



Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Annual Report for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

David Bolt

Independent Chief Inspector of
Borders and Immigration (Interim)

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ISBN 978-1-5286-5829-4

E03383378 09/25

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum.

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office.

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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Foreword

I was appointed as Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICI) on an interim basis on 3 June 2024. Having produced the inspectorate's Annual Report for 2023-24 without having been in post for any of that period, I did not expect to be writing another Annual Report as Interim ICI. However, my initial six-month appointment has been extended three times, firstly from 3 December 2024 to 2 April 2025, then to 2 July 2025, and finally to 2 October 2025. At the time of writing, a new ICI, John Tuckett, has just been formally appointed and will take up post shortly.

While I have been happy to continue as interim ICI for longer than originally planned, the delays in making a permanent appointment and my short-term extensions have had a negative impact on the output of the inspectorate (the ICIBI) over the past year.

In particular, they have affected the ICIBI's ability to publish an annual inspection plan either for 2024-25 or for 2025-26. I have refrained from doing this, in consultation with the Home Office, in order to allow the incoming ICI to determine his own programme of inspections, which is the cornerstone of the role's independence.

One of the benefits of a published annual inspection plan is that it puts the Home Office on notice about the areas of the Migration and Borders (M&B) System that the ICIBI will be scrutinising in the near future, and this has often prompted the department to identify and implement improvements in advance of an inspection. While some may see this as enabling the Home Office to paint over problems, I have always regarded it as entirely consistent with the ICIBI's purpose of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the department's immigration, asylum, nationality, and customs functions. In any event, any recent improvements are normally apparent to inspectors and do not prevent the ICIBI from reporting on what went before.

While I have not published an inspection plan for 2025-26, I did follow the established process of seeking the views of Home Office ministers and senior officials, and of a wide range of external stakeholders, on what areas the ICIBI should prioritise for inspection. I am grateful to all concerned for their thoughtful contributions, from which I was able to produce a draft programme for my successor to consider, as well as to identify a set of inspections to begin in Q4 2024-25 and Q1 2025-26.

The ICIBI's output in 2024-25 was also affected by the three-month gap at the beginning of the business year when there was no ICI in post. During this period, it was not possible to complete the inspections that were 'live' when the post became vacant (from 20 February 2024) or to begin any new inspections. My early priorities were to complete the 'live' inspections and, as soon as possible, to begin a new set of inspections. The calling of a General Election, and the subsequent change of government, delayed work on the latter for a short period while I consulted incoming ministers on the areas I planned to inspect.

Six inspection reports were published in 2024-25. The findings from these inspections are summarised later in this Annual Report. The six reports contained a total of 31 recommendations, of which 16 (52%) were accepted in full, 14 (45%) 'partially accepted', and one not accepted on cost-benefit grounds. While the proportion of 'partially accepted' recommendations was higher than in previous years,

the Home Office's formal responses (published alongside the reports) indicated that in many cases it agreed with the thrust of the recommendation but not with how or by when I recommended it should be implemented.

For most recommendations, I am less concerned about the how than the what, but timescales matter and, in general, it takes the Home Office longer to make recommended improvements than it should. This is at least in part because much of the M&B System is working beyond capacity, as was again evidenced in a number of the reports published in 2024-25, which identified issues with resourcing and backlogs. The concern with timelines that stretch into the future is that some unforeseen crisis will mean that priorities change and previous commitments are dropped. I have raised this with the Home Office, arguing that, in the interests of transparency and accountability, where the department is no longer intending to fulfil a commitment made in its published response to a recommendation, it should explain this via GOV.UK. Meanwhile, where the ICIBI identifies that this is the case, typically in the course of a subsequent inspection, it will report it.

In my 2023-24 Annual Report I referred to the long-standing problems with the time it takes for inspection reports to be published. The delays have been repeatedly criticised by successive ICIs, as well as by parliamentarians and stakeholders, and in the media. They have been seen as a check on the ICIBI's independence. Since 2014, when the Home Secretary assumed control of publication, reports have seldom been published within eight weeks of receipt, in line with ministerial undertakings. One of my priorities on returning to this role was to press for the timely publication of reports. It is encouraging therefore that five of the six reports published in 2024-25 were published within eight weeks, and I am hopeful that this will now be the norm.

The sixth report took 13 weeks to publish. While I am not privy to how the Home Office assembles the advice it puts to ministers in response to reports, I am aware that it sometimes finds difficulty deciding who should be responsible for recommendations that cut across different business areas and ministerial portfolios. This was given as the reason for the extra time taken to publish the inspection report on the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority. It is important that recommendations are 'owned', but alongside specific improvements to the inspected area, the ICIBI seeks to identify systemic problems and underlying causes of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, which by their nature require cross-cutting solutions. I expect the Home Office to reflect on the sense behind each recommendation and look to apply this wherever it is relevant across the M&B System. That it finds this difficult goes some of the way to explaining why these problems persist.

In last year's Annual Report, I also referred to my predecessor's concerns about the extent to which the Home Office sought to use the formal process of checking the factual accuracy of draft reports to push for changes that were not factual inaccuracies, and the overuse of national security redactions to published reports. Based on this year's performance, I have few concerns about the factual accuracy process, which in general works well. There were some attempts to put a gloss on things or tone down criticisms, but nothing that could not be managed within the agreed process.

