



# HOME TRUTHS

## Reforming the Home Office

By Tim Ambler

DISCUSSION PAPER

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Home Office has responsibility for a number of functions that are currently performed inefficiently and represent poor value for taxpayer money;
- The 2021/2022 performance report admits that the Home Office had failed on all four of its delivery objectives, in spite of a large volume of plans, strategies and consultations;
- 23 out of the 29 Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) identified by the Cabinet Office as associated with the Home Office should be closed;
- The Home Office is unlike other government departments in that it has no executive agencies. If it wants to make progress on achieving its 4 delivery objectives, one or more executive agencies should focus on each one;
  - Each agency should have key performance targets and outcome comparisons;
- The STAR department (4,943 staff) and Digital, Data and Technology (1,806 staff) should be closed and staff released;
- The Police College should become independent along the same lines of Sandhurst. Police officers would be better trained as a result;
- The Home Office core covering policy, legislation and the supervision of executive agencies should number 1,000 staff, plus another 1,000 to deal with matters inherited from the Ministry of Justice which should be closing down;
- Taken together, the recommendations in this report would produce a total headcount saving of approximately 6,991.

**Tim Ambler MA (Oxon), MSc (MIT)** is a Senior Fellow at the Adam Smith Institute, previously Senior Fellow, London Business School.

## ABOUT THIS SERIES

The UK government plans to reduce the civil service headcount by nearly 20%. We believe that deeper savings—bringing lower costs and greater efficiency—are easily possible. Whitehall has grown far more than 20% in the last seven years alone; and we have found most departments to be a confused clutter of overlapping functions and agencies. This series aims to cut through that clutter to suggest nimbler, lighter structures.

Whitehall departments have two functions: to manage policy and to provide services. We believe that services (such as passport provision) should be provided by executive agencies, without being swamped by the core department staff. We also believe that the cores could work, more effectively, with a fraction of their staff.

Deep staff reductions can be managed through natural turnover, early retirement, pausing non-essential recruitment and other methods. The result would be a slimmer, more focused civil service, better services for users and substantial savings for taxpayers.

According to the 2021/22 annual report,<sup>1</sup> the average numbers of full-time equivalent Home Office employees were as follows:

<b>BUSINESS SEGMENT</b>	<b>DG</b>	<b>TOTAL STAFF</b>	<b>EXPENDITURE (£ MILLION)</b>
Science, Technology, Analysis, Research and Strategy (STARS)	DG	4,943	158
Homeland Security		1,185	1,082
Public Safety	DG	2,050	10,474
Migration and Borders	DG	698	87
Customer Services (visas, immigration and passports)	DG	15,034	447
Borders and Enforcement	DG	14,343	1,239
Corporate Enablers (Human Resources, Estates, IT and Digital Services, Finance and Commercial)	DG	1,510	930
Legal		-	8
Digital, Data and Technology		1,806	436
Communications		132	20
Arm’s Length Bodies (Annex A)		3,224	14.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>44,928</b>	<b>15,031.4</b>

Only six of these business segments have director generals (indicated by the DG column),<sup>2</sup> while there were four director generals whose responsibilities do not appear (“immigration enforcement”, “unspecified”, “delivery”, and “asylum and protection”). The last column is the “spending in Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL)”.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) appears in the 2021/22 report only as being “outside the departmental boundary” (p.191); its operations, cost, headcount etc. are not mentioned in the annual report at all. The NCA itself thinks it is a non-ministerial department “accountable to the Home Secretary...and through the Home Secretary to Parliament”<sup>3</sup> (p.9). In 2021/22 it cost £612 million and had 5,760 staff.

