



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Pre-appointment hearing: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, HC 713

Tuesday 11 February 2025

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Dame Karen Bradley (Chair); Mr Paul Kohler; Robbie Moore; Chris Murray; Joani Reid; Bell Ribeiro-Addy.

Questions 1 - 86

Witness

I: John Tuckett, Government's preferred candidate for the role of Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration.



Examination of witness

Witness: John Tuckett.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you, Mr Tuckett, for coming in today. You will know that the Home Affairs Committee has a duty to carry out pre-appointment hearings. This is the first one we are doing as the new Committee, so bear with us if we ask repetitive questions or anything like that. We are finding our feet as much as anyone else. I wanted to kick off. Why do you want the job?

John Tuckett: Good afternoon, Chair, and good afternoon to everybody. Why do I want the job? There are three reasons. The first one is that I see this as a unique opportunity to make a difference and be a catalyst for change in one of the most sensitive and important areas of the country at the moment. We are all aware of the concerns about immigration. Public concerns have probably never been higher. Some would say that the trust and confidence in the whole system has probably never been lower. This role has a vital part to play in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the borders and immigration system and restoring that trust and confidence to some degree. I find the scale of that challenge very motivating for myself personally.

The second reason is that there is a huge intellectual challenge associated with this role. I may be a bit of a masochist but, in my previous roles, I seem to have relished taking on big scenarios, distilling them down into bite-sized chunks and then developing workable solutions. That is what this role is in a nutshell. It is a huge agenda across border security, immigration enforcement and visas immigration.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Q2 **Chair:** Apologies for the interruption. Mr Tuckett, you had been describing why you want to have the job. I guess that we can follow up with what qualifies you for the role.

John Tuckett: My qualifications are based on the experience and skills that I have. The experience falls into three main categories. I have been in major leadership roles as a chief executive or leading major change programmes across a very wide range of contexts within the public sector for over 20 years. That has given me a very significant belt, as it were, of leadership experience in different contexts. I know what it is like to be a chief executive in the public sector. I know not only what it is like to be inspected but also the kinds of challenges that the leaders in the borders and immigration system will face. I would guess that I have probably seen most of the situations in some shape or form that they are experiencing somewhere in the 20 years' experience that I have.

Secondly, I have led many reviews and inspections myself when I worked as part of the Treasury in some of the most complex and sensitive big



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programmes that Government had at that time. I am well acquainted with the model of inspections and how challenging they can be for people who you are inspecting or reviewing at the time. I know what works and does not work. Through the experiences of a chief executive and in leading reviews, I have a real good understanding of what works when it comes to organisational transformation and change when you are trying to take a system or organisation through some form of change, whether that is an improvement or a major structural change.

Finally, as a result of all the different contexts I have worked in, I have a very good amount of stakeholder engagement experience. I have worked with a huge range of stakeholders, from end users, be those patients or fishermen, through to service providers, be they nurses, doctors or immigration advisers, through to regulators, managers, directors, the civil service at the highest levels and Ministers. I have that range of expertise and am in a good position to engage with the huge multitude of stakeholders that the borders and immigration system has in its own way. Those are the three batches of experience that most suit me for this role.

Q3 Chair: Do you think there will be new challenges?

John Tuckett: Yes, there always are, but the contexts will be different. I have found that, while it might appear to be a different issue, when you get into it often the same old things are reappearing many times. That is not to say that you do not get surprised. Sometimes you do, yes.

Q4 Bell Ribeiro-Addy: You talked about your work with Government before. Could you tell us a bit more about your experience working directly with Ministers and senior officials, in particular any times where you have had to manage challenging relationships?

John Tuckett: The first one would be in the job I am in at the moment, which is now the Immigration Advice Authority. When I joined it, it was the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, and the distance between it and the Home Office was legion. The two were hardly talking with each other and the Home Office was hardly aware of what the office was doing. Equally, there was no contact between the office and the Home Office, or only at a minimal level.

In all the workings I have had with Government, that kind of relationship is not the most profitable or useful. Over the five years, I have worked very hard to bring the work of the OISC to the attention of Ministers and senior officials within the Home Office. That has meant a lot of briefings at personal level, a lot of pushing at doors to get access to senior officials and Ministers, and being prepared to say what the organisation was doing, how they could help and how we could help their agenda at the same time.

