



An inspection of asylum casework

June 2025 – December 2025

John Tuckett

Independent Chief Inspector of
Borders and Immigration

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Our purpose

By working with Home Office teams, we will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of borders and immigration functions through impartial inspections which identify pragmatic and deliverable recommendations.

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Contents

Foreword	2
1. Background	3
2. Summary of findings	6
3. Recommendations	8
4. Inspection findings: Overall aim	10
5. Inspection findings: Roles and responsibilities	12
6. Inspection findings: Priorities and values	13
7. Inspection findings: Resources	15
8. Inspection findings: Operating processes	17
9. Inspection findings: External environment	21
10. Comparison of findings with those of the 2021 and 2023 ICIBI asylum casework inspections	23
Annex A: 2023 ICIBI inspection of asylum casework – accepted and closed recommendations	24
Annex B: results of ICIBI survey, July 2025	26
Annex C: Sampling quality scores	30
Annex D: Quality assurance error descriptors and scoring system	34
Annex E: Role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector	35
Annex F: ICIBI ‘expectations’	37
Acknowledgements	39

Foreword

This inspection exploring the quality of decision making of asylum claims was started in June 2025 when my predecessor, David Bolt, was Chief Inspector. It has focused on the areas that were deemed important at that time and gathered evidence in line with current processes and procedures.

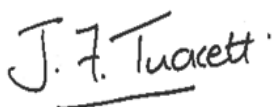
However, since I took over as Chief Inspector in October 2025, the evidence has been assessed and presented in line with a new way of working that the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) is now adopting. This approach focuses on inspections being more of a collaborative process with those being inspected, with the aim of developing recommendations that can be owned, committed to, and implemented quickly.

This report starts the transition to a new way of presenting the evidence, with changes to size and structure. The length is much reduced, without the extensive detail that previous reports might have included. Secondly, the evidence gathered has been assessed against six standard headings that will form the backbone of future ICIBI inspections. These have been articulated in a new ICIBI Inspection Framework that will replace the ICIBI Expectations.¹

Inevitably, with any transition processes, there are elements of both old and new practices. I would welcome feedback on this style of presentation to help develop the optimum product that informs and, most importantly, brings about change.

This report highlights three main areas for improvement, with one recommendation for each area.

This report was sent to the Home Secretary on 5 March 2026.



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¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), 'ICIBI Inspection framework' (published 10 February 2026). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/icibi-expectations-for-inspection>

1. Background

Purpose and scope

- 1.1** The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) carried out an inspection of asylum casework in 2023, which focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of asylum processes from the point of the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 (NABA).² The timing of the 2023 inspection meant there was also a significant focus on the Home Office's efforts to clear what was known as the 'legacy' asylum decision backlog, following the then Prime Minister's pledge to do so.³ Prior to the 2023 inspection, the ICIBI inspected asylum casework in 2016, 2017, and 2021.^{4,5,6}
- 1.2** This inspection focused on the quality of asylum decisions and the factors affecting quality. This approach was taken following concerns expressed by the then Home Secretary to Chief Inspector David Bolt in December 2024. The focus was also shaped by findings in the 2023 inspection, which identified concerns about the strategies employed by the Home Office to clear the backlog, and the potential effects they may have had on the quality of asylum decisions.
- 1.3** The inspection examined the quality management of asylum decision making and the factors affecting quality including:
- retention and recruitment of decision makers (DMs)
 - the effectiveness of training given to those involved in asylum casework
 - the recruitment process for asylum caseworkers
 - the training and guidance provided to staff involved in asylum casework
 - current decision-making processes
 - day-to-day management and supervision of asylum casework
 - quality assurance and feedback mechanisms used to drive improvements in decision quality
 - current and planned strategies and transformation initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of asylum decision making

2 Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), 'Inspection report on asylum casework, June – October 2023' (published 29 February 2024). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-asylum-casework-june-october-2023>

3 GOV.UK, 'Legacy backlog cleared as plan to stop the boats delivers' (published 2 January 2024). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/legacy-backlog-cleared-as-plan-to-stop-the-boats-delivers>

4 ICIBI, 'Inspection report on asylum casework, March – July 2015' (published 4 February 2016). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-asylum-casework-february-2016>

5 ICIBI, 'Inspection report on asylum intake and casework, April - August 2017' (published 28 November 2017). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-asylum-intake-and-casework>

6 ICIBI, 'An inspection of asylum casework, August 2020 – May 2021' (published 18 November 2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-inspection-of-asylum-casework-august-2020-may-2021>

- 1.4** The inspection excluded any processes or actions taken prior to the asylum claim being considered by the main decision-making unit (DMU), typically up to the stage of an applicant’s substantive interview with a DM. The inspection also excluded workflow processes, as well as all non-initial adult DMUs, including the Detained Asylum Casework team, Secondary Casework, the Foreign National Offenders team, and all Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children teams.

Open recommendations from 2021 and 2023 asylum casework inspections

- 1.5** Of the nine recommendations made in the 2021 inspection of asylum casework, one remained open at the time of the 2023 inspection; that the Home Office “introduce, as a matter of urgency, a published service standard”. This recommendation was re-stated in the 2023 inspection and was still open at the time of this inspection, nearly five years after first being made.
- 1.6** The Home Office reported that implementation of a service standard remained at an early stage, due to ministerial priorities such as reducing the asylum work in progress (WiP), processing asylum decisions for individuals receiving asylum support, and ending the use of hotels for accommodating asylum seekers. The Home Office, in an ICIBI recommendation update, reported that the expectation was that a new service standard would be introduced in Summer 2026.⁷
- 1.7** One other recommendation from the 2023 inspection still open at the time of this inspection was for the Home Office to:
- “implement the routine collection of data on vulnerability and protected characteristics to inform equality impact assessments and the Home Office’s understanding of how policies impact protected groups
 - streamline the collation of management information to provide a single source of accurate and real-time data”
- 1.8** The Home Office reported in November 2025 that this recommendation was owned by the wider Transformation team and that an extension until 31 March 2026 had been agreed to deliver it.