The treatment of arm’s length bodies (ALBs) is complicated by having only five non-departmental public bodies inside the Home Office accounting boundary (Disclosure and Barring Service, Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Immigration Services Commissioner, Independent Office for Police Conduct and the

<sup>1</sup> Home Office, ‘Annual Reports and Accounts’, 2021-22: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1090460/Home\\_Office\\_ARA\\_21-22\\_Final\\_-\\_Gov.uk.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090460/Home_Office_ARA_21-22_Final_-_Gov.uk.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Gov.uk, ‘Home Office senior staff’, 2021-22: [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment\\_data%2Ffile%2F1051386%2F211231\\_Senior\\_Staff\\_-\\_HO.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F1051386%2F211231_Senior_Staff_-_HO.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

<sup>3</sup> National Crime Agency, ‘Annual Report and Accounts’, 2021-22: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/606-national-crime-agency-annual-report-2021-2022/file>

Security Industry Authority). Those plus the College of Policing were reported in Annex A of the 2021/22 annual report and are included in the table above. The other ALBs were not detailed. The Cabinet Office reported<sup>4</sup> that the Home Office had 29 ALBs (see Appendix) and, separately, 15 ALBs with 6,912 staff.<sup>5</sup> The total Home Office headcount therefore is nearer 48,616 than 44,928.

One expects a government department to have a small core with the executive roles carried out by arm's length bodies (executive agencies and executive non-departmental public bodies) but, in this case, the Home Office annual report (p.113) records 38,319 (92%) of the staff as being core. That goes a long way in explaining why the Home Office is so ungovernable.

The Home Office delivery plan for 2021/22<sup>6</sup> was to:

1. Reduce Crime,
2. Reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK and UK interests overseas,
3. Enable the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity,
4. Tackle illegal migration, remove those with no right to be here, and protect the vulnerable.

The 2021/22 performance report admitted that it had failed on all four, despite a large volume of plans, strategies and legislation. On crime, it “continues to work with other government departments” and on terrorism, it has “brought forward legislation”, helped establish a Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre, and “created expert Regional Advisers”—not a very convincing response to the problem. The third objective was hindered, not helped, by introducing more border checks on goods and people. And on the fourth objective, illegal immigration is getting worse: “Three years into the small boats crisis, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has found the Home Office response is both ineffective and inefficient....”<sup>7</sup> Would things be any worse if it ceased to exist altogether?

<sup>4</sup> Gov.uk, 'Departments, agencies and public bodies': <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations>

<sup>5</sup> Cabinet Office, 'The Arms Length Body (ALB) landscape at a glance', 2020: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1001885/Public\\_Bodies\\_2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001885/Public_Bodies_2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Home Office, 'Outcome Delivery Plan', 2021-22: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-outcome-delivery-plan/home-office-outcome-delivery-plan-2021-to-2022>

<sup>7</sup> Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, 'Inspection Report', Dec 2021 - Jan 2022: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inspection-report-published-an-inspection-of-the-initial-processing-of-migrants-arriving-via-small-boats-at-tug-haven-and-western-jet-foil-december-2>

**DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE**

This body, employing 1,258 staff, checks candidates for jobs working with children and vulnerable adults against police and files. According to the 2021/22 annual report its total income was £219 million and costs were £164 million.<sup>8</sup> Only 0.01% of job applicants are barred:<sup>9</sup> those who know they are unlikely to pass scrutiny generally do not apply for sensitive jobs. The process could easily be automated, and all 1,258 staff found more useful roles. Fees should be reduced<sup>10</sup> and the service should be digitised and privatised.

**GANGMASTERS**

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, employed 125 staff and, for the year to that date, cost £6.2 million net after £1.1 million charges to customers.<sup>11</sup> No change is proposed apart from adding slavery to its concerns.

**POLICE BODIES**

The Independent Office for Police Conduct, employed 1,016 staff on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, and cost £73.8 million net after £91,000 charges to other government departments.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services employed 266 people in 2021.<sup>13</sup> These are only two of the “Justice Inspectorates”, the others being HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, HM Prisons Inspectorate, HM Probation Inspectorate, Criminal Justice Joint Inspection.<sup>14</sup> While they have slightly different roles, these all address the same issue. It would make sense to roll the five of them into a single Justice Inspectorate (JI). No impact on total staffing is assumed.

