



Home Office

Home Office response to the Independent Family Returns Panel Report 2016-18

In its 2016-18 report, the Independent Family Returns Panel (IFRP) made seven recommendations to the Home Office in relation to managing family returns. These recommendations, along with the Home Office response, are set out below.

1. ***Late legal challenges:*** *The IFRP recommends that work should take place as soon as possible by relevant officers in the Home Office and also in the Ministry of Justice, to raise awareness with the Judiciary about the impact of upholding legal challenges where these may be designed to frustrate family returns.*
 - 1.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted.
 - 1.2 The Family Returns Unit (FRU) is working with colleagues across the Home Office and in the Ministry of Justice to enable Judicial Reviews (JRs) against family returns to be expedited where appropriate, to minimise times of uncertainty for families and, where possible, avoid multiple arrests. Work is also in progress to ensure that all relevant evidence is presented to the Judiciary to enable informed decision making when considering late applications for injunctive relief and or JR.

2. ***Reducing the incidence of families absconding:*** *The IFRP recommends that the consideration and implementation of a range of strategies to reduce the incidence of absconding be completed as soon as possible.*
 - 2.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted in principle.
 - 2.2 The Home Office shares the concerns of the IFRP regarding potential safeguarding risks to families and children when they fall out of contact with the Home Office and are absent from their known address. While there are limited actions which can be taken to prevent families from leaving their last known address, the FRU will explore options with Home Office policy colleagues regarding families falling out of contact and mitigate against such safeguarding risks.

3. ***Consistency of support from Immigration, Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams to reduce the incidence of absconding:*** *The IFRP recommends that systems be developed to ensure that ICE teams are consistently able to support arrests at more than one location, where there is a high risk of families absconding.*
 - 3.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted in part.
 - 3.2 ICE teams do not routinely visit more than one address when carrying out the arrest of a family at the end of the Family Returns Process. There are a number of factors which make it difficult for ICE teams to plan consistently to visit more than one address during an arrest - including the likelihood of obtaining multiple warrants and distances between locations. To increase the chances of successfully completing the removal process as planned, and to avoid further uncertainty for families, ICE teams will seek to visit a second address where possible, on a case by case basis, where details of such an address are held and arrest of the family at the first location fails.

4. ***The use of charter flights, in exceptional circumstances:*** *The IFRP recommends that, in exceptional circumstances with families who have been disruptive or who have threatened disruption, the Home Office should consider the use of charter flights to ensure the safe removal of the family.*
 - 4.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted.
 - 4.2 The FRU will work with Returns Logistics to explore the use of charter flights for families on a case by case basis and in exceptional circumstances as set out in the report to enable specific arrangements to be made for the family. This would be considered in the best interests of the family where the safety and wellbeing of all returnees is paramount.
5. ***Return support:*** *The IFRP recommends that the work to provide a meet and greet service for required and ensured returnees be followed through and implemented.*
 - 5.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted.
 - 5.2 Family Engagement Managers will incorporate the use of meet and greet services into individual return plans when returning families to countries where such a facility is available.
6. ***Holding children at ports:*** *The IFRP welcomes the review by the Office of the Children's Champion (OCC) into the arrangements for holding children at ports and recommends that the Home Office gives careful consideration to implementing the recommendations.*
 - 6.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted.
 - 6.2 Where possible, every effort will be made to implement the recommendations made by the OCC. Action plans will be drawn up to ensure progress and risks are monitored and logged appropriately.
7. ***Data on the holding of children at ports:*** *The IFRP recommends that a nationally consistent approach be implemented urgently and as a matter of priority, across contractor and Border Force facilities, to the collation/management of data on the holding times of children in ports.*
 - 7.1 **Home Office response:** Accepted.
 - 7.2 Border Force is working closely with Mitie and Home Office analysts to develop a nationally consistent process for collating and managing data on the holding times of children at ports. This will need to take account of the widely varying numbers across Border Force locations.