Inspection methodology

- 1.9** During this inspection, three rounds of documentary evidence, including data, were received from the Home Office between July 2025 and December 2025. A call for evidence issued by the ICIBI in June 2025 resulted in 44 substantive submissions from organisations and individuals, and inspectors subsequently met with three non-governmental organisations. In July 2025, inspectors visited Liverpool DMU as part of the familiarisation phase of the inspection.
- 1.10** Inspectors also issued a survey to DMs and technical specialists (tech specs), which closed on 7 August 2025, receiving 262 and 69 responses, respectively. Inspectors examined 102 asylum cases with decisions made between 15 January 2024 and 30 June 2025, of which 21 were withdrawals, 33 were grants, and 48 were refusals.

⁷ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office clarified that “no definitive date had been set for the introduction of a service standard”.

1.11 Between 6 and 31 October 2025, inspectors conducted interviews and focus groups with staff from across Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO), Policy, Appeals, Litigation and Admin Review (ALAR), and the Performance, Assurance, Improvement and Risk (PAIR) team. Inspectors spoke to staff from Executive Officer (EO) level to Senior Civil Servant (SCS) level. This included staff involved in training, quality assurance, transformation, operational change, and the Asylum Central Communications Hub. Inspectors spent one week at each of these DMUs: London, Stoke, and Glasgow.

2. Summary of findings

- 2.1** While undoubted progress is being made in addressing the backlog of asylum cases waiting for an initial decision, this has come at a cost. The high priority given to reducing numbers waiting for a decision has had unintended consequences in terms of the quality of the decisions being made, staff morale, and wellbeing, with high attrition rates.⁸
- 2.2** The sections on inspection findings contain many individual instances where improvements could be made. Where appropriate, suggestions are included as to how best to address these, and it is for management to decide which of these to adopt. More significant, though, are three overarching themes which, if not addressed, will limit the impact of any individual actions to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and consistency.

Different versions of the truth

- 2.3** Across Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) there are many different versions and perceptions of key issues without the golden thread of understanding at all levels that one would expect from a high-performing organisation. Issues range from the achievability of targets, to the appropriateness of interview processes, the importance of quality as opposed to productivity, as well as the concerns and wellbeing of staff within decision-making units (DMUs).
- 2.4** This level of disconnected thinking can be highly divisive and threaten the integrity of an organisation and its work. There is therefore an urgent need to change the cultural thinking across the organisation from an 'us and them' mindset to one of 'we are in this together', with all parts of the organisation recognising their responsibilities in bringing this about. Not to address this as a matter of urgency will only undermine and limit the effectiveness of any other actions that may be taken.

Quality results and processes

- 2.5** Quality targets for both interviews and decisions are not being met across the core DMUs and have not been met for over two years. Quality assurance processes are in place but only at a tactical operational level.
- 2.6** This inspection has reinforced findings from other scrutiny reviews that there are multiple reasons contributing to this decline in quality, notably:
- a management focus on productivity through operational targets with little or no equivalent emphasis on quality
 - rushed recruitment campaigns with lower entry standards and with no 'lessons learnt' exercises to inform future campaigns

⁸ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated, "for context – the attrition rate remains lower than 2021".

- compressed training regimes that did not take account of the lack of skills and expertise of those being recruited
- operational practices such as interview structures
- limited quality assurance processes and a lack of feedback loops

- 2.7** While a quality improvement programme exists, it is focused on individual specific issues, rather than being a comprehensive strategic approach addressing root causes and covering all of the above issues in a coherent manner. The recommendations contain suggestions as to what such an approach might include.
- 2.8** The inspection did not explore the impact of current quality results on the wider asylum system. However, it is well known that the backlog within the appeals system has increased in recent months as the number of initial decisions has grown. More work would be needed to identify whether more decisions are being withdrawn or not being upheld at appeal due to lower-quality considerations, and what impact this has on additional workloads for AHRO staff in managing cases and in prolonging asylum accommodation costs.
- 2.9** However, the inspection found that, across AHRO, it is being recognised that quality has been the poor relation to productivity over the past few years. Furthermore, there is now a growing realisation that getting quality ‘right’ at the outset is an essential part of enhancing productivity and that the two must go forward hand in hand; focusing on numbers alone may bring short-term success but can bring significant longer-term issues. It is to be hoped this learning can feature in any future initiatives within the migration and borders system focusing on improving throughput.

Feedback loops and lessons learnt exercises

- 2.10** Effective feedback loops at all levels of an organisation are essential to long-term success. Within AHRO, this inspection found some processes at an operational level, but few if any at a higher organisational level. Inspectors gained the impression that such activities were seen as secondary to productivity issues rather than being appreciated for their essential input to achieving productivity targets. Opportunities to learn lessons, revise processes and procedures accordingly, and improve efficiency and effectiveness continue to be missed over a wide range of subjects.
- 2.11** There is a need not just to build in feedback processes, but also to embed across the organisation the vital nature of such processes and the importance of creating time and space for them.

3. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Bring about a change in the cultural mindset of the organisation that shifts from the current ‘us and them’ thinking to one of ‘we are all in this together’, the changes to be reflected in future staff surveys and feedback mechanisms.

It is suggested that consideration could be given to having a Senior Civil Servant (SCS) quality lead to spearhead the re-establishment of the quality agenda and the establishment of this refreshed mindset, working across all levels of the organisation to introduce new practices that enable dialogue and engagement to thrive.

Recommendation 2

Quality is re-established within the decision-making processes as a key component alongside productivity with critical success factors that align with the overall aims of the Asylum Group.

It is suggested that this could best be achieved through a system-wide approach that considers:

- a. defining overall aims for quality that support the wider asylum system with measurable success factors at organisational and local levels
- b. simplifying and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of the system, including consideration of a senior SCS lead for quality for a defined period to spearhead the re-establishment of the quality agenda – see recommendation 1
- c. defining the importance of quality within operational processes and embedding this with appropriate incentives and emphasis in performance management
- d. reviewing the appropriateness of recruitment, training, onboarding, and mentoring regimes given the likely skill levels of new recruits and their impact on quality
- e. publishing a new service standard as soon as possible
- f. reviewing operational practices to ensure appropriate emphasis on quality and productivity is reflected in ways of working and operational targets

Recommendation 3

Embed feedback and lessons learnt systems and processes with an appropriate priority that progressively identify where improvements can be made and result in enhancements to the quality scores being achieved.