**SURVEILLANCE**

The two roles making up the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner (each with a budget of around £300,000) have only just been combined. The Home

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**8** Disclosure and Barring Service, ‘Annual Report and Accounts’, 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1092974/ARA\\_-\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092974/ARA_-_Final.pdf)

**9** [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment\\_data%2Ffile%2F496975%2FFOI\\_1392.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F496975%2FFOI_1392.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

**10** Gov.uk, ‘Fee changes for DBS checks’, 10 Sept 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fee-changes-for-dbs-checks>

**11** Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, ‘Annual Report and Accounts 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021’: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1051154/GLAA\\_ARA\\_2020-21\\_HC\\_1041\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1051154/GLAA_ARA_2020-21_HC_1041_Web_Accessible.pdf)

**12** Independent Office for Police Conduct, ‘Annual Report and Statement of Accounts: 2020/21’: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1065323/IOPC\\_Ann\\_Report\\_2020-21.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1065323/IOPC_Ann_Report_2020-21.pdf)

**13** Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, ‘State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales’ 2021: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/State-of-policing-2021-1-single-page.pdf>

**14** Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, ‘Inspection Reports’, 2019–22: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/inspections?cjji-theme=cjji&year=2022&s>

Office regularly rejects the Commissioner’s recommendations.<sup>15</sup> The office should be closed and its responsibilities turned over to the JI mentioned above.

## IMMIGRATION

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner reported 60 staff and £4.4 million costs.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, according to the 2020/21 annual report, has 30 full-time equivalents (FTEs).<sup>17</sup> We do not need both: we should close the former and add (say) 10 staff to the latter.

## SECURITY

Security bodies have proliferated. The Security Industry Authority (SIA) works with the police and government bodies to ensure that individuals and companies operating within the private security industry comply with the law.<sup>18</sup> Thanks to £30 million in charges to the private security industry, the SIA made a profit of £3 million in 2021/22.<sup>19</sup> However, it has nothing to do with the Security Service (MI5) which focuses on international counter-terrorism, Northern Ireland-related terrorism and counter-espionage, counter-proliferation and protective security.<sup>20</sup> The SIA should be turned over to the industry in the same way that other professionals, such as solicitors and accountants regulate their members, moving the 289 staff from the civil service to the private sector.

Meanwhile, the new National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO aka ProtectUK) claims to be a “central hub for counter terrorism and security advice” available to businesses and the public.<sup>21</sup> Private bodies can fulfil this role. The Office should be closed.

The Commission for Countering Extremism had a £1 million budget for 2021/22, a third of which is spent on salaries.<sup>22</sup> Of course, ministers should seek advice on

<sup>15</sup> Surveillance Camera Commissioner, ‘Annual Report: January 2020 March 2021’: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1037227/E02682343\\_SCC\\_ARA\\_2020-21\\_v02\\_Elay.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1037227/E02682343_SCC_ARA_2020-21_v02_Elay.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, ‘OISC Annual Report and Accounts 2020 - 21 : Part 2: Accountability Report’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oisc-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-to-2021/oisc-annual-report-and-accounts-2020-21-part-2-accountability-report>

<sup>17</sup> Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, ‘Annual Report for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021’: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1017995/ICIBI\\_Annual\\_Report\\_for\\_the\\_period\\_1\\_April\\_2020\\_to\\_31\\_March\\_2021\\_Standard.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1017995/ICIBI_Annual_Report_for_the_period_1_April_2020_to_31_March_2021_Standard.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Security Industry Authority, ‘Annual Report and Accounts’, 2021-22: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1092957/sia\\_annual\\_report\\_21-22.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092957/sia_annual_report_21-22.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Security Industry Authority, ‘Annual Report and Accounts’, 2021-22: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1092957/sia\\_annual\\_report\\_21-22.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092957/sia_annual_report_21-22.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Security Service MI5, People and Organisation: <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/people-and-organisation>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.protectuk.police.uk/about-protectuk>

<sup>22</sup> The Commission for Countering Extremism, ‘End of Year Report, 2021-2022’: <https://tinyurl.com/2s3rsjzn>

countering extremism when they need it but that does not require another ALB especially when the core department and MI5 have 1,128 and 4,400 staff respectively already focusing on this topic. The same applies to the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation. Instead, the remit of the Security Service should be broadened to deal with all homeland security matters including those above.

