



Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Annual Report for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019



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Our purpose

To help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.

All Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration inspection reports can be found at www.gov.uk/ICIBI

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Contents

Foreword	2
Role and Remit	6
Inspection Findings 2018-19	10
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	20
Working with others	22
Resources and planning	26
Appendix 1: Inspection Reports published in 2018-19	30
Appendix 2: Reviews of Country Information 2018-19	31
Appendix 3: Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2018-19	32
Appendix 4: ICIBI 3-Year Inspection Plan 2017-18 – 2019-20	33
Appendix 5: ICIBI’s ‘expectations’ of asylum, immigration, nationality and customs functions	44

Foreword

As in previous years, my primary objective for 2018-19 was to deliver a broadly-based and balanced programme of inspections, covering as much of my published Inspection Plan as possible, through which I aimed to help the Home Office and others to make improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of their performance of the asylum, immigration, nationality and customs functions for which the Home Secretary is responsible.



David Bolt, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

For a number of reasons, I believe that this objective was not fully achieved.

By 31 March 2019, only seven inspection reports had been published, significantly fewer than in 2017-18, although a further seven completed reports were with the Home Secretary awaiting publication¹ and four inspections were underway and expected to report in the first quarter of 2019-20.

There were two principal causes of this reduced output: first, ICIBI's staffing levels, and second, the protracted process of laying the completed reports in Parliament. For most of the year, the inspectorate operated with well under its complement of 30 staff. For the last few months of 2018-19 only half of the inspector posts were filled. The reasons for this and the outlook for 2019-20 are explained in greater detail later in this Annual Report, but the inevitable consequence was fewer completed inspections. It also placed heavy demands on my team and I am grateful to each of them for their hard work and resilience.

I noted in last year's Annual Report that, the final quarter aside, most inspection reports took longer to lay in Parliament than the eight weeks to which the Home Secretary had committed in 2014 when taking control of the publication process. In 2018-19, none of the seven published reports was laid within eight weeks and most took substantially longer. Whatever the reasons, some of which I accept are beyond the Home Office's control, the effect is to slow down the flow of reports.

A second objective was to increase the impact and value of ICIBI's work, in particular in terms of its ability to affect how the Home Office thinks and works. Clearly, there is a relationship between the number and range of inspections delivered in any year and the inspectorate's impact and value, albeit not a simple linear one. But, throughout 2018-19, the department's focus on managing the fall-out from the Windrush scandal and on preparing for Brexit appeared to affect its capacity for other business, and this included inspections.

During 2018-19, I had just one meeting with the Home Secretary and two with the Immigration Minister. While I recognise the considerable pressures on ministers, particularly over this period, this

¹ Three of the seven reports were laid in Parliament and published on 4 April 2019.

added to my sense that the ICIBI's work had slipped down the agenda. However, this was balanced to some extent by receiving the Home Secretary's commission to carry out an annual review of the workings of the 'Adults at Risk' policy, as recommended by Stephen Shaw in his follow-up report on the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons, and by the formal acknowledgement of the ICIBI's assurance role in relation to the EU Settlement Scheme, pending the creation of an Independent Monitoring Authority, as set out in the EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Meetings with Home Office top management were more frequent and, as in previous years, I continued to see the Directors General of Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration at least quarterly to discuss current and upcoming inspections and to hear what was happening in the different areas of Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) that might affect inspection priorities, timings, and focus. Changes at the top of BICS meant that ICIBI had three different senior sponsors during the year, but on the plus side this resulted in closer dealings with Director General BICS Policy and Strategy and, since November, my monthly meetings with the new Second Permanent Under Secretary have become increasingly constructive.

By contrast, there were signs that relationships between the ICIBI and the Home Office at the working level were generally poorer in 2018-19 than they had been in 2017-18. Both parties were under strain and at times this showed, with some missteps by inspectors and some overly-sensitive reactions from those being inspected, which played out in disagreements over factual accuracy that went beyond the facts and into analysis and conclusions and in the formal responses to recommendations.

Fewer published reports in 2018-19 resulted in fewer recommendations (down from 75 in 2017-18 to 33, excluding eight recommendations that ICIBI assessed as still "Open" following a second re-inspection of family reunion applications). While I do not regard the number of recommendations as a measure of performance, how the Home Office responds to recommendations is certainly relevant.

Of the 33 'new' recommendations, 48.5% (16) were accepted, 48.5% (16) were 'Partially accepted' and 3% (1) 'Not accepted'. This compares with 72%, 23% and 5% in 2017-18 and 85%, 13%, and 2% in 2016-17. The reasons for the partial acceptances varied. In some instances, it was clear that certain parts of a recommendation had been accepted and others not, while elsewhere the need for improvement was recognised but the recommended course of action was rejected. As before, in a few cases the text accompanying the partial acceptance read more like a rejection, while too often the Home Office's responses did not contain any commitments to specific actions or timescales, which makes it difficult to measure progress.

Looking ahead to 2019-20, both ICIBI and the Home Office have some work to do, some of which is in hand, to get the best value from inspections and recommendations.

In keeping with the ICIBI's general approach to inspection reporting, I have focused on the areas where there is room for improvement. However, it is important to note the things that worked well in 2018-19.

Though few in number, most of the inspection reports published in 2018-19 dealt with big, strategically-important



David Bolt viewing artwork at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan

topics (the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, the threat to the border via the south coast, the provision of asylum accommodation, the identification and treatment of vulnerable adults, and collaborative working between the Home Office and other government departments), in which there was considerable stakeholder and Parliamentary interest.

Also, some reports from previous years were resurfaced, notably the 'compliant environment' reports on Bank Accounts/Driving Licences (2016-17) and on 'Right to Rent' (2017-18), demonstrating both the longevity of some of ICIBI's work and its "real world" impact and value, and emphasising the importance of producing high-quality, carefully-drafted inspection reports.

In 2017-18, I noted that my rolling 3-Year Inspection Plan had worked well as a planning tool and as a check against the inspectorate losing sight of any important issues. I felt it had brought more coherence and continuity to the ICIBI's programme of work, including through more follow-up inspections, with re-inspections and with the inclusion of previous findings and recommendations within the scope of 'new' inspections.

During 2018-19, a number of stakeholders commented on the importance of re-inspection as a way of maintaining momentum with the Home Office. With this in mind, and in order to round out the picture of the department's progress (or lack of it) in dealing with some of its long-standing and systemic challenges, as well as completing four re-inspections in 2018-19,² I sought wherever possible to draw on and cross refer to previous findings and recommendations, including those from other bodies, such as the National Audit Office (NAO).

I also looked to capitalise on the knowledge and experience the ICIBI had built up over its first ten years of operation about the key factors that affect the efficiency and effectiveness of borders and immigration functions. In November 2018, I published the ICIBI's 'Expectations'. Written in plain English and requiring no specialist knowledge of inspecting or of the borders and immigration system, these 'Expectations' are intended to help inspectors, the Home Office and stakeholders to understand what evidence the ICIBI will be looking for at the start of any inspection and what "good" looks like.

For the first four months of 2018-19 I was without a Chief of Staff (CoS) to deal with day-to-day management of staff and resources, including recruitment, and enable me to concentrate on inspections. With the new CoS in place, from August I was able to spend more time onsite with each inspection. This was particularly valuable in the case of asylum accommodation, where I visited properties across England, Scotland and Wales, and spoke to residents, service providers and stakeholder organisations. Meanwhile, from the start of 2019, I began a programme of visits to Immigration Removal Centres and HM Prisons to talk with Home Office and Prison Service staff, contractors and detainees in order to inform my first annual review of the workings of the 'Adults at Risk' policy.

Onsite visits aside, the bulk of my time and effort was spent ensuring that the scope of each inspection was correctly set, that the evidence was fully tested, that the conclusions were sound, and in particular that inspection reports were accurate and clear. Despite the staffing pressures and the complexity of some of the inspection topics, and notwithstanding some "pushback" from the Home Office on particular



David Bolt at an Asylum Aid event

² Three remained to be published at the end of 2018-19.

findings and recommendations, I believe that ICIBI consistently met the high standards required of reports that are to be laid in Parliament.

ICIBI's engagement with stakeholder groups is covered later in this Annual Report. In brief, as well as the standing fora and inspection-specific workshops, I met with a range of stakeholders throughout the year, some familiar, some new, and I was also invited to speak at a number of stakeholder events. From the feedback received, I believe ICIBI's stakeholder relationships were in good shape at the end of 2018-19, despite the reduced published output, and that ICIBI remained sufficiently abreast of stakeholder issues and priorities to take these properly into account when planning and carrying out inspections.

During 2018-19, ICIBI continued to improve the use of its website, in particular in making a public 'call for evidence' a routine part of each inspection. Some topics elicited a limited response, but 'An inspection of the Home Office Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System's policies and practices relating to charging and fees'³ received the biggest "post bag" to date, with almost 600 responses from individuals and from stakeholder organisations and representatives.

Partly to share experiences and best practice, but also to avoid unnecessary duplication in terms of our respective programmes, I met with a number of other inspecting and monitoring bodies during the year, including Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, National Audit Office, Government Internal Audit Agency, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, and the Chair of the Independent Monitoring Boards. I also met with Stephen Shaw both before and after he delivered his follow-up review of the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons.

My appointment as the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration is due to come to an end in April 2020. In looking ahead to 2019-20, I am keen to complete as much of my 3-year Inspection Plan (2017-18 to 2019-20) as possible. Despite ending 2018-19 some four or five inspection reports short of where I had hoped to be, I believe that ICIBI remains on course to deliver the bulk of my 3-Year Plan by the end of 2019-20, though as always this will depend on my being able to recruit and retain sufficient inspectors and on ICIBI receiving appropriate support from the Home Office.

David Bolt
Independent Chief Inspector

April 2019

³ The report was sent to the Home Secretary in January 2019 and was laid in Parliament and published on the ICIBI website on 4 April 2019.

Role and Remit

Legislative Framework

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (until 2012, the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency) was established by the UK Borders Act 2007. Sections 48-56 of the Act (as amended) provide the legislative framework for the inspection of the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs by the Home Secretary and by any person exercising such functions on his behalf.

At the beginning of March 2019, an amendment to the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2017-19 seeking to extend the remit of the Independent Chief Inspector was tabled for Committee Debate in the House of Commons. The new clause sought to include in the ICI's remit "any Government department insofar as the department is involved in the EU Settlement Scheme application process" and specified that this should "include the Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs insofar as they are involved in the automated residency checks for the EU Settlement Scheme."

Responding for the Government, the Immigration Minister made it clear that such an amendment was "unnecessary" as the EU Settlement Scheme was "primarily an immigration function" and as such was covered by the UK Borders Act 2007, under which the ICI "already has the powers to inspect Government Departments involved in the EU settlement scheme application process, and that includes activities undertaken by the Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs in support of the EU Settlement Scheme application process."⁴ The new clause was therefore withdrawn.

The UK Borders Act 2007 empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions, with the exception of those exercised at removal centres, short-term holding facilities and under escort arrangements unless directed to do so by the Home Secretary. The latter are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons or Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (and equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland). However, in July 2018, in response to Stephen Shaw's follow-up review of the welfare of vulnerable persons in detention,⁵ the Home Secretary wrote formally commissioning the Independent Chief Inspector to carry out an annual review of the workings of the adults at risk in immigration detention policy.