It is suggested that this work could focus on, but not be limited to:

- a. developing existing operational feedback processes and ensuring consistency and effectiveness

- b. developing feedback loops for decisions made by the Pre Appeals Review Unit and asylum appeal hearings where the quality of the initial decision is an issue
- c. lessons learnt exercises to consider how best to improve recruitment, training, and mentoring activities so that the skills of decision makers are appropriate and embedded

4. Inspection findings: Overall aim

This section explores the overall aim of quality within the asylum decision-making process, how it is defined with what success factors, and how well it is owned across the organisation.

- 4.1** During this inspection, in October 2025, the Home Office established the Asylum Taskforce, which later became the Asylum Group in November 2025. The Asylum Group is to focus on the government's commitments to end the use of hotels for housing asylum seekers and to reduce the number of individuals supported by the asylum system. The Asylum Group will subsume the work and organisations that were part of this inspection.⁹ A strategic vision for the Asylum Group had yet to be released.
- 4.2** Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) staff at Grade 6 and above identified their primary strategic objectives as:
- ending the use of hotels for asylum accommodation
 - reducing the number of 'supported' asylum seekers
- 4.3** However, there was no stated overall aim for asylum decision making as a core process in support of these high-level objectives, or clarity over how these strategic aims were aligned with good-quality asylum decision making.
- 4.4** Overarching and internal targets included:
- reducing the number within the work in progress (WiP) to below 50,000, which is considered a 'frictional' level
 - at least 75% of asylum decisions and interviews to achieve a quality score of QS1 or QS2
- 4.5** In the Home Office People Survey results for 2024, most asylum decision-making unit (DMU) staff (76%) responded that they understood their organisational objectives, and 84% understood how their work contributed to these objectives. While this might suggest an understanding of how decision making was related to higher-level aims, only 44% of respondents in the 2024 Home Office People Survey reported feeling motivated to achieve those aims, and only 40% of the Asylum Core Team responded in the same way in the 2025 survey.

⁹ GOV.UK, 'Director General, Asylum Group Dr Rannia Leontaridi OBE' (undated). <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/rannia-leontaridi>

4.6 The above would suggest that there is a need:

- to define a clear aim for the asylum decision-making process that staff can relate to and that links their work and its quality with the higher-level objectives
- for comprehensive engagement of, and communications with, staff to ensure these remain embedded

5. Inspection findings: Roles and responsibilities

This section explores how roles and responsibilities are defined within the asylum decision-making process, with particular reference to quality.

Organisational structure and roles

- 5.1** The Asylum Core Team comprises 15 decision-making units (DMUs) spread across the UK, responsible for conducting interviews and making decisions on initial asylum applications. There is a well-established structure of roles from Administrative Officer to Grade 6 level encompassing both operational and technical/quality roles, except for those relating to quality management.
- 5.2** Quality oversight and assurance roles and responsibilities involved several different teams including the Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) Quality Assurance Team (QAT), AHRO Chief Casework Team (CCWT), and the Performance, Assurance, Improvement and Risk (PAIR) team. This is on top of individual responsibilities for ensuring quality in decision-making processes.
- 5.3** Inspectors found it difficult to establish a clear picture of who was responsible for what and accountable to whom on the quality front. Feedback from staff in interviews highlighted a lack of clarity or understanding across the system as to who:
- held strategic responsibility for championing, promoting, and developing the quality agenda
 - within the DMUs, was accountable for quality at the operational level and how this was apportioned between DMU staff
- 5.4** This lack of definition and understanding is not conducive to achieving good-quality results and highlights the need to re-examine and redefine quality responsibilities across the asylum decision-making process, supported by an associated programme of engagement and communications to ensure these are understood and embedded.

6. Inspection findings: Priorities and values

This section explores what priorities have been established within the decision-making processes and how organisational values are reflected in operational practices.

Prioritisation of asylum claims

- 6.1** Since July 2024, Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) had prioritised the processing of claims from individuals receiving asylum and/or accommodation support as a key means of reducing accommodation and hotel costs. This aligned with the overall AHRO strategic aims, although it may have resulted in fewer resources being available for other cohorts, such as unsupported 'high-grant' nationalities.

Prioritisation of productivity and reduction in asylum case numbers awaiting a decision

- 6.2** Since 2023 there had been great emphasis and priority given to reducing the legacy work in progress (WiP) of asylum cases. The 2023 inspection found that between June 2022 and November 2023, AHRO reduced the legacy WiP by 82% through increased productivity.¹⁰ By the close of 2023, the Home Office announced that the legacy backlog had been officially cleared.
- 6.3** There remained a substantial asylum WiP at the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024, despite the clearance of the legacy WiP. This inspection found further reductions in the total WiP of 40% from 97,787 at the end of 2023 to approximately 58,500 in October 2025.¹¹ The Home Office internal goal of getting the WiP to below 50,000 by September 2025 was revised to December 2025 and was met in November. However, this may have come at a cost to quality.

Prioritisation of productivity and quality

- 6.4** In a quality assurance initiative in August/September 2025, the Chief Casework Team sampled 47 of the 348 cases of grant decisions across all decision-making units (DMUs). Their findings showed that 37 (78.72%) contained insufficient evidence on which to make a decision and were therefore likely to be incorrect. Although this was only one limited exercise, if replicated across the system, these results suggested the quality of asylum decision making was not in a good state.
- 6.5** The perception of most DMU staff that inspectors spoke to was that productivity had been prioritised repeatedly, with any emphasis on quality being progressively diminished, with the

¹⁰ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office added that "whilst reduced, all workable cases were decided".

¹¹ GOV.UK, 'Immigration Enforcement data July to September 2025' (published 27 November 2025). The figures quoted from the Immigration Enforcement data: July to September 2025 transparency data relate to the total number of cases that require an initial asylum decision.

balance between productivity and quality being strongly on the former. The Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) staff survey of decision makers (DMs) across all DMUs in July 2025 showed that 83.73% of respondents believed that senior managers prioritised quantity over quality.

- 6.6** There appeared to be different messages about the priority of quality coming from different parts of the system. Senior managers stated that both the quantity and quality of asylum casework were important and should be equally prioritised. However, within DMUs, targets, performance management, and incentives emphasising productivity had been reinforced and increased, with little equivalent emphasis on quality. For example, in July 2025, productivity targets were increased, which was later supported by a time-and-motion study. However, there was no change or emphasis on quality aspects despite no core DMU meeting its quality targets at that point.
- 6.7** Some efforts had been made to re-emphasise the importance of quality with a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in March 2025 and initiatives within individual DMUs such as role-play, workshops, and training. These are welcomed and, while limited in scope, have already shown they can impact on the quality of decision making.
- 6.8** All the above suggest that quality has been the poor relation to productivity and quantity in terms of operational priorities since at least 2020, when the ICIBI made the same finding. There is therefore a need for senior management to re-evaluate how the quality/productivity balance is better articulated and put into practice.

