



Home Office

Small Boats Response: Lessons Learned Review June 2019

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Annexes

[Annex A](#) – Terms of Reference for: The Cross BICS Lessons Learned Exercise with Regards to the Response to Small Boats

[Annex B](#) – Small Boats Intelligence Requirements

[Annex C](#) – Guidance for Responding to High Profile Incidents

1. Overview

1.1 Throughout 2018 there were increasing numbers of irregular migrants attempting to enter the UK via rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) and soft inflatable boats (SIBs), which became known as 'small boats' incidents. These small boats incidents grew throughout autumn in volume. The number peaked in December, most notably on Christmas Day, causing significant pressures on frontline teams and generating high levels of media interest which continued over the Christmas period. The small boats Gold Group was convened, following the Home Secretary declaring a major incident.

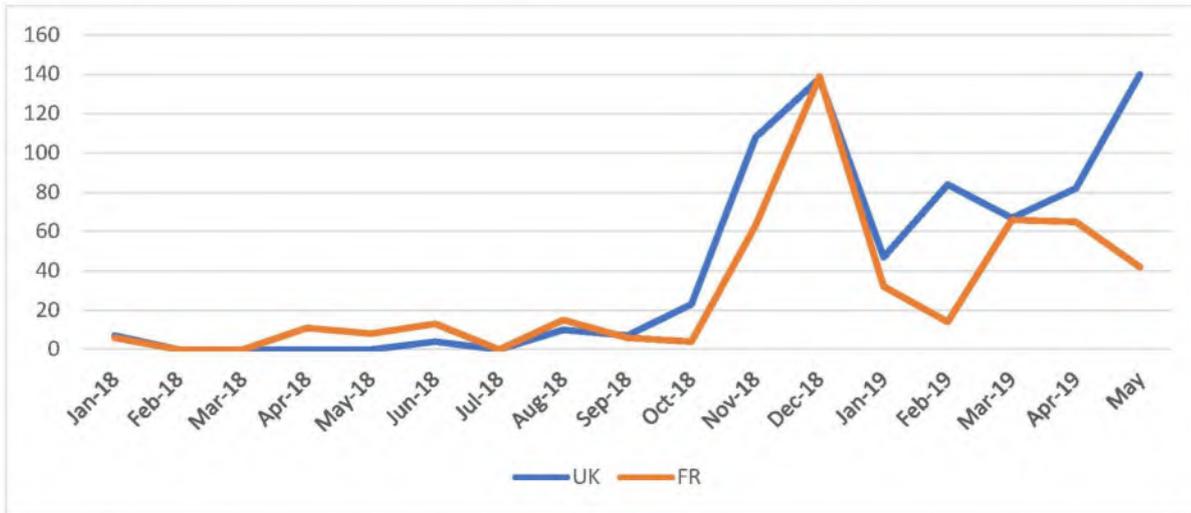


Figure 1 – Number of migrants detected on small boats 01 Jan 18 to 25 May 19

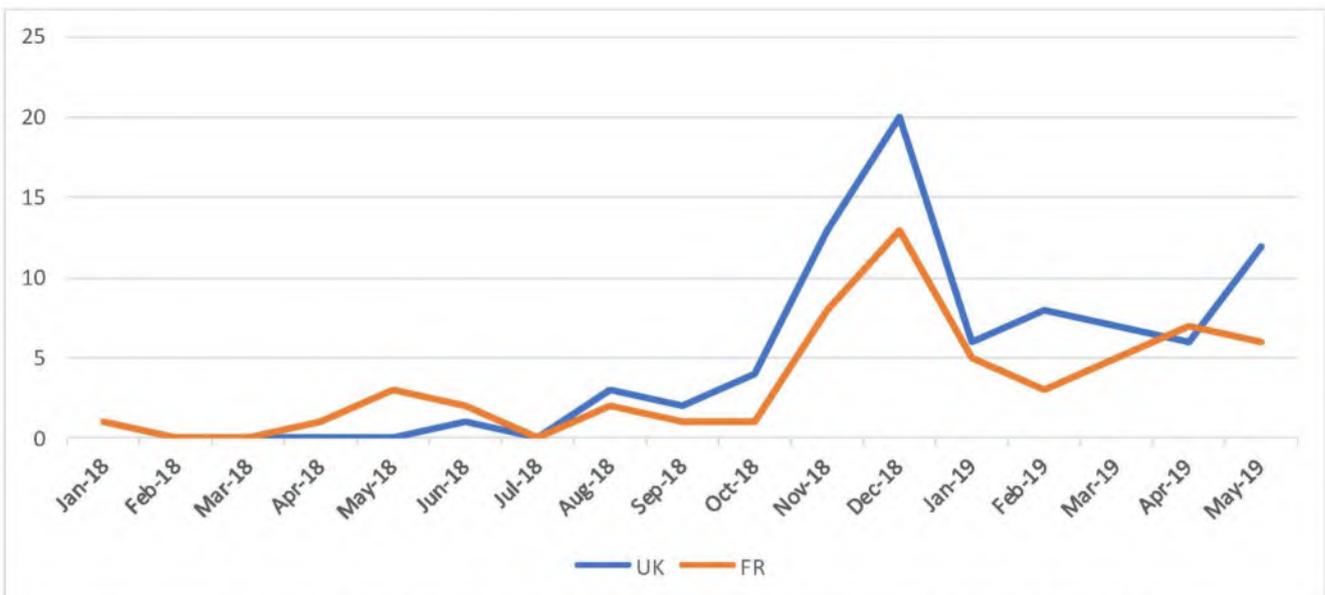


Figure 2 – Number of small boats events 01 Jan 18 to 25 May 19

1.2 In the intervening period, a range of tactics, responses and measures have been put in place to tackle this route from all parts of Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) and in partnership with the National Crime Agency (NCA) who lead on organised immigration crime (OIC). A “lessons learned” exercise was commissioned by the Small Boats Gold Group to look at the cross-system response to the increase.

1.3 The terms of reference were set after consultation with key senior leaders in each key area: [Name] Border Force, [Name] NCA, [Name] Immigration Enforcement, [Name] UK Visas and Immigration and [Name] BICS Policy & International. The full terms of reference are available at [Annex A](#).

1.4 A small team with interviewing experience and a good knowledge of the different departments was drawn together and engaged in a programme of field work and document assessment. Over 60 frontline officers and senior managers were interviewed or participated in focus groups.

1.5 Where staff raised issues, the review team encouraged the respondents to identify solutions and all the lessons identified in the review have come from those involved in the small boats response. Many of the lessons are already in the process of being addressed.

1.6 All staff that were interviewed have been open and honest in their views and opinions. They clearly care a great deal and are passionate and proud of what they do, to the highest professional standards. The review team identified the complexities at all levels that made this a challenging environment both politically and operationally and recognised the level of effort that has been put in across all teams to try to identify solutions and mitigate the risk.

1.7 The executive summary contains some of the overarching successes, key areas of learning and suggested steps going forward. The body of the report contains more granular detail at each stage of the process. A summary of all key lessons is available in chapter

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The intense media scrutiny and political interest in the small boats issue has driven demands for results and a silver bullet to stop the flow of migrants using this modus operandi (MO). The use of returns to act as a deterrent, cutting the supply chain by removing the organisers and seeking to return migrants at sea have been key tactics in the remit of BICS and UK partners. These tactics are complex and, in some cases, have delivered unintended consequences. The use of upstream messaging to influence the early decision making of migrants and the co-operation of the French to stop small boats from launching present opportunities to stop the flow at source. There is no silver bullet, and overall, the response has been co-ordinated and professional with key milestones and innovations. There have been significant weather windows where there have been no crossings at all, and apart from a very small number, the nationalities using this MO has not moved beyond Iranian and Iraqi nationals.

2.2 Overarching Key Successes

- The focussed efforts of policy and caseworking teams, backed by high level negotiations at political and senior official levels has brought about a transformational

approach to third country removals and opened up a route for returns to Iran, in the most difficult political landscape, delivering the first enforced removals in many years.

- Operational engagement and political intervention brought about significant step changes in the relationship with the French, continuously pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable and what the French would do in support of the effort to stop small boats leaving France.
- The combined efforts of the RNLI, Coastguard, Border Force Maritime Command and French Maritime agencies, supported by the National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC) have developed a search and rescue effort that is first class and rescued hundreds of migrants in challenging circumstances, without loss of life or serious injury.
- In responding to these incidents, all teams across the piece have worked tirelessly to achieve an effective reception and processing arrangement, ensuring rapid identification of resources and working collaboratively to overcome a myriad of challenges.
- Across UK law enforcement there have been 24 arrests of suspected facilitators with 9 ongoing investigations. Every event has been responded to and every opportunity for forensic evidence explored.

2.3 Key Lessons

- The response to the small boats issue has been delivered alongside pressures of business as usual, often diverting resource away from other key migration threats. The small boats issue is only one part of the clandestine threat, the rest of which has attracted less media attention, but carries as much risk, for example clandestine entry by shipping container or refrigerated lorry. There is a lack of evidence to baseline the comparison and assessments of these threats and how resources can best be deployed in co-ordination to tackle them. Linked to this is a need to horizon scan and look at where the next emerging trend is coming from, or a forum that will take notice and be able to flex the right capabilities to take early action.
- All teams are working flat out, diverting resources and coming up with innovative solutions. However, there is often a disconnect between departments and organisations and individual teams are missing out on the piece of the jigsaw puzzle they need to progress, or in some cases are duplicating effort. Staff had numerous concerns and felt unable to access levers of change or didn't have influence in another department. The structure and focus provided by the Small Boats Gold Group has started to ameliorate some of these issues, but there are realistic concerns that the disbandment of this focal point will leave a gap. This happened after the migrant crisis in 2015/16 and there is a real need for a body that will provide an overarching co-ordination of operational responses, holding departments to account, commission and co-ordinate data and intelligence products to own a single version of the truth and act as a repository for corporate learning.

- Intelligence is key to being able to focus resources in the right place and to predict the next concerning trend. A sustainable process bringing together the right agencies and departments is much needed, moving forward from the piecemeal approach there is now. It is not effective to have separate Immigration Enforcement and Border Force teams working on clandestine entry. There is a need to put the border picture and the inland context together at a more systemic level. The joint structures that exist now are not joint in the true sense, staff sit separately within a structure. There are numerous agencies with dedicated intelligence structures in Kent without enjoying the benefits of co-location. Consideration should be given to the development of a dedicated multi-agency hub, akin to the Common Travel Area hub, Operation Causeway in Merseyside, dedicated to clandestine migration, utilising the framework of the CCIC for better access to French partners.
- Dealing with major and critical incidents is complex and difficult but there are established frameworks for responses. The independent review of the Home Office's Critical Incident Management by Name and the outcomes from this will assist BICS in developing a co-ordinated and standard response. In the interim, a separate operational command structure with clear strategic and tactical aims reporting into a strategic governance group (which includes external partners) will tackle many of the issues raised by respondents. It will also provide a framework against which to test the preparedness of all parties (across commands and along hierarchies) for sustained high levels of migrants arriving by small boats. This would also represent a model for responses to future incidents.

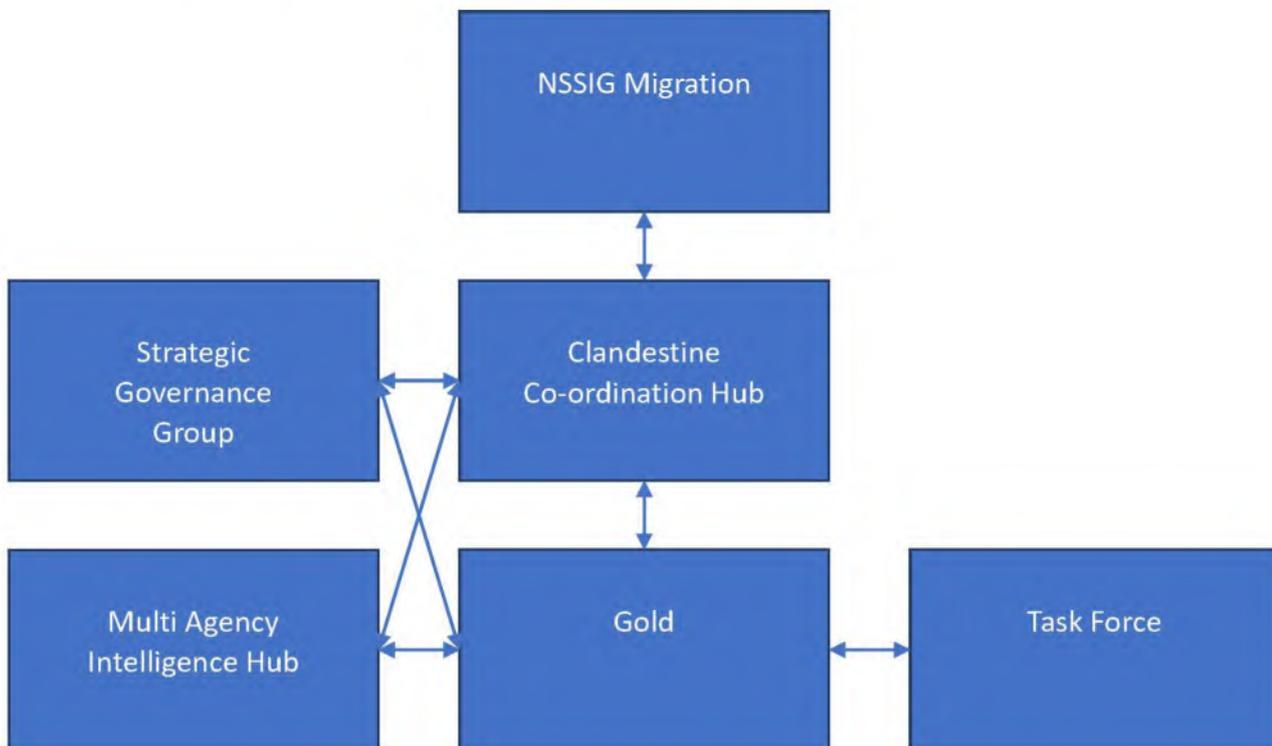


Figure 3 - Proposed Governance Framework

- The multiple levels of working with French partners, at ministerial, senior official and operational level cannot be underestimated. There are many areas of further co-operation that require similar attention, such as the NCA/Ocrist intelligence exchange, the embedding of investigators and intelligence operatives in France,

debriefing of migrants in France as well as the range of further tactics to support French intervention of migrant boats launching.

3. Governance

3.1 Key Themes

- Gold Command Purpose
- Membership of the Gold Group
- Small Boats Strategic Meetings
- Return to BAU
- Wider Strategic Landscape
- Clandestine Co-ordination Hub

3.2 Gold Command Purpose

3.2.1 The small boats gold group has provided the mechanism which is otherwise lacking to bring operational and policy partners together to address a shared problem, in this instance illegal crossings by small boats. The group has succeeded (because members have been called to account by the nominated Gold, [Name]) in pushing resources to this threat and ensuring that returns, asylum decisions and organised immigration crime responses are all in focus and not left to business as usual. In broader terms the group has achieved significant milestones such as the joint agreement with the French Minister of the Interior Monsieur [Name] new use of Dublin returns, a returns agreement with Iran and the working relationship with the French against the backdrop of EU Exit.

3.2.2 Many respondents raised concerns that if this structure is to be dismantled the same level of service will not be provided. There was also a keenness that the innovation and success arising from the response have a framework for application to all clandestine entry.

3.2.3 There were clearly differing expectations of a Gold Group, with frontline staff expecting a more instructional style, clear strategies and tactical plans and a direct link to the Silver and Bronze roles. At a very high strategic level, the Gold Group worked well, establishing effective political strategies and providing an excellent forum to co-ordinate the high-level response with the French. However, respondents felt it delivered less co-operation at an operational level.

3.2.4 During the influx at Christmas, Border Force set up a gold structure, however when the BICS wide Gold Group was established, though a Gold strategy was written, it does not appear to have been disseminated as widely from the Gold Group as necessary. Most of those interviewed, apart from the International Directorate and BICS hub, and a handful of others who attended the Gold Group, were not aware of what the

strategy was and therefore felt that implementing tactics was difficult without knowledge of the strategic aims.