### **ANTI-SLAVERY**

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner seeks to “address the economic, structural and cultural conditions which allow slavery to flourish across the globe”<sup>23</sup> and argues for a “public health approach” to this problem — which seems off-target. The issue would be better left to the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority and the Commissioner’s 10 staff better employed.

### **ADJUDICATION**

The Adjudicator’s Office reviews complaints,<sup>24</sup> primarily those against HMRC, the Valuation Office Agency (which values properties for council tax) and in regard to Windrush compensation. The Adjudicator has the independent personal authority to review these complaints. The Office falls within the same legal entity as the Commissioners of HMRC, and the staff are employees of HMRC but somehow the Cabinet Office think it is a Home Office ALB. Apart from resolving this confusion, no change is proposed.

### **POLICE TRAINING**

The College of Policing employed 679 staff according to the 2020/21 annual report.<sup>25</sup> Back in 2015, it announced that all future police officers would have to have degrees, and were in talks with 12 universities to provide them.<sup>26</sup> Sandhurst, Dartmouth and Cranwell are not parts of the MoD and there is no need for the College of Policing to be part of the Home Office; it should become independent along the same lines of, say, Sandhurst and police officers would be better trained as a result.

### **FORENSICS**

Although regulators are supposed to be independent, the Forensic Science Regulator, with only seven staff,<sup>27</sup> is too small to be a separate ALB. It should be merged into the core department.

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**23** Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, ‘Annual Report 2021-22’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-annual-report-2021-to-2022/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-annual-report-2021-to-2022-accessible>

**24** Gov.uk, ‘About Us - The Adjudicator’s Office’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-adjudicator-s-office/about>

**25** College of Policing, ‘Limited Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021’: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1041473/CoP-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2021-web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1041473/CoP-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2021-web.pdf)

**26** BBC News, ‘All new police officers in England and Wales to have degrees’, 2016: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38319283>

**27** Forensic Science Regulator, ‘Annual Report’, 17 November 2019 - 16 November 2020: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/950087/FSR\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2019-2020\\_Issue\\_1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950087/FSR_Annual_Report_2019-2020_Issue_1.pdf)

## **FAMILY RETURNS PANEL**

The Independent Family Returns Panel considers the return of children to other countries when they do not have the right to remain in the UK. With minimal staff and budget, this is an advisory body. All such bodies should be closed; government should seek advice when they need it and not have permanent statutory advisory bodies.

## **INVESTIGATORY POWERS**

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office and the Office for Communications Data Authorisations reported as one entity for 2019/20 (notably, they did so in January 2022). The report had no executive summary, accounts or headcount. It dealt mostly with alleged mistreatment of prisoners or data by the MI6, GCHQ, the MoD and (the only one that is part of the Home Office) the National Crime Agency.

Intercepting data is almost all to do with preventing crime. Of the 226,383 applications in 2019/20 only 0.1% were rejected: one has to wonder why they bothered. This pair of units should belong to the Cabinet Office and a much higher standard of annual reporting demanded.

## **NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY REMUNERATION REVIEW BODY**

The last (July 2021) report of this ALB recommended pay levels for the 1,940 "officers designated with operational powers": a third of the NCA staff. The time and personnel involved in deciding the wages of such a small number of civil service and producing a 68 page report on the subject seems excessive.<sup>28</sup> There should be one process for all civil servants administered by the civil service HR department, namely the Cabinet Office. The OME should be subsidiary to that. The NCA Remuneration Review Body should close.

## **SUMMARY**

In conclusion, 23 of the 29 ALBs identified by the Cabinet Office as associates of the Home Office should be closed, leaving only the Police College (which should become fully independent on the model of Sandhurst), the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office and the Office for Communications Data Authorisations (which should both be transferred to the Cabinet Office, and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Independent Office for Police Conduct) and the MI5. The recommended reductions in ALB staffing levels (see Appendix) total 2,251.