Feedback loops

- 6.9** Feedback and lessons learned exercises are the lifeblood of any successful high-performing organisation and would normally have a high priority. This inspection found some feedback loops, such as the Pre Appeals Review Unit (PARU) on withdrawn cases and the Presenting Officers Unit for appeals involving certain nationalities; however, these represent only a small fraction of the total decisions made by asylum teams. Additionally, there was no comprehensive lessons learned exercise following recruitment campaigns to inform future activities, and there was no regular feedback from tribunal hearings on the quality of decisions being appealed that could be rectified by training.
- 6.10** Reasons given for this lack of emphasis included resources, pressure of operational targets, and inappropriate and inadequate data and IT systems. Inspectors also detected a sense that the importance of feedback loops was not widely appreciated and was given a lower priority than achieving operational targets. The risk is that major opportunities for identifying trends and where improvements could be made are being missed. A reappraisal of the importance of feedback loops and lessons learned exercises is needed to embed this important function.

Staff feedback

- 6.11** Inspectors frequently heard about instances where staff views and concerns relating to levels of stress and difficulties in meeting ever-increasing targets were dismissed or ignored. In interviews, senior managers focused more on the lack of skills and competence, emphasising that operational targets were achievable, rather than acknowledging staff concerns. The exact truth of how concerns are managed was difficult to establish, but the perception within DMUs was that staff views did not count and were unlikely to be taken seriously. This raises questions as to whether the broader Home Office values are being properly reflected in practice.

7. Inspection findings: Resources

This section explores how people resources are being managed to get the right people into the right roles with the appropriate skills.

Recruitment

- 7.1** To increase the number of decision makers (DMs) to address the work in progress (WiP) backlog, Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) recruited over 800 DMs in a variety of campaigns, at speed, between the beginning of 2023 and September 2023. However, candidates were not assessed against the skills requirements applicable to the DM role, which resulted in people taking up their roles without the required expertise in evidence analysis, decision making, or writing skills. Nor were candidates sufficiently informed of the challenges of the role and the need for resilience in the face of daily exposure to traumatic information and testimony.
- 7.2** In May 2025, some changes were introduced to the recruitment processes to address the above issues, but concerns remained that the pressure to increase numbers had precluded a full tailoring of the campaigns to the DM role requirements. This pressure was also the reason given for why there had been no lessons learned exercise to explore how recruitment campaigns of the past could be used to best plan and develop campaigns going forward. Work continued on developing assessment tools with external providers, but this was only one part of an overall recruitment strategy, and in the absence of a comprehensive feedback exercise and strategy, success may be limited.
- 7.3** The December 2025 National Audit Office report ‘An analysis of the asylum system’ also concluded that the relaxation of recruitment standards to address the asylum-decision backlog had an adverse effect on the quality of decisions, as it resulted in the recruitment of individuals who were not adequately suited to the demands and needs of the DM role.¹²

Staff attrition

- 7.4** Given the demanding nature of the DM roles, it is perhaps not surprising that attrition rates, historically, have been high. An asylum DM recruitment and retention allowance (RRA) was introduced in 2022, and in the first 12 months attrition rates initially reduced from 45.51% to 26.17% but rose again by April 2024 to 32.8%. From April 2024 to May 2025, high attrition rates persisted, with 882 DMs leaving, representing a 42.2% annual attrition rate. The data also indicated that people typically left the DM role after about 11 months, with most of them leaving the Civil Service entirely.

¹² National Audit Office, ‘An analysis of the asylum system’, (published 10 December 2025). <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/an-analysis-of-the-asylum-system/>

- 7.5** The absence of detailed exit interviews meant it was not possible to identify the exact causes for these high rates or the impact and value for money being provided by the RRA. This is another area where the lack of feedback loops and lessons learned meant that opportunities to improve may have been lost.

Performance management

- 7.6** Effective performance management of staff who may not have been tested against or met the basic requirements for the DM role would always be a challenge. This inspection found that 311 core DMs were on performance management plans, with the majority of those having been recruited through various methods such as brigaded and Job Centre Plus campaigns.
- 7.7** Concerns existed at all organisational levels regarding the effectiveness of performance management. Senior managers expressed some doubts about line managers' capabilities to address underperformance and to manage staff effectively. Meanwhile, some individuals responsible for implementing performance management reported feeling pressured to place staff on performance plans. Those subject to performance management often felt unsupported throughout the process.
- 7.8** Some additional training in performance management had been introduced and will hopefully address the situation, albeit to a limited extent. This is another area where lessons need to be learnt.

Training and consolidation

- 7.9** Training of new DMs followed the 70% (on-the-job training) / 20% (consolidation) / 10% (core training) model.¹³ Given the lack of expertise of those recruited as DMs, inspectors were concerned about the adequacy of this approach and whether 10% of the time allocated to core skills was sufficient. The perception among DMs was that the training provided did not prepare them for the role, particularly the interview training.
- 7.10** The inspection found that no consistent consolidation process was being followed, precluding DMs from embedding their learning. While some DMs received effective mentoring support, others worked with mentors who were inexperienced or lacked sufficient time to provide guidance, and 44% of DM respondents to the Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) staff survey reported that they received no mentoring.
- 7.11** Dedicated time for training and development exists (five days learning and development per year) but many DMs felt they were unable to utilise them due to the operational pressures to meet productivity targets. As such, an opportunity to embed quality into decision making was being lost through the priority being given to productivity.
- 7.12** Overall, the efficacy of the training in preparing and supporting DMs for their role and ensuring quality decision making was not considered to be adequate. Inspectors identified a lack of training records and learning-needs analysis, suggesting little proactive planning for a cohort of inexperienced and unqualified recruits who did not have the required expertise. In August 2025, a new learning and development strategy was produced, with an emphasis on the use of Metis¹⁴ to allow for better reporting and records.