Gold Objectives – Gold Group 4th January 2019

- Prevent loss of life and minimise risk to those at sea
- Protect the UK border and the integrity of the immigration system
- Through;
- Disrupting, dismantling and prosecuting the criminal networks involved in GM facilitation
- Close collaboration with France (coordination of asset / CCIC etc)
- Coordination and investment in maritime assets
- Reviewing and strengthening asylum policy to enable swift returns
- Targeted use of strategic communication

3.2.5 Many respondents felt that Gold's priority was to brief upwards which resulted in very few actions coming down to operational staff. A few attendees at the Gold Group felt there could have been more challenge and consistently holding members to account after the initial impetus.

“What is the Gold Strategy? Who is Silver – what tactics are we doing to achieve that strategy? Difficult because we don't know what that strategy is?”

3.2.6 There is currently work ongoing across the Home Office following Names Independent review of the Home Office's Critical Incident Management to look at how the Home Office responds to major incidents and some respondents felt this will be important in bringing clarity and structure for all departments in dealing with high profile incidents going forward.

3.3 Membership of the Gold Group

3.3.1 The current membership of the Gold Group does not include key partners from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), Department for Transport (DFT), Ministry of Justice (MOJ) etc, all of whom have influence and a role to play. It is recommended that the group be reformed as a Strategic Governance Group (SGG) and widened to include those who have influence and levers to affect the issue. By utilising the SGG model and separating out the Gold from the policy / political considerations, this can create a framework to breakdown the operational silos.

“A Gold Group should have partners from outside, experts in the field etc. The police and other external partners were not involved in this which was a mistake. Innovation was stifled as we are wedded to our structures.”

3.3.2 Respondents did not feel that all members of the Gold Group had an awareness of the principles of critical incident management, or the responsibilities required in the declaration of a major incident and the roles and responsibilities of the Gold / Silver / Bronze structure. In a scenario like this, where there are multi-agency requirements, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) should be applied and there is a need for training on this. Also missing is engagement with local resilience forums in the event of an escalation of numbers arriving.

3.4 Under-pinning Structures

3.4.1 Those who had seen the strategy believed it was correct, but that the role of Gold should be reviewed and perhaps consideration given to the Chief Operating Officer or Director General of Border Force taking over the role as it is primarily a border issue not a policy issue. Several respondents felt that the Gold Group needed an operational outlet with a clear route to an operational silver, setting the tactics of Gold's strategy, with a forum for managing actions, resolving differences and raising issues.

"There is no cross-agency Silver putting together a tactical plan for all. No tactical plan that can be taken to other areas to replicate the good work in the Kent area. No low-level guidance for officers as to what they need to do at each event"

3.4.2 Several staff commented that more members of the Gold Group and senior leaders could have travelled to Kent and met with the variety of staff responding on the frontline and walk through the process.

3.5 Small Boats Strategic Meetings

3.5.1 The frequency of the meeting was commented upon. When the Gold Group was stood up, the daily meetings were to be expected, however nearly 6 months on the weekly meetings remain. Given the level of seniority in the meeting, it was questioned if this was a good use of their time and many felt that weekly meetings at that level are probably too frequent. However, incidents are still occurring on a weekly basis at a time when there are more opportunities for crossings, so there is a need at least at an operational level for a regular forum for oversight and governance. A check on actions needs to be sharper and not based on the weekly note to the Home Secretary. Other key observations from respondents include:

- There was no formal intelligence brief, or commonly recognised intelligence picture against which to frame decisions or assess ongoing risk.
- There is no review of the strategy or action plan which ongoing actions were linked to.
- It was unclear how the group would understand what it had achieved against what it set out to do or how it would transition to BAU.
- There were actions recorded at the meeting but no reference to any outstanding actions from previous meetings although the chair expressed his displeasure that things he asked for previously hadn't been done.
- The data in the pack that the chair had wasn't the same as the information that Border Force were reporting.
- The group looked at events since the last meeting not the longer-term trends – up/down/unchanged. For example, was there any displacement to other routes or any changes to the intelligence picture.

3.5.2 Immediately after the major incident was called, there were daily meeting and briefings to the Home Secretary, but this later moved to weekly meetings. Actions from these meetings were quickly dealt with at the outset. Once attendees felt they were

coming out of crisis mode, there was generally less urgency in responding to the action points arising from these meetings.

“Daily gold group meetings lost focus and became somewhere between strategic gold group and policy workshop.”

3.6 Return to Business as Usual

3.6.1 It is not clear what and when the transitions arrangements are to business as usual. In terms of the transition out of the critical incident phase, there was an official end to the Gold Command in early April, although this mainly constituted a scaling back of the attendance at the weekly meetings to key workstreams. No date has been planned for the end of these weekly meetings yet and many staff involved were not aware the major incident status had been closed.

“The Gold Group cannot exist forever, need to return to BAU. It feels like we have moved to BAU. Is this now a BAU risk that we have to manage?”

3.6.2 While it might have helped to have specific criteria to hand over to business as usual, the situation remains fluid and it is difficult to put a subjective measure of what would demonstrate success (given the number of attempts to cross the channel was, and remains, comparatively high for the time of year). The stepping back of the Gold Group is a cause for concern for many as they have welcomed the focus and co-ordination it has brought.

3.7 Wider Strategic Landscape

3.7.1 The small boats issue must be put into context against the wider illegal migration picture. Dealing with only one means of clandestine entry and not treating illegal migration in the whole context only provides a narrow opportunity to address the problem. Displacement/diversification is ignored and therefore the real results and success (or not) in dealing with the issue are masked. Refrigerated lorries, coach engines and shipping containers are all risky and all far more prevalent means of entry.

3.7.2 Structures exist such as the National Security Strategy Implementation Group (NSSIG) across the departments to deal with illegal migration but these structures are not operating in a proactive format. The approach is fragmented, and the various directorates work horizontally with hand offs rather than comprehensively as before when all parts were under one agency. The quality of information sharing, and hand offs is therefore crucial to keep an accurate picture of the situation. International Directorate hold the secretariat for the NSSIG and the chair is set to return (after a brief stint with DFID) to Home Office second permanent secretary and several respondents felt this would have much greater influence in bringing parties together. The lack of a single senior official to provide authority and grip, to unify all parts and have the right level of influence with partners and internationally prior to the establishment of a Gold Group, was identified as a key weakness by a number of respondents.

“Structure - NSSIG is a perfect example of a disorganised structure that has the potential to be a huge success. It is not clear why the chair sat with DFID.”

3.7.3 The European Directorate are in the process of drawing up an illegal migration strategy to focus on near borders and cooperation with the UK's close neighbours e.g. France, Belgium and the Netherlands. It is linked to the wider NSSIG illegal migration strategy which has a whole of route approach and is a significant step forward but still

lacks the co-ordinated intelligence and operational delivery forum. Very much of the focus has been on the up-stream effort, and while near Europe is also key, the response to successful illegal migration routes and the impact on the UK, both at the Border and inland must also be part of a whole of route approach.

3.8 Clandestine Hub

3.8.1 During the 2015/16 migrant crisis a clandestine co-ordination hub was created which sat across BICS, co-ordinating management information, high level briefings, commissioning intelligence and looking at longer terms responses. Reporting to the second permanent secretary, they also had leverage to co-ordinate the response, hold departments to account and provide an outlet for cross department issues to be raised, assessed and resolved. All responding departments referred to this structure and felt that if it had been in place now, this would have provided a response framework at an earlier stage, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and established reporting mechanisms.

“This is about the security of the UK and needs a co-ordinated structure to deal with it. A Clandestine Hub could co-ordinate intelligence and assist operational delivery. The Hub would need to comprise of the right people at the appropriate grade and could report into, ExCo for example. It will need to bring together all partners and if established there could be significant economies of scale.”

3.8.2 In addition to a clandestine co-ordination hub, many respondents asked that serious consideration be given the setting up a ‘taskforce’ that would deal with all types of clandestine migration and provide a focussed operational response, eliminating the duplication of resources. While this was a popular view among many staff in the South East involved in the operational response, there was not a consensus on what this would look like, only that the response would be significantly more effective with interoperable resources deployable in a more flexible manner.

“Could we have done anything earlier? Small boats have always been coming over. Should be target hardening at juxtaposed controls. Someone should have thought about displacement.”

3.9 Key Successes

- The Gold Group provided an efficient mechanism to bring cross BICS colleagues together and develop key strategic priorities focussed on tackling the problem.
- The Gold Group and secretariat provided an excellent forum to manage political interactions and co-ordinate French engagement at a strategic level.
- The outputs from the meetings were a good basis for briefing the Home Secretary and capturing the strategic response.

3.10 Key Lessons

- Different expectations of the Gold Group, both by members and staff led to dissatisfaction and there needed be clearly defined parameters.
- Given the input needed from external partners, the membership of the governing body should have included them, and consideration should have been given to establishing a Strategic Governance Group.

- The response would have benefitted from the establishing of a Silver command to sit under the Gold Group, to deliver and develop tactics and co-ordinate the roles of operational teams.
- A clearly published strategy for a return to BAU would have helped staff understand that the major incident had been closed.
- A wider sharing of Gold strategy and any changes in that strategy would assist with all staff understanding what was expected.
- Better recording of outstanding actions against an action plan would have helped hold members to account.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of a Clandestine Co-ordination hub to co-ordinate the responses to irregular migration, with a direct link to the NSSIG (Migration) and what benefits a taskforce approach would bring.

4. Resources & Preparedness

4.1 Key Themes

- Early Warning and Mobilisation of staff
- Lessons of 2015/16 migrant crisis
- Distraction from other priorities

4.2 Early Warning and Mobilisation of Staff

4.2.1 Prior to the declaring of a major incident during the Christmas Period, frontline teams and senior managers in Border Force, Immigration Enforcement, BICS Policy and International and the NCA felt the growing number of arrivals in small boats warranted a more co-ordinated operational response. Many staff spoke of how they had raised this as a risk that was likely to grow but did not see any uptake at a cross departmental level until the story was picked up in the national media and attracted the attention of politicians.

4.2.2 Several submissions were provided to ministers and all individual departments were taking actions and exploring options to tackle the response, with work being undertaken with French partners, but many respondents felt this lacked co-ordination and a lead voice at a senior level.

4.2.3 From October until Christmas, staff from Border Force South East and Europe, UKVI and IE's Criminal and Financial Investigation teams worked long hours to cope with the increases. The Kent Intake Unit in Dover provided a point of transfer for migrants, but they were unprepared for the influx on Christmas Day with no plans to mobilise staff over the holiday period. Border Force senior officers sought to place their staff within KIU, but they were not trained in the illegal entry and screening processes. Officers from IE's Immigration Compliance and Enforcement teams were diverted to support KIU. The 6-8 weeks in the run up to Christmas provided an opportunity to put plans in place and identify resources and responses in readiness for a large-scale event.

“The threat of small boats had been rising in 2018 and raised by operational seniors but the BICS structure which has a policy focus is not sufficiently flexible to address this threat. It took media coverage and HS intervention to move forward. By this time the OCGs had got more of a grip on using boats and consequently it feels as if we (UK/FRA law enforcement) are playing to their tune”.

4.2.4 The lack of preparedness was underpinned by no readily available intelligence picture to inform operational planning and decision making. Prior to the involvement of the Joint Slavery and Trafficking Analysis Centre (JSTAC) in November, there had been no co-ordinated intelligence products to identify and highlight the risk, or engagement with international partners via Europol to generate much needed upstream activity and analytical products. Officers were asking for a forward look to understand what the pressures might be and assist with rostering and planning, but none were available at this time.

4.2.5 Each operational department has comprehensive plans to deal with critical incidents and there has been some cross testing of plans under the Operation Cowl banner, but there has been no testing against the specific scenario of small boats which would help identify interoperability issues and stress points in a non-critical environment.

4.3 **Lessons of 2015/16 Migrant Crisis**

4.3.1 There have been previous discussions about a move to this type of modus operandi in 2015 following the events in the Mediterranean. There were a series of meetings, but no real action or decisions were taken to respond at the time and there was a lack of ownership of the issue.

4.3.2 The ability to horizon scan – for example the impact from the Serbia/Iran visa scenario and understand how this might impact on the UK is not co-ordinated or owned across BICS, nor is there a single forum for staff who are experienced and have lived through previous crises to raise concerns and be listened to. NSSIG was cited as an appropriate forum to own this responsibility and own a ‘near borders’ strategy. Focus has been further upstream, e.g, Turkey, which is needed but must also incorporate an early warning system and an understanding that not all migration flows will be disrupted upstream.

4.3.4 Many of the issues arising from the 2015/16 crisis were played out again during these incidents, such as interoperability, a common, unifying policy and staff with a multifunctional capability.

4.4 **Distraction from Other Priorities**

4.4.1 At the time of writing, irregular migration from small boats is less than 10% of in-country clandestine detections. Many staff raised concerns about the distraction the focus on small boats has on other irregular migration routes. Even in the peak month of December, small boat detections represented 15% of the total in country clandestine detections (Small boats 138, Total Clandestines 926). From 1st January 2019 through to 30th April 2019, small boat events are 9.5% of the total clandestine events. Even without the small boats cohort, clandestine activity would be increasing, albeit at a slower rate.

Month	Total Clandestines	Small Boat Detections
Jan 19	701	47
Feb 19	724	84
Mar 19	837	67
Apr 19	650	80
Total	2912	278

Table 1 – Number of Clandestine and Small Boat Detections

4.4.2 Teams are concentrating resources on a small area in the Channel, with two main corridors for small boats – Calais to Dover and Boulogne to Dungeness. Many expressed concerns as to what is happening away from these 2 areas. Several officers raised concerns about the perceived risk elsewhere along the coast, citing incidents of Ukrainian, Albanian and Vietnamese nationals using yachts to enter remote marinas undetected.

4.4.3 The threat from canalised routes, via HGV and other vehicles remains present, often with high risk concealments in purpose-built hides and refrigerated lorries. The staff dealing with small boats are often diverted from the traditional methods of clandestine entry.

“The potential for the economic climate to change the situation if the French fishing boats have no work. All of these issues need to be considered and planned for”.

“We need an action plan looking at the general maritime issue – what if the trend goes towards yachts, this may cause an issue”

“Should we be treating it as business as usual like the Lorries. We have more of a chance of people dying on the back of a lorry than coming across on a boat (with a helicopter above it) Just how are we going to deal with this and who is going to deal with it”

4.5 Key Successes

- Great response in a crisis initial Border Force response over Christmas period in setting up a Gold Command and setting an initial Gold Strategy, with support from IE’s Immigration Compliance and Enforcement teams to assist at KIU.
- Process for reception of migrants is now well rehearsed and smooth with considerations for welfare and forensic evidence retrieval evident.

4.6 Key Lessons

- A cohort of staff is needed from across BICS, trained in GSB structure and a GSB system ready to go at a moment's notice when the next major incident occurs. Also needed is a deep dive into how each department can provide support for each other in a crisis and what training is required to provide a minimum level of interoperability to be able to work together.
- The lessons from the 2015/16 crisis were well documented and many staff referred to this period, highlighting how parallels were present but not picked up. Some staff questioned why our corporate memory is so poor. With corporate memory in mind, especially in relation to this issue some felt a specific taskforce is the only way to tackle this problem effectively.
- Proper horizon scanning is needed, taking views from across BICS, to identify potential vulnerabilities and plan for them at a strategic and operational level.
- Proper evaluation of the risks in the wider context of irregular migration, to assist in identifying where deployment of resources will deliver the most effective tactics.

5. France

5.1 This chapter focuses on the operational tactics employed by the French with UK support to stop small boats from departing French beaches. The role of the Coquelles based multi-agency trans-national intelligence sharing centre, the Co-ordination and Information Centre (CCIC), is covered in [Section 9.6](#). The influence of French relationships in effecting third country returns is covered in [Section 10](#).

5.2 Key Themes

- Effectiveness of French Effort
- Longer Term Strategic Planning & Use of Strategic Forums
- Future Opportunities

5.3 Effectiveness of French Effort

5.3.1 All frontline teams and many other respondents agree that the most effective way to deal with the small boats modus operandi is to stop migrants launching boats into the channel. At both a strategic and tactical level, BICS Policy teams and Border Force have developed a strong working relationship with counterparts in France. There is no doubt that this relationship has led to the French authorities preventing many boats from leaving France.

“The French found 18 migrants on the beach and found the facilitator and have already sentenced him within a week. It was to send a clear message to the facilitators that a heavy sentence will be given out”

“The amount of investment we have made to the French has worked well – drones, equipment and paying to train the French drone pilots.”