The UK Borders Act 2007 directs the Independent Chief Inspector to consider and make recommendations about, in particular:

- consistency of approach
- the practice and performance of listed persons compared to other persons doing similar things
- practice and procedure in making decisions

⁴ Hansard for 5 March 2019.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728376/Shaw_report_2018_Final_web_accessible.pdf

- the treatment of claimants and applicants
- certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (c. 41) (unfounded claim)
- compliance with law about discrimination in the exercise of functions, including reliance on section 19D of the Race Relations Act 1976 (c. 74) (exception for immigration functions)
- practice and procedure in relation to the exercise of enforcement powers (including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure)
- practice and procedure in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of offences
- practice and procedure in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings
- whether customs functions have been appropriately exercised by the Secretary of State and the Director of Border Revenue
- the provision of information
- the handling of complaints, and
- the content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration officers and other officials

In addition, the legislation enables the Secretary of State to request the Independent Chief Inspector to report to him in writing in relation to specified matters, referred to as “Home Secretary Commissions”.

Section 51 of the UK Borders Act 2007 covers the inspection planning process, which includes the requirement to consult the Secretary of State when preparing a plan (in practice, the plan for the coming year).⁶

The legislation also requires the Independent Chief Inspector to prepare a plan for each inspection, describing its objectives and terms of reference, but also makes it clear that this does not prevent him from doing anything that is not mentioned in any plan. (A Protocol, agreed with the Home Office, defines responsibilities, processes, and timescales, both satisfying the legislation and ensuring that inspections proceed efficiently. The Protocol is reviewed annually.)

The Independent Chief Inspector is required to report in writing to the Secretary of State in relation to the performance of the functions specified. (In practice, this means submitting a detailed report for each inspection, plus an Annual Report.)

In 2014, the Secretary of State assumed control of the publication of inspection reports, deciding when to lay them before Parliament.⁷ At that time, the Secretary of State committed to doing this within 8 weeks of receipt of the report, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual’s safety. In such cases, the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report.⁸

⁶ The 2019-20 Plan was shared with the Home Secretary in March 2019. It was published on the ICIBI website on 2 April 2019.

⁷ As soon as they are laid in Parliament, inspection reports are published on the ICIBI website, together with the Home Office’s formal response to the report and its recommendations.

⁸ In 2018-19, one report, ‘An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports (January – May 2018)’, contained redactions. These were made for reasons of national security. The redactions were clearly marked in the published report.

Statement of Purpose

It follows from the legislation that the Independent Chief Inspector's role is to use the evidence gathered during inspections to challenge inefficiency, ineffectiveness or inconsistency, but to do so constructively and with the aim of helping to bring about improvements. To provide the appropriate focus and approach to its work, the Inspectorate has therefore devised a short 'Statement of Purpose':

"To help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection."

The Inspection Process

The legislation covers in detail what the Independent Chief Inspector is directed to consider, but it does not prescribe how inspections are to be conducted.

The Inspectorate has developed a 3-stage inspection process. This is tailored to fit each inspection, but is normally expected to take 100 days (20 weeks) from start to finish:

Stage 1: Planning

- Scoping
- Open source research
- Preliminary evidence request
- Familiarisation visit(s)
- Project Initiation Document sign off by the Independent Chief Inspector
- Formal notification to the Home Office and full evidence request
- Stakeholder engagement – requests for written submissions
- Website 'Call for evidence'

Stage 2: Inspecting

- Evidence analysis, including sampling of case files
- Stakeholder meeting(s)
- On-site visit
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Observations
- Review by the Independent Chief Inspector
- Further evidence request (if required)

Stage 3: Reporting

- Presentation of emerging findings to the Home Office
- Drafting of report
- Factual accuracy check of draft report by the Home Office
- Report finalised and sent to the Home Secretary

ICIBI 'Expectations' (formerly 'Inspection Criteria')

In November 2018, ICIBI published a set of 'Expectations' (see Appendix 5). These replaced ICIBI's 'Inspection Criteria', last updated in 2013.

The 'Expectations' cover the key factors that, based on ICIBI's knowledge and experience, affect the efficiency and effectiveness of all asylum, immigration, nationality and customs functions. They provide the starting point for all inspections, and inspectors will test for evidence of each of them, before examining any other areas that are specific to the particular inspection.

The 'Expectations' are intended to be helpful not just to ICIBI inspectors, but also to the Home Office and others responsible for delivering these functions, as well as to anyone who encounters them and to other stakeholders. To that end, they are written in plain English, and no specialist knowledge of the borders and immigration system or of inspecting is required to interpret them.

Inspection Findings 2018-19

Overview

Seven inspection reports were laid in Parliament in 2018-19. They are listed at Appendix 1. The full reports can be found on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's formal responses to the reports and to each of the recommendations.

The seven reports contained 33 'new' recommendations, of which the Home Office accepted 16 (48.5%), partially accepted 16 (48.5%) and rejected one (3%). In addition, eight recommendations made originally in 2016 were found on re-inspection to require further action by the Home Office before they could be considered "Closed".

The key findings from each inspection are set out below. Overall, they painted a by now familiar picture of a system (or more accurately a set of related but not always connected or coherent functions) that does not have the capacity, and in some instances the capabilities, to do everything required of it all of the time, with the result that some things are not done well or not at all.

It did not help that 2018-19 was a particularly difficult year, with the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) directorates having to cope additionally with preparations for the UK's exit from the European Union and with the fall-out from the Windrush scandal. But, in reality, sudden spikes in demand have been a common occurrence for BICS for some years (for example, in asylum claims in 2014, clandestine entries in 2015, more recently small boats in the Channel in 2018, and in queues at airport immigration control desks every summer) and serve to highlight how stretched the system is and how the response to the latest priority or crisis is typically at the expense of performance elsewhere.



Coastal Patrol Vessel Eagle

In the circumstances, it may seem harsh to continue to criticise the Home Office for its poor record keeping, quality management, and internal and external communications, all of which were evident again in inspections in 2018-19. But, unless these basics are addressed the over-stretched resources will find it hard to be efficient and effective.

Meanwhile, the EU Settlement Scheme provided a glimpse of what BICS might be able to achieve with better investment. In March 2019, ICIBI completed an initial inspection of the EU Settlement Scheme, focusing on the period to the end of the "Private Beta 2" phase, which ran until December 2018. The report⁹ identifies a number of areas for improvement, however it also recognises that the Scheme is well-resourced and supported at the most senior levels. The processing of applications has

⁹ The report had yet to be published at the end of 2018-19.

been automated to a significant degree, with assistance from other government departments, and staff, many of them new recruits to the Home Office, have been instructed by ministers to “look to grant”. The Scheme has its critics, and at the end of 2018-19 had yet to prove itself, but compared with many other areas of BICS, where systems and staff are under constant strain, forcing them to be largely reactive and to juggle different demands, the EU Settlement Scheme stands out as having been afforded the preparation time, resources and organisational priority to succeed.

Summary of findings from 2018-19 inspections

The 2018-19 Inspection Plan was set out under 5 ‘Themes’, reflecting the main purpose or outcome of the Home Office’s various borders and immigration functions. This format is followed below. In practice, most inspections touched on more than one Theme.

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)

One inspection had ‘protecting the border’ as its main Theme.

‘An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports (January – May 2018)’

In my original 3-year Inspection Plan (published in April 2016) I signalled my intention to carry out a series of inspections of Border Force operations at seaports and around the UK coastline. The first of these, ‘An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports’ (July to November 2016) was published in July 2017. This second looked at the south coast.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of Border Force immigration and customs operations at the seaports of Dover, Newhaven, Portsmouth, Southampton, Poole and Plymouth, and looked at its coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas along the south coast between Dover and Falmouth. The focus was on Border Force’s strategy, capabilities, and understanding of and overall response to threats to the border, including its collection and use of intelligence and its collaborations with others.



The Port of Dover

The inspection also looked to establish what changes or improvements had been made as a result of the earlier inspection of east coast seaports, and the inspection of General Maritime (GM), published in January 2016.

In light of actions in northern France to increase border security and close down migrant camps, the east coast inspection looked for evidence of the suspected displacement of clandestine arrivals from the south east. This inspection also looked at whether there had been displacement from Dover to other south coast ports. The numbers of clandestine arrivals discovered at Portsmouth and Poole had indeed increased, suggesting that irregular migrants looking to enter the UK had been displaced from northern France to the ferry ports in Normandy and Spain. Meanwhile, “upstream” efforts by European authorities, encouraged and supported by Border Force, appeared to have reduced the overall numbers successfully boarding UK-bound ferries.

The volumes and variety of passengers and goods arriving at seaports, harbours, marinas and along the south coast present Border Force with serious challenges, not least in terms of where and how best to deploy its officers and other resources. Each of the larger seaports has its own particular passenger and goods traffic and character (size, layout, infrastructure), but from most perspectives Dover stands apart.

At Dover, Border Force concentrates on customs controls (immigration checks for passengers arriving at Dover are completed at the juxtaposed controls in France). Elsewhere, officers are “multi-functional”. At all the ports visited, Dover included despite its significantly higher numbers and specialist teams, frontline officers believed they were understaffed, raising questions about whether the rationale for Border Force’s staffing model was clear and made sense. Nonetheless, the morale of officers at south coast ports was generally good.

The east coast inspection contrasted the broadly efficient and effective management of fixed immigration control points and freight arrivals at the major seaports with the poor coverage of smaller ports, harbours and marinas. Border Force responded that it would increase its maritime law enforcement presence and capability through the use of newly-acquired Coastal Patrol Vessels (CPVs), through partnership working and building better intelligence networks at a local level, and the re-launch of Project Kraken.

The south coast inspection again showed the scale of Border Force’s task. It was clear that it had put considerable effort into improving its coverage, and with some success. But, this was a “work in progress”, with much more to be done, particularly in freeing up officers to attend GM arrivals, and in effectively harnessing the “eyes and ears” of harbour masters, marina managers, the maritime and pleasure boating communities, and the general public to report unusual and suspicious activities along the south coast.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 20 June 2018 and was published on 12 November. It made seven recommendations for improvement, covering resourcing, equipment, the response to threats, clandestine arrivals, customers and stakeholders, GM, and the tracking of recommendations. The Home Office ‘Accepted’ one recommendation, and ‘Partially accepted’ the remaining six, although the accompanying comments were heavily caveated.

As I acknowledged at the time of publication, Border Force is dealing with many challenges, not just along the south coast, but nationally, and its job is not made any easier by having to prepare for the UK’s exit from the EU without clarity about what exactly this will involve. However, it was difficult to escape the impression that Border Force believes it knows best and will make changes only on its own terms and at its own pace. Consequently, my plan to complete the series of seaport and coastline inspections with an inspection of the west coast in 2019-20 may need to be postponed.

Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)

Two inspections had ‘providing a service’ as their main Theme. Meanwhile, a re-inspection that looked at Family Reunion applications is listed under Theme 5.

‘An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (August 2017 – January 2018)’

In September 2015, the Prime Minister committed the UK to resettling 20,000 refugees from the conflict in Syria by 2020. The Department for International Development (DfID), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Home Office became jointly responsible for meeting this commitment, with the Home Office retaining primary responsibility for the policy and operational delivery of the scheme.

The 20,000 target represented a huge increase in resettlements and required a major and rapid upscaling of effort from all those involved, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as the key partner agencies on the ground, and UK local authorities and their integration delivery partners.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, looking at the dependencies and risks to successful delivery of the 20,000 target. It found that the processes on which the Scheme relied were essentially effective. Identification of “the most vulnerable” refugees was delegated to UNHCR; consideration of referrals and matching of refugees to firm offers of accommodation and support was managed by the Home Office; the relocation of refugees to the UK was organised by IOM; and their reception, accommodation and initial support was led by the receiving local authorities.

What had been achieved, in particular the resettlement of over half of the target 20,000 refugees by the end of 2017, was greatly to everyone’s credit, and there was every reason to believe that the Scheme would achieve its 20,000 target by the government’s deadline of May 2020.

Nonetheless, the inspection found that, subject to improving its collection and management of data, the Home Office could do more to analyse and evaluate the various stages of the resettlement process, and to share ‘best practice’, in order to achieve greater consistency of treatment and outcomes. While it was perhaps too soon to assess whether those already resettled via the Scheme had been successfully integrated in the UK, and while the Home Office was taking sensible steps to study this over the longer-term, there could be lessons for the pre-departure period and first years in the UK that if they were identified sooner could benefit those still in the early stages of the process.

Furthermore, while delivering the 20,000 on schedule was the Home Office’s overriding objective, it needed to be alive to the effects on others of gearing its processes to ensure it achieved this, especially on those refugees told they had been selected for resettlement but who waited months for further news. The fact that the UK resettlement process was quick by comparison with other international schemes did not fully answer this concern.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 7 March 2018 and was published on 8 May. It contained seven recommendations, covering staffing, data collection and sharing, identification of ‘best practice’, making better use of the period pre-departure to prepare refugees for life in the UK, and communication and interactions with partner agencies ‘upstream’ and here.

The Home Office ‘Accepted’ two of the recommendations and ‘Partially accepted’ five. However, its formal response committed to few, if any, actions and disputed or rejected several of the report’s findings. As such, it appeared closed to the idea that there was any room for improvement. While those responsible for delivering the Scheme have much to be proud of, this was disappointing, for the inspection process and, more importantly, for those relying on the Scheme.



Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan.

‘An inspection of the Home Office’s approach to the identification and safeguarding of vulnerable adults (February – May 2018)’

In my Foreword to this report I observed that how well the Home Office recognised and responded to the needs of vulnerable individuals was a test not just of its competence but also of its capacity for compassion, both of which had been questioned in recent months.

This inspection explored the overall BICS approach to vulnerability and also looked at what was happening on the ground when Border Force, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), and Immigration Enforcement (IE) encountered vulnerable adults. It built on a number of other inspections produced over the previous two years that had focused on vulnerable ‘groups’: Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (PVoMS) arriving at the border, refugees from the Syrian conflict, asylum claimants, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and applicants for family reunion visas.

From all of these inspections, it was evident that the BICS Board, senior management, and the majority of staff were serious about improving the protection provided to vulnerable individuals. A good deal of effort was already targeted at particular, well-delineated ‘cohorts’, such as children and PVoMS, and other vulnerability-focused work was going on across BICS to improve training, raise awareness, and capture relevant information.

However, it was also clear that much remained to be done to develop a consistent understanding of what was meant by ‘vulnerability’ in a BICS context, and the appropriate response, and progress was too slow.

This inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 20 August 2018. However, it was not published until 10 January 2019. Its four recommendations covered: creating a detailed Programme Plan for delivering an effective response to the vulnerability and safeguarding challenges facing BICS; reaching out to other agencies with greater knowledge and expertise in dealing with vulnerable individuals; spelling out to BICS staff their ‘duty of care’ when they encounter vulnerable adults; ensuring that how each of the BICS directorates assesses and manages risk in relation to vulnerable individuals is fully aligned with the departmental goal of “Protecting Vulnerable People and Communities”. All four recommendations were ‘Accepted’.

Note

Work on this inspection ran in parallel with Stephen Shaw’s follow-up review into the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons, which was published in July 2018. Stephen and I were in contact, not least to avoid unnecessary duplication. Our reports were produced independently but share some common themes. One of Stephen’s recommendations was that the Home Secretary should invite the ICIBI to report annually to him on the working of the ‘Adults at Risk’ process, which the Home Secretary accepted. Work on the first annual review began in November 2018, with the aim of reporting to the Home Secretary in early 2019-20 on the year to 31 March 2019.

Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement

There were no published inspection reports under Theme 3. However, two completed reports were with the Home Secretary for him to lay in Parliament, a re-inspection of Reporting and Offender Management processes and of the Home Office’s management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders, and an inspection of the BICS approach to illegal working (part of the ‘compliant environment’ agenda). The latter also feature heavily in the published report on collaborative working with other government departments – see Theme 4.

Theme 4: Working with others

Two inspections had ‘working with others’ as their main Theme.

‘An inspection of the Home Office’s management of asylum accommodation provision (February – June 2018)’

The provision by the Home Office of asylum accommodation in line with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, delivered since 2012 through 6 regional ‘Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring of Asylum Support Services’ (COMPASS) contracts, was examined by the National Audit Office (NAO) in 2014 and by the Home Affairs Committee (HAC) in 2017. Both found significant room for improvement.

Among the latter’s recommendations was the suggestion that the Independent Chief Inspector could complement a local authority-led inspection regime (rejected by the Home Office) by conducting periodic inspections to provide a country-wide overview of the system.

While this inspection did not set out to re-inspect every finding or recommendation made by the NAO or HAC, it took note of the Home Office’s responses to the latter in particular and looked to see what actions had been completed and what improvements had been made.

For several reasons, not least the difficulty of extracting evidence from the Home Office, this inspection proved more challenging than most. It was clear from the Home Office’s response to my draft report that this topic touched a nerve. It considered my criticisms unfair and believed its efforts had not been recognised. At the same time, the likelihood was that many non-government organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders engaged with asylum accommodation, and those living in it, would feel that the report did not go far enough in challenging the standards of accommodation and support provided.

Discussions with the Home Office, Providers, NGOs and asylum seekers about particular properties showed just how difficult it was to agree on what constituted “an acceptable standard” of accommodation, and equally difficult for the parties to remain objective and to trust the intentions and actions of the other. The overriding impression from this inspection was of many individuals – from the Home Office, the Providers, NGOs and voluntary groups, statutory services and local authorities – up and down the UK, working hard to do their best for those in asylum accommodation, but often with quite different perspectives and priorities.

The system would always rely on collaboration, but it was the Home Office that held most of the keys – to easing demand on asylum accommodation through more efficient management of asylum claims; to standardising data capture and improving information flows; to ensuring policies and practices support and protect the most vulnerable; to driving a UK-wide dispersal strategy for asylum seekers and refugees that engages more local authorities.

For all its efforts, this inspection found the Home Office too accepting of the limitations of the current COMPASS contracts and how things were, and too optimistic that the work it had in hand and the new contracts would bring about improvements. In reality, there was much more that it could and should be doing before September 2019 when the new contracts were due to start. Otherwise, the same underlying issues with asylum accommodation were likely to persist, whatever benefits the new contracts might deliver.

The report made 9 recommendations, some of them time-sensitive. While it accepted all nine recommendations, the Home Office’s formal response looked to underplay the evidence of poor accommodation standards. This was unhelpful in terms of building trust, as was the delay in publishing the report, which was sent to the Home Secretary on 9 July 2018 but was not published until 20

November, the day before the HAC was to take evidence from the Home Office as part of its enquiry into asylum accommodation. The HAC's report was published on 17 December 2018.

'An inspection of Home Office (Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System) collaborative working with other government departments and agencies February – October 2018'

This inspection looked at how efficiently and effectively the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) directorates worked with other government departments (OGDs) in order to meet the objectives of both.

Inspectors examined examples of collaborative operations or projects begun since 1 March 2016, and ongoing collaborations now regarded as 'business as usual' (BAU). The examples covered Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, UK Visas and Immigration and four OGDs, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the Department for Education (DfE), and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), chosen because anyone seeking to settle or stay for an extended period in the UK would most likely have been encountered by one or more of them.

The Home Office commented that the report felt more like an inspection of the 'compliant environment' than of collaborative working *per se*, and that it failed to recognise the innovative and proactive approach it had taken to the formation of mutually beneficial relationships where none previously existed.

The latter, if true, was unintended. The examples quoted included instances of innovation and proactivity, particularly at the working level. Meanwhile, as the report made clear, collaboration between government departments was neither new nor exceptional. But, given the focus of immigration policies and legislation from 2013 onwards on the 'compliant environment', and the creation of related Home Office structures and inter-ministerial groups and taskforces, it was inevitable and entirely appropriate that this would feature heavily in any examination of collaborative working.

Increasingly, data sharing and matching is the cornerstone of cross-government collaboration. Done well, this should benefit not just the departments concerned in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness, but also their "customers" by reducing the burden on individuals of having to re-present evidence to one department that has already been provided to and verified by another.

However, Parliament and the public want to be reassured that such data sharing is not only legal, but is also demonstrably proportionate and necessary, that the data is accurate, and that safeguards are in place to prevent it being misapplied. In response to the inspection report, the Home Office noted that it was engaged in an extensive programme of work on data protection, including creating a network of operational data practitioners and a Data Protection Officer with statutory responsibilities. The inspection did not examine these measures but ICIBI will look to do so in future inspections.

The key finding from this inspection was that there was no evidence of an overarching BICS strategy for collaborative working with other departments, no single central list of current collaborations, and that the Home Office had no means of assessing, or even articulating, the overall value BICS derived from collaborations with other departments, or of understanding what more value it could gain from them and how to go about this. Nor did BICS capture centrally where another department relied on it to deliver its objectives and how the Home Office might ensure and enhance the support it provided.

The Home Office questioned whether an overarching strategy, uniformity and centralisation were inherently useful in a decentralised system. This goes to the heart of the efficiency and effectiveness of BICS and particularly to the quality and consistency of its decisions. Accepting that BICS is a complex machine, with many moving parts, the lesson from this inspection, and from many other inspections

and reviews, is that the BICS system would benefit from being less decentralised, if not in its structures than at least in terms of its knowledge and information management and how it presents itself externally.

The Home Office also questioned whether the scope of this inspection and the examples of collaboration that were examined presented a complete picture of its work with others. Failure to understand the complexity of the issues and to engage with all relevant parties are risks for any inspection and, had the Home Office provided the evidence when asked, this inspection might have benefited from other inputs. However, it was at best unhelpful of the department to look to obscure the systemic weaknesses accurately identified in the report by suggesting that there was a body of alternative evidence that would have presented a substantially different picture.

The inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 30 October 2018 and published on 31 January 2019. It contained three recommendations, which together aimed to achieve better oversight, coordination and value from collaborations between BICS and other government departments. Two of the recommendations were 'Partially accepted' and one, that a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for partnership working should be appointed, was 'Not accepted', as this would "blur lines of accountability, reduce the onus on lead business areas to take full responsibility for their partnership working, and discourage innovation at a local level."

The Home Office did however agree that there was a need for "a strong and clear strategy across all [BICS'] individual elements to operate as an effective and coherent system", but it believed this it would be best delivered by strengthening BICS as a system, including by "strengthening the capabilities of the central BICS strategy team, a renewed focus on embedding a single strategy across the BICS, and continually seeking out opportunities for individual business areas to work more closely together."

Theme 5: Learning and improving

Two inspections had 'learning and improving' as their main Theme.

'A re-inspection of the family reunion process, focusing on applications received at the Amman Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre November 2017 – April 2018'

The original family reunion inspection examined applications received in Amman, Istanbul, and Pretoria, because these Entry Clearance Decision Making Centres (DMCs) received the highest numbers of applications and made the greatest numbers of refusals. The report was published in September 2016. It contained ten recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Home Office. The thrust of the recommendations was that the Home Office needed to recognise that these were not like other visa applications, to demonstrate it understood that the majority of applicants were living in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances, and to show flexibility and compassion when making its decisions.

In 2017, the first re-inspection looked again at Istanbul. The report, published in July 2017, found that Istanbul had improved its handling of family reunion applications, but noted that while the Home Office had made progress towards implementing most of the recommendations, there had been no movement in some areas, and it concluded that all ten recommendations should remain "open" pending a more comprehensive re-inspection.

The Amman re-inspection moved the story forward. It involved a visit to Amman in November 2017, an examination of a sample of applications received at Amman between 1 April and 30 October 2017, and a series of exchanges with the Home Office up to April 2018 to establish the latest position on family reunion applications at Amman and overall.

The re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary on 26 April 2018 and was published on 5 September 2018. It found that most (eight out of ten) of the original recommendations remained “open”. The Home Office challenged the report’s conclusion that, after initial efforts to address the issues identified in the 2016 report, this has ceased to be a priority. It pointed to the revision of guidance in July 2016 and referred to ongoing work on family reunion policy as part of a wider review of its approach to asylum and resettlement strategy. It also reported its intention to remove family reunion decision making from DMCs and place it within the asylum directorate, thus recognising of the true nature of these applications.

Overall, the Home Office appeared to be moving in the right direction. But, accepting that it needed to take care when considering changes to policies and practices, the pace was far too slow given the profound impact on the lives of families seeking reunification.

Postscript

At the time of the Amman re-inspection, the Pretoria DMC was still receiving the largest number of family reunion applications and, with this in mind and to complete the cycle of re-inspections, the 2019-20 Inspection Plan included a re-inspection of Pretoria. However, in March 2019, the Home Office reported that it had begun “onshoring” applications received in Pretoria to an asylum team in Sheffield. Therefore, while a third re-inspection will go ahead as planned, the focus will reflect whatever changes the Home Office has made to the handling of family reunion applications from Pretoria and from elsewhere.

‘Inspection of Country of Origin Information – May 2018 Report’

This round of reviews, which included the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran and Turkey, again highlighted the problems with country of origin products where the most reliable and up-to-date information is not readily available in English. This issue was raised in the ‘May 2016 Report’, which recommended that the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) should be resourced to fund the translation into English of information which is not available from any other source. This recommendation was rejected, with the argument that the decision whether translation is necessary would continue to be made “on a case-by-case basis ... balancing the value of the information to the understanding of the country situation and the cost of translation.”



Lunar House, Croydon

The same argument was repeated in the Home Office’s response to the May 2018 report, with CPIT noting that “the volume of potentially translatable material relative to our finite resources”. While acknowledging these practical difficulties, the May 2018 report stressed that was not good enough for the Home Office to leave it there.

The report contended that the Home Office’s approach was not in the spirit of the Immigration Rules (339JA), which stated that “Reliable and up-to-date information shall be obtained from various sources”. As a matter of principle, the cost of translating material into English should not be a consideration for the Home Office where that material is essential to a proper understanding of country conditions. While the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal may have made it clear that the onus was on

individuals to provide it with translations, where necessary,¹⁰ it was unreasonable for the Home Office to rely on this in respect of initial claims, not least as it seemed guaranteed to increase the number of decisions that would be appealed.

As the reviews of the DRC and of Turkey showed, the problem of not using non-English language sources was not simply that more up-to-date and first-hand information was omitted, but also that the available English-language sources assumed more weight than they merited.

On the face of it, a “case-by-case” approach was the pragmatic solution. But, from the responses to the DRC reviews in particular, the Home Office’s threshold appeared to have been set far too high. As a Francophone country, it was always likely that the most relevant, comprehensive and up-to-date information would be in French, and claimants might reasonably expect that the Home Office should possess some facility in French.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 1 August 2018. It made three recommendations, two of which related to the treatment of non-English language sources.

The report was not published until 5 December 2018. All three recommendations were “Partially accepted”, but the responses were equivocal and the Home Office showed little inclination to look seriously either at the resourcing of this important function or at the way it currently worked. This was poor reward for the hard work of the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, who give their time freely on the understanding that the reviews they oversee make a difference.

Completed inspection reports awaiting publication

As at 31 March 2019, there were seven completed inspection reports with the Home Secretary waiting to be laid in Parliament:

- ‘An inspection of the Home Office Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System’s policies and practices relating to charging and fees (June 2018 – January 2019)’, submitted on 24 January 2019
- ‘A re-inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs (November 2018 – January 2019)’, submitted on 31 January 2019
- ‘A re-inspection of the Home Office’s Reporting and Offender Management processes and of its management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders (October 2018 – January 2019)’, submitted on 31 January 2019
- ‘A re-inspection of the Home Office’s application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens (August 2018 – January 2019)’, submitted on 31 January 2019
- ‘An inspection of the Home Office’s approach to Illegal Working (August – December 2018)’, submitted on 6 February 2019
- ‘An inspection of the EU Settlement Scheme (November 2018 – January 2019)’, submitted on 6 March 2019
- ‘Inspection of Country of Origin Information – January 2019 Report’, submitted on 25 March 2019

¹⁰ The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (Procedure) Rules 2014, Part 2 paragraph 12.

‘Live’ inspections as at 31 March 2019

Four inspections were ‘live’ at the end of 2018-19. Each planned to report by May 2019:

- An inspection of the UK Visas and Immigration’s ‘network consolidation’ programme (involving the ‘onshoring’ to the UK of visa casework)
- A short inspection of Border Force operations at Glasgow and Edinburgh Airports
- An inspection of the Home Office’s handling of complaints and MPs’ correspondence regarding the performance of BICS directorates
- 2018-19 annual review of the workings of the ‘Adults at Risk’ (in detention) policy

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Purpose

Section 48 (2) (j) of the UK Borders Act 2007 states that the Chief Inspector shall consider and make recommendations about “the content of information and conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration and other officials.”

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was established in 2009 by the Chief Inspector, with the purpose of advising him about the content and quality of country of origin information (Col) and guidance notes produced by the Home Office and relied upon by decision makers.

How IAGCI works

IAGCI works as follows:

- Stage 1: Taking account of the volume of asylum claims in relation to particular countries and of when particular Col products were last reviewed, the Chair of IAGCI proposes to the Independent Chief Inspector which countries/products should next be reviewed by the Group
- Stage 2: Independent reviewers, typically academics with relevant knowledge and expertise, are commissioned to review the products and to recommend amendments (additions, deletions, clarifications), citing their evidence. (The Inspectorate manages the tendering process and funds the reviews, and the Independent Chief Inspector has to sign off on IAGCI’s recommended reviewer from those replying to the tender.)
- Stage 3: IAGCI quality assures the submitted reviews and sends them to the Home Office unit responsible for producing Col material (the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT)) for it to consider and respond to the reviewer’s recommendations
- Stage 4: IAGCI (with the Independent Chief Inspector) holds a meeting with CPIT and the reviewers to go through the reviews and to consider, in particular, any points of disagreement
- Stage 5: Where the meeting identifies that these are required, IAGCI commissions any further inputs from the reviewer, before signing off the reviews as complete
- Stage 6: The Independent Chief Inspector produces a covering report with his recommendations, and send this, with the IAGCI reviews and the CPIT responses, to the Home Secretary to be laid in Parliament in the normal way

Membership

Membership of the IAGCI is by invitation of the Independent Chief Inspector. It is voluntary and unpaid. Members are respected academics and representatives of organisations with a working interest in country information and how it is used by the Home Office.

I should like to record my thanks to all the members of the IAGCI. Without their expertise, I could not fulfil this important part of my remit. My thanks go especially to Dr Laura Hammond, who completed another year as IAGCI Chair, and to Judge Andrew Jordan, who stood down from the group in April 2018 upon his retirement from the Upper Tribunal (Asylum and Immigration Chamber). I am also grateful to Judge Susan Pitt for agreeing to join the group.

List of members 2018-19

Chair:

- Dr Laura Hammond (School of Oriental and African Studies)

Independent members:

- Dr Mike Collyer (Sussex University)
- Dr Ceri Oeppen (Sussex University)
- Dr Patricia Daley (Oxford University)
- Dr Nando Sigona (University of Birmingham)
- Dr Julie Vullnetari (University of Southampton)
- Professor Giorgia Dona (University of East London)

Representative members:

- Judge Andrew Jordan (Upper Tribunal – Asylum and Immigration Chamber) to 13 April 2018
- Judge Susan Pitt (Upper Tribunal – Asylum and Immigration Chamber) from 19 July 2018
- Katinka Ridderbos (UNHCR, Geneva)
- Harriet Short (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association)

Meetings

IAGCI aims to meet 2 or 3 times a year. During 2018-19, it met twice, in May 2018 and again in January 2019.

Published reviews

A list of the country of origin products reviewed during 2018-19 is at Appendix 2.

Further details, terms of reference, minutes and reports from the IAGCI can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-chief-inspector-of-borders-and-immigration/about/research>

Working with others

Stakeholders

Inspection reports and recommendations are addressed to the Home Secretary and are aimed primarily at the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) business areas, in particular Border Force, Immigration Enforcement and UK Visas and Immigration.

However, the immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions performed by and on behalf of the Home Secretary involve and affect a wide range of other bodies, and touch everyone living in or seeking to visit the UK. In order to inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme, as well as engaging effectively with the Home Office, it is therefore essential that ICIBI reaches out to these "stakeholders" to understand their many perspectives, interests and concerns and to capture relevant evidence.

As with its dealings with the Home Office, ICIBI aims to develop strong stakeholder relationships, based on trust and openness, while remaining strictly impartial and objective.

Established fora

The Independent Chief Inspector chairs three established stakeholder groups that meet periodically, each of which shares the same terms of reference:

- to inform and advise the Independent Chief Inspector regarding any issues of interest or concern to members or those they represent
- to assist the Independent Chief Inspector with the 3-Year Inspection Plan by proposing topics for inspection and advising on their relative importance and urgency
- to assist the Independent Chief Inspector with the scoping and evidence collection for individual inspections

The Refugee and Asylum Forum (RAF) was created in 2009. Its membership comprises mostly third sector organisations with an interest in and knowledge of the Home Office's work in connection with refugees and asylum seekers and related issues. The RAF met twice in 2018-19, in October 2018 and again in February 2019. During the year, ICIBI had a number of other bilateral meetings and exchanges with RAF members both in relation to specific inspections and to discuss general issues and priorities.

The Aviation Stakeholder Forum was created in 2011. Membership comprises UK airport and airline operators. During 2018-19, the Aviation Stakeholder Forum met twice, in July 2018 and in February 2019. Meanwhile, in November 2018 the Independent Chief Inspector was invited to attend a meeting of the Board of the Airport Operators Association (AOA) to provide an overview of ICIBI's work and future programme as it related to the aviation sector and to hear from Board members about their issues and priorities.