## **UNITS THAT SHOULD BE EXECUTIVE AGENCIES**

The Home Office is remarkable in having no executive agencies. There is no justification for the National Crime Agency being a non-ministerial department; it should be reclassified as an executive agency, as should the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, Independent Office for Police Conduct and the Security Service.

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<sup>28</sup> National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body, 'Seventh Report 2021': [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1004935/NCARRB\\_2021\\_report\\_-\\_web\\_accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004935/NCARRB_2021_report_-_web_accessible.pdf)

Returning to the four “priority outcomes” in the 2021/22 annual report for the Home Office:

1. **Reduce crime.** Despite initiatives such as the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Rape Review and Action Plan, the Beating Crime Plan and the 10-year Drugs Strategy, crime rose by 18% in the year. Most of the rise was in fraud — and again, despite the Home Office having “relaunched the Joint Fraud Taskforce to bring together the efforts of the government, industry, regulators, and law enforcement” in October 2021, and having set up four “pilot fraud investigative teams” in March 2022, the rise continues. The NCA could not do worse.
2. **Reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK and UK interests overseas.** The annual report claims this will be achieved by working across government departments, legislation such as the Counter Terrorism and Sentencing Act, establishing a Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre and creating regional advisers to strengthen the Prevent initiative (p.17). But we now know that the “Prevent” strategy is a busted flush<sup>29</sup> and persevering will not help. By contrast, the Security Service, whose job this is supposed to be, does not get a single mention in the annual report.
3. **Enable the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity.** Covid was bound to be a problem for this, but the performance report focuses on EU Identity Cards ceasing to be accepted for travel and the commencement of EU Goods checks — unnecessary changes that inhibited, not enabled, legitimate movement. The delays in issuing passports<sup>30</sup> and in granting visas to Ukrainian refugees are further indicators of the Home Office’s incompetence.
4. **Tackle illegal migration, remove those with no right to be here, and protect the vulnerable.** Progress on this, we are told, includes implementation of the Nationality and Borders Bill, increasing detention, continued enforcement despite the pandemic, and pursuing agreements for processing asylum claims in other countries (p.17). But these are all activities rather than results. In terms of actual performance, the July 2022 Downer Report<sup>31</sup> indicated that all was far from well with the Border Force, calling for it to be made into a single well-managed unit (i.e. an executive agency: see below).

As “strategic enablers” of these four objectives, much bureaucratic attention is given to diversity and inclusion, the “representation of race within Home Office staff” and the “values of being respectful, compassionate, collaborative and coura-

<sup>29</sup> Gardner, F. 2021, ‘Prevent Scheme: Why the government’s programme is so difficult’, BBC News: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58975385>

<sup>30</sup> Kinnock, S. 2022, speech in Parliament on HM Passport Office backlogs: <https://www.stephenkinnock.co.uk/hm-passport-office-backlogs/>

<sup>31</sup> Downer, A. ‘An Independent Review of Border Force’, July 2022: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1092485/BF\\_Independent\\_Review\\_v2\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_\\_002\\_\\_\\_002\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092485/BF_Independent_Review_v2_FINAL_WEB__002___002_.pdf)

geous.” No evidence is provided for these fashionable aspirations actually enabling strategic objectives to be achieved.

## MEETING THE OBJECTIVES

However, if these really are the Home Office’s four priority outcomes, then one or more executive agencies need to focus on each one. Each agency should have key performance targets and outcome comparisons — not reports, plans, hopes, strategies and legislation. Crime is not reduced by talking about it nor by simply passing a law against it.

### REDUCING CRIME

This requires two executive agencies; one to supervise the 43 police forces, plus the Independent Office for Police Conduct (which should be re-named the “Police Standards Agency” to make its function more explicit) and one (the National Crime Agency) to address matters beyond the skills or capability of local police forces, notably organised crime and financial fraud. This could involve around 7,000 staff taken together.

### TERRORISM

For the second priority, the covert Security Service needs its remit to be slightly widened to take care of the overt matters currently handled by the Home Office core. This could involve 5,000 homeland security staff to allow for some MI5 expansion.