5.3.2 There is significant misunderstanding among many staff as to what is possible and what is acceptable to French partners, but great progress has been made via a combination of high level negotiations between politicians and senior officials on both sides, as well as strong operational relationships which provided support and technology to the French.

“The French recognise this is a shared issue – from outset we need to recognise they do not want it to happen. The French are genuinely engaged, and our relationship has changed.”

“NMIC in Portsmouth and the Army in France have a permanent skype link. Once an incident has been identified Portsmouth have the radar equipment and will control the incident. Two days after we gave the information to the French they raided the camp and made arrests.”

5.4 Longer Term Strategic Planning & Use of Strategic Forums

5.4.1 French law enforcement is key to tackling this MO, but a number of respondents highlighted the lack of a long-term funding stream to support this work. Colleagues have been working closely with the French, following the Joint Action Plan agreed between the French Interior Minister Monsieur Name and the Home Secretary in January, encouraging the continued allocation of French resources to stopping migrants from leaving on boats. There are a number who believe this approach is not sustainable against the backdrop of Brexit and French pressures such as the response to the ‘Gilet Jaune’.

5.4.2 The UK needs to continue to build this relationship. Key individual relationships are vital for partnership working with France but there needs to be clear engagement and enforcement strategies across the piece with agreed objectives for tackling small boats. These strategies need to be underpinned with a sustainable funding stream and a clear matrix for evaluating the effectiveness of tactics.

5.4.3 There have been several successful prosecutions in France which are not widely recognised or known and could be publicised, internally and externally.

5.4.4 There are some excellent examples of working with the French, and as with UK based law-enforcement, there is a complex landscape and national politics to navigate. The singular route for intelligence exchange from the NCA to Ocrist is one area many staff felt was hampering efforts, as well as the lack of opportunity to debrief migrants in France ([See section 9.5](#)).

5.4.5 The international frameworks such as the UK/FR migration committee and the bilaterals between senior officials and politicians offer direct routes to address such issues. Concerns and ideas need to be evidence based and co-ordinated from the UK, with feedback to frontline staff who are operating the day to day relationships. There is already a strong partnership between operational teams and central strategic policy teams and this is something respondents were keen to see develop and grow.

“With Belgium we regularly go over to there to complete de-briefing. There is no way we would be doing this with the French. No debriefing takes place with the migrants. The small boats now take a lot of their time, so we now do not see anyone de-briefing in France. We cannot debrief anyone who is in French custody.”

5.5 Future Opportunities

5.5.1 Further areas suggested by respondents have included:

- **Public Interest/Operational Sensitivity**
- More focus on the sale of boats in France and neighbouring countries – preventative measures and investigative opportunities.
- Embed French Officers in the UK – in intelligence structure and investigations.
- Agree better intelligence exchange routes outside the NCA/Ocriest route.
- Explore the options for and barriers to debriefing migrants in France.

5.6 Key Successes

- Relationship with France has improved, all Border Force staff spoke highly of the efforts the French have undertaken to address the issue.
- Good communications at an operational level have been established with France. Maritime Intelligence Bureau at NMIC skype every day with French colleagues. UK operatives know what assets the French are deploying. The Letter of Intent between French and UK ministers setting out the parameters of this work was ground breaking.

5.7 Key Lessons

- Sustainable funding stream needed to support work going forward.
- Identification of key operational blockers that can be unblocked by high level negotiations.

6. At Sea

6.1 Key Themes

- Scale of Risk.
- Returns at Sea and SOLAS vs Law Enforcement.
- Future Role of Border Force Maritime Command.
- Opportunities for Improved Response & Evidence Gathering.

6.2 Scale of Risk

6.2.1 The Channel is a challenging environment, as the second busiest stretch of sea in the world. Border Force, in their words, are operating at the high end of high risk. Success for the Maritime Command is that they have safeguarded everybody that they have been alerted to and they are (quite rightly) proud of that. However, they are acutely aware that a loss of life will lead to an intense scrutiny and possible criticism of their response. They are trying their utmost to reduce the risks of this occurring, and the focus on this as a successful humanitarian response is often lost.

6.3 Returns at Sea and SOLAS vs Law Enforcement

6.3.1 The activity of Border Force Maritime Command and the concept of returns at sea attracted significant commentary and opposing views. The contradiction of SOLAS (saving of life at sea) versus a law enforcement approach did not sit well with some members of Border Force but this did not seem to reach the Gold Group.

“The concept of returns at sea is not a good idea. The focus is SOLAS, which is Home Sec’s view too. We also have a Border Security role too, but this needs to be tackled in the UK or in France, not the bit in the middle. It is too dangerous.”

6.3.2 Staff referenced the Joint Action Plan between the Home Secretary and the French Minister for Interior positively. However, staff in the Maritime Command felt this interpretation had been erroneously extended to returns at sea.

6.3.3 Maritime experts think this tactic will increase the risk and migrants will not want to be rescued if they know they are going back to France. This would all take place in a narrow part of the channel and therefore may displace the problem or cause migrants to take more of a risk. One or two successful returns at sea may have a longer term adverse impact on how migrants react when encountered in the channel and there is significant reputational risk if migrants refuse to disembark in France.

6.3.4 Staff also expressed concerns that while legally it is possible, the operational risks are also relevant, and these should carry as much weight in considering whether this is the right tactical option to employ. In establishing the legality of the tactic, there was a large jump to its legitimate use without the fullest consideration of the risks and longer-term implications.

“I disagree that this risk is balanced against the risk of migrants keeping on trying this route. Coastguards think it will increase risk. There is a danger that the migrants will not get on any boat. You cannot carry out a SAR operation against someone’s will.”

“Not entirely happy with the concept of returns at sea. What risks are there to the migrants? Will they jump in the sea? This causes concerns. Tankers may have to change course, so dangerous. If people are in the water, we have to deploy numerous resources”.

6.4 Future Role of Border Force Maritime Command.

6.4.1 There are 2 Cutters and 2 CPVs currently deployed or available for deployment in the Channel. Presently, they are undertaking a SOLAS type role in taking migrants on board and bringing them to Dover. In the current process crews are asked to switch between SOLAS and law enforcement in the course of the response, identifying possible facilitators and seizing evidence around the rescue effort. If returns at sea as a tactic is taken forward the lines become blurred further. Border Force will be rescuing migrants

(SOLAS) but then taking them to France, possibly against their will (Law Enforcement). By doing this the safety of crew and migrants will be at risk. Migrants may refuse to board Border Force vessels and try and continue to the UK and land themselves. This means that they are in the busy shipping lanes longer and may arrive in the UK at a remote beach which is difficult for Emergency Services to access. If they do accept rescue they may become non-compliant and violent when they realise they are going back to France. The use of more Border Force vessels was seen by some as increasing the pool of 'grey lifeboats'.

6.4.2 Concerns were raised about the lack of a clear strategy on the use of the Border Force fleet in the channel in response to small boats. The Coastguard sees the SOLAS role as business as usual, with assets they can deploy such as the RLNI. It is difficult to deploy to multiple events on one day due to crew fatigue and the Border Force Vessels were a useful addition to the Coastguard's capability.

6.4.3 The effectiveness and value for money of bringing the cutter back from the Mediterranean, if measuring success against the deterrent factor, is arguably limited. As extra capability to provide a search and rescue functions and assist existing resources at times multiple incidents occur, the success is clearer. The cost of hiring Naval vessels to assist in the time taken to return the cutter to the UK was substantial – without providing additional deterrence factors, given the French navy and Gendarmerie Maritime have also been active in the Channel and throughout May events have continued to occur.

6.4.4 An additional complicating factor is funding – Overseas Development Agency money paid for Cutters in the Mediterranean and only funded for search and rescue. No funding for Cutters in the UK has been agreed and approximately 80% of the Maritime budget has been spent on the small boats response and concerns were raised about the future funding for work in the Mediterranean. There is work underway in Border Force to look at the complexities of this issue and deliver a strategy, protocols and detailed instructions to attempt to address these issues. This needs to be looked at in the wider context of maritime activity in the Channel, the composition of the fleet and the partnerships with NMIC and the Coastguard.

6.5 Opportunities for Improved Response and Evidence Gathering

6.5.1 Cutter and Coastal Patrol Vessels provide an excellent evidential opportunity which is not currently being exploited fully. Consideration should be given to the use of body worn video and use of digital evidence capture on the vessels. There is currently some limited capability, but quality is poor, and the equipment is not uniform across all vessels.

6.5.2 There is also opportunity for crews to be upskilled in evidence gathering. Staff also felt that the relationship with the migrants at this point is good as they have just been rescued. It was suggested that consideration could also be given to foreign language speakers being placed on the vessels to facilitate better communication at that first contact.

“CPV staff are first responders, first to speak to migrants. They pick up information, eg migrants being taken to a safe house before money is transferred and then they travel”.

6.5.3 There has been excellent joint working with the Coastguard and Port of Dover, which has included embedding an officer at Dover Coastguard during night shifts. Close

Liaison with the Royal Navy, around analysing patterns – sea state and wind direction has helped plan deployments and increase readiness. This should be shared more widely to assist all teams whose resources are likely to be called on with their planning.

6.5.4 Coastguard staff based at the NMIC are working with Border Force staff and provide feedback to their operational teams. This partnership working has changed and improved standard operating procedures. This co-location and joint working has facilitated an early warning system for all parties.

6.6 Key Successes:

- All migrants have been safeguarded, in high risk circumstances, co-ordinating deployments in the second busiest shipping lane in the world. However, events in the Mediterranean in recent years mean that the risk to life remains at the forefront of everyone's mind.
- Excellent joint working across the maritime community.

6.7 Key Lesson

- Acceleration to the Gold Group of the 'experts in the field view' and an openness in the Gold Group to hear dissenting views, and to have the consideration of risk as a key part of decision making.
- Strategic decision around Border Force Fleet overarching aim – will SOLAS always outweigh law enforcement or can this be better defined. Further assessments of the use and composition of the fleet and the relationship with other maritime agencies.
- Explore opportunities to gather better evidence by Cutter and CPV crews and expand successes of joint working experienced by NMIC to other operational environments.

7. Reception

7.1 Key Themes:

- Dockside Response
- Incident Management
- Silo Working

7.2 Dockside Response

7.2.1 The dockside process was referenced extensively by first responders in Border Force, NCA and IE. At first the process was slightly chaotic, but decisions to use the Tug Haven in Dover Harbour as a disembarkation point for small boats was a good step forward. The process improved greatly, and it was noted that when more experienced staff were present this became a much slicker process.

7.2.2 The response can still be inconsistent, sometimes with numerous teams turning up, and others with just a few. There is also sometimes a feeling that other business areas can't be relied upon to undertake responsibilities to the correct standard.

“For example, the NCA wanted to know who the facilitator was whilst the boat was still at sea and whilst it was still a SAR operation.”

“If the we do not go down and take the original photos we struggle to get it, and everyone starts jumping up and down. We do have a standard form to share information.”

7.2.3 All parties were open to learning and improving, adjusting their processes. The ability for all agencies and departments to adapt to change was excellent. There has been a real willingness to co-operate, and the response from the partners such as the Coastguard has been superb. The 24/7 nature of the frontline response has been outstanding, with staff working long hours and going above and beyond day after day. There were sometimes instances when expectations were unrealistic and showed a lack of understanding for the pressures on unfamiliar areas of work. There is no framework for feedback across departments, or to express concerns or frustrations. This has been mitigated to a certain degree by the long-term relationships that have been developed over many years in the region and a desire by the majority to support colleagues across departmental boundaries. Opportunities have been missed to give feedback and to provide learning, especially when outcomes were successful – for example, evidence gathered from the first responder that helps in the removal process or identifies a link to a facilitator.

“We never find out what happens to the migrants. Some feedback would be really helpful. There is a disconnect here”

7.3 Incident Management

7.3.1 Many teams have expressed concerns over the lack of clarity as to who oversees each incident. There are incidents when lots of agencies and officers are in attendance but no clear process and no clear management of the situation. Staff pointed out that the inconsistency in who is taking the lead at the start of the event can impact negatively further in the process if all the right steps aren't taken. A better process of escalation and notification is needed to ensure consistency.

“Everyone turns up at the event – it needs one agency to turn up and say we are in control and coordinate the effort.”

7.3.2 There has been a conflict of roles which has been difficult for staff to reconcile without support, for example health and safety of migrants and management of the event as a crime scene. There is a need for an operational forum to capture learning and to have a single operational order with clearly defined escalation routes, roles and responsibilities.

7.3.3 There was significant praise for Border Force's General Maritime team from investigators who have developed expertise and great partnership working when responding to incidents – there was a marked difference in response when this team wasn't available and others unfamiliar with the process attended. The development of a multi-functional task force was raised repeatedly as a means to respond more effectively to not only small boats incidents but other clandestine events in the South East.

7.4 Silo Working

7.4.1 Teams working in silos makes the response to incidents more difficult.

7.4.2 There was a trial placing IE staff on cutters which some felt worked well as it provided continuity as well as extra support, but others criticised the trial, unclear of the purpose or expected outcomes. There was no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the interoperability.

7.4.3. Operational guidance in different departments is often contradictory and lacks clarity. Limited resources have made staff very focussed on their areas of responsibility, seeking to set clear lines in the sand of where they will attend, for example, how far from the boat migrants are detected setting the standard for who will deal and what operational process to follow.

7.4.4 Border Force policy is for migrants to declare themselves within 24 hours if they arrive at an unmanned port. The Kent Intake Unit offers a solution for detections in Kent but relies on an in-country process. This solution is not available elsewhere and Border Force were undertaking the processing, following on-entry procedures. ICE teams expressed a view that all cases linked to a boat should be dealt with as border cases.

7.4.5 This separation of powers and processes has hampered interoperability. The current process in Kent relies on sufficient resourcing in the Kent Intake Unit. If KIU has capacity, they will take all cases referred to them. If there is limited or no capacity, IE's Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) Teams are required to support as KIU operate an after-entry process which Border Force staff are not trained to undertake. In high volume events, ICE officers can provide a multi-functional capability such as scene management, detention and escorting, control and restraint etc, so diversion to the KIU can reduce their usefulness elsewhere. These issues will become sharper if, as expected, numbers rise over the summer period.

"Agencies not using their full powers to assist the investigation or processing of individuals. Border Force have power to arrest and seize but don't use them effectively".

7.5 Key Successes

- Staff across all departments have worked long hours and at short notice to respond to all events, adapting their processes as they go.
- Border Force officers now have a greater knowledge of forensic retrieval and crime scene preservation.
- Work is being undertaken on post incident management methods and approaches.
- Staff have developed good cross department arrangements and have used these to call on support at short notice.

7.5 Key Lesson

- A tactical operational forum, or a silver command structure underpinning the gold group will provide a forum to address misunderstandings. A single operational order covering the multi-agency response, detailing roles and responsibilities is also

recommended, with clear explanations to partners as to the reasons for requests. Consideration to be given to aide memoires in layman terms for pocket books.

- Consideration to a cross departmental taskforce to undertake the response to end to end response to small boats and other clandestine events in the South East.
- There is no uniform policy for dealing with these incidents. Concise and consistent operational policy across all departments to address discrepancies and contradictory processes is needed.
- There is a need for a clearer escalation route to the Gold Group to identify resourcing or policy issues.

8. Investigations

8.1 Key Themes

- Primacy, Adoption Criteria & Levels of Criminality
- Crown Prosecution Service & Charging Decisions
- Forensics
- Partner roles
- Conflicting Priorities
- Money Flows

8.2 Primacy & Adoption Criteria

8.2.1 The NCA and IE's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) have both provided a 'PURSUE' response to small boats, the NCA under Project Catlin. There have been over 20 arrests and there are currently 7 ongoing investigations to identify facilitators. Teams have worked hard to provide a response to every event to identify facilitators and assess the opportunities for evidence.

8.2.2 There seemed to be a lot of confusion over the roles of CFI and the NCA, particularly around primacy and adoption criteria. This has been addressed by CFI and the NCA but will need a robust communications strategy to embed with first responders.

"The NCA/CFI sometimes clash re investigations, who has primacy? BF officers are caught in the middle. This needs consistency of tasking from either investigative authority."

8.2.3 There was also a view that the focus on looking for a "Mr Big" was detracting from looking at the lower level facilitators. With Operation Invigor taking the lead for organised immigration crime, some felt this had detracted from the disruption that can be achieved by tackling small time and lower level facilitators. The suggestion of a taskforce was also prevalent among respondents in CFI who felt this would ensure the UK had a '1 stop shop' for clandestine related criminality into the UK and upstream. Many praised the

momentum and joint working that had developed from the response to small boats and felt this should be maintained.

