

**Improving the response to organised immigration crime. Response from Simon Foster, Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands.**

In early 2024, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned to inspect how effectively the police and the National Crime Agency (NCA) tackle organised immigration crime (OIC) in England and Wales. The inspection involved conducting interviews and focus groups with police forces, Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCs), the National Crime Agency (NCA), and relevant Home Office departments. It also included a review of over 100 documents and incorporated input from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.

The complexity of OIC and the number of agencies involved continue to present significant challenges. Since 2021, the police have had the powers to respond to and address OIC, and improvements have been made. However, HMICFRS found that more still needs to be done for the response to fully align with the Government's priorities on reducing illegal migration. Therefore, the report sets out ten recommendations for various agencies involved in immigration, with four directed specifically at chief constables.

Since police forces have taken a more active role in addressing organised immigration crime (OIC), there has been a notable increase in intelligence recorded on the Police National Database. However, the inspectorate identified inconsistencies in how different agencies record information, which has adversely impacted data quality. Police officers are required to complete and submit an intelligence report to the National Command and Control Unit (NCCU), detailing the circumstances of each incident. The NCCU informed the inspectorate that some intelligence may have been overlooked due to inconsistent submission of these reports. This issue underpins Recommendation 1.

**'By 30 April 2026, chief constables should make sure that every time a member of their force reports a case to Immigration Enforcement's National Command and Control Unit, the reporting officer completes and submits the required intelligence document.'**

This recommendation highlights the importance of consistency in intelligence sharing, particularly when liaising with immigration enforcement partners. A standardised process ensures that valuable operational information is not lost, and that intelligence contributes meaningfully to investigations.

In response, West Midlands Police (WMP) is in the process of developing procedural guidance that will regulate how intelligence referrals are submitted. This includes producing a central resource that outlines what the intelligence document should contain and how it should be completed. The aim is to ensure officers are clear on expectations and that all referrals meet national standards. By improving the consistency and quality of submissions, WMP is strengthening its contribution to the national intelligence picture on OIC.

**‘By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure they have clear plans to collect, analyse and share information related to OIC.’**

The inspection further revealed that not all police forces and ROCUs prioritise OIC, and some lack the necessary governance structures and intelligence systems to support effective operations. This inconsistency weakens the national response to organised crime, leading to intelligence gaps and hampering joint investigations. In light of this, the inspectorate issued a recommendation to address the disparity. WMP has already responded by developing a regional plan to support this recommendation. The plan will be implemented through existing intelligence functions and the ROCU, promoting stronger alignment with national priorities.

**‘By 30 April 2026, chief constables, working with the Modern Slavery & Organised Immigration Crime Unit (MSOICU), should make sure that relevant personnel in all Home Office police forces complete the Hydra training package on organised immigration crime.’**

The third recommendation stems from the recognition that frontline officers and supervisors must be equipped with scenario-based training to effectively identify and respond to immigration crime. The Hydra training package was developed by MSOICU to address this need, offering immersive training that replicates the complexity of live incidents.

WMP has the infrastructure in place to support this recommendation, with its own Hydra training suite already established. Plans are underway to roll out the training package across the police force, specifically targeting supervisors in response, contact, and investigation departments. The use of the Hydra suite will not only help improve operational responses but also foster a deeper understanding of the organised immigration crime landscape among key personnel.

**‘By 30 April 2026, chief constables, working with the Modern Slavery & Organised Immigration Crime Unit and the College of Policing, should make sure that relevant personnel in all Home Office police forces complete the four modules of the organised immigration crime e-learning package.’**

The inspectorate also recognised the value of the OIC e-learning modules and commended the collaborative effort behind their development. Although the training is beneficial, completion rates vary widely across police forces, indicating a need for more consistent implementation. In response to this, the inspectorate issued a recommendation. WMP has already begun rolling out modules of the OIC e-learning package to relevant personnel. To ensure full compliance and enhance operational readiness, a force-wide directive will be issued, mandating completion of all modules for staff in designated roles which will be monitored.

In conclusion, the recommendations set out by the inspectorate, offer a valuable opportunity for WMP to significantly enhance their approach to tackling OIC. By acting on these insights, WMP can not only improve the robustness of their intelligence gathering, but also refine and strengthen training procedures to ensure a more informed and effective response. Embracing these changes could mark a pivotal step, toward delivering a more coordinated and proactive strategy, in this complex area of policing.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Foster', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Simon Foster**

**West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner**