

Press release: Chief Inspector publishes reports on the Reporting and Offender Management processes, and the Management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders

The completed reports were sent to the Home Secretary in May and June 2017.

In June 2016, I was asked by the Home Secretary to consider bringing forward some work that I had included in my inspection plan for 2018/19 under the theme of 'Compliance Management and Enforcement'. The two inspection reports published today are the result of that work.

The first examines the efficiency and effectiveness of the Home Office's Reporting and Offender Management (ROM) system, focusing on its understanding and management of the reporting population (those individuals notified of their liability for detention and removal from the UK). It also looks at the implementation of policy and guidance relating to absconders (individuals who have failed to report and whose whereabouts are unknown).

The second examines the Home Office's management of non-detained Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) towards their removal from the UK. This second report looks in particular at the actions taken by the Home Office since 2016, following the creation of an improvement plan to address identified failings.

In both cases, I found people and processes under strain. The numbers required to report routinely mean that it is extremely difficult for staff at Reporting Centres to ensure that reporting events are 'meaningful', in terms of encouraging voluntary departures or resolving barriers to removal. Meanwhile, the removal of FNOs is regularly frustrated, often by last minute legal challenges, and monitoring non-detained FNOs effectively is a challenge and one that raises obvious public protection concerns.

The ROM system is hampered by poor communication and coordination within the Home Office. The inspection found that recording and treatment of non-compliance with reporting restrictions was inconsistent, and there was little evidence of effective action to locate absconders. The ROM report makes 6 recommendations grouped under 3 headings: achieving the stated purpose of the ROM system; concluding cases; and, managing non-compliance.

The FNO inspection makes 8 recommendations, including completion of the improvement work begun in 2016. While these will not change some of the underlying issues and risks, they are important in ensuring that processes are as efficient and effective as they can be.

I have read with interest the Home Office's responses to my recommendations, which I saw shortly before the reports were laid in Parliament. All but two of the recommendations have been accepted in full. I look forward to re-inspecting both areas of work in 2018, when I hope to be able to confirm that the necessary improvements have been made and sustained. In the case of the partially accepted and rejected recommendations, I will be looking to test that the measures to monitor and manage the risks associated with FNOs referred to in the responses are indeed effective.