“Lots of people making decisions but no one organisation owns them. CFI could own it but sits with NCA at present. What is the adoption criteria for NCA? Has CFI adapted their own adoption criteria?”

“What happens with the small-time facilitators if NCA and CFI are looking at serious and organised crime”

8.3 **Crown Prosecution Service and Charging Decisions**

8.3.1 Respondents talked about ability to secure convictions as an issue, with variable decision-making by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Staff and managers felt there was a need to look closely at how evidence is obtained in the response to small boats (and organised immigration crime in general) to reach charging decisions at a much earlier stage. Currently suspects are often released under investigation, and with their connections to facilitation networks, have a much greater opportunity to disappear. A quicker and more effective process from the initial notification of an incident, through the reception of the migrants, with the forensics and evidence gathering, understanding if there is a facilitator there or not is essential.

8.3.2 This issue has been discussed with CPS at the NCA Pursue meeting, and workshops are planned for June to identify best practice. Practitioners in CFI are convinced that dedicated specialist CPS lawyers will drive great improvements in this area and suggested running a pilot scheme in Kent.

8.4 **Forensics**

8.4.1 There has been some good work by the NCA in connection with forensics. Of the 77 vessels to arrive to date 73 have been forensically examined by the Maritime and Military Interdiction Cell (MAMIC). In partnership with Border Force, an effective process has been established for retrieval and response.

8.4.2.1 There are currently 2 NCA investigations and 1 Immigration Enforcement CFI investigation which have resulted from vessel examinations all of which are still ongoing and have already yielded a number of arrests and significant intelligence of value in the UK and up-stream. Respondents thought this work was key and although resource intensive, supported the continued response.

8.5 **Partner Roles**

8.5.1 Officers pointed to the need for more co-operation with French partners at an investigative level. They were under the impression the French would not accept a UK investigative presence on mainland France and suggested this could be tackled by exploring the option of funding a French officer working within UK authorities to support investigations. This has previously been experienced and was believed to have worked well. The barriers to a UK presence in France could also be escalated to the Gold Group for discussion at official levels with French counterparts.

8.5.2 Concerns were raised by NCA colleagues around the delay in processing evidence, the example cited was the issue of and the speed in which phone downloads are being received, with a lapse of a number of months in one case. It was felt that these issues

were due to lack of resources and poor communication around the procedures. There did not appear to be an outlet for such issues to be raised and addressed in a timely fashion.

8.5.3 There was agreement that there is a need to strengthen the response at the actual event, with all parties beyond the investigation teams needing to get the golden hour correct, from the RNLI through to IE. Ideally, everyone would understand the evidential necessities, but inconsistency in the officers undertaking the response has led to inconsistencies in the standard of evidence gathered, with loss of understanding around golden hours principles.

8.6 **Conflicting Priorities**

8.6.1 The impact of the small boats response on CFI is difficult to measure. It has impacted on staff hours and other work. If port and in-country incidents of clandestine detections increase over the summer, as is normally the case, as well as a swell in small boats arrivals, which is also expected, the current resourcing model will not be sufficient to tackle all referrals. There were concerns that difficult and unpalatable decisions will need to be made on priorities and diversion of resources. The level of current response has already caused the Dover team to make difficult decisions on referrals from Dover and Coquelles to respond to traditional clandestine detections.

8.7 **Financial Investigations**

8.7.1 While there are conflicting views of a UK based organised immigration crime group nexus, migrants are now settling into UK based communities and there is some intelligence to link money flows to UK based individuals. Financial investigation experts have also raised the issue of use of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) and if this is being used for all those all those charged. Removing the money will act as a deterrent to these individuals, especially if it can be done internationally if convicted. This will rely on joint working with CFI and NCA teams and consideration should be given to developing a financial investigation strategy, with some dedicated resource – given that this is currently a very stretched and scarce resource in law enforcement, consideration should be given to the use of external resources looking at bids under ARIS for a dedicated medium-term capability.

8.8 **Key Successes**

- The response from the NCA and IE have resulted in over 20 arrests and a number of ongoing investigations into the facilitators behind the MO.
- Establishing Project Catlin ensured NCA resources are focused on the response as one of the Agencies top priorities
- Significant forensic opportunities are exploited via MAMIC.

8.9 **Key Lesson**

- CPS is a key partner and needs to be part of the Gold Structure to escalate issues and work with NCA and IE to identify best practice, establish consistent decision making and focussed guidance to get to early charge decisions from good evidence.

- Clear adoption criteria and demarcation of responsibilities to be established between CFI and NCA and shared with frontline teams.
- Better understanding of financial flows and options to tackle – requires a strategy and consideration of resourcing.

9. Intelligence

9.1 Key Themes

9.1.1 Intelligence was a topic that was raised as an issue most amongst frontline staff, with conflicting and often diametrically opposed views as to what is working, what is needed or what the right structure is. However, no matter what views staff held, they were all united in the opinion that the current arrangements were not working.

- Intelligence Products
- Intelligence Flows
- Intelligence Structures
- Debriefing
- CCIC
- Systems
- Other Partners
- Conflicting Views
- Value for Money

9.2 Intelligence Products

9.2.1 Previously, during the 2015/16 migrant crisis BICS got to a place where there was a commonly recognised intelligence picture (CRIP) that all parties were feeding into and referring to – this seemed to drop away once the crisis abated and all parties felt the loss of this. It has taken several months for all departments and agencies to come together and create a forum for intelligence products. Everyone welcomed this and were indeed hungry for the products.

9.2.2 All intelligence is fed in to the National Intelligence Hub (NIH - which is part of the Invigor task force lead by the NCA) via different departments who are generating intelligence. There are Border Force and Immigration Enforcement embeds in the NIH. JSTAC have taken the lead on generating intelligence reports with the intelligence

community coming together quickly at the start developing and utilising excellent links between the analysts in Border Force, IE and the NCA. They have produced 18 intelligence reports since October 2018. More effort into being an intelligent client is needed – the intelligence reports have dropped away, and there have been no strategic products since March. The range of products required is varied according to each department's focus on the problem. There is currently no agreed range of products or frequency of publication, leading to wide ranging demands, often at short notice. A more co-ordinated and unified approach is needed to eliminate duplication and unreasonable deadlines.

9.2.3 IE and Border Force are interested in lower level intelligence, at a regular, tactical level. The strategic requirements also go beyond organised immigration crime and are needed for longer term projections and analysis of trends. In the short term, the Lessons Learned Team, with support from the Gold Group have commissioned a number of products from a joint IE/Border Force forum. This commission is available at [Annex B](#).

“Someone should take a lead on developing a problem profile – no one department owns the problem. Without a problem profile there is a real gap.”

“Where is the overarching intel, no one stop shop – IE, BF, Frontex etc. Everyone is doing it for their own organisation. At the time of the migration crisis it went in to COBR and got a fantastic intel piece produced. Should have this within the BICS system”

9.3 Intelligence Flows

9.3.1 Currently all intelligence is routed via the NIH and is shared with French partners via Ocriest in Paris. Many parties feel this leads to an inbuilt delay in the intelligence process particularly as the NCA is focussed on the top end of organised crime. The view from frontline staff within IE and BF is that this is limiting opportunities for quick time exchanges. Joint Debriefing Team reports are routed in this manner and whilst the intelligence is uncorroborated at this stage, real-time sharing with Border Force and partners via the CCIC would offer better opportunities for French deployments to deliver fast time disruptions along the coast line and encourage reciprocity with French law enforcement partners.

9.3.2 There are still many unanswered questions on the MO around costs, ability of migrants to navigate, connections to facilitators, use of safe houses etc. Clear defining of intelligence requirements and gaps, disseminated to all staff involved, from first responders to asylum teams is needed.

“There seems to be a blockage between Paris and the PAF they don't seem to be getting the information.”

“I don't think we have seen all the intelligence due to the sheer volume of the information coming in. We need to ensure agencies have a clear path way for the collection and dissemination of intelligence.”

9.4 Intelligence Structures

9.4.1 Without a doubt, the collaboration of all partners across the intelligence community has moved forward in the response to small boats, but there are a range of units and teams operating in this arena, with some duplication of effort and still a prevailing feeling that the right people are not getting the right intelligence feeds. Kent

Police have the European Liaison Unit, there is the Joint Border Intelligence Unit, the CCIC, Border Force Intelligence teams, the Joint Debriefing Team and Operation Snowbird all active in the South East. Over time as resources have become scarcer, co-location and embedding of staff has reduced and organisations are focussing on their own core priorities.

9.4.2 The NCA's creation of Project Catlin and the use of JSTAC to develop strategic analysis was seen within the NCA as a positive step, giving a focus for resources and intelligence but stopped short of creating a multi-agency hub. It assisted in identifying all the intelligence feeds and co-ordinating the contributions and analysis.

9.4.3 Many were keen to build on the progress of working closely across departments, with embedded officers and clear links back into originating organisations. There was a real desire to expand this work into the wider clandestine threat. Many teams have developed daily or weekly briefing meetings with partners, or have embedded staff into key units (such as NCA secondments into NMIC and IE and Border Forced embeds into the NIH)

“What has been built under small boats we need to keep and turn the focus to other threats such as lorries. We want to keep the momentum and keep working together. We need a joint forward work plan to stop wasted effort working on the same thing.”

“This is a once in a chance opportunity with a manufactured crisis to show how well we can work together, a whole system response.”

“If we started from scratch I would set up a task force – arrival development through to investigation. This would provide a single path way for information, intelligence and evidence collection.”

9.4.4 Operation Causeway, the multi-agency hub established in Liverpool to look at the common travel area was referenced as a good model that could be replicated in Kent. While there is the JBIU, which provides excellent support, their remit is wide and their ability to devote resources to immigration issues is limited. Staff were also keen to see the secondment of French officers into a multi-agency hub.

9.5 Debriefing

9.5.1 The Joint Debriefing Team (JDT) is made up of Border Force, IE and Kent Police officers totalling 19 staff working on a shift system. They have a national remit and cover all clandestine routes. They will identify migrants suitable for debrief but due to a combination of staffing issues, available interview space and other processes, JDT assess they are speaking to approximately 3 out of 8 small boat arrivals. Other respondents felt this was less. There have been suggestions that the screening, initial interviews and debriefing all have overlapping elements and create an unnecessary duplication and hand-offs between teams. A taskforce approach could assist in streamlining the process.

9.5.2 JDT also undertake phone downloads which can yield vital intelligence and evidence. The process is slow, especially when there are large volumes of phones, and subject to technological limits. Recent legal challenges to the accessing of victim / witness's phone data may frustrate Law Enforcement's opportunities to downloading migrants' phones in future which would present a serious set back. There is a need for a better IT system for downloading phones, this will give us a better product and cross-

referencing facilities. Staff cited Dutch and Australian law enforcement who are using more advance systems but there seems to be a difficulty in getting traction to purchase the system here.

9.5.3 There have been questions raised by the NCA as to whether there is value in the debriefing of migrants to generate high end intelligence. This has created tensions with the JDT who have worked hard to generate the most up to date picture of changing tactics. The ability to debrief more migrants and to download more phones, not only from those arriving on small boats but also those using other irregular migration routes is currently highly valued by IE and Border Force, both of whom would like to see more activity, not less. Enhanced support to JDT with a clear evaluation of outputs should be considered. JDT have plans to expand their debriefing to migrants as they progress through the system, but this is resource intensive and would detract from first accounts.

9.5.4 Senior managers of the JDT are seeking to expand their links to other Government Departments and the Security Services (they already have at least one embed), to enhance collaborative working and support the counter terrorism threat response.

9.6 **CCIC**

9.6.1 The UK-France Co-ordination and Information Centre opened in Calais at the end of November as part of the Sandhurst Treaty. While the full remit of the CCIC is not yet being fully realised, it is making progress and gaining traction.

- Assist with preventing illegal attempts to cross the shared border
- Exchange real-time intelligence between UK and French agencies to combat cross-border criminality
- Work on the prevention of threats to public order on cross-border infrastructure
- Provide analysis of cross-Channel traffic flows

9.6.2 Importantly, it will also help with the identification, prosecution and dismantling of the organised crime groups currently behind illegal migration attempts by small boats across the Channel.

9.6.3 The CCIC provides an excellent opportunity to work collaboratively with the French, but there is a view that this has been side-lined to a certain extent to preserve existing communication channels (NCA/Ocriest) and is a missed opportunity to improve the regional intelligence picture and investigations capability. The expectations placed on the CCIC are great, but support with intelligence and information flows, or consistent attendance has not always been forthcoming from partner agencies. Border Force are providing 24/7 attendance alongside the PAF, but most partners attend for weekly meetings on an ad hoc basis, limiting the capability to respond in real-time to events. CFI colleagues have pointed to the value they have had from it, with real-time requests for support producing pictures from French helicopters of migrants driving the boats.

9.6.4 The CCIC has provided a forum to tackle blockages with French partners, for example facilitating access to French magistrates to improve information flows from French investigations.

9.6.5 More commitment from partners beyond Border Force to the CCIC and a recognition of the full potential role it could fulfil would improve the progress already made. In a multi-agency hub framework, the opportunity to co-locate with international partners the CCIC provides is highly valuable and should be exploited by all.

9.7 Systems

9.7.1 Across organisations, different platforms and systems to record and disseminate intelligence is used. A number of teams raised concerns that operating on different intelligence systems created in-built delays and silos. For example, many in Border Force don't use the single intelligence platform, but use Immediate Event Notifications which go into the regional Border Force Intel hub.

"We would benefit to work from a joint system – JBIU could put everything on to an intelligence report. BF GM cell will see what JBIU produce and add in their own information to enhance the report."

9.7.3 The NCA also stated they didn't have access to certain essential intelligence systems owing to a security IT solution requirement. They had lost the ability for secure instant messaging and this was seen as a major benefit for sharing of fast time information and intelligence. It was suggested that there is a need for intelligence from every agency or department to be tagged with an identifier to locate it, such as "GMBOATS".

9.7.4 With no single overarching intelligence lead for small boats (and indeed other cross system issues), the identification of blockages and co-ordinated action to resolve them is not happening. The appointment of a single senior intelligence lead would assist greatly in this.

9.8 Other Partners

9.8.1 Non BICs and NCA partners have also been active in intelligence gathering and supporting the response. Port of Dover Police (POD) are part of the Police network and work closely with Special Branch. Depending on the location of the arrival local police have also undertaken first response roles.

9.8.2 Under Operation Yapp police officers at South East ports have been seeking to identify individuals leaving the UK with boats that could be used to transport migrants.

9.8.3 Kent Police have the European Liaison Unit with co-ordinates enquiries for police partners with French Law Enforcement, building on their well-established contacts built over the last three decades. They did not feel as well connected to the NCA, but welcomed the analytical products produced by JSTAC as a means to link into the bigger picture and missed them when they stopped. Staff felt they were at the coal face but didn't get enough support.

"It feels like we are just supporting the effort and have very little link with the NCA in Spring Gardens"

9.9 Conflicting Views

9.9.1 According to an experienced de-briefer the criminal network in the UK is very powerful but believes migrants are too fearful to speak up. There have been instances of UK based individuals identified who were awaiting the arrival of the boats, albeit only very occasionally. This in direct contrast to the view of the NCA who, despite assessments of all the intelligence flows, have not identified a significant or hierarchical OCG network.

“With a high degree of confidence, we don’t feel this is coming from the UK.”

9.9.2 There are views held by staff which are not born out by the facts or the reality of the situation, which could be easily addressed by a commonly recognised intelligence picture.

“This will get worse and worse as it goes on we are getting lots more nationalities. It is generally ups and downs with numbers. There appears to be a lot more nationalities involved, and the MO is constantly changing.”

9.9.3 The NCA had a different view from Border Force and Immigration Enforcement as to how well the intelligence flows were working, and within Immigration Enforcement there were differing views of the service intelligence teams were providing. UKVI teams were not sufficiently connected to the intelligence picture and have a role to play, both as a contributor and as a recipient.

“The three main Intel teams from the different agencies are working well together. Historically this has been a struggle but having a galvanised incident they now work closely together. The NCA OIC Intel lead was having almost a daily briefing with IE JDT & BF. The ILO’s in France were also a real benefit getting information from the French.”

