



Home Office

The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector's report:

'The Extent to Which Police Are Identifying and Flagging Up Foreign Nationals Arrested to the Home Office and Checking Status'

April-June 2016

The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector (ICI) for the recommendations in his report on the extent to which Police are identifying and flagging up Foreign Nationals arrested to the Home Office and checking status.

Operation Nexus began in 2012 as an operational and intelligence partnership between Immigration Enforcement and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) that focused on improving the management of, and responsiveness to, foreign national offending in London.

Operation Nexus ensures that more resources, tools and intelligence are deployed to remove foreign national offenders earlier, and for those who cause most harm, to use the combined powers of the police and Immigration Enforcement to remove or disrupt them. As of 5 April 2015, Operation Nexus Custody aligned to the MPS Detention Regional Clusters. Immigration Enforcement officers work out of 'hub stations', which have been identified as having the highest foreign national offender footfall in each cluster and/or are the most productive in terms of removals generated per Immigration Officer. The relationships within London between the MPS and Immigration Enforcement continue to go from strength to strength.

Outside of London, the relationships between police forces and Immigration Enforcement continue to embed and improve. Where necessary and appropriate a similar process of embedded Immigration Officers exist in key custody suites, with deployable support to other suites that do not require full-time cover. The Home Office recognises that such joint working has the potential to transform dramatically how law enforcement tackles criminality and immigration, both of which go to the core aim of protecting the public.

We were pleased to note the Independent Chief Inspector found that "Operation Nexus (initiated in 2012) had led to closer and smarter working between the police and the Home Office. In general, joint working, including embedding Immigration Officers in police stations, produced the "best results" and recognises that "embedded IOs were able to forge effective working relationships with police counterparts, and to exchange knowledge and expertise."

We acknowledge the ongoing need to build and improve upon successes to date, and welcome the recommendations in this report. We have already begun the process of implementing some of the ICI's recommendations.

The Home Office fully accepts two recommendations, and the third in part. Our responses are below.

1. Recommendation 1: That the Home Office should:

Ensure that Immigration Officers (IOs) record, in a way that is centrally retrievable, where the police have requested an immigration status check locally rather than through the Home Office Command and Control Unit (CCU), in order:

- a. to produce a more accurate picture of the levels of referrals of arrested or encountered foreign nationals by each police force;**
- b. to work with those forces where immigration status check rates are low to improve compliance.**

1.1 Accepted.

1.2 Since the conclusion of this inspection, we have reviewed our guidance to staff to ensure that all checks undertaken are recorded on the National Operations Database (NOD) so

that data retrieved from that system can be combined with the data from the CCU Enquiry Database (ED) to form a comprehensive picture of compliance. We can then work directly with those forces with lower compliance rates to seek improvements. A longer term proposal to have one national standalone system for the recording of all checks undertaken is currently being considered.

2. Recommendation 2: That the Home Office should:

With police forces, review how available resources are best configured (for example, specialist ('Nexus') teams, embedded IOs, 'hub and spoke' arrangements) to promote effective joint or collaborative working between police and Immigration Officers in relation to foreign nationals arrested or encountered by the police.

2.1 Accepted.

2.2 Deployment levels to police stations are subject to regular review, and will be further reviewed in light of the results of activity to drive up compliance rates. As each police force becomes more compliant in undertaking immigration checks on all those arrested, there may be an increased demand for IO resource in police stations which will again be addressed by local managers.

3. Recommendation 3: That the Home Office should:

With police forces, review and reach agreement on data and systems access requirements to support joint or collaborative working in relation to foreign nationals arrested or encountered by the police, including (but not limited to):

a. Immigration Officer access to the Home Office CID while working in police stations, so that status checks and other enforcement activity can be carried out efficiently;

b. the sharing of the results of ACRO Criminal Records Office checks, so that foreign nationals with previous convictions can be efficiently identified and assessed for enforcement action;

c. Nexus Joint Operations Centre (JOC) direct access to HMPO's Data Validation Application, so that claims to UK citizenship can be checked where there is doubt as to such a claim.

3.1 Accepted in part.

3.2 We have agreed to review the provision of IT systems to officers working in police stations.

3.3 It is accepted that there are restrictions in sharing ACRO criminal records data for immigration purposes which **limits** the volume of information which can be made available to immigration officials under existing processes. However, we will consider whether there are ways to obtain more efficiently criminal records data on foreign nationals for immigration purposes.

3.4 We have agreed to seek direct access to the HMPO Data Validation Application (DVA) in the Nexus JOC.