Of the six reports published in 2024-25, only one contained redactions. This was 'An inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK (August 2024 – November 2024)', which was submitted to the Home Secretary on 4 February 2025 and published on 25 March 2025. For the most part, the redactions concerned the effectiveness of different detection methods, which if published could be exploited by those looking to evade the checks, and as such the rationale for them was clear-cut.

In March 2025, I wrote to the Home Secretary about redactions, acknowledging that the provision within the UK Borders Act 2007 for the Secretary of State (SoS) to make redactions to published reports

on national security grounds (or where an individual may be harmed) was an important and necessary safeguard that enabled the ICI to report fully and in detail to the SoS without compromising the safety and security of the UK or of any individuals.

I recognised that it was for the Home Secretary to judge what constitutes a risk to national security but urged that the bar be set and maintained at an appropriate level to avoid any impression that redactions were being used to constrain the ICI's independence or to hide critical inspection findings, as this would not be in the best interests of either the inspectorate or the Home Office. I suggested that, where the Home Office had any national security concerns, these should be raised with the ICI before the report in question was finalised as it might be possible to redraft parts of the text where the ICI judged that this did not materially affect the substance of the report. This had been the practice when I was previously in post. The Home Secretary agreed, and this will be the aim going forward.

It has always been difficult to get documentary evidence from the Home Office on time and in full. This slows down inspections and creates extra work for inspection teams. My impression is that the Home Office has become slightly worse at this than it was when I was last in post. The ICIBI is careful not to ask for non-essential evidence, but evidence requests are often lengthy. However, it is surprising that more of what the ICIBI requests is not readily to hand, since it is mostly what I would expect Home Office managers to need in order to be able to make well-informed decisions.

The problem is particularly acute when it comes to data, and the ICIBI is frequently told either that the requested data does not exist or that a manual trawl of records would be required to produce it. Where data is supplied, it is often incomplete, inconsistent, or simply wrong. Unsurprisingly, record-keeping and IT systems feature in almost all inspection reports as areas for improvement. Equally unsurprising to anyone with any experience of public sector IT projects, the new Atlas caseworking system that became the stock answer to any criticisms about data and records when I was last in post has failed to deliver on its promises, and inspectors heard complaints from users in several different business areas about missing functionality and general 'clunkiness'.

Notwithstanding the difficulties noted above, the ICIBI has been well served in 2024-25 by the Home Office's Inspection Support and Engagement Team, which has tried to bring some structure to the way the Home Office engages with the inspectorate, and especially with factual accuracy returns and responses to recommendations, including providing the ICIBI with a monthly 'tracker' noting progress towards implementing the latter. This has been helpful in considering which areas the ICIBI might revisit.

Since June 2024, I have had regular meetings with the Second Permanent Secretary, who is ICIBI's Senior Sponsor, and with the Directors General for Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, and Customer Services Group. I am grateful to all of them for the open and constructive way in which they have engaged with me, including identifying areas that they believe would benefit from independent inspection. Since his appointment in September 2024, I have also met with the Border Security Commander, whose area falls within the ICIBI's remit, and we have agreed that it would be sensible to include an inspection of how this is working in the ICIBI's 2025-26 programme, though this will be a decision for my successor.

I met the then Home Secretary in June 2024 and the current Home Secretary in December 2024. Both expressed their support for the ICIBI and commitment to publishing and responding more quickly to reports and recommendations. I emphasised that the substance of the responses was as important as the timing. Overall, I believe this has improved and, aiming off for an element of optimism bias, the Home Office's published responses in 2024-25 generally provided a clear explanation of what it accepted, where it disagreed, and why. In the interests of accountability, it could be more specific when

setting out the actions it plans to take, and these should always have an expected completion date, if only to provide a sense of genuine commitment.

I also met periodically with the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum and the Minister for Migration and Citizenship to discuss 'live' inspections and current issues. Both have been supportive of the ICIBI and interested to hear what inspectors were finding. I am also grateful to Lord Hanson, Minister of State (Lords Minister), who spoke at an ICIBI 'away day' in October 2024, providing inspectors with some interesting and helpful insights into the priorities for the new government.

Since returning to the role of ICI, I have met with a large number of external stakeholders, both bilaterally and through the various ICIBI forums. It has been good to reconnect with some of the individuals I knew from before and to meet a lot of new people (new to to me, if not to the ICIBI). Stakeholder engagement is an essential part of every inspection, and to shaping the ICIBI's inspection programme, and while the ICIBI does not have the capacity to inspect all of the areas of concern to stakeholders, these meetings are always informative and enable me to raise matters with ministers and senior officials.

It has been evident in the inspections the ICIBI has worked on through 2024-25 that the Home Office needs to improve its own engagement with stakeholders, both those on whom it is to some degree reliant, such as other government departments and local authorities, and those who support and advocate for migrants and, as a result, are generally more censorious. This requires better, more transparent, and timely communication from the Home Office about its plans, intentions, and decisions, and a willingness to listen and make changes. Too often, the ICIBI finds itself including explanations and information in reports that the Home Office should have made available itself, through GOV.UK, for example.

In my first few months in post, I visited the Bibby Stockholm barge, Wethersfield, and Napier Barracks, and I spoke with the Home Office and contractor staff who worked at these sites. I also held open meetings with the residents, which reinforced my view that the thing that causes them the most distress is not knowing what is happening with their asylum claim. I wrote to the Home Office about this in 2021, and it has become even more of an issue in the absence of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for asylum decisions, backlogs and lengthening decision times, and legislative changes. I used the 'Inspection of contingency asylum accommodation', published in October 2024, to repeat my recommendation that the Home Office should establish mechanisms for informing asylum seekers of the progress of their claim and suggested that the reintroduction of an SLA would be a start.