Immigration advice was initially seen as—I sometimes describe it as a Cindarella service—something that was out there and everyone just let it



be out there. One success I have managed to achieve with Ministers of the previous Government and this current Government, and with Home Office officials, is to see immigration advice as an integral part of the immigration system. If you have a good, robust, thriving advice sector, the benefits for the wider immigration system are very considerable indeed.

Q5 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Have you had to manage any other challenging relationships in your previous roles? You have talked about what you have been doing at the moment, but what about in your previous contact? Were there any challenging relationships with senior Ministers?

John Tuckett: Yes. When I was working as the chief executive of the Marine Management Organisation, I was regularly meeting with the Minister for Fisheries and the Environment Minister, who at that time were George Eustice and Thérèse Coffey. I then ran a major review of Defra's transformation programme and was working with the Secretary of State, who at the time was Liz Truss. I was regularly meeting with them and briefing them all on where things were going and how I saw that things could improve moving forward.

Q6 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Do you believe you have the experience to ensure that, as the ICIBI, you understand and engage with the experience of the people who are actually going through the immigration system? These could be vulnerable people, such as people seeking asylum or the victims of modern slavery. How would you go about doing this?

John Tuckett: They are a group of stakeholders with whom it is vital for the ICIBI to have contact, either directly or through representative bodies. There are many representative bodies, such as, for example, Refugee Action, which will be able to speak on behalf of the individual asylum seekers, visa applicants or whatever it is. If one can get to the individual end user, their experiences are very important to get a feel for. For someone such as an applicant for a visa, that is much easier than, let us say, a refugee or asylum seeker, someone who, for example, has come across illegally in a boat. Nevertheless, it is quite feasible to do it. As ICIBI, one of the first things I could do would be getting out to establishments where these individuals are to meet them face to face, as well as meeting the officials.

Q7 **Mr Kohler:** Your answers sounded wonderfully collaborative. That is, of course, important, but this is an independent role and you are there to challenge Government and the Home Office on very controversial issues. What experience have you had of being independent from the system and challenging the system?

John Tuckett: In that sense, the role I did in the Treasury, in leading reviews of major programmes and projects, was exactly that. You put together a small team. You were the team leader. You went in as an independent team and an independent team leader, but at the same time worked with the people you were reviewing, inspecting and assessing.



One way that I found was very successful was that, at the start of each review or inspection, you had a session with the people you were going to work with and established the ground rules of how you were going to work, where, as the reviewer being independent, you would be independent and what that meant in practice, and how you would work through, with the people, such that they understood, "Yes, at times this person is going to be independent, but they at the same time are working with us". The end result is that you get recommendations that are implementable, are workable and will improve the system.

That does not in any way stop me, as an independent lead reviewer or inspector, saying, "I have identified this and this does not seem to be working", not at all. You can and must do that, but it is how you then work it through that is important after that.

Q8 **Mr Kohler:** What if you get pushback?

John Tuckett: You discuss it. You talk about it, and you talk further about it. As I have done in the past, you establish a modus operandi: "If we disagree in the course of this review, how are we going to work it? How are we going to resolve it? Who is going to meet with whom?" You go on discussing it until you see whether you can get a resolution.

As the reviewer and in charge of a review or inspection team, you may have to say, "This is my finding at the end of the day. This is what I am going to say", but I hope that you do not get to that. In my experience, if you establish what I call a compact with the people you are reviewing at the start of the process, so you all can know what to expect from one another, most times you can find a way through without having to resort to saying, "We agree to disagree totally and utterly, and I am going to take this line".

Q9 **Mr Kohler:** Talking about controversial issues, in your experience when you were secretary to the Archbishop of York during a controversial time with the safeguarding issues, what did you learn from that experience?

John Tuckett: That was probably the most challenging stakeholder engagement experience of my life for three years, working with the archbishop, bishops and those three dioceses that were being brought together into a single entity. It was vital in that particular role to spend a lot of time having one-to-one conversations and discussions with people to understand where they were coming from and why they were concerned. One learning that I took from that particular project was that, right from the outset, the case for change had not been properly made. When I arrived, there were a lot of people still saying, "Why are we doing this? We don't understand". We had to formulate what the case for change was and restate it as part of working with individuals, often on a one-to-one basis.