### MOVEMENT

The third priority is addressed by the existing Customer Services department, with 15,034 staff, covering passports, immigration and visas. The Passport Office annually provides about five million passports for British nationals and also has charge of the General Register Office (GRO) which administers civil registration in England and Wales, such as of births, stillbirths, adoptions, civil partnerships, marriages and deaths.<sup>32</sup> About 4,200 staff provide the passports<sup>33</sup> but the number of GRO employees remains elusive.

It is arguable that the Passport Office and the GRO should be separate executive agencies but, as they rely on the same data, it would be better to make use of that in modernising their services as a single unit.

Civil registration records have long been an obvious application for digitisation and the GRO commissioned Siemens to do that in 2005. By 2008, the project had gone horribly wrong and was terminated. After a number of stops and starts, some 130 million records are now online but that is a small proportion of the total and many

<sup>32</sup> Gov.uk, ‘About Us - HM Passport Office’: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-passport-office/about>

<sup>33</sup> UK Parliament debate transcript, ‘HM Passport Office Backlogs’, 27 April 2022: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-04-27/debates/FDE27D2D-C4A4-488E-BF12-05BCD7382006/HMPassportOfficeBacklogs>

errors have been found.<sup>34</sup> With customer-driven automation and better management, 5,000 staff should be enough for the combined unit.

A separate executive agency is needed for visas, where 7,500 people manage around 3 million visa applications p.a. and evaluate applications for British citizenship.<sup>35</sup>

### **ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION**

The fourth priority also has two different roles. Border Force employs about 10,000 staff<sup>36</sup> to carry out immigration and customs checks at 140 sea and airports across the UK and overseas.<sup>37</sup> They appear to be, since Brexit, fully stretched. Border Force has been cobbled together from various previous units and as noted, the Downer report says it should become a unified, coherent, focused and effective unit.<sup>38</sup>

The second role is Enforcement, i.e. removing those with no right to be in the UK. This needs a specialist executive agency. As the Border and Enforcement department numbers together, according to the 2021/22 annual report, total 14,343 and the Border Force is about 10,000 of that, the Enforcement Agency should total about 5,000 staff.

The UK has long resisted identity *cards* and, despite EU evidence, it is not certain that they would be of much help.<sup>39</sup> Identity *numbers*, however, along the lines of the US Social Security Number (SSN),<sup>40</sup> would be a step forward. A single number replacing National Insurance, HMRC UTR, NHS, hospital, passport and driving licence numbers would go a long way to facilitating the detection of illegal immigrants (as well as simplifying government's customer service functions).

The proposed total staffing for these seven executive agencies amounts to 39,500 staff plus 125 staff in the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse agency.

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**34** HM Passport Office, 'Index Data Quality and Error Reporting': [https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes\\_data\\_quality\\_error\\_reporting.asp](https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/indexes_data_quality_error_reporting.asp)

**35** Gov.uk, 'About us - UK Visas and Immigration': <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration/about#who-we-are>

**36** Gov.uk, 'Border Force - Home Office Careers': <https://careers.homeoffice.gov.uk/role/frontline-and-operational/border-force>

**37** Gov.uk, 'About us - Border Force': <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force/about>

**38** Downer, A. 'An Independent Review of Border Force', July 2022: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1092485/BF\\_Independent\\_Review\\_v2\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_\\_002\\_\\_002\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1092485/BF_Independent_Review_v2_FINAL_WEB__002__002_.pdf)

**39** The Week, 'The pros and cons of ID cards for UK citizens', 30 July 2018: <https://www.theweek.co.uk/brexit/95434/the-pros-and-cons-of-id-cards-for-uk-citizens>

**40** Kissiah, M. 2022, 'How Social Security Numbers are Assigned', EInvestigator: <https://www.einvestigator.com/social-security-numbers-ssn/>

“The Science, Technology, Analysis and Research (STAR) Group is responsible for ensuring that the Home Office thrives in the new and emerging UK context so that the public benefit from strategic direction which will be informed and driven by international collaboration, research, science and evidence to deliver on the government’s priorities and improve outcomes for the public.” (*Annual Report*, p.49). This claim is profoundly unconvincing as it has no bearing on the Home Office’s objectives nor its skills. More digital skills are needed to tackle crime but those have been added to the appropriate executive agency, namely the NCA. Other executive agencies, e.g. the GRO, also need more digital skills but they should staff accordingly. This (STAR) department (4,943 staff) and Digital, Data and Technology (1,806 staff) should be closed.