¹³ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated that "AHRO follows the 70/20/10 model that applies across the Civil Service".

¹⁴ Metis is the Home Office system used to conduct human resources processes, and financial and procurement transactions.

8. Inspection findings: Operating processes

This section explores the quality results being achieved and how day-to-day operating processes within decision making are affecting quality.

Quality results

- 8.1** All decision-making units (DMUs) had a headline target of achieving a 75% quality (QS1/QS2) score for decisions and interviews, yet no core DMU was meeting this at the time of the inspection, nor had this target been met for some years.
- 8.2** Inspectors calculated that, in the 12 months to October 2025, across core adult DMUs, 54% of decisions received a QS1/QS2 score. Home Office analysis recorded 62% for the same period. It was not possible to reconcile these figures, suggesting data quality may be an issue in assessing the quality of decision making.
- 8.3** Of interviews in the same 12-month period to October 2025, 64% received a QS1/2 score, up 6% on the previous year.¹⁵
- 8.4** Case file examination highlighted several issues with the quality of both interviews and decisions, including inadequate exploration of material facts, inappropriate interview techniques and practices, and poor recording and assessment of relevant facts in reaching a decision. These quality findings were consistent with feedback received from quality and technical staff during onsite discussions.
- 8.5** The Home Office told inspectors that plans to change public reporting of quality data to improve transparency had been submitted to ministers. Inspectors noted that decisions previously deemed unsatisfactory (QS3 and QS4) would be referred to as ‘correct decisions with errors’. Given that QS4 classifications include fail errors and QS3s significant errors, there is a risk that this approach will increase the proportion of lower-quality ‘correct’ decisions.

Quality assurance

- 8.6** Quality assurance operated at several different local and national levels with a range of teams and individuals. As already indicated, the overall governance arrangements for driving quality improvements and quality assurance need clarifying.
- 8.7** First-line assurance functions within DMUs were assessed by the Performance, Assurance, Improvement and Risk (PAIR) team in July 2025 as ‘limited’ but were later revised to ‘moderate’. This assessment did not take account of quality scores, despite them being below internal tolerance thresholds.

¹⁵ The data excludes areas which fall outside the scope of the inspection, such as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and Secondary Casework.

- 8.8** First-line secondary assurance involved senior caseworkers assessing the quality of technical specialist (tech spec) performance through bi-monthly checks. A number of DMUs were not conducting these checks, raising concerns about the reliability and integrity of the quality assurance process. Calibre data showed only 38% of first-line secondary assurance assessments on decisions were satisfactory in the 12 months to October 2025, and 45% for interviews. Although these represented an improvement on the previous 12 months, they were low scores and a cause for concern.
- 8.9** Feedback from tech specs was perceived by decision makers (DMs) in interviews and surveys to be inconsistent and variable in its impact. Furthermore, there are limited structured mechanisms for providing feedback to DMs on issues such as:
- when an interview was assessed outside of the standard quality assurance procedures, the DM who conducted the interview did not typically receive feedback
 - a lack of follow-up checks to confirm previous quality issues had been addressed (for example, supplementary interviews)
 - the absence of embedded feedback mechanisms between different DMUs
 - results of an appeal made against a DMs decision where quality may have been an issue

Measures to address quality performance and results

- 8.10** There was widespread acknowledgement across Asylum and Human Rights Operations (AHRO) that, despite some improvements, the overall quality of decisions and interviews remained far from where it should be. Furthermore, there was the realisation that attempting to improve quality after prioritising productivity is more challenging than prioritising quality alongside productivity from the outset.
- 8.11** A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) rolled out in March 2025 represented a renewed commitment to quality, with an emphasis on a centralised approach to analysing appeal outcomes and judicial reviews, aiming to improve quality and formalise feedback with asylum teams.¹⁶ Other more recent initiatives included:
- a new management information product for 2026, offering deeper insight into decision quality to better target improvement initiatives
 - thematic quality leads to support the Chief Casework Team in establishing formal quality governance structures as well as developing new quality initiatives
 - monthly Senior Management Team quality improvement meetings, chaired by a Senior Civil Servant to ensure a co-ordinated approach to improving decision quality
 - improvements to the Calibre¹⁷ system to provide more comprehensive quality insights and trend analysis, enhancing feedback mechanisms
- 8.12** All of these initiatives are to be welcomed as addressing some of the specific issues this inspection and others have highlighted. However, they fall short of a system-wide strategic approach that the many issues this inspection has highlighted would suggest is needed. The creation of the new Asylum Group provides an opportunity to provide fresh impetus and

¹⁶ The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was approved by the AHRO Executive Board and rolled out in March 2025. The QIP includes development of technical teams, targeted coaching, improved performance management, centralised appeals analysis and feedback loops, and error-based interventions for decision makers.

¹⁷ Calibre is a Home Office tool used to assess and produce management information on the quality of casework decisions and associated processes.

momentum towards achieving a more optimal productivity/quality balance and sustainable quality outcomes.

Interview processes

- 8.13** The two-hour interview process introduced in 2023 was mandated across DMUs for substantive asylum interviews. An optional extension of up to 30 minutes was subsequently introduced and could be used subject to tech spec approval.¹⁸ Significant concerns emerged from the Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) staff survey, which revealed that many DMs (>80%) felt that the allocated time for completing an interview was insufficient, with between 54% and 62% of interviews in the six months to November 2025 exceeding two hours.¹⁹ Stakeholders had also raised concerns that claimants' experiences were not being fully assessed.
- 8.14** Average interview length varied depending on DM experience and applicant nationality, but no flexibility had been introduced to take account of these factors, and the management view was that all DMs should be able to complete interviews within the timeframe.
- 8.15** The process allowed for supplementary interviews (when an initial interview failed to meet quality standards), or continuation interviews (when an interview could not be completed within the two-hour window), with the expectation that no more than 15% of interviews should utilise either process.²⁰ Practice was inconsistent across DMUs, with examples of DMUs banning all continuation interviews, and some encouraging DMs to write out to claimants instead.
- 8.16** Inspectors found that, in February 2025, up to 75% of supplementary interviews were due to poor DM practices in the original interview. Monthly data consistently showed the single identifiable cause of suspended interviews to be case complexity, supporting the need for either a tailored approach or an overall extension of time allowed.
- 8.17** Case file examination showed instances of DMs asking applicants to limit their responses and an inadequate exploration of material facts, impacting the quality of both the interview and the subsequent decision. The Performance, Assurance, Improvement and Risk (PAIR) team identified similar occurrences during a targeted review in Autumn 2024, with time pressures quoted as the reason.
- 8.18** The above suggests that the interview regime with its strict time restriction is having a significant effect on interview and decision quality. Managers were seemingly reluctant to accept this view, and their insistence on maintaining the status quo risked jeopardising any initiatives to improve quality.