“I can’t think of one event where we have had a piece of intelligence that has helped us”.

9.10 Value for Money

9.10.1 There was a significant strength of feeling from NCA teams that the amount of resource devoted to this threat was not commensurate with the risk, particularly as it was drawing resources away from other key threats. The level of reporting and resources being allocated across all parties was at the detriment to other key threats arising from the clandestine threat, such as HGVs and containers.

“It was our assessment that the effort was not proportion compared to the risk to the country”

“It would have been an easy sell if we did not have the risk of people coming from containers”

9.10.2 Many believed this was a good time to review structures and process across the piece to ensure all best possible products, intelligence flows and partnerships were developed to maximum capacity.

9.11 Key Successes

- Unprecedented levels of collaborative working across agencies.
- Development of key strategic products.

- Benefits of co-located and embedded officers realised.

9.12 Key Lessons

- A single senior officer responsible reporting to the Gold Group on intelligence, co-ordinating intelligence requirements, products, resolving issues and driving co-operation would address a number of the issues raised across the different teams.
- All staff would have benefitted from an early stage by the production of a commonly recognised intelligence picture, available to all parties and produced on a regular basis.
- Proper commissioning of intelligence products at all levels in a co-ordinated manner would reduce confusion and unrealistic demands and deadlines.
- Use of a single hub to route all intelligence created in-built delays and hampered the ability to break out lower level intelligence. Consideration to be given to simultaneous sharing of intelligence across BICS teams.
- There are significant opportunities for more effective use of the CCIC with all parties seeking to support the UK presence.
- Exploration of debriefing in France, akin to that undertaken in 2015/16 under Op Focal to be escalated to senior official level for discussion with French partners, and wider opportunities within the UK at all stages of the process.
- The clandestine threat would benefit from a multi-agency hub, akin to Op Causeway, uniting all South East Intelligence teams focussing on the range of clandestine routes and able to flex in times of crisis or increased activity.

10. Asylum Teams

10.1 Key Themes

- Initial Processing
- Senior Leadership views
- Decision making
- Dublin Process

10.2 Initial Processing

10.2.1 The Kent Intake Unit sits within UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) and is responsible for establishing the identity for migrants on arrival from the first detection point. Staff establish reasons for travelling to the UK, conduct screening interviews and Eurodac checks. The unit acts as a short term holding facility, the detention element being undertaken by a contractor, MITIE. First responders will take migrants to KIU for processing from across Kent and beyond. Border Force, IE and Police all utilise the unit

to process migrants seeking to enter the UK clandestinely. KIU follow an after-entry process and will deal with asylum and non-asylum referrals.

10.2.2 KIU Managers felt they had responded well to the situation and managed within available resource plus initial pull-in. Contingency planning had not been invoked, and all migrants have been processed in KIU without the need to divert to other intake units - AIU in Croydon and MIU in the Midlands.

10.2.3 There were concerns from IE and Border Force that KIU had not been prepared for the influx over Christmas and have raised concerns about the readiness of KIU for any large-scale response. Support was provided to KIU from IE's Immigration Compliance and Enforcement teams for a significant period after the Christmas influx. As KIU only follow an after-entry process, enhanced support from Border Force is of limited use, even when it was readily offered.

10.2.4 The capacity of KIU to process large volumes of migrants is dependent on staffing levels and is restricted by infrastructure. There were a number of options which were developed in the 2015/16 migrant crisis which increased capacity and throughput to a significantly higher level than is currently being realised.

10.2.5 KIU have conducted their own lessons learned process following the situation at Christmas and made the following assessments:

- Senior people became involved after the initial pressure had abated.
- Good response from outside UKVI to the immediate problem.
- There was an expectation – gut feeling – that something was going to happen, however, there was no hard evidence and therefore the standing up of more than skeleton staff resource was not considered necessary.
- By comparison better arrangements were in place for Easter 2019 as all organisations were more alive to the threat even though there was again no specific intelligence. The coincidence of good weather and holiday season was this time deemed enough to resource for a surge.

10.2.6 Among their observations and recommendations for improvement to the process they have suggested the following:

- There is an opportunity for some of the debrief work to be brought forward in the process. Where Cutters rescue the small boats, KIU felt its staff could ask targeted questions over and above seeking assurance of the migrants' well-being. Given the predominant nationality and costs of travel, the cohort is likely to include a number of English speakers.
- The initial operational Gold Group which was established by Border Force and was an excellent forum to tackle operational issues and this has been missed.
- Scepticism over whether this was a "major incident", it appeared to be a reaction to media interest principally.

10.2.7 At Christmas when the Home Secretary called a 'major incident' the general feeling amongst senior managers and intake staff was that all parties at Dover could have coped although with hindsight immediately calling a CI may have enabled more resources to be deployed.

10.2.8 For asylum screening teams, it didn't feel like a major crisis, just busier than business as usual. No significant changes to asylum screening processes were required although they did consider scaling down to a lower level of processing.

10.2.9 The team at KIU continue to play a pivotal role in the speedy processing of migrants and the identification of repeat immigration offenders. This led to the identification of a significant facilitator and the subsequent investigation. Their willingness to take immigration offenders from outside the region, and to continue to process those who do not claim asylum has provided an exceptional level of service to IE, Border Force and the Police, not experienced anywhere else in the country.

10.2.10 Concerns remain over the robustness of KIU's contingency planning and their ability to deal with significant increases in migrant arrivals. The Op Cowl planning team have been tasked with looking closely at the plans to ensure they dovetail with the wider cross organisational planning.

10.3 Senior Leadership Views

10.3.1 Senior Leaders in UKVI have identified several challenges that had an impact on UKVI teams:

- Significant time spent at a senior level deliberating between the political response (stop them coming over) and operational response (preserve life/humanitarian aspect).
- Felt like BF were heavily focussed on 'maritime aspect/systems' rather than integration into the 'immigration/asylum' aspect.
- Initial meetings with Home Sec – clear that he was not sufficiently aware of asylum processes/systems/requirements as he wanted to make strong tactical decisions sometimes not in line with these. Possible learning point with regard to detail contained in the 'Day 1 Briefing' he received when he started in post.
- Related to above, differences were apparent between operational and policy responses e.g. IRN nationals 'why can't we just return to Iran?'
- Daily gold group meetings lost focus and became somewhere between strategic gold group and policy workshop.

10.3.2 Other Positive Outcomes have also been realised by senior UKVI staff:

- Better coordination and balance emerged regarding debriefing and screening processes.
- Building BICs senior leadership as a 'team' as they spent more time together dealing with real issues than they would have done in 'normal' circumstances.

This has manifested in better connections on individual levels and ability to identify specific issues around different parts of the business.

- There was no specific combined BICs plan in place for this sort of incident which has now been addressed.

10.3.3 Long term implications:

- There was an impact on other areas of asylum decision making, although it was made clear the arrivals from small boats were a priority.
- Questions were raised around how long the 'small boats threat' would be treated as something special and different. There was a gap in understanding what the plan was to move over to management to the business, so it becomes BAU, and how in future BICS teams are able to use this experience to respond more effectively to respond to the other 'crises'.
- It was felt there was more clarity needed on the focus of the incident and what was the priority – is it intake/routes/humanitarian/disruption to shipping etc.
- A suggestion was made to undertake a detailed cost benefit analysis required to inform how BICS views the 'small boats threat' going forward.

10.4 Asylum Decision Making

10.4.1 Claims from small boat arrivals have had an impact on intake, although it was newsworthy as it was an unusual occurrence and caused an increased focus on intake, the numbers (200+ in just over 2 months) were not significant in comparison to intake from other existing cohorts.

10.4.2 There was an ask from senior managers to prioritise small boat arrivals and again staff did not think this was an unusual request.

10.4.3 The identification of those claiming asylum from small boat arrivals and the introduction of a specific marker on the case management database, CID, allowed teams to prioritise the cases. This also assisted in the hand offs between teams and has enabled data collection and monitoring.

10.4.4 The grant/refusal rate for decisions is not out of kilter with other similar cases and there has been oversight of the process via an independent assurance team within UKVI. Applications were dispersed to regional teams as per current processes.

10.4.5 For teams on the ground, there was not a discernible difference to business as usual, other than slightly increased governance and reporting.

10.4.6 The teams identified a few challenges:

- Agreed move away from service standards (agreed by Home Secretary) in relation to other priority groups. This however caused a relatively small delay to decisions made in these groups as the queueing system employed is effective and the small boat arrivals represented a priority group as per current tasking requirements.

- Senior managers/politicians not fully aware of the decision process and continual review of decisions was difficult due to staffing resources.

10.4.7 There were also a few successes and innovative practices:

- The Op Sillath cohort were subject to scrutiny by the asylum chief caseworker group for a further pair of eyes on every decision which ensured a robustness in the process.
- Reporting regime set up to provide information to senior managers/politicians; agreed to prioritise this cohort and also agreement for a set number of decisions per week.

10.4.8 The long-term implications for this cohort and the changes applied are not yet known. It takes 6-12 months for an applicant to exhaust all appeal rights and reach the end of the process (post appeal, Judicial Review, documentation etc) so decisions made on the 'small boats cohort' have not been tested through the external scrutiny of the court system yet.

10.5 Dublin Process

10.5.1 The improvements in the Dublin process is viewed as one of the most marked successes in the response to small boat incidents. The Dublin process has been ineffective for several years (caused by various factors, particularly the approach of other countries). Dublin returnees to EU Member States are difficult cases, more liable to disrupt removal at every turn than others being returned to their country of origin. Recent changes to the process have aggravated the situation, such as the reduction in the opportunities for immediate return, giving would-be returnees due notice to prepare barriers to removal either through legal means (casework barriers etc) or through disruption at any and every point of the return journey. Senior Leaders have 'pushed the team harder' around increased throughput, used a wider range of airlines, prioritised the use of escorts and made greater use of bilateral agreements with France.

10.5.2 The use of Article 13.2, which had previously never been used has been instrumental in achieving removals which would not have been possible before. This article allows the third country return to an EU Member State of someone who has lived there for over five months, irrespective of having been recognised by Eurodac. An innovation for the small boats arrivals followed on from a heightened interest by the French in closing off this route, in interpreting this period of residence generously.

10.5.3 Staff also owe the success of the Dublin process to several strategic interventions:

- Face to face meetings between Home Secretary and his French counterpart.
- Similar meetings at other levels (Director of BICs Policy & International at an officials' level).
- Seconded UKVI person into French Third Country equivalent.

10.5.4 The Dublin Cessation Team (DCT) was previously known as the Third Country Unit and makes all decisions on whether a member state should be asked to accept. This includes decisions on when article 13(2) should be applied.. It has evolved into an

asylum decision team focusing on the London and SE cohort. While most Third Country Unit activity is transferring to an IE unit in Glasgow, this team retains responsibility for Dublin decisions in respect of the small boats arrivals. This cohort is expected to remain with this team for the foreseeable future.

10.5.5 The Sillath process involved referrals from KIU after screening. National Asylum Allocation Unit disperses substantive claimants around the country to Asylum Decision teams. DCT gets those which are Eurodac hits and gets to consider others as potential Article 13(2) cases. While BICS Asylum Policy keeps sight of potential third country removals, they need a caseworking team to manage each return.

10.5.6 The Dublin Cessation Team raised several issues which have impacted on the wider processes:

- Before and during the transition, DCT was insufficiently resourced to manage its full caseload. As Op Sillath had priority, the risk was loss of some other third country cases. These must be completed within six months of the member state agreeing to accept, but the mechanics can extend beyond this. Potentially some other possible returns will be lost as non-priority cases will not be processed in time. There is a feeling that both productivity pressures work against each other. There is a WIP of 5000 cases which TCU could not close in time, and 40% of new asylum intake is allocated to London and South teams. Self-check-in departure is not a viable option as it is highly unlikely returnees will comply (a few years ago, in a review of 100 self-check-in cases, only one departed) so the returns process is resource intensive.
- A further time pressure is the 42-day detention limit. Temporary release affords the opportunity of absconding.
- In mid-March, the opportunity for immediate removals was lost. When available, 22 Op Sillath cases had been returned to France, only three since. Lacking the ability now for immediate removals, the migrant and their representatives have clear cues on when to submit fresh representations to disrupt the process.
- The precedent has now arisen where a boat arrival at Christmas was returned to France and has now re-entered the country. He is still a third country case but shows that this cohort may persist.
- Importance of travel history is not clear to all screeners resulting in a lack of detail to inform an Article 13(2) removal.
- The DCT had to devote considerable energy to providing twice daily MI to Gold on the cases in Op Sillath. This included data which was not to be extracted from CID, which therefore became time-consuming. Many suggestions were made to upgrade the tracker spreadsheet the team devised and the more complex it became, the harder it was to maintain. In turn this took resources away from caseworking and therefore impaired case completion.

10.5.7 There are opportunities to build on the success of the process developed to tackle to the Op Sillath cohort:

- Article 13 (2) was unused previously as it requires significant engagement from the other EU Member State. The French have engagement in Op Sillath cases potentially opens the opportunity for those who have not been fingerprinted in France to be returned there. A broadening of Article 13(2) to include other countries would enable more removals without Eurodac matches.
- 35% of Op Sillath cases have Eurodac hits. This cohort could therefore be removed under Dublin without invoking Article 13 (2) if there were resources to process in time. 26 of the 55 who landed on Easter Monday were Eurodac hits.
- Access to 'pocket litter'. Since 13(2) relies on evidence of a lengthy period of time in France, it is not a universal remedy. However, pocket litter may provide evidence of a stay in France as will download information from migrants phones. Awareness of both frontline teams and DCT of the potential uses is limited and there is no process in place to identify and allow access potential useful information. This can be remedied through better use of data recording and awareness at all stages of the process.
- Better quality of screening details could be achieved if the requirements for a Dublin removal were re-stated to screening teams.

10.6 Key Successes

- Use of KIU as a focal point for small boats migrants assisted all organisations in a delivering a unified response.
- The operational command structure established on Christmas Day helped identify resources to support the shortfall in KIU.
- KIU processes identified a migrant who had previously been processed and his referral to CFI instigated an investigation which identified the individual as a key facilitator.
- The creation of a recognisable flag for the cohort, to assist in tracking and maintaining accurate records and reduced complications in hand offs between the teams.
- The use of a second pair of eyes on asylum decisions has assisted in delivering more robust decisions from the outset.
- Re-invigoration of the Dublin process and innovative use of Section 13(2).
- Interventions at a senior official and political level brought about significant changes that were transformative.

10.7 Key Lessons

- KIU preparedness for large scale migrant events and their ability to respond effectively with a speedy throughput would benefit from further testing and scrutiny, in partnership with other in the South East.
- Reliance on an after-entry process at KIU limits interoperability and options for support – consideration could be given to utilising both an on entry and after entry process to build resilience and widen options for staffing.
- Better identification needed of duplication with other parts of BICS at the start of the process.
- Better technological solutions required to assist tracking and management of the cohort and reduce reliance on manual data gathering.
- A link needs to be established between those collecting information at the start of the response, where information is gathered, to the decision makers who are not always sighted on call the relevant material and facts. Better links to frontline capture of evidence and screening processes could elicit better evidence to support 13(2) and third country decision making.
- Consideration of the resourcing model to address the time pressures on third country removal processes. The DCT prioritisation of the Op Sillath process is at the expense of other Dublin and third country removals. Options for improved staffing from across the BICS system, or from the HMRC surge teams is recommended.

11. Asylum Policy

11.1 Key Themes:

- Media Influence and Impact of Timing
- Role of Politicians
- Consistency & Unintended Consequences
- Article 13(2)

Asylum Policy sits within the BICS Policy and International Directorate and outside UKVI. A key observation from colleagues in Asylum Policy was that there were a “lot of fingers in the pie” and a variety of people with different agendas which weren’t always complementary. At a policy level, the need to address this cohort robustly did not synchronise fully with the need for all asylum decisions to be consistently made. Priority given to the small boats cohort meant preferential treatment over other asylum claimants. In view of the high success rate of the small boats arrivals, this meant they could legally become economically active here out of turn.

11.2 Media Influence and Impact of Timing

11.2.1 It was felt that the timing of the arrivals at Christmas were unfortunate as Brexit was no longer headlining in the press during the Parliamentary recess and the media required other stories, this being one of them. With staff numbers being generally

restricted over Christmas, there was limited resource to manage media and direct a response, which is a common holiday position. It was felt that the boat landings constitute a very small proportion of all asylum claimants but attracted a disproportionate response due to the media attention.