The basic principle of core departments to handle policy, legislation and supervise executive agencies applies here as it does to all other ministerial departments. The standard staffing for that is 1,000. In this case we need to add another 1,000 to take care of the criminal rehabilitation transition and other minor responsibilities of the Ministry of Justice as it closes down.<sup>41</sup>

The total Home Office now recommended is therefore 2,000 staff for core plus 39,625 for the eight executive agencies. Subtracting those from the initial 48,616 indicates that 6,991 staff should be released for more gainful employment elsewhere.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Disclosure and Barring Service process should be automated and all 1,258 staff found more economy-enhancing roles.
- The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority should include anti-slavery matters and become an executive agency.
- The Police College should become independent along the same lines of, say, Sandhurst and police officers would be better trained as a result.
- Although regulators are supposed to be independent, the Forensic Science Regulator is too small, with only seven staff, to be a separate ALB. Merge with core.
- The remit of the Security Service should be broadened to deal with all homeland security matters.
- All advisory bodies should be closed including the National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body; government should seek advice when they need it and not have statutory bodies.
- The Investigatory Powers Commissioner’s Office and the Office for Communications Data Authorisations should belong to the Cabinet Office and a much higher standard of annual reporting demanded.
- Eight executive agencies are proposed: Police Standards Agency (2,000 staff), National Crime Agency (5,000 staff), Homeland Security (5,000 staff), Pass-

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<sup>41</sup> Ambler, T. 2022, ‘Criminal Negligence: Reforming The Ministry Of Justice’, Adam Smith Institute: <https://www.adamsmith.org/research/criminal-negligence-reforming-the-ministry-of-justice>

port Office (5,000 staff), Visas (7,500 staff), Border Force (10,000 staff), Enforcement (5,000 staff) and Gangmasters, Labour Abuse and Anti-slavery Authority (125 staff).

- The STAR department (4,943 staff) and Digital, Data and Technology (1,806 staff) should be closed and staff released.
- The Home Office core covering policy, legislation and the supervision of executive agencies should number 1,000 staff plus another 1,000 to deal with matters inherited from the Ministry of Justice which should be closing down.
- Of the initial 48,616, 6,991 staff should be released for more gainful employment elsewhere.

## ARM'S LENGTH BODIES

EXECUTIVE NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES	NUMBER OF STAFF	RECOMMENDATION	HEADCOUNT SAVING
Disclosure and Barring Service	1,258	Privatise	1,258
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	125	No change	-
Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)	1,016	No change	-
Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner	60	Merge	-
Security Industry Authority	289	Close	289
<b>ADVISORY NON-DEPARTMENTAL PUBLIC BODIES</b>			
Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs		Close	
Animals in Science Committee		Close	
Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group		Close	
Migration Advisory Committee		Close	
Police Advisory Board for England and Wales		Close	
Police Remuneration Review Body		Close	
Technical Advisory Board		Close	
<b>TRIBUNALS</b>			
Investigatory Powers Tribunal		Close	
Police Discipline Appeals Tribunal		Close	
<b>INDEPENDENT MONITORING BODIES</b>			
Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner	6	Close	6
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner	10	Close	10
Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration		Merge	-
Other			
The Security Service (MI5)	4,400	No change	-
National Counter Terrorism Security Office		Close	-
The Adjudicator's Office		No change	-
College of Policing	679	Privatise	679
Commission for Countering Extremism	8	Merge into MI5	8
Forensic Science Regulator	7	Merge with core	7
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services		Merge with IOPC	-
Independent Family Returns Panel		Close	
Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation	1	Close	1
Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office		Transfer to Cabinet Office	
National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body		Close	
Office for Communications Data Authorisations		Transfer to Cabinet Office	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7,852</b>		<b>2,251</b>