Streamlined grant process

- 8.19** Case file examination showed that over 10% of adult cases (11 out of 102) were considered under a streamlined process, despite inspectors being told by the Home Office that no streamlined processes were being used. Many of these cases had no minutes to explain the

¹⁸ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated, "a new flexible interview model was introduced in November 2024 which permits a minimum of two hours and 30 minutes, and up to three hours where required".

¹⁹ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated that "the average time over this period was two hours and one minute".

²⁰ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated, "although we do monitor the data around supplementary and continuation interviews and report on this, there is no set target to keep this at a particular level. The purpose in recording this is to ensure interview capacity can be managed effectively not to set a target on how many interviews use the process."

decision rationale, making it difficult to assess quality. Use of the process varied across DMUs, ranging from one DMU using it regularly to another not using it at all. This raised questions about the potential impact on quality and consistency of approach.²¹

Guidance

- 8.20** According to managers, unapproved guidance should not exist, despite inspectors finding evidence of it. A ‘surfacing exercise’ to identify any unapproved local guidance had commenced at the time of this inspection.
- 8.21** Over 80% of DMs who responded to the ICIBI survey stated that they found semi-scripted interview guides helpful, especially in mitigating gaps arising from their training. Inspectors also found through onsite discussions and stakeholder feedback that this process risked applicants not being listened to. The case examination exercise carried out by inspectors suggested this was indeed happening.
- 8.22** The need for such guidance by DMs suggests that the training regime was not embedding the core skills for interviewing and/or decision making, with inevitable impacts on quality. A re-evaluation of current methods is needed to determine what is most appropriate to ensure DMs have the requisite skills and expertise without the need for semi-scripted interviews.

Use of Artificial Intelligence in asylum casework

- 8.23** The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in asylum casework was in its infancy. Approved tools such as the Asylum Policy Search tool were implemented across all DMUs by July 2025, but its effectiveness and reliability were varied. Managers attributed the lack of awareness to a clash with the rollout of Copilot, an AI tool that is not permitted for use in asylum interviewing or decision-making processes. Despite this, inspectors found there was evidence that AI applications like Copilot and ChatGPT had been used inappropriately in asylum decision letters and interviews. DMU managers told inspectors that these instances had been addressed.

²¹ In its factual accuracy response, the Home Office stated, “under the ‘streamline’ process, the reasons for granting refugee status were recorded within Atlas and could be viewed through the associated task card, rather than in a separate grant minute. Use of Atlas ‘streamline consider’ task ceased in adult asylum casework as of August 2025, and in children’s asylum casework in November 2025. All reasons for granting refugee status are now recorded in a separate consideration minute.”

9. Inspection findings: External environment

This section explores other external and environmental factors that may impact on the work of the decision-making units (DMUs) and the quality agenda.

Working environment and staff concerns

- 9.1** Inspectors met with many staff who were dedicated and committed to their roles. Nevertheless, while conditions varied across the DMUs, inspectors had a widespread sense that decision makers (DMs), team leaders, and other staff were stressed, anxious, and worried on a regular basis. In the Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) survey, 69.8% of DMs stated that they wanted to “leave as soon as possible” or “within the next 12 months”, citing low morale, poor mental health, anxiety, stress, exhaustion, and sickness among their reasons. These results were consistent with high attrition rates.
- 9.2** Relations between junior and senior staff came across as strained, with many of the former citing undue managerial pressure and micromanagement, and the latter being ready to ascribe their shortcomings to a lack of skills and competence. Overall, there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the other’s positions or awareness of the pressures the whole system was experiencing. Mutual trust and respect appeared more absent than present, a worrying consideration for such a vital function.
- 9.3** The inspection did find places, notably Stoke DMU, where relations were improved and a better understanding was being established, leading to a more positive environment and atmosphere.

Appeals, systems, and data

- 9.4** Over the past few years, the number of new asylum appeals has increased dramatically from ca. 8,000 in 2022-23 to well over 29,000 in 2023-24. Concurrently, the backlog of appeals awaiting a hearing has grown as the backlog of initial asylum decisions has reduced.
- 9.5** A limited number of asylum appeals are assessed by the Pre Appeals Review Unit (PARU) before being determined at a tribunal. Of the asylum refusals withdrawn by PARU between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2024, 74% were due to an incorrect or partially flawed decision. This reflected poorly on the sustainability of refusals being made by asylum DMs.
- 9.6** Since the transition from CID to Atlas²², it had not been possible for the Home Office to provide data or feedback on the outcome of asylum appeals to DMUs. Although local workarounds had been implemented, this shortcoming with Atlas had hindered the ability to identify and

²² CID (Case Information Database) is the legacy caseworking system of the Home Office which was replaced by Atlas, the current caseworking system.

monitor trends and to learn effectively from appeals. Work to resolve this was ongoing but required a full rebuild of other platforms, and it was anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025.

- 9.7** Inspectors found it difficult to obtain consistent figures on decision and interview quality from the Calibre records. This was highlighted in differences between the Home Office's and inspectors' analysis of quality scores, and in Home Office internal reporting, as discussed in chapter 8. A Performance, Assurance, Improvement and Risk (PAIR) report in July 2025 also recognised issues with data integrity attributed to the move from Calibre 1 to Calibre 2 and recommended cleansing the data to ensure consistency.

Transformation

- 9.8** Asylum processes were undergoing a number of transformation initiatives, such as enhancements to asylum screening and the use of questionnaires to improve front-end information gathering. These could enable decisions to be made without a substantive asylum interview. Project trial evaluations found this was possible in up to 3.14% of cases, with scope for even greater potential.²³
- 9.9** In addition, a number of digital technology improvements were planned, all of which should lead in time to improved efficiency and effectiveness in the decision-making process.

²³ In trials, decisions could have been made on paper for 3.14% of the enhanced screening cohort and 2.6 % of the questionnaire cohort, with the potential of increasing the latter up to 4.3%.