I also made two visits to Western Jet Foil (WJF) and to Manston during 2024. The second of these visits included going out into the Channel with a Border Force cutter, where we recovered almost 100 migrants from two small boats. Two things stood out: firstly, the professionalism of the crew, and secondly, the perilous conditions of the migrants waiting to be rescued. The first boat was overloaded, few people had a life jacket, some had serious injuries. The second boat was smaller, more seaworthy, but included families with small children. Even in a relatively calm sea, the transfer to the cutter was a delicate and risky operation, and it was effected with great skill and efficiency. Everyone was quickly and safely brought on board and recorded, and any urgent medical needs were identified.

The operations at WJF and at Manston appeared well organised, and the staff to whom I spoke were mindful of the importance both of maintaining the flow through the various stages of the process and of recognising and responding to individual needs and vulnerabilities. Along with others, the ICIBI has strongly criticised aspects of the processing of small boat arrivals at WJF and Manston, and there are, no doubt, further improvements that could be made. However, based on my observations rather than

any more formal inspection, it was evident that the Home Office had learned a great deal from its experiences to date.

As part of the 'Inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK', I visited Calais and Coquelles, where I observed the juxtaposed controls in operation. The findings and recommendations from this inspection are summarised later in this Annual Report. I also visited Newhaven to observe the Border Force operation there and to meet some of the other organisations working at the port with whom Border Force interacts. These visits reminded me how important local relationships and initiatives from frontline officers are to Border Force's operational effectiveness.

In November 2024, I visited Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centres. This followed an exchange of correspondence with ministers regarding the 'Adults at Risk in Detention' (AAR) policy, in which I suggested that this was a topic to which the ICIBI would wish to return, not least because it was of considerable interest to stakeholders, but that I would want to see some better evidence of progress against previous findings and recommendations to be sure that a further inspection would be worthwhile.

In my letter, I pointed out that the Home Office's responses to the three previous AAR inspections stood out in terms of resistance to change. Out of 29 recommendations, only six were accepted in full, and three were rejected. Meanwhile, from some of the 'tracker' entries where recommendations had been 'closed', the department did not appear to have followed the letter or the spirit of what had been recommended. In her response, the minister referred to an ongoing review of AAR and indicated that it might be timely to begin an inspection towards the end of 2025, when any reforms would have been implemented. This will be for my successor to consider, but it is unlikely that stakeholder concerns will have lessened by then, or that the reforms will have addressed all of the ICIBI's previous recommendations, so I would expect AAR to feature in the ICIBI's priority list.

In February 2025, I gave evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) in connection with its enquiry into asylum accommodation. ICIBI's 'Inspection of contingency asylum accommodation' report was published in October 2024 and provided the basis for the bulk of the session. I made the point to the Committee that its ability to probe and amplify inspection findings made it a key stakeholder for ICIBI's reports and that I was sure that my successor would want to establish a strong working relationship with HASC.

Also in February, I was invited to speak to a joint meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees and the APPG on Children about the use of age assessment with asylum seekers. At the time, the ICIBI's inspection of the Home Office's use of age assessments was ongoing (the completed report was sent to the Home Secretary on 20 May 2025), so I could not discuss our findings or recommendations in detail. Nonetheless, it was a valuable opportunity to meet stakeholders working with children and young people and to hear at first-hand the experiences of two young people who had been through the process.

As my time as Interim Independent Chief Inspector draws to an end, I would like to thank everyone who has helped to make my return to the ICIBI enjoyable and fulfilling. In particular, I would like to thank my team, who have worked hard to make 2024-25 a successful year, despite the difficult start. I wish John Tuckett every success as the new Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and leave him in good hands.

David Bolt
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (Interim)
July 2025

Role and remit

Legislative framework

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (until 2012, the Independent 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 Secretary of State and by any person exercising such functions on their behalf.

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, at short-term holding facilities, under escort arrangements, and at detention facilities, unless directed to do so by the Secretary of State. The latter matters are subject to inspection by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons or His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (and equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

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
- 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 paragraph 17 of Schedule 3 to the Equality Act 2010 (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
- 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 them in writing in relation to specified matters, referred to as 'Home Secretary Commissions'. No inspections were commissioned by the Home Secretary during the period covered by this report.

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, this relates to the inspection programme for the coming year, but it also makes it clear that this does not prevent the Independent Chief Inspector from doing anything that is not mentioned in the plan. Inspection protocols are agreed with the Home Office and define responsibilities, processes, and timescales that satisfy the legislation and ensure inspections proceed efficiently.

The legislation specifies that the Independent Chief Inspector shall submit to the Secretary of State an annual report on the performance of immigration, asylum, nationality, and customs functions in general, as well as reports on specific matters prepared at their request, with the Secretary of State responsible for laying these reports before Parliament. In 2014, the Secretary of State assumed control of the publication of all inspection reports, deciding when to lay them before Parliament.¹ Following this change in practice, the Secretary of State committed to laying ICIBI reports in Parliament within eight weeks of receipt, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session.