11.2.2 The response to the alert did not exclusively limit itself to on call officers who had the appropriate expertise, leading to more random suggestions on how to address the incident rather than a considered response across BICS.

11.2.3 Questions were raised as to whether there is sufficient resilience to respond to serious incidents. Further balance is needed there is a risk of over-staffing or over-resource a response when it is not needed. Respondents felt the Rapid Response Team and SCS rota should be invoked on such incidents relying on the right people with the right levels of knowledge.

"We should not rely on those who have laptops as this could bring in people who may not be direct contributors."

11.2.4 Colleagues felt it was difficult to turn off the heightened response once established and a step back process was needed.

11.2.5 The possible ambitions were prevention of more arrivals (protection of migrants from danger), reduction of intake, deterrence through a fast returns process, cost reduction. Some of these were contradictory.

11.3 Role of Politicians

11.3.1 Political pressure determined what could be attempted. Asylum policy colleagues supported the views of UKVI colleagues that it was the agreements between the Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister that lead to a more robust line and the use of the Dublin Article 13(2).

11.3.2 Asylum Policy was required to provide a more consistent steer on handling, to protect the Home Secretary from legal challenge and manage the risk, the difficulty was in balancing the high grant rate with the need for deterrence. There is a need to demonstrate a credible set of evidence of a well-founded risk of persecution on the one hand, and on the other expediting returns to reduce the pull factor of this modus operandi. The Home Secretary was clear in his media interviews in Dover that a credible claimant would not have crossed from France to UK but should have made an application in France.

11.3.3 Home Secretary was briefed twice before his visit to Dover. Specific policy advice was consistent with legislation, but Asylum Policy colleagues felt the messages he received need closer managing. This series of incidents commanded a firm response but Windrush required a more sympathetic one.

"It was impossible to satisfy both the Guardian and the Daily Mail."

11.4 Consistency & Unintended Consequences

11.4.1 The strong messages being set by the Gold Group in respect of this cohort were that every effort must be made to stop the route, including sending a message through

their return as far as possible to France. With the agreement between the Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister these returns became possible. The availability of a reinterpreted, flexible Article 13 (2) meant that possibly on more instance than was proper the opportunity to return to France outweighed any merits of the case.

11.4.2 Accelerating this cohort also opened the possibility of grants on insufficient evidence. The message this sends conflicts with the prohibition on this route.

11.4.3 For downstream handling there were different agendas. 25+ migrants returned under Dublin is excellent compared to overall Dublin returns numbers, but it is 3% of the small boats intake thus far. There are different agendas in using this data – on the one hand it demonstrates the Home Office is doing something tangible and providing a visible response to the Home Secretary's demands, but the miss rate is potentially embarrassing. Asylum Policy colleagues did not feel sighted on the handling guidelines for this dichotomy.

11.4.4 The diverse nature of handling of clandestine entrants, involving multiple directorates, means that Asylum Policy does not feel it has full control over the end to end system. For example, IE effects the removals. IE may have different priorities e.g. Foreign National Offenders over failed asylum seekers.

11.5 Article 13 (2)

11.5.1 This article allows the third country return to an EU Member State of someone who has lived there for over five months, irrespective of having been recognised by Eurodac. An innovation for the small boats arrivals followed on from a heightened interest by the French in closing off this route, in interpreting this period of residence generously.

11.6 Key Successes

- Innovative use of Article 13(2)

11.7 Key Lessons

- Better use of on-call system and experts in the field.
- A need to understand the risks of prioritising this cohort from the outset and seek to establish the wider consequences.

12. Returns

12.1 Except for a handful, most migrants arriving by small boats have been Iranian and Iraqi nationals. This represents a significant challenge for returns to country of origin as the returns policy of the Iraqi government is currently only applicable to foreign national offenders. Until recently, Iran had no formal international returns agreement and for many years has been among the most resistant nations to engage in negotiations on returns.

12.2 While negotiations are ongoing with Iraqi diplomats and officials, this is not likely to achieve significant returns. Ground breaking agreements have been reached with the Iranian government, leading to the first removal in many years. It is hoped this will be the first of many,

but progress will be slow and require careful selection of the right cases. The focus has been on Dublin and third country returns, which have made ground breaking progress. However, heralding the volume of removals is not a persuasive deterrent factor. With delays in the process and a high proportion of grants, this is not a tactic that will deliver a change of mind amongst the migrants.

12.4 While decisions-making sits with UKVI, removals are arranged by Immigration Enforcement teams, who will also deal with challenges, disruption and other barriers to removal, often in conjunction with UKVI colleagues.

12.5 While the review team were not able to speak with IE colleagues in returns preparation, sessions were held with DEPMU (detainee escorting and population management unit). Colleagues within UKVI did not raise any issues connected to returns teams in IE. It is likely this is because there are currently low levels of removals being generated by IE with only 70% of the detention estate being utilised. There had been no need to prioritise or do anything different within DEPMU and there was speculation as to whether MITIE would still be able to deliver same level of service in incidence of greater detainee numbers.

12.6 DEPMU staff didn't feel like there was any communication around the strategic direction, they just knew that this issue was 'important' and that the cases would be under scrutiny. The use of 'tracker' (a spreadsheet) and daily calls with DCT, Returns Prep etc lead to a more co-ordinated operational approach.

12.7 DEPMU staff echoes the views of the DCT around the disruption caused by third country cases happening on a more regular basis therefore greater planning and focus is required.

13. BICS Policy and International

13.1 Key Themes

- Role of BICs Hub & Secretariat
- Role European Directorate
- Role of International Directorate

13.2 Role of the Hub and Secretariat

13.2.1 The BICS Hub, which was set up in response to the Windrush critical incident and, amongst its other functions, provides enhanced Secretariat support to the Gold Commander (and wider Gold Command) during critical incidents.

13.2.2 The Hub was prompt in engaging and assisting with the newly established Gold Command group once the Critical Incident was declared. The Gold Commander played the primary role in getting the right policy and operational leads involved. The Gold Command developed a strategy for responding to the critical incident. The view from the hub was that all departments involved were fully aware of their areas responsibility.

13.2.3 While most cross-cutting issues were dealt with successfully, with hindsight respondents felt there could have been a clearer structure in place to sign-off issues that

did not necessarily fall within one clear business area or required day-to-day oversight by the Gold Commander. The most obvious example of that was the issues relating to a single version of the truth on the data relating to small boats.

13.2.4 Respondents from the Hub felt the division of labour between 'the centre' and the operational teams represented in the critical incident has worked well. With the protocols that were set at the early stages they have been effective in dealing with the high level of correspondence that this ongoing incident has produced, acting as a focal point for FOIs, briefings and all manner of requests.

13.3 International Directorate

13.3.1 The International Directorate is very much on the periphery of the Gold Group. The small boat issue has provided political leverage to broker a return deal with Iran. Given the political impetus, the team has used this opportunity as a reporting mechanism to notify ministers of issues.

13.3.2 A submission compiled regarding enforced removals to Iran was submitted for the Home Secretary's attention on 26th October 2018 and it remained with him until the New Year, when the crisis was at its peak. When it was clear that the small boat cases were Iranian nationals, the submission was acted upon.

13.3.3 Historically enforced returns to Iran have been impossible. Significant progress has been made in the last few months and have achieved 3 removals to Iran of failed asylum seekers, making the UK one of the only countries in the world to have brokered a returns agreement with Iran. This has been made possible by the International Directorate working with Immigration Enforcement teams.

13.4 Europe Directorate

13.4.1 The Europe directorate is acutely aware that this issue is only a small part of illegal migration and is trying to ensure that this message is heard and acted upon. Staff are in the process of drawing up an illegal migration strategy to focus on near borders and cooperation with the UK's close neighbours, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. It is linked to the wider NSSIG illegal migration strategy which has a whole route approach.

13.4.2 Respondents from the European Directorate provided significant input into the discussions around the role of NSSIG and the wider strategic context and were very supportive of the need for a clandestine co-ordination hub and the consideration of a task force.

13.4.3 A member of the European directorate is based in the Paris Embassy. His intricate knowledge of the silo French judicial and law enforcement systems was invaluable when it came to the Home Secretary and senior officials forming alliances with their French counterparts. In addition, he has been instrumental in being able to strategically advise the small boats group as to how best to apply political leverage to achieve goals, without compromising relations with the French. Frustrations were expressed around continuity of decision making and the impact this has on French partners.

13.5 Key Successes

- Single unit overseeing corporate response and datasets.
- Influence on Iranian Returns.
- Improved near Europe strategy on NSSIG agenda.
- Presence of team member in Paris and influence on strategic French relationships.

13.6 Key Lessons

- Need for a single version of the truth with regards to statistics and data streams.
- Use of political influence is very effective but needed a crisis to galvanise action. Work is needed to effect better responses ahead of the crisis.
- Clear and consistent decision making is crucial in maintaining good relations with international partners.

14. Communications

14.1 Strat Comms

14.1.1 Respondents from Strategic Communications highlighted the vital role they have in deterring migrants from making the perilous journey to the UK. The nature of the proactive work is far reaching and has a measurable impact. Activity is most effective before migrants leave source countries. Funding remains a 'prickly' topic with no one having ownership. The existing governance structure is not one that fits easily with the Gold Group as reporting is straight to the Prime Minister. There is also limited understanding of the work across other teams and units.

“Strategic comms are good however all it takes is for 1 migrant to make it across and send a text home and the strat comms message is nullified.”

14.1.2 The Migration Strategic Communications team is responsible for delivering multi-channel campaigns that help achieve policy objectives. For the small boats response, they also co-ordinated reporting to the Home Secretary from the other comms units including:

- Press office
- Border Force Comms Team
- RICU

14.1.3 The word of mouth approach continues to be effective at conveying the nuanced messages necessary and building trust with recipients. Social media achieved strong reach both to migrant hubs in France and to audiences further upstream.

14.1.4 Whilst the team felt an effective campaign was implemented, a longer-term approach is needed that both supports prevention, and ensures there is a comms presence and existing relationships in our neighbouring countries that can be activated or increased at speed in response to emerging issues. Strat comms were able to mobilise and implement a campaign in this instance at short notice to respond to the crisis. However, this was only possible as there was a contract in place and activity in Northern France was already under consideration. Longer running activity would also have been more effective and trusted over time. This approach would require funding.

14.1.5 The research showed future potential to better reach audiences by taking different approaches dependent on nationality – for instance reaching diaspora in destination countries, or directing comms at other countries on route, or using particular social media channels.

14.1.6 Whilst messaging reached the target audiences in northern France, evidence from wider HO strat comms activity has demonstrated the importance of reaching people at an earlier stage in the decision-making process. Therefore, activity in neighbouring countries is best supported by ongoing upstream activity to ensure migrants are reached at key points in their journey.

14.1.7 For this incident there was an expectation that comms would find the budget. No allocated budget was initially provided for the work. Strat comms works to achieve policy objectives and would usually receive funding from the commissioning comms unit.

14.1.8 Some delays were experienced due to achieving approval and engaging French counterparts. There are plans to consider approaches to improve this in future – and this would be supported by ongoing relationships with counterparts at near borders. There was for some a lack of clear commissioning of Strat Comms to undertake activity, although when attending Gold Command there was an expectation that activity was delivered, and they were held to account. It was evident that not all areas understood the remit of strat comms and areas of responsibility – for example the different roles of Press Office and Strat Comms. There was some concern around resourcing, that individuals already working at capacity experienced challenges with the expected time commitment and struggled to give the actions/the group their full attention. The reporting structure of the team is to report direct to the PM whilst for the Gold group it was to the Home Secretary.

14.2 Press Office

14.2.1 Like other units Press Office were aware of increasing activity in November and December, although these were dealt with as business as usual. The initial small boat events were not of national media interest, but this started to change in mid to late November when the frequency of incursions increased. Press Office were often alerted to small boat incidents by the national or regional press, which was less than ideal as they were then on the back foot having to corroborate the information. The journalists had very good links and possibly had means to listen and monitor public radio channels alerting the maritime community to boats in distress.

14.2.2 The Christmas holidays and Christmas day were exceptionally busy. This was primarily driven by the absence of any other news and a strong media appetite for a big story. It was also intensified by the political interest in the Home Secretary, his whereabouts and subsequent return from holiday. Skeleton staff meant that Press Office was dealing with a significant number of media calls with a very small number of people.

Similarly, Border Force were also working with reduced staff which did create some tensions given the demand of the media.

14.2.3 At the height of the crisis Press Office did not have a long-term communications plan in place. Instead, proactive media work was undertaken in response to events as they developed to show steps were being taken to deal with arrivals – for example, the Immigration Minister’s visit to Dover, briefing to media of Home Secretary’s call with the French Interior Minister. Into January, they started working on a media plan for the planned visit of Name and the Immigration Minister’s visit to Calais. This worked well, especially the support received from the British Embassy in Paris and resulted in positive coverage. Press Office arranged for journalists to visit the joint CCIC in Coquelles which opened in mid-November. This show and tell exercise happened in mid-January and respondents felt it would have been useful for this to have been done sooner, but as a joint centre operated with the French authorities they were constrained by the timescales European partners were able to work to.

14.2.4 Working relationships with external stakeholders have been good, NCA, MCA and Kent Police routinely share their lines with each other. Press Office did not contact the French media as they felt there was a clear demarcation and equally there was no contact from the French for any information. Other respondents have felt that more could have been done to highlight the action the French have taken, and the support UK partners have given in achieving this. Respondents from Press Office have recognised this themselves and work is underway to address this.

14.2.5 Historically the media have been used to getting very detailed and specific information on migrant incidents (age, gender, nationalities), so expected that and wanted to receive it in quick time given the nature of the media cycle. Press Office understand that the relevant departments are dealing with a live operation, however there were several occasions where the requests for information would go unanswered for a significant amount of time. This has reputational issues because other organisations – for example police and MCA – are issuing lines faster and potentially risks HO losing control of the story.

14.2.6. In late December and early January, it became increasingly difficult to provide this information and there was feedback from Border Force and CFI colleagues that it would be impossible to provide this level of detail. In response to this Press Office worked with Border Force and CFI to draft a protocol (available at [Annex C](#)) for handling these events – rationalising the information that would be provided and including holding lines while information was established. Prior to the protocol being put in place, it was difficult to get information to get ahead of the story, but things started to improve, and a pattern of reporting was established. All parties are better at notifying Press Office colleagues of any situations as they arise.

14.2.7 When the small boats Gold Group was set up this greatly assisted in the information flows. There have been occasions when units within the same directorate have given conflicting information or have highlighted inaccuracies in detail provided by others. Before any lines can be issued, holding or otherwise the information needs to be checked with individual teams – BF Secretariat, KIU, CFI/IE etc. Only once Press Office have all this information can lines be issued but not all the information is given in a timely manner. There is no agreement or standard operating procedure as to how long each department should take in getting back to Press Office and they would welcome this.

14.2.8 Respondents felt there was an unrealistic expectation of what the Press Office can do, and the influence reporting can have on the media as a whole. With regards to social media, although it was monitored, Press Office felt they did not have enough Border Force related social media assets for use on Twitter/Facebook – for example, videos of cutters in the Channel.

14.2.9 Press Office also suffered with the difficulties when reporting statistics and found that it was impossible to identify a single version of the truth. Respondents noted that they were regularly querying statistics and finding that they were inaccurate. A lack of releasable data, and no inclusion of clandestine statistics in transparency data and migration statistics which are released quarterly has been a challenge for many years.

14.2.10 Concerns have been raised by other respondents around the use of removals numbers as good news, and while this might be a success internally, given traditional difficulties with third country removals, the risk of adverse inferences around the proportion of removals to those who migrants who successfully are making the attempts is high.

14.3 Key Successes

- Strat Comms able to use existing frameworks to step up campaigns at pace.
- Agreements reached with key teams around flows of information to Press Office.
- Proactive media opportunities have been identified.

14.4 Key Lessons

- Poor knowledge around other areas of the role of Strat Comms and what they can achieve – better links into other teams are needed to share their results and possibilities. This team also holds important information for intelligence colleagues and better links would assist in developing a more rounded picture.
- The funding streams for Strat Comms are unclear and do not provide a long-term platform for which they can develop a robust strategy further upstream.
- Wider use of successful prosecutions and deterrents in France and the role the UK has played in delivering these is recommended as part of the media strategy.
- Consistent and transparent data sets would help Press Office manage demand for information and take pressure off operational teams by reducing requests.
- Communication issues have been a key theme running through all processes and work areas, so consideration should be given to including HO Internal Comms teams to assist with messaging and information flows.