10. Comparison of findings with those of the 2021 and 2023 ICIBI asylum casework inspections

- 10.1** The last inspection of asylum casework took place between June and October 2023 and focused on asylum decision making since the implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022. Its scope included:
- retention and recruitment of decision makers
 - the effectiveness of training given to those involved in asylum casework
 - workplace culture and performance management
 - barriers to case progression and decisions being made efficiently
 - the prioritisation of asylum casework
 - initiatives and operations to increase efficiency
- 10.2** Some of the findings and issues identified in the 2023 inspection were consistent with findings made in this inspection, indicating that there had been little or no progress in those areas.
- 10.3** Both the 2021 and 2023 inspections reported on the “relentless” focus on productivity, which had a significant impact on staff morale, with staff feeling quantity was being prioritised over quality. Inspectors found that this focus had not changed and was still impacting morale, and that it was contributing, in some instances, to a negative working environment.
- 10.4** This inspection identified similar quality issues to those that arose in the 2021 inspection, such as inadequate probing of material facts and poor-quality interviews negatively affecting asylum decisions, prompting the need for additional interviews.
- 10.5** Decision-making and interview quality were notably higher between July 2019 and December 2020, during which the target of 75% of decisions scoring DQ1 and DQ2 (now QS1 and QS2) was met in some quarters and narrowly missed in others. This compared with decision making units not meeting this target for the timeframe assessed in this inspection and, in most months, falling significantly short of it.
- 10.6** During the 2021 inspection, the re-interview process could be used where decisions were deemed unsatisfactory, and there were no interview time limits. Only 2.1% of interviews needed a further interview. In contrast, between October 2024 and June 2025, 17.74% of completed interviews required an additional interview.

Annex A: 2023 ICIBI inspection of asylum casework – accepted and closed recommendations

Recommendation 2

“a) Identify vulnerable claimants in the asylum work in progress (WIP) queue and prioritise their claims.”

This recommendation was accepted and closed in November 2024. The prioritisation of vulnerable applicants was not a focus for the 2025 inspection.

Recommendation 3

“a) Review the inadmissibility WIP (including the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) cohort) to ensure that only claimants who have a realistic prospect of removal from the UK are considered under the process.

b) Ensure claimants are informed in writing when their claim is referred for consideration under the inadmissibility or MEDP process.”

This recommendation was accepted and closed upon publication of the 2023 asylum inspection on 29 February 2024. Inadmissibility was not in scope for the 2025 inspection as it did not impact asylum decision quality.

Recommendation 4

“a) Confirm and implement the delineation of decision maker training and consolidation responsibilities between the training team and decision-making units.

b) Use feedback from decision-making units and stakeholders to continually review and update the training provided to Asylum Operations staff.”

The Home Office also accepted and closed recommendation 4 upon publication of the report. Despite this, during the 2025 inspection of asylum casework, staff feedback from interviews and the Independent Chief Inspectorate of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) surveys of decision makers and technical specialists was that, while a defined consolidation framework existed, it was not being applied consistently across decision-making units, and in some cases staff told inspectors they had received no consolidation period at all. Regarding feedback mechanisms for reviewing and updating training, inspectors learned that new processes had been implemented at the time of this inspection.

Recommendation 6

“a) Ensure that routine quality assurance assessments are carried out on all asylum interviews and decisions, including withdrawn claims since December 2022, to ensure the 3.5% target is met.”

This recommendation was accepted and closed in November 2024. Inspectors found that routine sampling for interviews had been implemented effectively. The 3.5% routine sampling target was subsequently revised internally to 2% for decisions and expanded to include the newly introduced 2% routine interview sampling process.

Annex B: results of ICIBI survey, July 2025

Decision maker survey results

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?							
Answer choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable (training not completed)	Response total
Current targets for asylum casework are set at the right level	0.40% 1	4.37% 11	7.94% 20	26.98% 68	59.13% 149	1.19% 3	252
I regularly achieve my targets for asylum casework	5.16% 13	20.63% 52	21.83% 55	28.97% 73	21.43% 54	1.98% 5	252
I find the two-hour target allows sufficient time to conduct a thorough interview and explore all aspects of the asylum claim	2.78% 7	5.95% 15	9.52% 24	19.44% 49	57.94% 146	4.37% 11	252

What do senior managers and leaders in asylum prioritise?		
Answer choices	Response	Response total
Quantity of your output	83.73%	211
Quality of your output	1.98%	5
Both quantity and quality	10.71%	27
Undecided	3.57%	9

How satisfied were you with the quality of the training you received?		
Answer choices	Response	Response total
Very satisfied	5.16%	13
Satisfied	30.95%	78
Neutral	20.63%	52
Dissatisfied	30.16%	76
Very dissatisfied	13.10%	33

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?							
Answer choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable (training not undertaken)	Response total
The training I have received has equipped me to write grant decisions effectively.	7.94% 20	29.76% 75	15.87% 40	28.97% 73	17.06% 43	0.40% 1	252
The training I have received has equipped me to write refusal decisions effectively.	5.16% 13	21.03% 53	13.10% 33	30.16% 76	30.16% 76	0.40% 1	252
The training I have received has equipped me to conduct substantive interviews effectively.	7.94% 20	33.73% 85	15.87% 40	23.81% 60	18.25% 46	0.40% 1	252

Have you completed a period of mentoring?		
Answer choices	Response	Response total
Yes	51.59%	130
No – I am currently being mentored	4.37%	11
No – I have not received any mentoring	44.05%	111

Was the interview training followed by a consolidation period in which you were able to embed your learning before conducting substantive asylum interviews?