Reports are published in full, except for any material that the Secretary of State determines 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.²

Statement of purpose

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

This statement of purpose aims to capture the intention behind the legislation, which is for the Independent Chief Inspector to use the evidence gathered during inspections to challenge inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or inconsistency, but to do so constructively and with the intention of helping to bring about improvements. The statement of purpose guides ICIBI's focus and approach. It was adopted in 2015 and appears at the beginning of each inspection report.

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.

Under a protocol agreed with the Home Office, inspections carried out under ICIBI's standard methodology follow a three-stage process and are scheduled to last for 100 days. While a range of shorter inspection formats have been developed in recent years – including a 40-day 'medium' inspection, a 30-day 'short' inspection, and a 10-day 'spot check' – the Independent Chief Inspector adopted the standard methodology for all inspection work undertaken in 2024-25, as he judged it to

¹ 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.

² During 2024-25, one inspection report contained redactions: 'An inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK (August 2024 – November 2024)', published on 25 March 2025.

be the inspection format best suited to the topics being examined. The 100-day inspection follows the inspection stages detailed below.

Stage 1: Planning

- scoping
- open-source research
- preliminary evidence request
- familiarisation visit(s)
- 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)
- onsite visit
- interviews
- focus groups
- observations
- surveys
- 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 checks of draft report by the Home Office
- report finalised and sent to the Home Secretary (the ICIBI’s response to the Home Office’s factual accuracy return is sent separately to the relevant Director General)

ICIBI ‘expectations’

The ICIBI continues to evaluate the performance of immigration, asylum, nationality, and customs functions against the set of ‘expectations’ that it adopted for those functions in 2018 (see Appendix 3).

The ‘expectations’ cover the key factors that, based on the ICIBI’s knowledge and experience, affect the efficiency and effectiveness of the functions that the inspectorate is charged with inspecting. 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 Plan for 2024-25

As referenced above, section 51 of the UK Borders Act 2007 requires the Independent Chief Inspector to “prepare plans describing the objectives and terms of reference of proposed inspections” and to consult the Home Secretary when doing so.

As the post of Independent Chief Inspector was vacant at the start of the 2024-25 business year, when the annual inspection plan would ordinarily have been published, no plan was issued at that time, nor was a full plan for the year produced when the post was filled on an interim basis in June 2024, as it was anticipated that a substantively appointed successor would soon be in office and would wish to set the inspectorate’s priorities. Instead, the interim Independent Chief Inspector wrote to the Home Secretary on 8 July 2024 to outline, and consult on, an inspection plan for the next six months, with inspections proposed on:

- age assessments
- the Home Office’s management of fee waiver applications
- concealed entry into the UK
- contact management
- General Maritime

The Minister for Migration & Citizenship replied to the Independent Chief Inspector’s letter on behalf of the Home Secretary on 20 August 2024, indicating that ministers were happy with the areas he had identified as a focus for the inspectorate. The ICIBI carried out the inspections outlined in the plan over the remainder of the business year.

As work on these inspections was completed, with a substantive appointment to the Independent Chief Inspector role still pending, the interim Independent Chief Inspector agreed with the Second Permanent Secretary of the Home Office that he would launch several new inspections but not issue an annual plan for 2025-26. Following consultation with ministers, Home Office officials, and stakeholders, he initiated inspections in March 2025 on the department’s management of administrative reviews and on its approach to overstayers.

Inspection findings 2024-25

Overview

During 2024-25, six inspection reports were published. The key points from each report (with the exception of the two country of origin information inspection reports, which are discussed in the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information section of this Annual Report) are summarised below. The reports are listed in the order in which they were completed and sent to the Home Secretary, rather than by publication date.

An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation (November 2023 – June 2024)³

This inspection examined the Home Office's use of contingency accommodation for asylum seekers, including its strategic approach, its assurance processes, and consistency of services and conditions.

The inspection found that the Home Office's ten-year strategy for asylum accommodation was still in development, and that normal governance processes had not been followed in progressing the establishment of large accommodation sites. There was an absence of clear ownership for asylum accommodation at a senior level in the Home Office, and there had been a lack of challenges to ministers on unrealistic delivery timescales for large sites. With respect to assurance processes, the inspection found there was an over-reliance on self-reporting by service providers on their performance. Provision of management information on asylum accommodation was poor, and there was no single system for data on service users and the accommodation estate. In terms of service user experience, the inspection found that induction processes were adequate and that the cleanliness and physical condition of sites were generally acceptable, but that the quality of accommodation was highly variable, with inconsistent attention to the mental health and support needs of residents.

The inspection resulted in nine recommendations, including to: ensure that the ten-year strategy and annual delivery plans for asylum accommodation are informed by clearly stated milestones for expected benefits and a standardised methodology, improve stakeholder engagement, strengthen governance arrangements, overhaul contract compliance and assurance checks, improve record keeping and data quality, define roles and responsibilities in respect of providing purposeful activities, improve the safeguarding of vulnerable asylum accommodation service users, strengthen organisational learning, and improve communication with asylum seekers.

The Home Office accepted four recommendations in full and partially accepted five.

The report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 3 September 2024 and laid in Parliament on 24 October 2024.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-contingency-asylum-accommodation-november-2023-june-2024>

An inspection of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (January – June 2024)⁴

This inspection examined the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (IECA) and its management of modern slavery and human trafficking claims. It focused on the timeliness of Reasonable Grounds (RG) and Conclusive Grounds (CG) decisions, the quality of decisions and assurance mechanisms, and the impact of recent legislative changes on the IECA.