Q10 **Mr Kohler:** Ultimately, your boss did not accept that.



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John Tuckett: No, he did. The whole proposal was approved by the General Synod.

Q11 **Mr Kohler:** I mean the Archbishop of York.

John Tuckett: The Archbishop of York was fully in favour of it.

Q12 **Mr Kohler:** Okay, but he did not accept the findings.

John Tuckett: This was nothing to do with safeguarding. We had no safeguarding issues during the time I was working with the Archbishop of York. This was John Sentamu when he was the archbishop. This was purely about how you brought together three dioceses and made them into a single entity after that. The issue with safeguarding did not rear its head during my time there.

Q13 **Chris Murray:** Could I ask a little bit about the context in which the ICIBI operates and the wider immigration and border security challenges that the Home Office faces? What would you say are the greatest risks that the Home Office faces right now, first on immigration and secondly on border security?

John Tuckett: If I can pre-phrase my answer to that one, I will say that I am not in yet with the detailed knowledge of the system, so the perspective I bring at the moment is an outsider's perspective. While my current role is to do with immigration advice, it is not into the main stream of immigration business.

However, having said that, if one takes lawful immigration first, there are some big challenges for the Home Office associated with electronic visas, which are coming in as we speak. Also, if one looks at the other border issues coming down the line when the European Union starts introducing ETIAS and other electronic forms of verification of people as they cross the border, there are going to be challenges for all countries, with potential worse delays at the borders trying to get through.

In that area of what I would call lawful migration, including visas servicing and processing, we have a lot of people who were migrants shortly after Brexit who may well be now applying for indefinite leave to remain. Those numbers could be well into the hundreds if all of them were to do so. That is going to provide processing challenges for the Home Office looking further down the line. Of course, there is always the asylum backlog that is there at the moment, which is probably the most pressing of all the servicing areas that the system faces.

In terms of the border itself, you asked about the border and the border security. Part of it is covered by what I have already said. There are the potential challenges with electronic verification of identity to both enter and leave the country, and the kinds of checks that have to be done with people as that comes in. That will be challenging for the system as a whole to bring in smoothly without huge disruption and delays.



In terms of border security itself, assuming I am in this role I would like to come back in a few months' time to talk to this Committee more about border security. I am not up to speed with the confidential areas of border security at the moment.

- Q14 **Chris Murray:** Would you say that the role of the ICIBI is to measure and inspect the operational functionality of the Home Office, or is it also to measure the gap between the political objectives and what we are being told the Home Office will achieve, and the reality on the ground? Another way of putting that question would be to ask whether you think your role is to kick the tyres on whether the public can properly trust what the Home Office is telling them it is doing.

John Tuckett: The role of the ICIBI is to look at the functions that the borders and immigration system is carrying out and to see whether they are delivering on government policy, for which these functions have been established, and whether the functions are being carried out efficiently and effectively to deliver on that policy. There is a bit of both elements of your question, if I have understood it correctly, about seeing how the policy is working in practice and advising if it is not or what needs to be done to make it work in practice, and then looking at whether the processes are being done efficiently and effectively to the benefit of end users and those who are using the services.

- Q15 **Chris Murray:** When you say "to the benefit of end users", what role do you think the ICIBI has in ensuring that migrants' rights are properly protected and that the Home Office is treating people appropriately and fairly?

John Tuckett: That depends upon how the Home Office prioritises migrant rights. I can look at any process and tell you whether it is working efficiently and effectively, but one thing I look at is what the priorities for that process are and what the ultimate aims that it is trying to achieve are. If one of the ultimate aims is that migrants' rights must be absolutely top of the list, as ICIBI I will go in and say, "How are you protecting migrants' rights? How are you honouring migrants' rights?" There is an element here about where the migrants' rights are articulated in the priorities for the processes.

- Q16 **Chris Murray:** For example, if it had not been very clearly articulated by the Home Office at the outset of a new process, you would not think that it was implicit in your job description to consider whether this could turn into another Windrush.

John Tuckett: Yes, most certainly.

- Q17 **Chris Murray:** That is not what you just said.