The Seaports Stakeholder Forum was also created in 2011. Membership comprises UK seaports and shipping organisations and during 2018-19 was extended to include the Royal Yachting Association (RYA). The Seaports Stakeholder Forum met twice during the year, in July 2018 and again in February 2019.

Membership and Minutes of meetings for all three groups are available on the ICIBI website.

Other stakeholder events

In October 2018, I was invited to a celebration of the work done by the Home Office and the signatories of the Women's Asylum Charter to make childcare available nationally to women attending asylum interviews, so that they were not required to give traumatic evidence in front of their children. The invitation from Asylum Aid included a request for me to judge the 'guess the weight of the cake' competition, testing my independence and objectivity to the limits.

Speakers highlighted the importance of childcare provision and of the Home Office continuing to fund it when EU funding finishes in 2020, and of the other aims of the Charter's 'Protection Gap' campaign: to ensure that no woman seeking asylum should have to tell her story to a male interviewer or interpreter if she is not comfortable with this; to someone who does not understand how trauma affects memory; without being offered counselling if her story is traumatic, and, without information about her rights as a woman within the asylum system. I aim to look at these important issues when I revisit the efficiency and effectiveness of the asylum system in 2019-20.

In November, I was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Annual General Meeting and Conference of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA). I previously did so in 2015 when I had been in post just six months. On this occasion, some 50+ completed inspections later, while many of ICIBI's concerns about the Home Office's performance of its asylum, immigration, nationality and customs functions had not materially changed, I was able to evidence them from first-hand knowledge and explain how they informed my work programme. I also took the opportunity to emphasise the importance of ILPA's input to inspections.

Also in November, I attended an event at Portcullis House organised by the Children's Society, the purpose of which was to highlight the impact of Home Office processes on young people's mental health and wellbeing. I was asked to speak about the findings and recommendations from ICIBI's inspection of how the Home Office considers the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (published in March 2018), but the more important contributions were from the young people who told their stories and explained how they had been affected.

In February 2019, I attended another event at Portcullis House that also focused on children's experiences of the asylum process. This was organised by the Brighton-based Hummingbird Refugee Project and hosted by Caroline Lucas, MP. The young people taking part spoke with feeling about their enforced separations from family and friends, dangerous journeys, difficult and distressing encounters with the Home Office, long delays, poor



David Bolt at Children's Society event

communication and lack of appropriate support. However, what frustrated and upset them most was not being believed.

Both the November and February events confirmed my view that I should take a further look in 2019-20 at the treatment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and at the wider question of how the Home Office determines a child's 'best interests'.

In March 2019, I spoke at the 'Families Together' Conference organised by the British Red Cross. I gave an account of my 2016 inspection of the Home Office's handling of family reunion applications and the two subsequent re-inspections and referred to my plan to carry out a third and final family reunion re-inspection in 2019-20. The Conference, which was well-attended, was for family reunion practitioners and I found it extremely useful to hear about the issues that concerned them. It was also useful to connect with stakeholders I hope will be able to contribute to the re-inspection when it goes ahead.

Website

ICIBI uses its website to reach out to stakeholders and to the wider public, including "customers" of the Home Office's immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions. One of the main ways of doing this is via 'calls for evidence', which have become a standard part of each new inspection.

In some cases, the numbers responding to a 'call for evidence' are quite low. However, during 2018-19 ICIBI received its biggest 'post bag' yet in response to the 'call for evidence' for 'An inspection of the Home Office Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System's policies and practices relating to charging and fees'. Almost 600 submissions were received from individuals and from stakeholder organisations and representatives. (The completed report was sent to the Home Secretary in January 2019 and was published on 4 April).



The screenshot shows the ICIBI website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the GOV.UK logo and a search box. Below the navigation bar, the main content area features a large 'Featured' section. The central focus is a 'Call for evidence: family reunion' article, dated 7 June 2019. The article includes a silhouette illustration of a family (two adults and two children) and a brief description of the call for evidence. To the right of the main article, there are three smaller featured items, each with an image and a title: 'Call for evidence: Administrative Reviews' (dated 3 June 2019), 'Call for evidence: Use of interpreters in the asylum process' (dated 29 May 2019), and 'Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the Home Office's approach to illegal working' (dated 5 May 2019). Below the featured section, there is a 'Latest from Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration' section with a list of recent calls for evidence and their dates.

Chief Inspector's website: www.gov.uk/icibi

Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies

Like other statutory inspecting or auditing bodies and ad hoc reviews, ICIBI has its own remit, priorities and reporting arrangements. These limit the opportunities for joint inspections, but not for the sharing of experiences, knowledge and plans, which continued throughout 2018-19, most notably:

- in April 2018, a presentation to ICIBI staff from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) about how it had approached the creation of its initial inspection programme for the Fire & Rescue Services
- quarterly meetings with the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA), formerly Home Office Internal Audit, to share findings and to avoid unnecessary overlaps between audits and inspections, plus in September 2018 a presentation to ICIBI staff from GIAA on its approach to auditing BICS
- four meetings with the National Audit Office (NAO), in April 2018 and again in March 2019 to discuss our programmes for the year ahead, and in July and October 2018 to contribute to NAO's audits of the preparations for EU exit by government departments and of the handling of the Windrush situation
- a meeting with Wendy Williams in July 2018 at the start of her "Lessons Learned" review of Windrush, followed in March 2019 with a presentation to Wendy's Independent Advisory Group on ICIBI's overall findings from its inspections of BICS, including reflections on Windrush
- from July 2018 through to the end of 2018-19, preparations for the annual review of the working of the 'Adults at Risk' policy, including meetings with Stephen Shaw and with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) to discuss its work in relation to immigration detention and future cooperation
- in December 2018, a meeting with Darra Singh in relation to his review, commissioned by the Home Secretary, of the Home Office's use of DNA evidence in immigration applications
- regular conversations with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), Kevin Hyland (up to his departure in August 2018), and his team, by virtue of our shared accommodation

In December 2018, the Independent Chief Inspector sat as the independent member of the interview panel to appoint a new Immigration Services Commissioner.

Home Affairs Committee

The Independent Chief Inspector was not called to appear before the Home Affairs Committee (HAC) during 2018-19 (the last appearance was in November 2017). However, ICIBI inspections and findings were referred to in various HAC inquiries, including 'The Windrush generation', published in July 2018, 'Asylum Accommodation', published in December 2018, and 'Immigration detention', published in March 2019.

Resources and planning

Budget and Staffing 2018-19 and 2019-20

ICIBI's budget is determined by the Home Secretary and delegated to the Independent Chief Inspector under a formal letter of delegation from the Home Office Second Permanent Under Secretary.

The total budget for 2018-19 was £2.085m, a slight reduction on the 2017-18 budget of £2.1m as the Home Office took over the production costs for published inspection reports. Subject to confirmation from the Home Office, the budget for 2019-20 remains unchanged at £2.085m.

'Pay Costs' (staff salaries and employer's pension and National Insurance contributions) account for the bulk of the total budget. In 2018-19, £1.9m (91%) was designated for 'Pay Costs', with £185k allocated to 'Non-Pay'. There was no allocation for Capital expenditure.¹¹

The Inspectorate recorded an overall underspend of £650k (31%) in 2018-19, of which £574K was 'Pay Costs' – see 'Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2018-19' at Appendix 3.

Staffing was a problem throughout the year. The agreed headcount for 2018-19 was 30 full-time equivalents (FTEs). This includes the Independent Chief Inspector. Of these, 25 (83%) are inspector posts. ICIBI began 2018-19 with a total of 23.67 "active"¹² staff, including 18 inspectors (mostly Senior Executive Officers). During the business year, 11 inspectors left (one on retirement, three on promotion, one on special leave to join their spouse on an overseas posting, and six on level transfer to a post within the Home Office or another government department). Meanwhile, one inspector went on temporary loan to the Windrush 'Lessons Learned' review, two took maternity leave, and two others were absent for extended periods for health and family reasons.

As a result, ICIBI operated at around two-thirds of its total funded strength across the year, and by 31 March 2019 was down to just 11 inspectors. Inevitably, the reduced staff numbers affected expenditure on travel and other non-pay items, which were also significantly underspent.

During 2018-19, ICIBI ran two recruitment campaigns using Civil Service Recruitment. They produced more than 100 applications, but just two new joiners, and two internal promotions.¹³ Two 'expression of interest'¹⁴ campaigns aimed at existing Home Office staff produced one further new joiner, while one inspector re-joined ICIBI at the end of an overseas posting. A later external recruitment campaign, run with the help of Manpower, was more successful, producing over 200 applications. From this, ICIBI made 10 offers of employment at the end of 2018. However, only one person had joined before the end of 2018-19, with five more confirmed to join between April and June 2019, subject to security clearances.

¹¹ Since 2016-17, ICIBI's accommodation costs have been met directly by the Home Office.

¹² Excludes staff on career breaks or on loan from ICIBI to other departments.

¹³ ICIBI follows the Civil Service recruitment process and all Inspectorate staff (except the Independent Chief Inspector) are Home Office employees. All staff are cleared to Security Check (SC) level, with a small number, plus the Independent Chief Inspector, cleared to Developed Vetting (DV) level.

¹⁴ 'Expressions of interest' are used to invite Home Office staff who would like to take up a vacant post at their existing grade to submit their CV and a covering letter and, if assessed as suitable, to attend a selection interview.

Outlook and Plan 2019-20

In theory, 30 FTEs create a 'bank' of c.5,600 'working' days available for inspection work (based on 220 working days per full-time equivalent (FTE), minus an average of 10 days each for training and personal development, and days allocated to essential corporate functions). This is equivalent to 85% of ICIBI's total staff time.

In practice, ICIBI is likely to be significantly under strength for at least the first half of 2019-20.

For planning purposes, each 'standard' inspection is assumed to require 350 working days (the elapsed time from the start of the inspection to delivery of the finished report to the Home Secretary is 100 days/20 weeks). Re-inspections and some more tightly scoped inspections may require fewer resources and be completed more quickly.

Updated 3-year Inspection Plan

The first rolling 3-year Inspection Plan was published in 2016. Prior to this, the Independent Chief Inspector had published an annual plan identifying a number of 'announced' inspections and committing to a further number of 'unannounced' inspections.

The aim of the 3-year plan was to provide a better sense of the overall shape and range of the Inspectorate's work programme, how planned inspections fitted together thematically, and to signpost when particular topics would be examined.

Because of the time inspections take to complete, plus the time between reporting to the Home Secretary and the report being laid in Parliament, some inspections will straddle two business years. The plan reflects when the work will start.

An updated inspection plan for 2019-20 is at Appendix 4. The plan does not look beyond 2019-20 as my five-year appointment as Independent Chief Inspector is due to end in April 2020. Deciding what to inspect and when is one of the most important aspects of the Chief Inspector's independence. Therefore, whoever is appointed to take over the role will want to be free to determine their own inspection plan for 2020-21 and beyond.

The rolling 3-year plan has been largely successful in delivering a balanced and broadly-based programme of inspections, as intended, and in the process creating a clearer picture of the underlying issues and systemic improvements required. The updated 2019-20 plan therefore retains the 3-year plan's overall shape and spread. It is informed by the inspections completed in 2018-19 and in previous years, and also takes into account the views of Ministers, officials, stakeholders, and the wider public, who were invited through the ICIBI website to say what they would like to see inspected.

The plan comes with two important caveats.