The inspection found that the IECA had grown quickly in anticipation of the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act and that its rapid expansion had made it challenging to onboard and integrate new staff. RG casework was overstuffed, and there was limited evidence of flex in resource to clear the CG backlog. Recruitment was focused on decision makers (DMs), resulting in a lack of technical specialists to provide oversight, assurance, and support. Training and mentoring for DMs was inconsistent, and technical specialists received no role-specific training. More positively, staff attrition rates were low, and staff at all levels were positive about their work. Inspectors also found that the productivity of the team had been negatively impacted by recent changes in legislation and by legal challenges. Changes in law to the burden of proof required to support RG and CG decisions had resulted in a much higher proportion of negative decisions. Moreover, safeguarding processes were not robust and had been neglected since IECA implementation, and quality assurance mechanisms were limited.

The inspection resulted in seven recommendations, relating to: recruitment and workforce planning, training, performance and productivity, National Referral Mechanism referrals, IECA decisions, quality assurance, and safeguarding.

The Home Office fully accepted five recommendations and partially accepted two.

The report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 7 August 2024 and laid in Parliament on 11 December 2024.

An inspection of the Home Office's management of fee waiver applications (August 2024 – November 2024)⁵

This inspection examined the effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of the Home Office's management of in-country, child citizenship, and overseas fee waiver applications. It focused in particular on resourcing of the three teams responsible for managing fee waiver applications; on training, workflow, and the prioritisation of fee waiver casework; and on the quality, timeliness, and consistency of decision making, including the quality assurance of decisions. It also considered the extent to which fee waiver teams communicate, share best practice, and engage with stakeholders.

The inspection found that recruitment to the in-country fee waiver team had not kept pace with an upward trend in the volume of applications, leading to an increase in wait times for applicants between August 2023 and June 2024, which had since reduced. Stakeholders raised concerns about the timeliness of decision making, reporting negative impacts on applicants' mental health and their ability to evidence their section 3c leave in the UK. Inspectors also found there were issues with inconsistent training and mentoring for staff on the in-country team. The child citizenship and overseas teams were more positive about training and did not have the same staffing or productivity issues due to the much lower intake and steady workforce. Inspectors found evidence of inconsistent fee waiver

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-the-immigration-enforcement-competent-authority-january-june-2024>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-the-home-offices-management-of-fee-waiver-applications-august-2024-november-2024>

assessments, particularly in relation to the affordability test, what constitutes essential living needs, and what is meant by large transactions and excessive spending. Stakeholders raised concerns around the level of evidential burden applied to fee waiver applications and the fact that caseworkers focused on individual transactions instead of taking a holistic view of whether the fee could be afforded or not. There were also concerns that credit checks carried out as part of the process of considering fee waiver applications often contained third-party information, not relevant to the application, which was then stored and saved onto Home Office systems, which the department accepted it had no lawful basis to do. Inspectors did not find evidence of effective communication between the three fee waiver teams. There was also very little evidence of communication and engagement with applicants (outside of the 'write out' process) or with stakeholders, who reported difficulties in being able to contact the fee waiver teams.

The inspection resulted in eight recommendations, including to: develop a workforce plan for in-country fee waiver applications; formalise regular meetings of staff from the three fee waiver teams to share information and to promote 'best practice' and consistency; create a more exacting 'quality score marking' system for use with fee waiver caseworkers; overhaul how the quality and consistency of the work of fee waiver caseworkers are managed; review and document the lawful basis for storing Equifax reports on Home Office systems; ensure that, where significant changes to fee waiver policy and processes are proposed, they are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment; introduce service level agreements for fee waiver application processing times; and develop an external stakeholder engagement strategy.

The Home Office fully accepted five recommendations and partially accepted three.

The report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 21 January 2025 and laid in Parliament on 20 March 2025.

An inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK (August 2024 – November 2024)⁶

This inspection examined the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants at the juxtaposed controls in northern France (Calais, Coquelles, and Dunkerque). It also examined the Clandestine Entrant Civil Penalty Scheme (CECPS), which seeks to ensure vehicle owners and drivers secure their vehicles to prevent access by clandestine entrants. In addition, it examined the Civil Penalty Accreditation Scheme (CPAS), which incentivises hauliers to operate an effective system for securing their vehicles and preventing the carriage of clandestine entrants.

The inspection found that there was no senior operational leader who had responsibility for the Home Office response to the deterrence, detection, and management of clandestine entry to the UK, and that the processes and systems for the capturing of information and data on clandestine activity at the juxtaposed controls were poorly designed, obsolete, and not followed. Issues with data collection and the sharing of information impacted the ability of Home Office Intelligence to support clandestine entry detection. Essential skills training, including immigration and personal safety training, was not always readily accessible to relevant staff, affecting the ability of Border Force to deploy its officers. Stakeholder engagement and relationships were generally good at the juxtaposed controls. With respect to the CECPS, the inspection found that inconsistencies in the application of the scheme raised genuine concerns around its fairness, including the way discretion and the exceptionality policy

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-the-border-force-operation-to-deter-and-detect-clandestine-entrants-to-the-uk-august-2024-november-2024>

were exercised. Management information data for the CECPS was limited and unreliable, and vehicle intercept data passed to ports by the scheme was often inaccurate, out of date or incomplete, resulting in vehicles being stopped in error.

