

Inspection Report Published: An inspection of asylum casework

I welcome the publication of this report, which explored the efficacy of the Home Office's ability to make timely and good quality asylum decisions. It examined resourcing, training, workflow, case progression and the prioritisation of cases, as well as the quality of interviews, decisions and quality assurance mechanisms.

The inspection began at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While the pandemic had impacted asylum operations, most, if not all, of the issues identified by this inspection predate it. Primarily, the Home Office is still failing to keep on top of the number of asylum decisions it is required to make. The inspection found that the length of time asylum claimants had waited for a decision increased annually since 2011. In 2020, adult asylum claimants were waiting an average of 449 days. This increased to 550 days for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Delayed decision-making is caused by a number of factors, including workforce capabilities, inefficient workflow processes, a reliance on outdated IT, and routing asylum claims for inadmissibility consideration in the absence of any bilateral agreements with EU countries. In addition to timeliness concerns, the inspection found problems with the quality of interviews and decisions, and with quality assurance mechanisms.

An efficient and effective asylum casework system is in the interest of all parties. It is clear that the current system pleases nobody, least of all asylum claimants who are currently in limbo awaiting a decision, or the Home Office itself who are having to fund asylum accommodation for those awaiting a decision and pay to defend poor quality decisions in court.

I made nine recommendations focusing on case progression, workplace culture, training and skills. I am pleased that the Home Office accepted eight recommendations in full, and partially accepted one. I am also encouraged to learn that work on their implementation commenced prior to publication of this report.