Firstly, the timing of some planned inspections will depend on events outside ICIBI's control and their effects on the UK's border and immigration functions, in particular the UK's exit from the EU and the outcome of the Windrush 'Lessons Learned' review. The 2019-20 plan notes where this is a particular concern.

The other key factor is ICIBI's capacity. The plan is deliberately ambitious, reflecting the breadth of topics that merit attention. In order to cover every topic listed, ICIBI would need to be fully staffed throughout the year. In reality, while a number of new recruits are in the pipeline and further recruitment campaigns are planned, ICIBI starts 2019-20 with a significant shortfall in inspectors. As

ever, this will mean some hard choices about priorities and some careful scoping of inspections to get the most value from the programme of work.

Training and Development

New joiners receive in-house training from experienced inspectors, most of it delivered on the job by attaching new staff to a 'live' inspection and taking them through the inspection process step by step.

Additionally, ICIBI had planned that from the beginning of 2018-19 all new inspectors would study for a Certificate in Operational Delivery (Level 5), and this would also be offered to existing staff. Although not dedicated to inspecting, the Certificate had been identified as the best fit in terms of the skills needed to be a fully competent ICIBI inspector, in particular the identification, analysis and presentation of data and information, plus several management units. However, the staffing situation meant that both new and existing staff had limited opportunities to study for the Certificate during 2018-19, but a number were still hoping to be able to do so in 2019-20.

Vision Statement

ICIBI's 'Vision Statement' is intended to sit alongside its stated Purpose (see 'Role and Remit'). It remains unchanged for 2019-20:

"ICIBI will:

- be highly-skilled, professional and effective, with a reputation for the highest standards of work and conduct
- operate thorough, rigorous and transparent processes to reach sound, evidence-based conclusions
- deal with others consistently and reliably
- be efficient, forward-thinking, committed to continuous improvement and focused on delivery
- enable and develop its people"

Values

ICIBI adheres to the Civil Service values:

- integrity
- honesty
- objectivity
- impartiality

Diversity

Most ICIBI staff are employed as permanent Home Office civil servants.¹⁵ By agreement with the Independent Chief Inspector, those recruited from elsewhere become Home Office civil servants on joining ICIBI unless on loan or secondment from their permanent employer.

As at 31 March 2019, the staff profile was:¹⁶

¹⁵ The Independent Chief Inspector is a public appointee.

¹⁶ Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Based on Home Office criteria and self-reporting. Breakdown not provided where a category has fewer than 5 employees. From the data collected by the Home Office, the only categories affected were Sexual orientation and Disability.

- 50% male, 50% female
- Age bands
- 30-39 35%
- 40-44 30%
- 45-64 35%
- 50% minority ethnic, 50% white
- 60% married, 40% not married
- 53% Christian, 47% Other religions
- 57% with no caring responsibilities, 43% with caring responsibilities
- 95% full-time, 5% part-time
- 65% flexible working pattern, 35% non-flexible working pattern

Continuous improvement

ICIBI is always looking to improve its processes and professionalism.

In 2017-18, ICIBI began a major overhaul of the ICIBI Handbook (which sets out the principles and processes by which inspections are conducted), looking to incorporate recognised standards for audits, reviews, and inspections. This work was completed in October 2018.

As part of this process, ICIBI developed a set of 'Expectations' to replace the 'Inspection Criteria' that had last been updated in 2013. From an inspection planning perspective, the 'Expectations' are intended to help inspection teams to consider what evidence they will need to collect and where they might find it.

Appendix 1: Inspection Reports published in 2018-19

- 'An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (August 2017 – January 2018)', published on 8 May 2018
- 'A re-inspection of the family reunion process, focusing on applications received at the Amman Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre (November 2017 – April 2018)', published on 5 September 2018
- 'An inspection of Border Force operations at south coast seaports (January – May 2018)', published on 12 November 2018
- 'An inspection of the Home Office's management of asylum accommodation provision (February – June 2018)', published on 20 November 2018
- 'Inspection of Country of Origin Information – May 2018 Report', published on 5 December 2018
- 'An inspection of the Home Office's approach to the identification and safeguarding of vulnerable adults (February – May 2018)', published 10 January 2019
- 'An inspection of Home Office (Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System) collaborative working with other government departments and agencies (February – October 2018)', published 31 January 2019

Appendix 2: Reviews of Country Information 2018-19

Published 5 December 2018

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- 'Opposition to the government' (November 2016)
- 'Women fearing gender-based harm or violence' (June 2017)

Iran

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- 'Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation' (December 2017)

Turkey

- Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs)
- 'Kurdish political parties' (August 2017)
- 'Kurdish Workers' Party' (August 2017)

Appendix 3: Expenditure Report for Financial Year 2018-19

Account	Pay/Cost Code	Spend
Pay Costs – Recurring	Pay & Allowances Pay Remit	1,183,771
	Premia Payments	1,558
	Pay & Allowances Other	24,031
	ERNIC	116,333
Pay Total		1,325,693
Pay Costs – One time		1,927
Other Costs and Services		8,424
Special Payments		48
IT & Comms		251
Equipment and Vehicles		130
AT Conferences		715
Training & Recruitment		22,336
AT Office Supplies & Services		30,587
AT Travel Subsistence		55,089
Consultancy		59
Non-Pay Total		119,567
Outside of Budgets		(10,454)
Resource Total		1,434,806
Grand Total		1,434,806

Appendix 4: ICIBI 3-Year Inspection Plan 2017-18 – 2019-20

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Intelligence	A re-inspection of the Intelligence Functions of Border Force (BF) and Immigration Enforcement (IE) (published 21 July 2016) Possible re-inspection in 2017-18 or 2018-19				2018-19: Progress check on the development of the Single Intelligence Platform 2019-20: Possible re-inspection, to include the work of the National Border Targeting Centre	2018-19: Written update provided to ICIBI by Directors General of BF and IE in October 2018. The 'Illegal Working' inspection report (awaiting publication) includes some coverage of IE intelligence functions 2019-20: No inspection planned, but BF intelligence will be a key feature of BF Freight operations inspection (see below)
Customs Controls	An inspection of Border Force operations at Coventry and Langley postal hubs (March – July 2016) was published 13 October 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2018-19: 'Light-touch' re-inspection of the original recommendations	2018-19: Inspection report sent to Home Secretary in January 2019 (awaiting publication) 2019-20: No further action planned (subject to the Home Office response to the re-inspection report)
	Border Force Freight operations			●	2019-20: Inspection scope and timing subject to agreement on the handling of freight after the UK's exit from the EU	2019-20: As planned: work to begin in Q2 (July-September) or Q3 (October-December) (subject to Brexit timing)
Visa applications (crossover with Theme 2)	Visa Decision Making Centre(s) – focusing on the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of UKVI's visa operations	○	●	●	2017-18: Inspection of Croydon and Istanbul published July 2017 2018-19: Inspection of "onshoring" of decision making to Croydon and Sheffield 2019-20: To be decided	2018-19: 'Onshoring' (Network Consolidation) inspection began in Q4 (January-March) 2019-20: Inspection report will be completed and sent to the Home Secretary in Q1 (April-June)

Theme 1: Protecting the border (identifying and intercepting risks and threats)						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
UK Seaports and coastline	An inspection of Border Force operations at east coast seaports will be published in April 2017 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2017-18: Re-inspection of recommendations incorporated into south coast ports inspection	2019-20: Re-inspection of recommendations from east and south coast seaports inspections, possibly combined with a west coast ports inspection
	West Coast Ports (to include people and goods entering the UK via the Common Travel Area (CTA))		●		2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19; timing subject to agreement on the CTA arrangements after the UK exits the EU	2019-20: As planned (subject to Brexit timing and any CTA developments).
	South Coast Ports (to include Dover)	●			2017-18: Inspection began in January 2018, due for publication mid-2018	2018-19: Inspection report published in November 2018 2019-20: See above
	The Border Force Cutter Fleet	○	»	»	2017-18: Inspection deferred due to recent Border Force Operational Assurance Directorate review 2019-20: Possibly include in overview inspection of seaports, incorporating re-inspection of recommendations from previous inspections	2019-20: No plan for a separate inspection, but use made of the cutters will feature in any re-inspection of east and south coast seaports
	The National Maritime Intelligence Centre (NMIC) – a standing item in Ports and Cutter Fleet inspections	»	»	»	2017-18: NMIC included in scope of south coast ports inspection	2019-20: As with the cutters, no plan for a separate inspection, but the contribution of NMIC will feature in any re-inspection of east and south coast seaports
UK Airports	Immigration and customs controls of scheduled international flights	○	○	○	2017-18: Inspection of Gatwick (South) published July 2017; Inspection of Stansted published March 2018 2018-19 and 2019-20: Programme of inspections of Border Force resourcing at regional UK airports, including service levels	2018-19: Inspection of Glasgow and Edinburgh airports piloting new methodology began in Q4. Report will be completed and sent to the Home Secretary in Q1 2019-20 2019-20: Possible inspection of regional airport 'cluster' (subject to the success of the pilot)
Border security partnerships	Juxtaposed controls			●	2019-20: Inspection scope and timing subject to agreement on the arrangements for juxtaposed controls after the UK's exit from the EU	2019-20: As planned, possibly extended to include other 'upstream' work with partner agencies, in particular with European authorities to prevent clandestine departures from the European mainland.

Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Immigration routes	An inspection of family reunion applications (January – May 2016) was published 14 September 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2018-19: Re-inspection of family reunion applications, focusing on Amman DMC, due for publication Q1 2018-19 2018-19 or 2019-20: Re-inspection of Pretoria Entry Clearance Decision Making Centre	2018-19: Amman re-inspection report published September 2018 2019-20: Re-inspection to cover the family reunion process as a whole. (NB. The Home Office began 'onshoring' Pretoria applications from March 2019).
	Asylum casework	•		•	2017-18: Asylum Intake and Casework inspection published November 2017 2019-20: As originally planned, with a possible interim inspection of the Asylum 'new model' office (Bootle) in 2018-19	2019-20: As planned. A system-wide inspection in Q3 or Q4 (including the re-inspection of previous recommendations), plus a possible earlier inspection of some discrete elements of the asylum system e.g. use of interpreters, LGBTQI claims
	Points Based System (PBS) visa applications – a standing item in all Visa Post inspections, plus an inspection focusing on treatment of a particular Tier(s) across the system in 2018-19	»	•	»	2018-19: Inspection of "Brexit preparedness", focusing on resourcing and processes for the registration and settlement of EU nationals 2019-20: To be decided, but possibly to include Intra-Company Transfers	2018-19: PBS applications received some coverage in the 'Charging for Services' inspection report (awaiting publication). ICIBI's first 'EU Settlement Scheme' inspection report was sent to Home Secretary in March 2019 (also awaiting publication). 2019-20: PBS applications will feature in the 'Onshoring' inspection.
	Administrative Reviews An inspection of the Administrative Review Processes introduced following the 2014 Immigration Act (Sept – Dec 2015), published 26 May 2016			○	2017-18: Re-inspection published July 2017 2019-20: Follow-up to 2017 re-inspection, to include an examination of benefits realisation	2019-20: As planned, inspection scope to include Admin Reviews of EU Settlement Scheme decisions
Routes to citizenship	Nationality casework – registration of children as British citizens under the British Nationality Act 1981	○			2017-18: 'Good character' inspection published July 2017 2018-19: 'Light touch' re-inspection	2018-19: The re-inspection report, extended to cover operational practice and the new guidance, was sent to Home Secretary in January 2019 2019-20: Inspection of the application of the new guidance, and consideration of 'best interests', either as a standalone inspection or as part of a wider children-focused inspection
	An inspection of the General Register Office for England and Wales, with particular emphasis on birth records (March – June 2016), published 13 October 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: 'Light touch' re-inspection of 2016 recommendations	2018-19: GRO functions were covered briefly in the 'Charging for Services' inspection report sent to the Home Secretary in January 2019 (awaiting publication). 2019-20: No further action
	Abuse of UK marriage laws for immigration purposes, including marriage fraud				2018-19 or 2019-20: Possible 'new' topic for inspection	2019-20: To be included in 'Overview' of 'hostile' ('compliant') environment' measures.

Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)

Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Identification and treatment of vulnerable individuals	Children (including the exercise of S. 55 safeguarding duties and 'best interest' judgements) – treatment of children will be a standing item in all relevant inspections	●	»	»	<p>2017-18: 'Best interests' inspection published March 2018</p> <p>2018-19: Inspection of the safeguarding of children and young people departing the UK</p> <p>2019-20: Possible 'best interests' re-inspection</p>	<p>2019-20: Re-inspection of 2017-18 recommendations, extended to include 'new' aspects (e.g. 'Dubs') where relevant</p> <p>Note: After preliminary evidence gathering re children departing the UK, this topic has been dropped as the responsible bodies are largely outside ICIBI's remit to inspect.</p>
	<p>Potential Victims of Modern Slavery (in collaboration with the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner) – focusing on in-country identification and treatment</p> <p>An inspection of Border Force's identification and treatment of Potential Victims of Modern Slavery was published 2 February 2017</p> <p>Possible re-inspection in 2017/18</p>		●		<p>2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19, as 'in country' covered by NAO in 'Reducing Modern Slavery', published December 2017.</p> <p>2017-18: Re-inspection of 'at the border' identification and treatment published March 2018</p>	<p>2019-20: Options for joint inspection will be discussed with the new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (in post from 1 May 2019)</p>
	Immigration detainees, including the handling of further submissions and the provision of bail accommodation – aligned with HM Inspectorate of Prisons' inspection programme, where possible			●	<p>2019-20: As originally planned; scope likely to include some or all of: follow-up actions from the 2018 Shaw Review; availability of post-detention accommodation; application of the Adults at Risk policy; policy, training and practice in relation to Medico-Legal reports/medical evidence</p>	<p>2018-19: Preliminary work on the first annual review of 'Adults at Risk (AaR)' began in Q3, and the inspection began in Q4. The report will be sent to the Home Secretary in 2019-20 Q1.</p> <p>2019-20: In-year monitoring by ICIBI, with a possible interim re-inspection report, plus the second annual review of AaR in Q4</p>
	<p>Vulnerable adults, including identification and treatment victims of torture – a standing item in all relevant inspections</p> <p>Domestic Workers visa route</p>	○	»	○	<p>2017-18: Inspection began in January 2018, due for publication mid-2018</p> <p>2019-20: Scope to be decided, but may include processes for determining "no recourse to public funds" (NRPF)</p>	<p>2018-19: Inspection report published January 2019</p> <p>2019-20: Re-inspection, timing to be agreed (NB. NRPF may fit better in another inspection, or as a standalone topic)</p>
	<p>Women (gender bias) – a standing item in all inspections, plus a themed inspection in 2018-19</p>	»	○	»	<p>2017-18: Pregnant women are a focus of the Asylum Accommodation inspection, begun January 2018, due for publication mid-2018</p> <p>2018-19: As planned; scope to take account of findings of Asylum Accommodation inspection</p>	<p>2018-19: Asylum Accommodation report published in November 2018</p> <p>2019-20: Possible thematic inspection of Country of Origin information with a focus on women</p>
	<p>Particular social groups – a standing item where relevant, and forming part of the Asylum casework inspection in 2017-18</p>	»	»	»	<p>2018-19 or 2019-20: Inspection to focus on treatment of LGBTQI+ individuals</p>	<p>2018-19: Treatment of LGBTQI+ individuals featured in the Asylum Accommodation inspection report</p> <p>2019-20: Possible LGBTQI+ asylum casework inspection and/or focus on the detention of LGBTQI+ individuals</p>

Theme 2: Providing a service (processing applicants, claimants and customers)						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Service Levels	Service standards (and internal targets) – a standing item in all inspections	»	»	»	2018-19 and 2019-20 : As originally planned	2019-20 : Customer Service Standards will be a key feature of the planned Asylum Casework inspection
	Charging for services – covered in relevant inspections, plus a system-wide inspection of in 2018-19		○	»	2018-19 : As originally planned; scope to include value for money and fee waiver criteria	2018-19 : The ‘Charging for Services’ inspection report was sent to Home Secretary in January 2019 (awaiting publication) 2019-20 : Re-inspection/further work dependent on the Home Office’s formal response
	Complaints handling will be a standing item in all inspections A re-inspection of Complaints Handling, work began in January 2017, due to report by early May 2017, and to be published by early July 2017	»	»	»	2017-18 : Re-inspection published in July 2017 2018-19 and 2019-20 : As originally planned	2018-19 : An inspection began in February 2019. The report will be completed and sent to the Home Secretary in 2019-20 Q1 2019-20 : Re-inspection/further work is dependent on ICIBI’s findings/Home Office response to 2018-19 inspection
Syrian Refugee Programme	Progress towards the agreed targets and lessons learnt	●			2017-18 : Report completed March 2018, due to be published Q1 2018-19 2019-20 : Possible re-inspection	2019-20 : Possible re-inspection with a focus on integration.

Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Clandestine entrants	A short notice inspection of the Home Office response to ‘Lorry Drops’ was published 21 July 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20 : Incorporate re-inspection into planned clandestine entrants inspection (see below)	2019-20 : As planned (see below)
	Clandestine entrants – identification and handling			●	2019-20 : As originally planned	2019-20 : As planned, incorporating re-inspection of lorry drops

Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
'Hostile ('Compliant') environment'	Checking of immigration status within civil registration processes – see also Theme 2 'Routes to citizenship'				2018-19: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection	2018-19: Not started (insufficient resources) 2019-20: ICIBI unlikely to have sufficient resources for more than a paper-based re-inspection.
	An inspection of the 'hostile environment' measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts (January – July 2016) was published 13 October 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview	2019-20: As planned
	An inspection of the implementation of the 2014 'hostile environment' provisions for tackling sham marriage was published 15 December 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview	2019-20: As planned
	Landlord immigration checks	●			2017-18: 'Right to Rent' inspection published March 2018. 2019-20: Include re-inspection in Overview	2019-20: As planned
	National Health Service charging	○			2018-19: Inspection deferred from 2017-18, due to insufficient ICIBI capacity	2018-19: Covered in 'Collaborative working with other government departments' inspection. Report published in January 2019 2019-20: Include in Overview
	Illegal working		●		2018-19: As originally planned, or possibly to begin in Q1 2019-20	2018-19: Inspection report sent to the Home Secretary in February 2019 (awaiting publication)
	Overview of 'hostile ('compliant') environment' measures			○	2019-20: Timing as originally planned, but likely to be a bigger piece of work than envisaged	2019-20: As planned, but the timing needs to take account of the 'Windrush Lessons Learned' review, and the scope may include a re-inspection of 'Collaborative working with other government departments'.
	Status reviews – revocation of leave to remain and deprivation of citizenship	○			2019-20: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection	2019-20: Considerable public interest in deprivation on National Security grounds, but any report is likely to be heavily redacted, so of limited value. A paper-based re-inspection of non-NS casework may be possible.

Theme 3: Compliance Management and Enforcement						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Contact management	An inspection of reporting arrangements, including the work of Reporting Centres, work began in December 2016, due to report by mid-May 2017, and to be published by early July 2017 Reporting arrangements, including Reporting Centres			●	2017-18: Inspection brought forward (at the Home Secretary's request), published November 2017 2019-20: Re-inspection	2018-19: A combined Foreign National Offenders/ Reporting and Offender Management re-inspection report was sent to the Home Secretary in January 2019 (awaiting publication) 2019-20: The above identified several 'open' recommendations from the 2017-18 report, so a further 'light touch' re-inspection before the end of 2019-20 may be worthwhile
	'Helplines' (and published guidance)		○		2018-19: As originally planned, or possibly to begin in early 2019-20	2018-19: Deferred on advice from Director General UKVI in light of changes planned in 2018-19 Q3. Covered briefly in 'EU Settlement Scheme report'. 2019-20: Possibly include in Overview of 'hostile ('compliant') environment' measures or in an inspection of Guidance (see Theme 4)
Removals	An inspection into failed right of abode applications and referral for enforcement action, published 13 October 2016 Possible re-inspection in 2017-18				2019-20: Possible 'light touch' re-inspection	2019-20: As planned, but ICIBI is unlikely to have sufficient resources for more than a paper-based re-inspection.
	An inspection of Removals, focusing on Foreign National Offenders, work began in January 2017, due to report by late May 2017, and to be published by late July				2017-18: Inspected (at the Home Secretary's request), report published November 2017. 2019-20: Re-inspection	2018-19: Combined FNOs/ROMs re-inspection report sent to the Home Secretary in January 2019 2019-20: FNOs will feature in the 'Adults at Risk' (AaR) annual review. Removals (logistics, stats) could form part of an AaR (detained casework) in-year inspection
	Migration Removals Pool (MRP), Voluntary Returns, Family Returns, and Emergency Travel Documents (last inspected 2015)		●		2019-20: Defer from 2018-19 and combine with the Overview of 'hostile environment' measures	2019-20: As planned, but possibly better incorporated into an AaR (detained casework) in-year inspection
Exit checks	Exploitation of exit check data across the border and immigration systems (including planning and implementation of Exit Check project), included as a standing item where relevant from Year 2	●	»	»	2017-18: Inspection published March 2018 2019-20: Re-inspection	2019-20: Re-inspection as planned, but possibly incorporated into the Overview of 'hostile ('compliant') environment' measures
Sanctions and Penalties	Completeness, consistency of application, deterrent effect of sanctions and penalties (including, but not limited to, the 'hostile environment' measures above), a standing item where relevant	»		○	2019-20: As originally planned	2018-19: Some coverage in 'South Coast Seaports' and 'Illegal Working' inspection reports 2019-20: As planned