John Tuckett: If I saw that it had been ignored and I felt that this was something that should have been taken into account, I would draw attention to that and say, "Yes, there is a gap here. You have not taken account of migrant rights". You may have an excellent process for



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delivering XYZ, but if XYZ does not include migrants' rights, for example, I would say, "I think you should be thinking about migrants' rights to include that with XYZ. Now let's see how your processes will deliver on migrants' rights".

Q18 Chris Murray: Imagine you are in the role and you have a year ahead of you and limited resources. The work of the Home Office is vast. The programmes that you have just talked about are huge ones. How would you go about designing a programme of work to maximise the impact of your office?

John Tuckett: The first thing I would do is get myself up to speed with a much more in-depth knowledge on the big picture side of all of borders and immigration. That is just an education thing. I would do that by going out, visiting people and talking with leaders, stakeholder groups, end users et cetera.

When it comes to defining a programme, you have to start segmenting this vast arena. I know that the current incumbent uses a methodology of looking at border security on the one hand, visa and asylum processing on another, immigration enforcement as another and, I think, learning opportunities as another. He has that way. I would like to explore that further to see whether I can build on that. That seems a sensible way of doing an initial segmentation. Once you have that segmentation, you can take each one of those in turn and start breaking it down.

The challenge here is how you decide where you can get the most impact for the least input. The agenda is vast and one could spend a lot of time looking at a lot of processes and coming up with a lot of recommendations that might not have that major an impact overall. The real skill is identifying where you can have the most impact.

Q19 Chris Murray: How are you judging impact? Impact could be that your recommendations are accepted by the Home Office and it changes policy, or impact could be that the national debate about immigration is affected and you get press coverage and start shaping it, or it could be that the lives of the actual people who are affected by the policy are altered in some way. How would you distinguish and prioritise between those three?

John Tuckett: There is one that you have not mentioned, which is what is laid down in statute: to raise the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of processes. You can measure effectiveness and efficiency of processes quite easily. In some respects, the aim of the statute is efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. It comes back to what I was saying earlier. It depends on how a process has defined its other priorities, which are all the other things that you mention. You can measure efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. They are parameters that are relatively easy to measure. Other ones are more challenging.

Q20 Chris Murray: You talk about processes. What process challenges do you



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think the Home Office currently has? Do you think the Home Office is in the market for improving those processes?

John Tuckett: From everything that I have been told from the Home Secretary, through the Permanent Secretary and officials, there is a general recognition that there are processes that could be improved and that there are areas that need to be improved.

Q21 **Chris Murray:** My question was not whether there is a recognition. My question is whether there is an appetite. I do not think that the Home Office has struggled to recognise its failures of processes in the past. It just has not been willing to do anything about them. My question for you is whether you also recognise that.

John Tuckett: I would not be sitting here in front of you if I had not received assurances from the highest levels of the people I have spoken with at the Home Office that they were determined to get to grips with making the processes better.

Q22 **Chris Murray:** Would you say that the Home Office wants transformational change and how would you evidence that?

John Tuckett: The Home Office is a huge organisation in its own right. It becomes almost too big to think of it as a single entity. Even borders and immigration is not a single entity in its own right. There are three very different chunks, if you like. There is border security, immigration enforcement, and visas and immigration on the other side. Are they up for transformation? I think that there is a growing recognition that things need to change. I have not yet got sufficiently into the job to be able to evidence that to you now. I would very much welcome coming back in six months' time and giving you my experience then. I would not have put in for this job unless I thought at least at the very top there was top-level support for making a change, doing things differently and getting things better in the areas where it is appropriate to do so.

Q23 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Going back to what you have just said, as far as you are concerned you have got the job.

John Tuckett: No, not at all. I appreciate that it is for you, this Committee, to approve my nomination as the preferred candidate.

Q24 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Do you think that it is strange that the Home Office has already listed you on its website as being the preferred candidate in an article?

John Tuckett: As I understand it, this is the standard procedure that the Home Office has gone through with previous incumbents. At this stage, it announces who the preferred candidate is.