The inspection resulted in seven recommendations, including to: designate a Home Office-wide 'owner' for clandestine entry; review the range of analyses, assessments, and intelligence products dealing with clandestine entry; overhaul training provision for front-line Border Force officers at the juxtaposed ports; install an integrated automated numberplate recognition (ANPR) system linking the controls at Calais, Coquelles, and Dunkerque; carry out a review of the working practices of the CECPS Team to eliminate duplication and maximise efficiencies; produce and publish an engagement plan for industry stakeholders; and produce and publish an annual report on how the CECPS is working.

The Home Office accepted two recommendations in full, and it partially accepted four. The department did not accept the recommendation that an ANPR system be introduced across the juxtaposed controls, on the ground that it was not feasible financially.

The report was submitted to the Home Secretary on 4 February 2025 and laid in Parliament, with redactions, on 25 March 2025.

'Live' inspections as at 31 March 2025

Six inspections were 'live' as at 31 March 2025:

- An inspection of the Home Office's use of age assessments
- An inspection of Home Office management of contact with migrants who are without leave to enter or remain
- An inspection of General Maritime
- An inspection of the Home Office's management of administrative reviews
- An inspection report on Home Office country of origin information relating to Turkey and Vietnam

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Purpose

Section 48(2)(j) of the UK Borders Act 2007 states that the Independent 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 to advise the Independent Chief Inspector on the content and quality of country of origin information (COI) and guidance notes produced by the Home Office and relied upon by decision makers.

How the IAGCI works

The IAGCI follows the following process when carrying out reviews of Home Office COI:

- Stage 1: Taking account of the volume of asylum claims in relation to particular countries and of when particular COI products were last reviewed, the Chair of the 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 the IAGCI’s recommended reviewer from those replying to the tender.)
- Stage 3: The IAGCI quality assures the submitted reviews and sends them to the Home Office unit responsible for producing COI material (the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT)) for it to consider and respond to the reviewer’s recommendations.
- Stage 4: The 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, the 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 their recommendations, and sends 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. The ICIBI is grateful to the members of

the Group for their commitment and for the valuable contributions they make to its work. The ICIBI is particularly grateful to Professor Mike Collyer, who continued in the role of IAGCI chair in 2024-25.

List of members, 2024-25

- Professor Mike Collyer, University of Sussex (Chair)
- Dr Ceri Oeppen, University of Sussex
- Professor Nando Sigona, University of Birmingham
- Dr Julie Vullnetari, University of Southampton
- Professor Giorgia Dona, University of East London
- Judge Mark Blundell, Upper Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber
- Judge Roxanne Frantzis, First-tier Tribunal, Immigration and Asylum Chamber
- Katinka Ridderbos, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Geneva)
- Larry Bottinick, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UK)
- Harriet Short, Immigration Law Practitioners Association
- Zoe Bantleman, Immigration Law Practitioners Association

Meetings

The IAGCI aims to meet two or three times a year, and the Independent Chief Inspector and ICIBI staff engage regularly with the Chair between meetings. During 2024-25, the Group met in July 2024 to discuss reviews of COI on Georgia, and in February 2025 to discuss reviews of COI on Turkey and Vietnam.

Published reviews

Two inspection reports on Home Office COI were published in 2024-25:

- a report on the 2022 country policy and information notes (CPINs) on Rwanda was submitted to the Home Secretary on 16 July 2024 and laid in Parliament on 9 September 2024⁷
- a report on selected COI on Georgia was submitted to the Home Secretary on 29 August 2024 and laid in Parliament on 24 October 2024⁸

Both reports presented recommendations from expert reviewers commissioned through IAGCI to evaluate the quality, completeness, and accuracy of selected Home Office COI. The published reports include the Home Office's response to each recommendation.

Further details on the IAGCI and past COI inspection reports can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-independent-advisory-group-on-country-information-iagci>.

7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-home-office-country-of-origin-information-on-rwanda-january-2024>

8 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-home-office-country-of-origin-information-on-georgia-july-2024>

Working with others

Stakeholders

ICIBI inspection reports and recommendations are addressed to the Home Secretary. In practice, the recommendations are aimed primarily at the operational arms of the Home Office's Migration and Borders System, in particular Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, and Customer Services Group.

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 impact on everyone living in the UK or wishing to settle here, or coming as a visitor or to work or study, or to seek protection. To inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme, and to engage effectively with the Home Office, it is essential that the ICIBI reaches out to these other stakeholders to understand their many perspectives, interests, and concerns, and to capture relevant evidence.

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

ICIBI stakeholder forums

The ICIBI has seven 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 propose topics for inspection and advise 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 voluntary sector organisations with an interest in and knowledge of the Home Office's work with refugees and asylum seekers, and related issues. In 2024-25, the RAF met in October 2024 and March 2025.

The Aviation Stakeholder Forum was created in 2011. Membership comprises UK airport and airline industry umbrella bodies. The Maritime Stakeholder Forum was also created in 2011. Membership comprises UK seaports and shipping industry umbrella bodies. Meetings of the Aviation and Maritime forums were held in October 2024.

The Adults at Risk Forum (AARF) was established in 2019, following the Home Secretary's commission to produce an annual review of the 'Adults at risk in immigration detention' policy. Though the commission to review this topic was discontinued by the Home Secretary in December 2022, the AARF continues to provide input to the Independent Chief Inspector on issues and concerns relating to detention. Membership comprises non-governmental organisations that focus specifically on immigration detention. In 2024-25, the AARF met in February 2025.