Theme 4: Working with others

Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
'Hand-offs' between Home Office Directorates	Alignment of border and immigration processes and priorities – a standing item for all inspections, plus an inspection of any 'new' major processes at an early stage, plus an inspection of HM Passport Office and/or General Register Office in Year 2 where their functions overlap or join border and immigration functions	»	●	●	<p>2018-19: Defer HMPO/GRO/UKVI overlap inspection to focus on preparations for the UK's exit from the EU and the consequences for BICS 'business as usual'</p> <p>2019-20: To be decided, possibly re-instate HMPO/GRO/UKVI overlap inspection</p>	<p>2018-19: 'Hand-offs' between and within directorates featured in a number of completed inspection reports, while the 'EU Settlement Scheme' report covered a 'new' major process. 'Charging for Services' looked briefly at HMPO, as did 'Good character'.</p> <p>2019-20: Inspections of the 'EU Settlement Scheme' and of 'Asylum Casework' will provide opportunities to examine the question of alignment of processes and priorities.</p>
	Forecasting, planning, contingency planning – a standing item for all inspections, plus a re-inspection of the planning for (and management of) a summer 2016 asylum 'surge' under Theme 5	»	»	○	<p>2018-19: Bring forward from 2019-20 and run alongside workforce planning inspection (see Theme 5)</p>	<p>2018-19: ICIBI had insufficient resources to carry out the planned inspection</p> <p>2019-20: There is significant stakeholder interest in Border Force planning/resourcing for summer 2019, but Brexit and the 2019 Comprehensive Spending Review risk an inspection being nugatory</p>
	'Onshoring' (to the UK) of immigration functions and remote decision-making	○			<p>2017-18: Deferred due to delays in roll out</p> <p>2018-19: Inspection of "onshoring" of decision making to Croydon and Sheffield (see under Theme 1); to include document handling between overseas posts and UK Decision Making Centres.</p>	<p>2018-19: An inspection of 'Onshoring' (Network Consolidation) began in Q4. The report will be completed and sent to the Home Secretary in 2019-20 Q1</p> <p>2019-20: Any further work is dependent on the findings and response to recommendations from the above report</p>
Partnerships	Other Government Departments (OGDs) and Local Authorities – alignment of priorities and responsibilities, information sharing, plus a comparison of similar functions e.g. DWP, HMRC processing of bulk data, contact management	●			<p>2017-18: Inspection begun February 2018, due for publication mid-2018</p>	<p>2018-19: The inspection report was published January 2019</p> <p>2019-20: A re-inspection of the recommendations from the above may be incorporated into the Overview of 'hostile environment' measures</p>
	Law Enforcement – information sharing and collaborative working		●		<p>2019-20: Deferred from 2018-19; to include a re-inspection of Operation NEXUS.</p>	<p>2018-19: The relationship between BICS directorates and law enforcement agencies featured in the 'South Coast Seaports', 'Collaborative working with OGDs', 'Postal Hubs', 'FNOs/ROMs', and 'Illegal Working' inspection reports</p> <p>2019-20: A paper-based re-inspection of NEXUS may be possible</p>

Theme 4: Working with others						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
	Overseas partners and stakeholders – relationship management, information sharing, comparative performance			●	2019-20: As originally planned, possible focus on Immigration Enforcement International (formerly RALON)	2019-20: ICIBI is unlikely to have sufficient resources for a standalone inspection, but may examine this in the context of removals (including of vulnerable individuals e.g. PVoMS) and processes for obtaining Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs)
Commercial contracts	National/strategically significant (Home Office 'Tier 1') contracts – performance/delivery management, alignment with in-house border and immigration functions		●		2017-18: Asylum Accommodation inspection (begun in January 2018, due to be published mid-2018) – brought forward from 2018-19 in response to Home Affairs Committee report	2018-19: The 'Asylum Accommodation' inspection report was published in November 2019 2019-20: Contracts will feature in the 'Adults at Risk' annual review, and in a possible 'Asylum Accommodation' re-inspection after new contracts/providers are in place.
	Regional or Local ('Tiers 2 and 3') contracts – Home Office visibility, plus performance/delivery management	●			2019-20: Deferred from 2017-18 to make room for Asylum Accommodation inspection (above); possibly to include NGO contracts	2019-20: ICIBI is unlikely to have sufficient resources for a standalone inspection
	Overseas contracts, for example Visa Application Centres (VACs) – a standing item in all Visa Decision Making Centre inspections			»	»	2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned
'Joint' Inspections	Collaborations with other Inspectorates and similar bodies (including short-term attachments, input to inspections and, where relevant, joint or complementary inspections)	○	○	○	2017-18: ICIBI supported HMICFRS inspection in Guernsey 2018-19: Possible support to HMICFRS inspection in Jersey 2019-20: To be decided	2019-20: ICIBI (minus HMICFRS) has been requested by States of Jersey to assist with an inspection of its immigration and customs services. This requires a relatively small/short-term commitment, but may still be beyond ICIBI's capacity

Theme 5: Learning and improving						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Country of Origin Information	Country of Origin (Col) Reviews – 10-12 reviews per year focused on the countries and issues featuring most commonly in Asylum claims – reviews are commissioned and quality assured by the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information	○	○	○	2017-18: See Annual Report 2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned	2018-19: One IAGCI report was published in December 2018, a second was sent to the Home Secretary in March 2019 (awaiting publication). 2019-20: As planned
	Production, usefulness and use made of Col material within the Home Office – to include an assessment of the ICI's process for delivering Col reviews	●			2017-18: Inspection published January 2018 2019-20: Re-inspection in parallel with Asylum Casework inspection, meanwhile monitor through COI reviews	2019-20: Re-inspection as planned, possibly aligned with Asylum inspection
Litigation	Handling of litigation cases, including the work of Presenting Officers – inspection combined with Organisational Learning	●			2017-18: Inspection published January 2018, but Presenting Officers were set out of scope 2019-20: Inspection of the work of Presenting Officers	2019-20: see below
	Organisational learning from litigation cases, including Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) letters, Judicial Reviews, allowed appeals – then included as a standing item in relevant inspections		»	»	2017-18: See above 2018-19: Possible re-inspection of 2017-18 Learning from Litigation inspection	2019-20: Re-inspection as planned, but possibly combined with an inspection of the Presenting Officer (PO) function, including the use by POs of COI material and actions/learning from concluded appeals
	Non-suspensive appeals – a standing item where relevant, plus a thematic inspection in 2019-20	»	»	○	2019-20: As originally planned	2019-20: Possibly incorporate into an inspection of Removals
Staff	Type of staff (permanent, temporary, agency), grades/responsibility levels, provision of initial and refresher/top-up training, knowledge, experience, engagement – a standing item in all inspections	»	»		2018-19: Workforce planning across BICS ('right skills, right place, right time'), including for the UK's exit for the EU – a major piece of work requiring significant resources 2019-20: Re-inspection	2018-19: A 'Workforce planning' inspection was not possible (insufficient resources), but staffing was a key feature of the 'South Coast Seaports' (BF) and 'EU Settlement Scheme' (UKVI) reports, and 'Vulnerable Adults' looked at training across BICS. 2019-20: The 'lessons learned' from BF resourcing for Brexit and UKVI resourcing of the EU Settlement are possible topics for inspection, while staff training will feature in the planned 'Asylum Casework' inspection.

Theme 5: Learning and improving						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Tools/ Technology	Operating Mandates, Instructions, Guidance, Quality Assurance – clarity, accessibility, use etc. – a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2018-19	»	●	»	2018-19 (or early 2019-20): Inspection to complement the workforce planning inspection	2018-19: Guidance featured in all completed inspection reports, most of which also looked at quality assurance 2019-20: As for 2018-19, this will feature in all inspections, but it is unlikely ICIBI will have sufficient resources for a major standalone inspection.
	Data/Management Information, record keeping – a standing item in all inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2019-20	»	»	●	2019-20: Inspection to include review of ATLAS (the new caseworking system) implementation	2018-19: The quality and completeness of data/MI featured in all completed inspection reports 2019-20: As planned, subject to ATLAS progress
	Digital services at the border – a standing item in relevant inspections, plus a thematic inspection in 2018-19	»	●	»	2018-19: As originally planned	2018-19: Deferred following discussion with the Home Office regarding progress in developing DSAB 2019-20: Keep under review, but unlikely to have advanced sufficiently during 2019-20 to be inspected
Re-inspections	Check on the implementation of accepted Recommendations after c. 6+ months or earlier if the Home Office has committed to an earlier implementation date – 6 re-inspections per year	●	●	●	2017-18: 5 re-inspections published; all other inspections incorporated re-inspection points where relevant 2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned	2018-19: One re-inspection report was published and re-inspection points were also included in all inspections where relevant. Three further re-inspection reports were sent to the Home Secretary in 2018-19 Q4 (awaiting publication) 2019-20: As planned

Home Secretary Commissions						
Area	Topic	17-18	18-19	19-20	Updated Plan as at April 2018	2018-19 update and 2019-20 Plan
Not known in advance	S. 50 of the UK Borders Act 2007 enables the Home Secretary to request the ICI to report in relation to a specified matter.	●	●	●	2018-19 and 2019-20: As originally planned (merge with planned inspections where possible)	2018-19: 'Adults at Risk' annual review commissioned. First report will be completed and sent to the Home Secretary in 2019-20 Q1 2019-20: 'Adults at Risk' annual review, plus a possible 'Windrush Lessons Learned' implementation review

Key

- an inspection that is likely to require significant resources (for planning purposes estimated at 350 days) and take 20 weeks to complete
- an inspection that is likely to require more limited resources (for planning purposes estimated at 200 days) and may be completed in less than 20 weeks
- » a standing item that will be covered, where possible, in all relevant inspections

Appendix 5: ICIBI's 'expectations' of asylum, immigration, nationality and customs functions

Background and explanatory documents are easy to understand and use

(e.g. statements of intent (both ministerial and managerial), impact assessments, legislation, policies, guidance, instructions, strategies, business plans, intranet and GOV.UK pages, posters, leaflets etc.)

- They are written in plain, unambiguous English (with foreign language versions available, where appropriate)
- They are kept up to date
- They are readily accessible to anyone who needs to rely on them (with online signposting and links, wherever possible)

Processes are simple to follow and transparent

- They are IT-enabled and include input formatting to prevent users from making data entry errors
- Mandatory requirements, including the nature and extent of evidence required to support applications and claims, are clearly defined
- The potential for blockages and delays is designed out, wherever possible
- They are resourced to meet time and quality standards (including legal requirements, Service Level Agreements, published targets)

Anyone exercising an immigration, asylum, nationality or customs function on behalf of the Home Secretary is fully competent

- Individuals understand their role, responsibilities, accountabilities and powers
- Everyone receives the training they need for their current role and for their professional development, plus regular feedback on their performance
- Individuals and teams have the tools, support and leadership they need to perform efficiently, effectively and lawfully
- Everyone is making full use of their powers and capabilities, including to prevent, detect, investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute offences
- The workplace culture ensures that individuals feel able to raise concerns and issues without fear of the consequences

Decisions and actions are 'right first time'

- They are demonstrably evidence-based or, where appropriate, intelligence-led
- They are made in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance
- They are reasonable (in light of the available evidence) and consistent

- They are recorded and communicated accurately, in the required format and detail, and can be readily retrieved (with due regard to data protection requirements)

Errors are identified, acknowledged and promptly ‘put right’

- Safeguards, management oversight, and quality assurance measures are in place, are tested and are seen to be effective
- Complaints are handled efficiently, effectively and consistently
- Lessons are learned and shared, including from administrative reviews and litigation
- There is a commitment to continuous improvement, including by the prompt implementation of recommendations from reviews, inspections and audits

Each immigration, asylum, nationality or customs function has a Home Office (Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System) ‘owner’

- The BICS ‘owner’ is accountable for o implementation of relevant policies and processes
 - performance (informed by routine collection and analysis of Management Information (MI) and data, and monitoring of agreed targets/deliverables/budgets)
 - resourcing (including workforce planning and capability development, including knowledge and information management)
 - managing risks (including maintaining a Risk Register)
 - communications, collaborations and deconfliction within the Home Office, with other government departments and agencies, and other affected bodies
 - effective monitoring and management of relevant contracted out services
 - stakeholder engagement (including customers, applicants, claimants and their representatives)