Answer choices	Response	Response total
Not applicable (training not undertaken)	0.79%	2
No	39.29%	99
Yes	59.92%	151

How often do you apply the ‘interview-decide’ model within your unit?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
19.84%	53.17%	17.46%	5.16%	4.37%
50	134	44	13	11

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Answer choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable – model not applied	Response total
In your opinion, is the ‘interview-decide’ model an efficient way of making decisions?	42.86%	34.52%	11.90%	4.37%	3.17%	3.17%	252
	108	87	30	11	8	8	

Have you used AI tools as part of the decision-making or interview process? (select all that apply)

Answer choices	Response	Response total
No – I have not yet used any available AI tools	56.35%	142
I have used the Asylum Case Summarisation (ACS) tool	2.38%	6
I have used the Asylum Policy Search (APS) tool	37.70%	95
I have used other AI tools (please specify)	15.08%	38

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?							
Answer choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable (training not completed)	Response total
The AI tools I have used provide accurate and relevant information	3.17% 8	25.40% 64	17.86% 45	5.95% 15	2.38% 6	45.24% 114	252
The AI tools I have used have positively contributed to my productivity and efficiency	4.76% 12	17.06% 43	17.46% 44	10.32% 26	4.76% 12	45.63% 115	252

How long do you want to stay in your current role?		
Answer choices	Response	Response total
I want to leave as soon as possible	41.27%	104
I want to leave within the next 12 months	28.57%	72
I want to stay for at least the next year	15.48%	39
I want to stay for at least the next three years	14.68%	37

Technical specialist survey results

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?						
Answer choices	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response total
Team leaders and technical specialists work effectively together to provide support and performance management for decision makers	14.06% 9	45.31% 29	15.63% 10	18.75% 12	6.25% 4	64

Annex C: Sampling quality scores

Note: The following data was extracted from Calibre data provided by the Home Office. The following teams were considered out of scope for this inspection and therefore excluded from the data analysis: Detained Asylum Casework, Flexible Deployment Team, Secondary, and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children asylum teams. Additionally, entries recorded as Liverpool or Solihull Asylum were also excluded, as the dataset provided did not differentiate between adults and children due to inaccurate data entries.

Routine sampling quality scores (decisions)

Routine sampling QS scores for the rolling 12-month period from November 2024 to October 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	1,174	39%	1,630	54%	Satisfactory
QS2	456	15%			
QS3	687	23%	1,224	40%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	537	18%			
QS5	186	6%	186	6%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

Routine sampling QS scores for the 12-month period from April 2024 to March 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	1,195	39%	1,576	51%	Satisfactory
QS2	381	12%			
QS3	698	23%	1,283	42%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	585	19%			
QS5	210	7%	210	7%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

Routine sampling of QS scores for the 12-month period from April 2023 to March 2024					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	353	35%	454	45%	Satisfactory
QS2	101	10%			
QS3	287	29%	479	48%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	192	19%			
QS5	65	7%	65	7%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

Routine sampling quality scores (interviews)

Routine sampling QS scores for the rolling 12-month period from November 2024 to October 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	1,003	39%	1,636	64%	Satisfactory
QS2	633	25%			
QS3	607	24%	806	31%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	199	8%			
QS5	124	5%	124	5%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

Routine sampling QS scores for the 12-month period from April 2024 to March 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	873	35%	1,450	58%	Satisfactory
QS2	577	23%			
QS3	606	24%	878	35%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	272	11%			
QS5	155	6%	155	6%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

First-line secondary assurance quality scores (decisions)

First-line secondary assurance QS scores for the rolling 12-month period from November 2024 to October 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	70	27%	98	38%	Satisfactory
QS2	28	11%			
QS3	75	29%	143	55%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	68	26%			
QS5	17	7%	17	7%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

First line secondary assurance QS scores for the 12-month period from April 2024 to March 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	93	19%	140	28%	Satisfactory
QS2	47	9%			
QS3	161	32%	311	62%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	150	30%			
QS5	51	10%	51	10%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

First-line secondary assurance quality scores (interviews)

First-line secondary assurance QS scores for the rolling 12-month period from November 2024 to October 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	27	20%	60	45%	Satisfactory
QS2	33	25%			
QS3	52	39%	63	47%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	11	8%			
QS5	10	8%	10	8%	Unsatisfactory and wrong

First-line secondary assurance QS scores for the 12-month period from April 2024 to March 2025					
	Number	Percentage	Total number	Total percentage	Satisfactory/unsatisfactory
QS1	19	22%	40	46%	Satisfactory
QS2	21	24%			
QS3	32	37%	40	46%	Unsatisfactory but outcome correct
QS4	8	9%			
QS5	7	8%			

Annex D: Quality assurance error descriptors and scoring system

Error descriptors

The Home Office Calibre Assurance Sampling Framework defines what constitutes a minor, significant and fail error as follows:

“Minor Errors look like: An error which does not detract from the consideration and would not affect the outcome of the decision, and should be quickly rectified – there are no apparent risks/negative impact on the customer, Home Office, or the UK as a result.

Significant Errors look like: An error which detracts from the quality of the consideration of the decision and requires attention to address serious weaknesses or omissions. There are potential risks/negative impact on the customer, Home Office, or UK as a result.

Critical Errors look like: An error which not only detracts from the consideration but also affects the decision such that the outcome cannot necessarily be relied upon, and immediate attention is required to address the critical failure(s) – there are significant risks / negative impact on the customer, Home Office, or the UK as a result of this error.”

Scoring system

The Calibre Assurance Sampling Framework also outlines the quality assurance scoring system, with scores for casework (including decisions and interviews) awarded on a scale of 1 (high quality) to 5 (fail) using the following standard calculations:

- QS1: Less than 20% minor errors
- QS2: 20% or more minor errors
- QS3: One or more significant errors
- QS4: One or more fail errors, and the outcome is assessed as ‘probably correct’
- QS5: One or more fail errors, and the outcome is assessed as ‘probably wrong’, or one or more fail errors relate to special policies, including safeguarding, security, and modern slavery

For all reporting purposes, overall scores of QS1 and QS2 will be considered satisfactory, while QS3, QS4 and QS5 will be considered unsatisfactory.

Annex E: Role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector

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 UK Borders Act 2007 (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 their behalf. The legislation empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions and in particular:

- consistency of approach
- the practice and performance of listed persons compared to other persons doing similar activities
- the 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)
- the 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)
- the 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
- the 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 them in writing in relation to specified matters.

The legislation requires the Independent Chief Inspector to report in writing to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State lays all reports before Parliament, which they have committed to do 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 it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual's safety, in which case the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report.

As soon as a report has been laid in Parliament, it is published on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's response to the report and recommendations.

Annex F: ICIBI ‘expectations’

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)

Acknowledgements

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Inspection team members

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Inspector:	Julie Dugdale
Inspector:	Louise Milligan
Inspector:	Matthew Adlam
Summer intern:	Iris Tunley