15. Costs and Financial Impact

15.1 While there is no consistent way of measuring the cost of the response to small boats, some units have applied estimates at varying degrees of accuracy. DEPMU were able to demonstrate clear cost analysis of removals and at the time of interview estimated the cost to escorting/detention costs amounted to £58,271.44 for 14 successful removals (with a knock-on effect that 13 scheduled non-small boat cases had to be cancelled.)

15.2 For many teams operational and caseworking teams the real costs lie in the abstractions from business as usual. Those teams using annualised hours contracts are seeing teams building up hours and shift changes. Time-off- in-lieu arrangements have had an impact and several units have had to purchase additional hours or pay 6 day working premiums.

15.3 Many respondents spoke of how there is no access to central funding streams or contingency pots, and some pointed to the process in policing whereby forces carry over a proportion of their budgets to fund the unexpected and emergency situations.

15.4 At the time of interview Border Force South East and Europe teams estimated cost of the response to be over £800k and stated that responding to crisis is at a cost of dealing with other areas, for example, high risk arrivals airports.

15.5 The Overseas Development Agency (ODA) funded Cutters to patrol in the Mediterranean, and only for Search and Rescue. Funding for Cutters in the UK has not been agreed. Approximately 80% of the Maritime Budget has been spent on small boats. This has stopped work in the Aegean and concerns were raised that the current deployment presented a risk to future ODA funding.

16. Data and Management Information

16.1 A major cross cutting theme is the difficulty in establishing one single version of the truth on small boats numbers – events, boats, attempts, people etc. This caused all teams difficulties and extra work and nearly caused some embarrassment with the Home Affairs Select Committee. At one point all the information was held in spreadsheet form and there were five different spreadsheets held by IE, BF, Kent Police and the NCA, none of which tallied. Significant efforts by the BICS secretariat and key leads in each area lead to manual reconciliation of the numbers, but this did not address the systemic issues.

“In terms of membership of the Gold Group, in future I believe that PRAU should be involved from the outset where there is a significant data reporting element.”

16.2 The lack of co-ordinated, assured data became a real issue prior to the Home Secretary's appearance at HASC, and it required the BICS Hub to pull together PRAU, Border Force and IE to reconcile figures in response to an urgent request for data. Following this exercise, the Hub took the lead in ensuring that NCC had formal responsibility for maintaining and reporting on the consolidated dataset going forward.

16.3 Another issue that arose around the HASC session was the lack of join-up with the NCA, who were at an evidence session the following day. During their session, they were pressed to provide specific figures which they did not then request from BICS, meaning there was a last-minute intervention the night before the HASC session to stop the NCA providing the Committee with data that was not consistent with the data that had

been produced for the Home Secretary’s briefing. BICS respondents identified the need to co-ordinate more closely with arm’s length bodies who are engaged in the HO response to ensure that public lines are consistent and that all parties are reporting from a single, assured dataset.

16.4 Data is currently recorded on a range of systems and often without a unique identifier. Initial events are recorded on the National Operations Database which is currently being migrated to a new system, Pronto. Case management and progression through the system is then managed via CID, which is person centric and does not link individuals to a specific event. Many teams work around the lack of a single system that captures all the correct data fields by creating their own spreadsheets and data sets. The demand for instant data also creates an issue as operational data can take up to 3 weeks to mature and be reliable in accuracy.

16.5 These issues have been prevalent in previous crises and audits and present a constant challenge. Reliable data is essential for assessing trends and emerging threats and acting as an evidence base to inform cohesive decision making. Clear oversight of cross departmental standards and use of systems is essential along with better technological solutions. The BICS hub has instigated this work with operational teams, PRAU and DDAT.

16.6 **Key Successes**

- Oversight by BICS HUB of key data streams.

16.6 **Key Lessons**

- Inclusion of PRAU at the start of any major/critical incident to assist with data capture.
- A systemic review of clandestine data sets and the ability to create a transparent data set that is publishable externally is required.

17. Summary of Recommendations

No	Page & Paragraph	Area	Recommendation	Business Area Owner
1	Page 5, Para 2.3.1 Para 2.3.2 Page 14, Para 4.6	Strategic Oversight	Strategic Co-ordination Hub Creation of a forum to undertake strategic risk comparison, commission intelligence products, horizon scan for threats and co-ordinate departmental activity.	X-BICS (EXCO)
2	Page 10 Para 3.7.2 Para 3.7.3 Page 13, Para 4.3	Strategic Oversight	Role of NSSIG The return of the NSSIG to a HO chair with clear whole of route actions and reporting frameworks. Clearly defined senior responsible officer with lines of governance to other structures.	ExCo
3	Page 10, Para 3.6.1	Strategic Oversight	Return to BAU Establish what BAU will look like and establish a cross-departmental plan for implementation.	Gold Command
4	Page 9, Para 3.5.1	Governance	Gold Meeting Content Introduction of a mapped action plan to Gold meetings to	Gold Command

			assist with holding members to account and use of the latest intelligence picture and a forward look.	
5	Page 6, Para 2.3.4	Critical Incident Response	Command Structure Re-design of the current command structure to separate the strategic high-level response and policy development with the operational critical incident management, using a strategic governance group, with partners and a Gold/Silver/Bronze structure to address operational co-ordination and governance.	X-BICS
6	Page 13, Para 4.2.5 Para 4.6 Page 32, Para 10.2	Critical Incident Response	Response Plans and Testing Plans to respond to large scale events should be examined for interoperability and preparedness, with cross department testing against small boats scenarios KIU preparedness for large scale migrant events and their ability to respond effectively with a speedy throughput would benefit from further testing and scrutiny, in partnership with other in the South East.	BF/IE/UKVI
7	Page 8, Para 3.3.2	Critical Incident Response	Critical Incident Response - Training Ensure sufficient numbers of staff are trained in the Gold / Silver / Bronze structures and a cohort of senior staff training in Multi-Agency Gold Incident Command and JESIP.	X-BICS
8	Page 6, Para 2.3.5	International Relations	Use of High-Level International Frameworks Expand the use of the high-level relationships at ministerial and senior official level to unlock operational barriers.	BICSPI
9	Page 16, Para 5.4	International Relations	Stable Funding Stream for French Co-operation Establish a stable funding stream and longer-term strategy for partnership opportunities with French Law Enforcement teams, with clear evaluations of tactics and what works.	X-BICS
10	Page 16, Para 5.4.5	International Relations	Use of International Forums Continued and wider use of international forums and high-level interactions to unblock operational issues (debriefing in France, secondments of officers, multi-level intelligence exchanges etc).	X-BICS
11	Page 11, Para 3.8.2 Page 20, Para 7.3.3 Page 23, Para 8.2.3	Operational Response	Creation of a Taskforce Establish options, with costs, risks and benefits for a taskforce approach in South East, to small boats and other clandestine threats.	BF/IE/UKVI
12	Page 20, Para 7.2 Para 7.3 Page 25, Para 8.5.2 Para 8.5.3	Operational Response	Feedback, Operational Forum & Op Order A tactical operational forum, or a silver command structure underpinning the gold group will provide a forum to address misunderstandings. A single operational order covering the multi-agency response, detailing roles and responsibilities is also recommended, with clear explanations to partners as to the reasons for requests. Consideration to be given to aide memoires in layman terms for pocket books.	Border Force / IE / UKVI
13	Page 22, Para 7.4.4 Page 32, Para 10.2	Operational Response	Consistent Policy & Interoperability There is a need to review operational policy for BF, IE and UKVI to resolve inconsistencies and conflicts.	Border Force / IE / UKVI

			Reliance on an after-entry process at KIU limits interoperability and options for support – consideration could be given to utilising both an on entry and after entry process to build resilience and widen options for staffing.	
14	Page 19, Para 6.4	Maritime Response	Border Force Maritime Response Strategic decision around Border Force Fleet overarching aim – will SOLAS always outweigh law enforcement or can this be better defined. Further assessments of the use and composition of the fleet and the relationship with other maritime agencies.	Border Force
15	Page 19, Para 6.5	Maritime Response	Information Sharing Sharing of analysis and patterns of weather and incidents with wider teams delivering responses to assist with operational planning.	Border Force / NMIC
16	Page 18, Para 6.3	Maritime Response	Returns at Sea Better escalation needed to Gold Group of expert views of Maritime Command.	Border Force
17	Page 24, Para 8.3	Investigations	Role Of CPS CPS is a key partner and needs to be part of the Gold Structure to escalate issues and work with NCA and IE to identify best practice, establish consistent decision making and focussed guidance to get to early charge decisions from good evidence.	IE / NCA
18	Page 19, Para 6.5 Page 23, Para 8	Investigations	Investigative Primacy & Opportunities for Evidence Gathering Explore opportunities for better evidence and intelligence gathering by cutter and CPV crews Better understanding for first responders of evidential opportunities	Border Force / IE / UKVI
19	Page 26, Para 8.7	Investigations	Financial Investigations Better understanding of financial flows and options to tackle – requires a strategy and consideration of resourcing.	IE / NCA
20	Page 5, Para 2.3.3 Page 27, Para 9.4	Intelligence	Multi-Agency Intelligence Hub Creation of a multi-agency intelligence hub dedicated to illegal migration via clandestine methods.	X-BICS
21	Page 26, Para 9	Intelligence	Intelligence Tsar Appointment of a single senior officer responsible reporting to the Gold Group on intelligence, co-ordinating intelligence requirements, products, resolving issues and driving co-operation would address a number of the issues raised across the different teams.	X-BICS Intelligence
22	Page 26, Para 9.2	Intelligence	Intelligence Products All staff would have benefitted from an early stage by the production of a commonly recognised intelligence picture, available to all parties and produced on a regular basis. Proper commissioning of intelligence products at all levels in a co-ordinated manner would reduce confusion and unrealistic demands and deadlines.	X BICS & NCA Intelligence
23	Page 27, Para 9.3	Intelligence	Intelligence Flows Use of a single hub to route all intelligence created in-built	IE / BF

			delays and hampered the ability to break out lower level intelligence. Consideration to be given to simultaneous sharing of intelligence across BICS teams.	
24	Page 28, Para 9.5	Intelligence	Debriefing Exploration of debriefing in France, akin to that undertaken in 2015/16 under Op Focal to be escalated to senior official level for discussion with French partners, and wider opportunities within the UK at all stages of the process.	IE/BF
25	Page 26, Para 9.6	Intelligence	CCIC There are significant opportunities for more effective use of the CCIC with all parties seeking to support the UK presence. Consideration by UK LEAs to increase representation. Evaluation required of effectiveness and opportunities for better flows.	IE / BF / NCA
26	Page 37 Para 10.5	Asylum	Support to Asylum Decision Making A link needs to be established between those collecting information at the start of the response, where information is gathered, to the decision makers who are not always sighted on call the relevant material and facts. Better links to frontline capture of evidence and screening processes could elicit better evidence to support 13(2) and third country decision making.	IE / UKVI / BF
27	Page 37 Para 10.5	Asylum	Resourcing Model Consideration of the resourcing model to address the time pressures on third country removal processes. The DCT prioritisation of the Op Sillath process is at the expense of other Dublin and third country removals. Options for improved staffing from across the BICS system, or from the HMRC surge teams is recommended.	UKVI / IE
28	Page 32 Chapter 10	Asylum	Processing Cases Through Asylum System Better identification needed of duplication with other parts of BICS at the start of the process. Better technological solutions required to assist tracking and management of the cohort and reduce reliance on manual data gathering.	UKVI / IE / BF
29	Page 38 Para 10.5.7	Asylum	Third Country Returns Article 13 (2) was unused previously as it requires significant engagement from the other EU Member State. The French have engagement in Op Sillath cases potentially opens the opportunity for those who have not been fingerprinted in France to be returned there. A broadening of Article 13(2) to include other countries would enable more removals without Eurodac matches.	UKVI
30	Page 39 Para 11.2	Policy	Use of Experts in Initial Response Consideration to be given to the use of policy experts in initial decisions and strategies at the start of critical incidents	BICSPI
31	Page 40 Para 11.4	Policy	Effects of Unintended Consequences Work is needed to understand the risks of prioritising this cohort from the outset and seek to establish the wider consequences.	BICSPI

32	Page 45, Para 14.1	Communications	<p>Better Integration of Strat Comms Role Poor knowledge around other areas of the role of Strat Comms and what they can achieve – better links into other teams are needed to share their results and possibilities. This team also holds important information for intelligence colleagues and better links would assist in developing a more rounded picture.</p>	Strat Comms
33	Page 45, Para 14.1	Communications	<p>Funding Stream The funding streams for Strat Comms are unclear and do not provide a long-term platform for which they can develop a robust strategy further upstream.</p>	Strat Comms
34	Page 46, Para 14.2	Communications	<p>Use of French Successes in Media Strategy Wider use of successful prosecutions and deterrents in France and the role the UK has played in delivering these is recommended as part of the media strategy.</p>	Press Office
35	Page 45 Para 14	Communications	<p>Communications Tsar Communication issues have been a key theme running through all processes and work areas, so consideration should be given to including HO Internal Comms teams to assist with messaging and information flows.</p>	Gold Command
36	Page 49 Para 16 Page 46 Para 14.2	Data	<p>Data Inclusion of PRAU at the start of any major/critical incident to assist with data capture. A systemic review of clandestine data sets and the ability to create a transparent data set that is publishable externally is required.</p>	X-BICS

18. Glossary

AIU	Asylum Intake Unit
ARIS	Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme
BICS	Border, Immigration and Citizenship System
CCIC	Centre for Intelligence and Co-ordination
CID	Case Information Database
CFI	Criminal and Financial Investigations
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CPV	Coastal Patrol Vessel
CRIP	Commonly Recognised Intelligence Picture
DDAT	Digital, Data and Technology (Home Office)
DCT	Dublin Cessation Team
DEPMU	Detainee Escorting and Population Unit
FI	Financial Investigations
GSB	Gold Silver Bronze
HOLA	Home Office Legal Advisors
Invigor	Joint OIC taskforce lead by NCA
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
JBUI	Joint Border Intelligence Unit
JDT	Joint Debriefing Team
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
JSTAC	Joint Slavery and Trafficking Analysis Centre
KIU	Kent Intake Unit
MAMIC	Maritime, Aviation and Military Intervention Cell (NCA)
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MIB	Maritime Intelligence Bureau
MIU	Midlands Intake Unit
MO	Modus Operandi
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCCU	National Command and Control Unit
NMIC	National Maritime Information Centre
NOD	National Operations Database
NSSIG	National Security Strategy Implementation Group
ODA	Overseas Development Agency
POD	Port of Dover Police
RHIB	Rigid-Hulled Inflatable Boats
RNLI	Royal National Lifeboat Institute
SAR	Search and Rescue
SCS	Senior Civil Servant
SGG	Strategic Governance Group
SIB	Soft Inflatable Boat
SOLAS	Saving of Life at Sea
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
Tug Haven	Area of Dover docks used to store tugs
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration

19. Respondents

Ser	Name	Organisation	Role
1	Name	Border Force	Deputy Director, South East and Europe
2	Name	Border Force	A/Deputy Director, South/South East & Europe
3	Name	Border Force	South East & Europe Senior Officer <i>General Aviation/General Maritime</i>
4	Name	Border Force	Regional Director South East & Europe
5	Steve Whitton	Border Force	Head of Maritime
6	Toby Whale	Border Force	Assistant Director NMIC Management of Incidents at Sea
7	Paul Campbell	Maritime and Coastguard Agency	Head of Specialist Ops Maritime and Aviation Security
8	Name	Maritime and Coastguard Agency	NMIC Liaison Officer
9	Name	Border Force	Senior Intelligence Analyst
10	Name	NCA	Coordinate with IE, BF & Forensics
11	Name	NCA	Invigor – South Investigations
12	Name	NCA	Investigations, Dover
13	Name	NCA	Investigation Manager
14	Name	JBIU	JBIU Manager
15	Name	JBIU	JBIU Intelligence Supervisor
16	Name	NCA	Commander – Kent
17	Name	IE	CFI Investigations

18		IE	CFI Investigations/CCIC Liaison
19		BF	Regional Intelligence
20		Police	Kent Police SB
21		Police	Kent Police SB
22		Police	Kent Police SB
23		Border Force	Invigor JDT, JDT Manager
24		NCA	Op Catlin
25		IE	NCA Embed
26		NCA	NCA Intelligence
27		NCA	NCA Intelligence
28		IE	CIO JDT
29		Police	JDT DC
30		Border Force	BF Intelligence
31	Name	Border Force	BF Intelligence Senior Officer
32		Border Force	BF Intelligence
33		NCA	Head of JSTAC
34		NCA	Invigor lead
35		Border Force	CCIC, Senior Officer
36		IE	Director CFI
37		IE	G7, Kent and Sussex ICE
38		IE	CIO, Kent and Sussex ICE
39		IE	CIO, Kent and Sussex ICE
40		IE	G3 Crime & Enforcement
41		IE	G7, Immigration Intelligence (Embeds in JDT, NIH & JBIU)
42		IE	A/G6 CFI Southern Command
43		IE	A/HMI Dover CFI

44		IE	HMI Dover CFI
45		IE	G7 Financial Investigations, CFI
46		UKVI	G3, Immigration and Protection
47		UKVI	G7 Asylum Decisions
48		UKVI	G7 Dublin Cessation Team
49		UKVI	SEO Dublin Cessation Team
50		UKVI	A/SEO Dublin Cessation Team
51		BICS Policy & International	Asylum and Family Policy
52		BICS Policy & International	Asylum and Family Policy
53		IE	DEPMU G7
54		MITIE	Care and Custody Manager
55		BICS Policy & International	Paris
56		BICS Policy & International	BICS Hub
57	Name	BICS Policy & International	BICS Hub
58		BICs Policy & International	Europe Directorate
59		BICS Policy & International	International Directorate
60		Home Office Communications Directorate	Press Office
61		Home Office Communications Directorate	Press Office
62		Home Office Communications Directorate	Strat Comms
63		Home Office Communications Directorate	Strat Comms
64		Border Force	Intelligence Analysis
65		Border Force	South East & Europe Intelligence
66		Border Force	Senior Intelligence Analyst

67	Name	IE	G7 National Removals Command
68		UVKI	G6 Asylum Operations
69		UKVI	G7 Asylum Operations – National Intake Units

Annex A

Terms of Reference for:

The Cross BICS Lessons Learned Exercise with Regards to the Response to Small Boats

1. Introduction

1.1 This exercise was commissioned by the Small Boats Gold Group to capture lessons learned from the cross BICS response at a strategic and tactical level to the increasing number of migrants seeking to enter the UK illegally by small boats on the South East Coast.