In 2021, the Independent Chief Inspector established three additional forums to bring together the perspectives of other stakeholder groups on borders and immigration issues. The Education Forum includes representatives of the education sector, reflecting the interest of universities and higher education providers, boarding schools, and English-language schools in the efficient functioning of the immigration system. The Business Forum includes employer groups from a range of sectors. The Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) Forum is composed of the local authority-led partnerships established throughout the UK following the introduction of a regional asylum dispersal policy in 1999. These forums generally meet once a year; in 2024-25, all three were convened in February 2025.

During the year, a number of individual meetings were held with forum members, as well as with other organisations, both in relation to specific inspections and to discuss general issues and priorities.

Website

The 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’ to support its inspections. In 2024-25, seven ‘calls for evidence’ were made via the website.⁹

The ICIBI uses X (formerly Twitter) to publicise the start of an inspection, to draw attention to a ‘call for evidence’, to notify that an inspection report has been sent to the Home Secretary, and when a report has been laid in Parliament.

Stakeholder survey

The annual ICIBI stakeholder survey collects views from stakeholders who have previously engaged with the inspectorate by submitting evidence and/or participating in focus groups or forums. The survey asks questions relating to stakeholders’ experience of engaging with the ICIBI, and also asks for views on inspection reports and the value of the recommendations contained within them.

The ICIBI issued its annual stakeholder survey in December 2024. Among the 45 respondents were charities, regional Strategic Migration Partnerships, local authorities, trade associations, Home Office contractors, and legal firms.

The survey results indicated that stakeholders were satisfied with their engagement with the inspectorate and took a positive view of its work. Respondents praised the ICIBI’s openness to stakeholder input, while questions around the clarity and focus of inspection reports received extremely positive responses. ICIBI stakeholder forum members that responded to the survey commented favourably on the value and usefulness of those forums. However, survey results were

⁹ Call for evidence: An inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-the-border-force-operation-to-deter-and-detect-clandestine-entrants-to-the-uk>;

Call for evidence: An inspection of the effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency of the Home Office’s management of fee waiver applications. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-the-effectiveness-efficiency-and-consistency-of-the-home-offices-management-of-fee-waiver-applications>;

Call for evidence: An inspection into the Home Office’s use of age assessments. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-into-the-home-offices-use-of-age-assessments>;

Call for evidence: An inspection of Home Office management of contact with migrants who are without leave to enter or remain. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-home-office-management-of-contact-with-migrants-who-are-without-leave-to-enter-or-remain>;

Call for evidence: An inspection of General Maritime. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-general-maritime>;

Call for evidence: An inspection of the Home Office’s management of administrative reviews. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-the-home-offices-management-of-administrative-reviews>;

Call for evidence: An inspection of the Home Office’s approach to overstayers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/call-for-evidence-an-inspection-of-the-home-offices-approach-to-overstayers>.

less positive about the ability of the ICIBI to drive change in the Home Office, with 49% of respondents expressing the view that the department's responses to ICIBI recommendations were inadequate.

Stakeholders were invited to suggest potential areas for inspection, and their input will help to inform the ICIBI's future inspection programme.

Engagement with other inspectorates and similar bodies

The ICIBI continued to meet with other inspecting and monitoring bodies to remain abreast of their work, share best practice, and identify ways in which the ICIBI can complement, rather than duplicate, their work. Such bodies include the National Audit Office, the Government Internal Audit Agency, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), and the Independent Monitoring Authority. These meetings were also used to explore opportunities for further joint working with other inspectorates on overlapping areas of interest. During 2024-25, several ICIBI inspectors contributed to inspections being carried out by HMIP and by His Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

Other engagement

In March 2025, the Independent Chief Inspector appeared before the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee to give evidence to its inquiry into asylum accommodation. Also in March 2025, the Independent Chief Inspector spoke at an event jointly organised by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees and the APPG on Children.

During 2024-25, the Independent Chief Inspector and inspectors visited a number of Home Office sites and met with stakeholders, including those with lived experience of the asylum and immigration systems. These exchanges provided valuable insights into some of the issues and challenges people are encountering in the areas the ICIBI is responsible for inspecting. The ICIBI would like to extend its thanks to everyone who took the time to share their knowledge and views.

Resources and planning

Budget and staffing 2024-25

The ICIBI's budget is determined by the Home Secretary and delegated to the Independent Chief Inspector. The budget is issued in the form of an annual delegation letter. The delegation letter for the 2024-25 financial year was signed on 22 July 2024.

Delegation letters and other sponsorship functions come through the Second Permanent Secretary, who is the ICIBI's Senior Sponsor within the Home Office.

The budget for 2024-25 was £2.103 million.

'Pay costs' (staff salaries, and employer's pension and National Insurance contributions) account for the bulk of the total. In 2024-25, £1.949 million was designated for 'pay costs', with £154,000 for 'non-pay'. There was no allocation for capital expenditure. The inspectorate recorded a small overspend this year, which was driven by slightly higher than expected pay costs. See 'Expenditure report for financial year 2024-25' at Appendix 2.

