

News story: A re-inspection of the Home Office's Reporting and Offender Management processes and of its management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders

My original inspection reports on the Home Office's Reporting and Offender Management (ROM) processes and on its management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) were published together in November 2017 since they dealt with various overlapping issues.

The ROMs report made six recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Home Office, and the FNOs inspection made a further eight, six of which were accepted, one partially accepted, and one rejected.

This re-inspection looked again at all 14 recommendations. It found that the Home Office had made significant efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the reporting process, principally through technology-enabled smarter working, and that a good deal of analysis and review work had been done in relation to the management of "out of contact" cases. However, at the time of the inspection, it was unable to evidence that any of the original six recommendations could yet be considered "Closed". Crucially, Home Office guidance on how to deal with non-compliance with reporting requirements and absconders had not been updated and practice varied across the ROMs and caseworking units. This issue, particularly the tracing of absconders, deserved to be treated with considerably more urgency than the Home Office had shown.

The original FNO report acknowledged that implementation of the recommendations would not change some of the underlying challenges or risks surrounding the monitoring and removal of non-detained FNOs, but it was important that the Home Office was able to demonstrate it was doing as much as it possibly could to manage them. This re-inspection found that five of the eight recommendations could now be considered closed. However, the Home Office had not made the promised improvements in its recording and quality assurance of FNO casework, which raised questions about how well it actually understood and was mitigating the risks.

My report, which was sent to the Home Secretary on 31 January 2019, made four recommendations, the first of which concerned taking the necessary actions to close the original recommendations without further delays. The Home Office has accepted this and set out the actions it has taken or is planning to take. Towards the end of 2019-20, I will look for confirmation that these actions have been completed and have been successful.

Two other recommendations concerned FNO management, including a request for

the Home Office to revisit its rejection of my recommendation regarding monitoring re-offending rates for FNOs released to 'no fixed abode', which the Home Office has now accepted. Again, this is a matter of demonstrating that it has a grip on the risks.

My final recommendation looked to ensure that the moves towards smarter working at the ROMs do not have the unintended consequence of reducing the Home Office's ability to safeguard vulnerable individuals. In accepting this recommendation, the Home Office has referenced the commitments it made in response to my earlier report on its identification and safeguarding of (non-detained) vulnerable adults. During 2019-20, I plan to check on its progress in fulfilling those commitments.