

Inspection report published: An inspection of juxtaposed controls, April – May 2022

News story

This inspection team visited the UK Border Force juxtaposed controls at Paris Gare du Nord and Coquelles. The report makes 3 recommendations.



Publishing the report, David Neal, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), said:

I welcome the publication of this report, which examined the quality of decision making at juxtaposed controls. Inspectors conducted a sample of 109 Border Force records for passengers subjected to further examination at all juxtaposed controls throughout March 2022, and visited Paris Gare du Nord and Coquelles, France, to observe practices on the ground.

Overall, this inspection found that staff were generally doing an effective job and that decision making was generally conducted in line with guidance, policy and the Immigration Rules, though this was caveated by the fact that poor record keeping sometimes made it difficult to tell whether a decision was correct. I was particularly pleased to see that the principles of the 'ethical decision-making model' were being applied.

I made three recommendations. First, on improving record keeping and ensuring the rationale underpinning decisions was clearly articulated. Second, on introducing guidance and policy instructions for Border Force staff on the use of 'elect to embark', which I found was currently being applied inconsistently and possibly incorrectly. Finally, in light of transparency data that suggested Romanian nationals are subjected to greater levels of questioning at juxtaposed controls than other nationals, I

recommended that the Home Office conduct a review to ascertain on what grounds particular nationalities were being subjected to greater levels of scrutiny.

It is disappointing that, of the three recommendations made, one has been rejected, and two were only partially accepted on the basis of the Home Office being unable to meet the stated timeframe for implementation. This was partly due to the Home Office already having some projects in train (such as the Border Crossing project), though receipt of my report does not appear to have influenced a more rapid introduction of this technical solution.

Further, it is disappointing that the Home Office has rejected my recommendation regarding the disparate treatment of certain nationalities at the juxtaposed controls. While I accept that immigration functions are exempt from certain elements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Home Office has provided an assurance that passengers are not being targeted on the basis of nationality, my inspectors could not be satisfied that the current approach taken by Border Force in respect of the questioning and examination of arriving passengers of certain nationalities at juxtaposed controls could be objectively justified.

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