

Inspection Report Published: A short inspection of Border Force queue management at Birmingham Airport based upon onsite observations

News story

The report makes 3 recommendations which focus on adequate and effective Border Force staff coverage across key functions.



Publishing the report, David Neal said:

I chose Birmingham Airport as a smaller airport to inspect and, although flights were running at reduced capacity due to COVID-19, it had a sufficient number of international flight arrivals at the time of the inspection.

Queues at passport control at UK airports have been the subject of media focus this year and I wanted to observe queue management and measurement processes.

Whilst inspectors observed no issue with queue lengths or breaches of the service performance standard, and the flow of passengers through Birmingham Airport was generally good, there was an absence of a clear and consistent approach to queue measurement, which is integral to effective queue monitoring and workforce planning.

Although the inspection scope did not include customs activity, inspectors identified that Border Force staff had been re-deployed from the customs channel to passport control to avoid queue build-ups. I am pleased that Border Force is reviewing existing staffing levels to ensure sufficient coverage in both customs and immigration areas

according to identified risks. Nevertheless, I am concerned, and I think the public should be concerned, if checks in the customs channels are routinely sacrificed for targets in queues. I will continue to monitor this area to ensure that resources are deployed in an effective and efficient manner.

I made three recommendations which focused on adequate and effective Border Force staff coverage across key functions, including the roving officer role, and a consistent approach to queue measurement.

I am pleased that the Home Office accepted two of these recommendations in full, and partially accepted one. I am encouraged that Border Force has already started work to standardise queue measurement methodology and that national queue standards and procedures are undergoing a fuller review.

David Neal Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Published 12 January 2022