The agreed headcount for 2024-25 remained at 30 full-time equivalents (FTEs), including the Independent Chief Inspector. Of these, 24 (77%) are Grade 7 or Senior Executive Officer (SEO) Inspector posts. The remaining six posts consist of the Independent Chief Inspector, a Chief of Staff (Grade 6), a Research and Strategy Manager (Grade 7), a Communications and Engagement Lead (SEO), and two corporate services posts (one Executive Officer and one Administrative Officer).¹⁰

As of 31 March 2025, the ICIBI had 27 staff in post.

The staff profile, excluding the Independent Chief Inspector, was:

- 48% female, 52% male
- 80% white, 20% minority ethnic
- age bands:
 - 25-29 4%
 - 30-34 11%
 - 35-39 7%
 - 40-44 19%
 - 45-49 26%
 - 50-54 11%
 - 55-59 22%

¹⁰ The Independent Chief Inspector is a public appointment. By agreement with the Independent Chief Inspector, all other Inspectorate staff are employed as permanent or temporary Home Office civil servants. Those recruited, loaned, or seconded from elsewhere become Home Office civil servants on joining the ICIBI.

- 48% not married, 52% married
- 48% Christian, 52% other religions
- 63% with no caring responsibilities, 37% with caring responsibilities
- 68% flexible working pattern, 32% non-flexible working pattern
- 4% part time, 96% full time

Training and development

During 2024-25, the ICIBI held two dedicated study/away days, at which colleagues had an opportunity to engage in dialogue with internal and external stakeholders and to hear from guest speakers, including the Second Permanent Secretary of the Home Office, Simon Ridley; a Minister of State, Lord Hanson of Flint; and the Chair of the Migration Advisory Committee, Professor Brian Bell.

Home Office and Civil Service talent and development programmes are open to ICIBI staff, with one member of staff taking part in the Home Office's 'Advance' programme in 2024-25. Inspectors also have access to the Civil Service Learning platform and external resources that provide training in a range of subjects. Within the inspectorate, training and refresher courses were offered, as were 'listen and learn' presentations by a number of Home Office teams and external organisations.

As part of the Civil Service Fast Stream Summer Internship Programme, the ICIBI hosted an intern for ten weeks in summer 2024. The intern made a full contribution to the work of the inspectorate, joining inspection teams onsite and undertaking bespoke projects.

Vision statement

ICIBI's 'vision statement' is intended to sit alongside its stated purpose (see 'Role and remit'). It remained unchanged for 2024-25:

"The 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

The ICIBI adheres to the Civil Service values:

- integrity
- honesty
- objectivity
- impartiality

Equality and diversity

In carrying out its statutory functions, as set out in the UK Borders Act 2007, the ICIBI has three equality objectives:

- to monitor and report on compliance with the Equality Act 2010 by the Secretary of State, their officials and others exercising functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality, or customs on their behalf, including reliance on paragraph 17 of Schedule 3 of the Equality Act 2010 (exception for immigration functions)
- to ensure that the ICIBI's policies, processes, and practices are fair and transparent and comply with the Equality Act 2010
- to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion through its inspections and within the Inspectorate.

Through these objectives, the ICIBI seeks to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

ICIBI equality, diversity, and inclusion statement

The ICIBI is committed to promoting the letter and spirit of the Equality Act 2010 by embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in everything it does.

The immigration, asylum, nationality, and customs functions performed by and on behalf of the Secretary of State involve and affect a wide range of other bodies, and touch everyone living in or seeking to enter the UK.

To inform individual inspections and the overall inspection programme, the ICIBI will reach out through its website, and directly where possible, to capture relevant evidence and to try to understand and reflect a diverse range of perspectives, interests, and concerns.

The ICIBI has one Inspector who also acts as the Inspectorate's equality and diversity adviser, supporting the Independent Chief Inspector to ensure that the ICIBI's policies, processes, and practices are consistent with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

ICIBI's equality objectives and equality, diversity, and inclusion statement should be read in conjunction with its [statement of purpose](#), [vision](#), [values](#) and [expectations](#).

Appendix 1: Inspection reports published in 2024-25

- ‘Inspection report on Home Office country of origin information on Rwanda (January 2024)’, published on 9 September 2024
- ‘An inspection of contingency asylum accommodation (November 2023 – June 2024)’, published on 24 October 2024
- ‘Inspection report on Home Office country of origin information on Georgia (July 2024)’, published on 24 October 2024
- ‘An inspection of the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority (January – June 2024)’, published on 11 December 2024
- ‘An inspection of the Home Office’s management of fee waiver applications (August 2024 – November 2024)’, published on 20 March 2025
- ‘An inspection of the Border Force operation to deter and detect clandestine entrants to the UK (August 2024 – November 2024)’, published on 25 March 2025

Appendix 2: Expenditure report for financial year 2024-25

Resource pay total (£)	1,973,957
Resource non-pay total (£)	141,934
Travel and subsistence	84,991
Training and recruitment	1,515
Conferences	3,815
Estates	55
Marketing	864
IT and Comms	1,654
Office supplies and services	34,862
Contracted out services	325
Special payments	7,500
Other costs and services	6,351
Other costs	851
Research ¹¹	3,600
Major contracts	1,900
Grand total (£)	2,115,891

¹¹ This figure reflects the cost of commissioning expert reviews of Home Office country of origin information (COI), an activity led by the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information in support of ICIBI's scrutiny of this material.

Appendix 3: 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 ‘owner’

The Home Office ‘owner’ is accountable for 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)

