

Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the Home Office Presenting Officer function

Certain decisions by the Home Office attract a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber (FTTIAC). The Home Secretary is represented in the FTTIAC by Home Office Presenting Officers (POs) and in the Upper Tribunal by Senior Presenting Officers. This inspection examined the PO function, focusing on staffing, the training, guidance and support available to POs, and Home Office learning from appeals, including feedback to decision-making and policy areas to avert decisions that are likely to result in allowed appeals.

The number of appeals reached a peak of 205,891 in 2008-09. Between 2013 and 2015 the government removed the right of appeal for most types of immigration decision, providing instead an ability to reapply and provide further information or to seek an administrative review – see [An inspection of Administrative Reviews](#)

While the number of appeals fell significantly it has remained high. Since 2017-18, there have been 40-50,000 a year. Figures published by the Ministry of Justice showed that between January and March 2020 the FTTIAC received 10,000 appeals (while the Upper Tribunal received a further 1,500). These large volumes create resource and logistical challenges. Inspectors looked at how the Home Office was managing these challenges, including its involvement in Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service's "Reform Programme", which was aiming to transform the way in which Tribunals worked, primarily through technology-enabled smarter working.

Meanwhile, the composition of the appeals caseload has shifted, with relatively simple entry clearance and family visit visa appeals removed and a larger proportion of more complex cases involving human rights issues and protection claims. The inspection looked at the implications for PO training, support and case preparation time.

Inspectors also looked at stakeholder engagement. There are obvious stakeholders: internally, the Secretary of State and the department need the PO function to be efficient and effective; externally, the same is true of HMCTS and of Tribunal Judges. Appellants and their representatives may be more ambivalent about POs' effectiveness insofar as this translates into upheld decisions, but still need the PO function to work well. More generally, there is the question of public confidence in the integrity of the UK's immigration system, in which an efficient and effective appeals process has to be a key component.

Ultimately, it is in everyone's interests that the PO function is properly resourced and supported, with well-trained, professional staff and reliable ways of working.

The inspection showed that, although the Home Office was making efforts to improve the PO function and the wider appeals process, there was more that it could be doing to professionalise POs, to connect up its processes, and to position itself with its key external stakeholders.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 29 October 2020. It contained six recommendations and I encouraged the Home Office to press ahead with implementing them rather than be tempted to defer some actions until further progress had been made with the Reform Programme. I am therefore pleased that the department has not only accepted all of the recommendations but has set out a clear timetable for their implementation.

[New partnership pledges clear and consistent evidence-based guidance on medicines for pregnant and breastfeeding women](#)

A major new initiative to ensure pregnant and breastfeeding women can make informed decisions about their healthcare was announced today by health minister, Nadine Dorries.

[The Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Consortium](#) brings together 16 leading organisations under a common pledge to meet the information needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women and healthcare professionals, through accessible, clear and consistent advice.

The partnership spans the NHS, regulators, and leading third sector and charitable organisations. Together, this group will develop a long-term programme of work to improve information provision on medicines for women who are thinking about becoming pregnant, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

In the UK, hundreds of thousands of babies are born each year, and more than 50% of expectant mums will need to take a medicine of some description when pregnant. However, more needs to be known about the effects of taking medicines in pregnancy.

Work on this is already underway. [A report published by the Commission on Human Medicines \(CHM\) Expert Working Group on Optimising Data on Medicines used During Pregnancy](#) has today provided recommendations on ways in which data on medicines used in pregnancy and breastfeeding can be better collected and made available for analysis. This will enable more robust evidence to be generated through research and will be important in helping to develop clear and consistent advice about medicines used during pregnancy and breastfeeding – the main aim of the Consortium.

Recommendations of the report include the better capture and linking of existing data, exploring new ways to collect relevant information on exposure to medicines during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and improving access to and quality of data to further enable research. The Consortium welcomes the recommendations of the report.

To support the aims of the Consortium, the MHRA has developed [a webpage](#) to assist users in finding information and projects related to medicines use in pregnancy and breastfeeding. This webpage includes links to Consortium members' websites, which also contain important information.

Healthcare professionals are asked to report important inconsistencies in UK advice on use on individual or classes of medicines in pregnancy or breastfeeding to [the Consortium](#).

Anyone can report suspected side effects with medicines or adverse events with medical devices, including those experienced by the mother or baby during pregnancy or breast feeding, to the [Yellow Card scheme](#).

Nadine Dorries, Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health, said:

“It is vitally important women are empowered to make informed decisions about their healthcare during pregnancy and this means accessing timely information and answers about any medicines they consider taking while pregnant or breastfeeding.

“I am delighted so many of the health system's main information providers are working closely together to address this and I look forward to seeing positive results from this new collaboration.”

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive and Chair of the Consortium, said:

“We know that in many cases the information on taking medicines when pregnant or breastfeeding can be improved. I would encourage healthcare professionals to report any important inconsistencies you find on our webpage.

“There is vital work to be done, as started by the EWG report published today and continued by our new Consortium, which is addressing the issue head on. Today is an important step, and we are proud to have brought this partnership together.”

Notes to editors

The Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Information Consortium was set up following the [Commission for Human Medicines report on Hormone Pregnancy Tests](#), published in 2017.

Its launch was announced as part of a statement setting out the government's response to the recommendations in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

The Consortium will focus on delivering recommendation 11 of the report: “The

MHRA should work with the key information providers to ensure healthcare professionals and patients receive the best available information, and are empowered to make informed decisions and ask questions about any medicines they may be prescribed in pregnancy.”

First level advice for women who are thinking about getting pregnant, are pregnant or breastfeeding, on taking medicines prescribed or bought over the counter, can be found on the NHS websites’ pregnancy and baby guide.

The Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) Expert Working Group on Optimising Data on Medicines used During Pregnancy was set up to identify ways in which data on medicines used during pregnancy and breastfeeding can be better collected and processed.

[A new valproate registry](#) was launched on 11 February 2021, spearheaded by the MHRA in partnership with NHS Digital, that will help prevent pregnancy in women taking valproate and make it easier for healthcare professionals to monitor the issue.

Members of the Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Information Consortium:

Prime Minister commits £3bn UK climate finance to supporting nature

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson will today [Monday 11 January] announce that the UK will commit at least £3 billion to climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity over five years.

The funding will be allocated from the UK’s existing commitment of £11.6bn for international climate finance and will deliver transformational change in protecting biodiversity-rich land and ocean, shifting to sustainable food production and supply, and supporting the livelihoods of the world’s poorest.

Programmes supported by the funding will include the flagship Blue Planet Fund for marine conservation; projects to maintain forests and tackle the illegal timber trade and deforestation; and initiatives to conserve habitats such as mangroves that protect communities from the impacts of climate change.

The Prime Minister will make the announcement at the One Planet Summit, a leader-level virtual event convened by France. He will address a session on Financing for Biodiversity, to call on others to raise their level of ambition on funding for nature and to mobilise public and private finance for sustainable solutions to climate change.

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and COP President Alok Sharma will also convene a roundtable on Clean Power Transition with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday, bringing together ministers from eight African and European countries.

The Foreign Secretary is expected to announce that the UK will pledge up to £38 million to the Climate Compatible Growth programme, supporting developing countries to accelerate their transition to green energy while growing their economies.

The UK is already moving to clean power faster than any major economy, and last year committed to protect at least 30 per cent of our land and ocean by 2030. Together, today's announcements address the two leading sources of global emissions – electricity generation and land use – and demonstrate the UK's leadership in fighting climate change ahead of the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November.

Ahead of the One Planet Summit, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We will not achieve our goals on climate change, sustainable development or preventing pandemics if we fail to take care of the natural world that provides us with the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.

The UK is already leading the way in this area, committing to protect 30 percent of our land and ocean by the end of the decade and pledging at least £3bn today to supporting nature and biodiversity.

We must work together as a global community to drive the ambitious change and investment we need to protect our shared planet and the glorious, rich and diverse life within it.

Biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. There has been a 68 per cent decline in populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians over the past four decades and 1.3 million square kilometres of forests were lost between 1990 and 2016, the equivalent of 800 football fields an hour.

Tackling climate change and protecting nature are closely linked – rising global temperatures and pollution are damaging natural ecosystems, while thriving forests and ocean play a critical role in mitigating climate change. Agriculture, forest loss, and land-use contribute 23 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but our land and coastal marine ecosystems could provide up to a third of the climate mitigations needed to meet the targets set out in the Paris Agreement.

COP President Alok Sharma said:

We have seen ambitious commitments from across the world to net

zero targets to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. But targets can only be met through action. We must preserve nature and our biodiversity, and move more quickly from coal to clean power.

It is fantastic to see billions of pounds pledged today to support efforts to reduce deforestation and degradation, and to accelerate the transition to clean energy. By working together, on the road to COP26, we can make faster progress towards a sustainable future for our planet.

Today's announcement on funding for nature is the latest in a series of concrete actions the Government has taken to address this crisis.

In September, the Prime Minister signed the [Leaders Pledge for Nature](#) at the UN General Assembly, an initiative pioneered by the UK and now signed by 82 countries. We have funded the Blue Belt Programme to protect vulnerable ocean ecosystems, and five years ago joined with our partners Norway and Germany to pledge at least \$5 billion to reduce deforestation between 2015 and 2020 – exceeding the target by the end of last year.

Next month, we also expect the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity to be published – an independent review commissioned by the Government in 2019 to set out the economic case for protecting biodiversity.

[Consultation launched on new nuclear power station design proposed for UK](#)

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£3m to fund new wave of Artificial Intelligence for the military

The second phase of funded proposals has been announced for the [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\)](#) Intelligent Ship competition to revolutionise military decision-making, mission planning and automation.

Phase 2 of [Intelligent Ship](#), run by DASA on behalf of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), sought novel technologies for use by the military in 2030 and beyond.

Nine innovative projects have been funded, sharing £3m.

With a focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), the projects will support the evaluation and demonstration of a range of human-machine teams and their integration with an evaluation environment. Phase 2 will develop AI for wider application across defence platforms.

Julia Tagg, Dstl Project Technical Authority said:

The Intelligent Ship project aims to demonstrate ways of bringing together multiple AI applications to make collective decisions, with and without human operator judgement.

We hope that the use of AI in the future will lead to timely, more informed and trusted decision-making and planning, within complex operating and data environments. With applications for the Royal Navy and more broadly across defence, we are very excited to see what these Phase 2 projects might bring.

Rachel Solomons, DASA Delivery Manager said:

DASA is focussed on finding innovation to benefit the defence and security of the UK.

Artificial Intelligence and human-machine teaming are such innovations, and by taking this competition to Phase 2 we hope to help find solutions that could make a real difference to future decision making in defence.

The companies awarded funding for Phase 2 are:

- CGI IT UK Ltd
- Decision Lab
- DIEM Analytics
- Frazer Nash Consultancy

- Montvieux Ltd
- Nottingham Trent University
- Rolls Royce
- SeeByte Ltd

Examples of proposals funded include an intelligent system for vessel power and propulsion machinery control to support the decision-making of the engineering crew, and an innovative mission AI prototype Agent for Decision-Making to support decision making during pre-mission preparation, mission execution and post mission analysis.

[Phase one contracts](#) were announced last year.