Gold Group representatives from each lead agency have been consulted to shape the parameters of the exercise and identify key questions and areas of interest. The exercise will seek to understand what worked and what could be better, to drive improved responses to any future critical incidents and the cross-system business as usual response to irregular migration.

1.2 This is not a review or an audit, but an opportunity for all involved to learn and improve.

2. Objectives

2.1 This exercise will seek to determine from all key partners and stakeholders:

- 2.1.1 What worked well & what could have been better, what should be done differently next time?
- 2.1.2 What was the innovative learning and how could this be translated to wider irregular migration responses?
- 2.1.3 What combination of actions had the most impact? What had less impact?
- 2.1.4 How well did the different teams work together at a tactical level and strategic level and what could be improved for more effective outcomes?
- 2.1.5 What systemic changes are needed to oversee and effectively manage the small boats response going forward and will this have wider implications for other irregular migration routes?
- 2.1.6 How much did the response cost? Was it value for money? How much would any proposed changes cost?

3. Scope

3.1 This exercise will look at the effectiveness of the tactical and strategic response, with a focus on which responses have brought the best results and how these lessons can inform future responses to small boats and wider irregular migration scenarios.

3.2 The business areas that are in scope for this exercise are the teams involved in the small boats response from detection to removal.

- 3.2.1 Border Force – Regional Teams, Maritime Command, Intelligence
- 3.2.2 Immigration Enforcement – CFI, ICE, Intelligence, Returns Preparation & Returns Logistics
- 3.2.3 UKVI – Asylum Intake Units, Third Country Unit
- 3.2.4 BICs Policy & International Group – Asylum Policy, European Directorate, International Directorate
- 3.2.5 Communications & RICU
- 3.2.6 Press Office
- 3.2.7 Joint Debriefing Team
- 3.2.8 National Crime Agency – Invigor, South East operational teams, JBIU

3.3 Areas in scope will be:

- 3.3.1 The use by BF of boats in the Channel for humanitarian and deterrence processes
- 3.3.2 Collecting and sharing of intelligence
- 3.3.3 Support of French preventative security in ports/on beaches, both financial and through the CICC
- 3.3.4 Criminal investigations by NCA/IE
- 3.3.5 Returns to France under Dublin, to other Member States and third countries (eg Iran)
- 3.3.6 Asylum policy measures
- 3.3.7 Comms
- 3.3.8 UKVI/IE/BF/NCA hand-off
- 3.3.9 Governance

3.4 The following areas are not in scope for this exercise:

- 3.4.1 Actions of non HO partners (but their views will be considered)

3.4.2 Foreign law enforcement or government bodies

3.4.3 Financial and contractual management (although costs and value for money will be considered)

3.5 Key principles to be followed by the exercise team and the expectations of participants are available at [Appendix 1](#).

4. **Timescale and Resource Requirements**

The provisional schedule for the review is as follows:

Ser	Provisional Dates	Activity
1	3 rd April – 8 th April	Build Review Team and complete consultation of key partners, draft terms of reference
2	8 th April – 17 th April	Devise questionnaires, identify key teams and individuals for group sessions and interviews, book sessions and collect documentary evidence HO Organisational Learning Team engagement
3	15 th April – 5 th May	Field work & on-site phase
4	6 th May – 12 th May	Analysis and Drafting
5	13 th May – 19 th May	Factual accuracy checking and sharing of report
6	June	Adoption and implementation of recommendations

5. **Team**

Ser	Grade	Number	Notes
1	G6	1	

2	HEO/SEO (equivalents)	9	On loan from IE team
3	Pol Insp	1	On loan from OIC MSHT NPCC portfolio
3	EO	1	

Note: Additional support from HO lessons learned team.

Detailed methodology is available at [Appendix 2](#).

6. Product & Outcomes

6.1 Lessons Learned report with recommendations.

6.2 To be shared with all partners for consultation.

6.3 Any early identification of replicable good practice will be shared early via Gold Group lead or Directorate head.

7. Governance

7.1 The project team will report to Gold Group and take direction from the Gold Group but will consult with all partners.

Annex B

Small Boats Intelligence Requirements

1. Having consulted with the frontline teams in Border Force and Immigration Enforcement, the following criteria is the ask to help officers plan deployments and ensure staff are processing the events with maximum effect:
 - 1.1 Any officer safety issues (e.g. knife found in RHIB after migrants had been taken off, instances of non-compliance etc).
 - 1.2 Summary of activity / nationalities arriving.
 - 1.3 Latest reported trends & MOs coming from debriefing, first responder observations and investigations (eg phones being thrown overboard once Border Force vessels is in sight and rescue is imminent, anecdotal reports of jet skis to move facilitators away from the RHIB).
 - 1.4 Timings / patterns of activity (e.g. Did they refuse to stop for French assets and/or UK assets initially? Did they utilise the shorter Calais-Dover corridor or the longer Boulogne-Dungeness route?) BF Maritime report that as we have moved into Spring, the timings of the incidents have gone back and we are now deploying in response to notifications from around 05.30 hours onwards to about midday so changes of this sort need to be identified.
 - 1.5 Short term forward weather look.
 - 1.6 Any significant activity from France.
 - 1.7 Significant reports from frontline staff to support asylum decision making (e.g. pocket litter or other evidence that migrant has been in a safe third country to assist asylum decision making).
 - 1.8 Latest successes and what is working – to motivate frontline staff to identify actions which can support future success.

2. Additionally, what Border Force would find helpful is the more complex de-brief material that is comes from JDT and flows into INVIGOR (facilitators names, phone numbers, etc not just tactical information surrounding which beach the migrants left from). One of the key relationships that with the French via the CCIC. Currently this debrief material is not being shared and is subject to a central processing, triage and assessment for high end intelligence value linked to OIC. The route to the French is via the NCAs national intelligence hub (NIH) and to Ochriest, with a number of hand-offs and assessments. The tactical element of the JDT work could be taken out early and shared with the French at a local level via the CCIC, as well as in Paris. Sharing this information has the potential to inform deployments to identify targets (agents and facilitators) who are operating across the Nord for disruption that if successful will create further upstream opportunities for the French and NCA higher in the OCG. As yet we do not have a mechanism for this information to be stripped out, shared and sent.

3. A longer term and less frequent report monthly or bi-monthly is also required.
 - 3.1 Upstream & near Europe events that might impact flows.
 - 3.2 Other irregular migration patterns likely to exert a demand on frontline resources.
 - 3.3 Best guess as to changes in flows

Annex C

Guidance for responding to high profile incidents

1.1 When a major incident unfolds, it takes very little time for that information to enter the public domain. As soon as it does, Press Office Newsdesk (or the duty press officer out of hours) will take a number of calls from journalists.

1.2 Simultaneously, while Press Office is taking calls, Border Force and CFI are working to deal with the incident as it unfolds.

1.3 Therefore, **in office hours, Border Force Secretariat will be your point of contact** for providing information for media lines and clearing them on all incidents where Border Force is the lead agency (e.g. a small boat). You should also copy in IE's NCCU

Personal Data @homeoffice.gov.uk). As far as possible, you should remove Border Force NCC from the chain. Even if you have spoken to individual officials or officers during past similar queries, please do not go to these colleagues directly on a fresh incident.

1.4 If it is an incident that CFI are responding to (e.g. an inland lorry drop) then IE's NCCU

Personal Data @homeoffice.gov.uk) will be your point of contact in office hours and you should keep the Immigration Enforcement Secretariat copied.

1.5 Outside of office hours, Border Force National Command Centre (NCC) will be your point of contact. If it is an incident that CFI are responding to (e.g. a lorry drop) then CCU

Personal Data @homeoffice.gov.uk) will be your point of contact outside of office hours.

1.6 Border Force and CFI colleagues acknowledge that it is important to ensure that accurate information about these incidents is reaching the public in a timely manner, in order to prevent misreporting and maintain public confidence in the department.

1.7 However, if Border Force or CFI are unable to provide the information that Press Office is requesting (either because the incident is still ongoing or because information has not been verified) they should say so, and Press Office should accept this and draft holding lines with the information available.

1.8 As far as possible, we should keep the chains as tight as possible, recognising that individuals and teams will be copied for sight and handovers (e.g. Press Office SMT, Press Office Newsdesk).

2. ESCALATION

2.1 In the event that you feel you are not getting the information that you need from Border Force Secretariat or CCU, you are free to escalate the issue.

2.2 For Border Force led incidents (e.g. small boats)

2.2.1 During Office Hours: you should contact

Name	PD
------	----

 444) in the Director General's office.

2.2.2 Out of hours, you can contact the BICS Hub Out of Hours team.

2.3 For CFI led incidents (e.g. lorry drops)

2.3.1 In or outside of office hours, you should contact

Name	Personal Data
------	---------------

 (051) or

Name	PD
------	----

 (915).

2.3.2

Name

 are also your points of contact for any CFI related issues for small boat incidents, in relation to arrests of facilitators.

3. BEST PRACTICE

Note: While preparing lines for the media it is important to remember that Border Force NCC will be busy dealing with the incident at hand. Therefore, if an incident occurs in office hours then BF Secretariat will be able to assist with lines.

3.1 After receiving an alert from Border Force NCC, CFI or the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, press officers should work directly with Border Force Secretariat on lines. Border Force NCC will be involved in the incident itself and will therefore not be able to clear lines. You should only refer to NCC if an incident is unfolding out of hours.

3.2 Until the incident is resolved and the migrants have been transferred to immigration officials for interview, we should provide a holding line as background information.

3.3 For example:

Background information:

Border Force is currently dealing with an ongoing small boat incident off the Kent coast. Further details will be provided once the situation has been resolved.

You should clear this with the Border Force Secretariat and send it to the Immigration Minister's Private Office for information.

Once the incident is resolved and the migrants have been transferred to immigration officials for interview, you should clear fuller lines which provide more information on the incident, with the Border Force Secretariat.

This should include:

- **the time that the Home Office was made aware.**
- **the HO agency involved (e.g. Border Force / Immigration Enforcement).**
- **some brief detail on what happened.**
- **some detail on the people involved.**
At this point we may be able to provide a firm number but we should not specify the ages and gender of those involved. If we are providing detail on nationalities, we should say that they are 'believed' to be of X nationality, but it is fine to say that nationalities have not been confirmed.
- **that they have been medically assessed and found to be well (if that's the case).**
- **that they have been transferred to immigration officials for interview.**

For example:

Background information:

- *At around 6.30am, Border Force was alerted to a small boat travelling across the Channel towards the UK coast.*
- *Two Border Force cutters and a coastal patrol vessel (CPV) were deployed and intercepted the RHIB. Those on board were transferred to one of the cutters and the CPV.*
- *A group of 34 people, made up of men, women and children, were brought to Dover, where they were medically assessed and believed to be well, before being transferred to immigration officials for interview. Their nationalities have not yet been confirmed.*

3.4 Information on an incident should be provided as background information, rather than in a spokesperson statement as we are just providing facts, rather than an explanation of our position. If you need to issue a statement, you can issue something along the lines of the below, which references the incident and the Home Office's overall response to small boats incidents.

A Home Office spokesperson said:

"Today Border Force responded to an incident in the Channel involving a small boat containing 34 people. The group were brought to Dover and have been transferred to immigration officials for interview.

"Anyone crossing the Channel in a small boat is taking a huge risk with their life and the lives of their children.

"Since the Home Secretary declared a major incident in December, two cutters have returned to UK waters from overseas operations, we have agreed a joint action plan with France and increased activity out of the Joint Coordination and Information Centre in Calais.

"It is an established principle that those in need of protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach and since January and since January more than 20 people who arrived illegally in the UK in small boats have been returned to Europe."

3.5 You should clear this with the Border Force Secretariat and send it to the Immigration Minister's Private Office for information.

Appendix 1

Key Principles

Key Principles

It is important to recognise that there can be a number of barriers to effective learning from incidents. These can include fear, blame and anxieties about reputation. These can be enhanced (or alleviated) by the setting the standards and culture for the lessons learned process. The focus of this project will be to identify what worked well, what could be done differently and how key findings can be incorporated into business as usual. This will be done whilst adhering to the following values and principles:

- NOLAN principles (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership)
- In addition:
- Transparency
- Blame free culture
- Active Listening
- Independent and free from bias or undue influence
- Evidence based & corroboration
- Careful handling of sensitive documentation

Appendix 2

Methodology



Data Collection: Methods & Sources

Method	Purpose	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Questionnaires, Surveys & Checklists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually devised and administered to obtain statistical data for a particular question or set of questions Used when you need to get information quickly and/or easily from people in a non-threatening way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be completed anonymously Inexpensive to administer Easy to compare and analyse responses Can be sent to a large number of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not get a detailed response The wording can cause bias May not include all information Might have a low response rate
2. Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful to obtain a fuller understanding of someone's impressions & experience or to delve into more details Structured interviews tend to be used for quantitative interviews, semi structured and unstructured interviews tend to be used in qualitative research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects a full range and depth of information Can be flexible with interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming Can be hard to analyse and compare Can be costly if involves face to face interviews
3. Review of Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveys information about how the incident operated Reflects what was happening at the time Documents can include MOUs, meeting minutes, agreements, intelligence products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collects comprehensive and historical information Is not disruptive or intrusive Less room for biases in interpreting the information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take time Information can be incomplete or out of date Need to be clear about what you are looking for Not a flexible approach
4. Participant and Direct Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gather information about how a group operates Participant observation requires the researcher to become a participant in the culture or context being observed Direct observation involves the researcher observing actual situations or interactions rather than being told about them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> View operations as they are occurring Is adaptable in accordance with events as they are occurring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to interpret observed behaviours or to categorise observations Observer can influence the behaviour of participant & difficult to remain impartial if participating
5. Focus Groups / Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences Usually involves exploring a range of views or a topic in depth through discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliable sources of impressions that are shared by all Can be an efficient way to get a broad range and depth of information in a short time Can convey key information about the group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to analyse responses Needs a good facilitator for safety and closure Can be difficult to schedule people together