Q25 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Thinking of some of the processes and things you might have to look into, one of them would be immigration detention. The immigration detention estate is probably one of the most privatised parts of the Home Office. There are contracts worth millions of pounds. I



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was wondering whether you had any links, current or previous, to any of the major contractors, such as Serco, G4S, Mitie, Mears or Clearsprings Ready Homes?

John Tuckett: I have personally had no contact with organisations of that nature and certainly not with anything to do with immigration detention. That is an area as well where there are overlaps with other chief inspectors, such as prisons and constabulary. It is a very complex area, but I appreciate that it is a very important one.

Q26 **Chair:** You have talked a lot about areas where the Home Office might have an appetite for seeking improvements. How are you going to shine a light on those areas that the Home Office does not want to look at?

John Tuckett: By being bold and courageous and saying, "I think you should be looking at those areas". I would like to think that I am experienced enough and confident enough in my own judgment. I would not say that I am ugly enough, but I feel quite ready to say to a Minister, Permanent Secretary or whatever, "This area is not working. You should be looking at this area".

Q27 **Chair:** Would you say it publicly?

John Tuckett: That would depend. There is a public accountability side for this role. As I said right at the start of this, the public concern about immigration is so vast at the moment that to deny that there is any form of a public accountability aspect to this role would be a mistake. How one exercises that public accountability is another matter. The way you phrased the question implied whether I would go public on a major issue. I do not think that I would initially. I would want to have discussions first to express my concern and see what the reaction was. If I may say so, Chair, the way you phrased the question put it rather in the terms of a nuclear option. There are always many other options before you have to get to that one.

Q28 **Robbie Moore:** I want to focus a little bit on investment. I know that you have previously identified that there is a relatively small resource for the organisation compared to the size of the borders and immigration system at large, and therefore that had been identified an area of risk associated to it. Could you outline how you would go about making sure that there was the right level of resource available to you and to the priorities that you would be wanting to seek?

John Tuckett: The first thing I would say is that, if we, as an inspectorate, are looking for efficiency and effectiveness throughout the rest of the Home Office, we have to make sure that our own house is in order and that we are making the best use of the money that we have available and being as efficient and effective as we can be with what resources we have. In terms of how I would argue for more resources, I would certainly put the case to the powers that be, the financial people within the Home Office, that there is a case for expanding the size of the inspectorate.



The NAO did a review of all the inspectorates. I think that it was about 10 years ago now. There are some elements of that report that are still very current today. The current inspectorate within borders and immigration is on, one might say, the small side compared with some of the other inspectorates. Given the scale of the borders and immigration agenda and the way that it has expanded, there is a case, and I will be making that case, for more resource. I will also be making the case that, if you have more resource and can identify more efficiencies, it becomes a spend-to-save type of option. You may be able to save as much as you have to put in to invest into an enhanced inspectorate.

Q29 Robbie Moore: May I just expand on making the case? How would you be as robust as possible? Would you be prepared to ruffle feathers, so to speak, to make sure that you are heard by the Home Secretary in making that case that more investment, should you deem that necessary, should come into particular areas? How robust are you going to be in your position of being independent?

John Tuckett: I have been very successful in my current role in getting a huge increase in funding without having to ruffle feathers.

Q30 Robbie Moore: Are you pushing strongly enough?

John Tuckett: I think that I am for what we are getting at the moment and are capable of spending. Rather than ruffling feathers, the approach I would take is arguing logically, "This is the area of work I want to get into. This is the benefit I can see coming out of it. This is the cost that will come out of it and this is how you will save and benefit in the longer term if you invest that money up front". That way has more chance of success than going in—I do not know quite how to put it—and being negative about it.

Q31 Robbie Moore: I suppose that part of the challenge is being nimble enough—because risks change—with your requests and asks not only for the level of investment going in but level of resources going in. How would you use your role of being that independent chair to put those requests, whether it is to the Perm Sec or the Home Secretary, to make sure that resource of finance or other resource that may be needed is nimble enough to address the risks that you have identified?

John Tuckett: You have to prove that you are a credible force. If you can point to achievements where, for example in the ICIBI case, you have made recommendations and got efficiencies going because recommendations are being implemented and they are delivering—because that is the name of the game and what we are here to do—you are on much stronger ground for then arguing for more resources. To argue for more resources from a current level where you may be delivering something but not a lot is a much weaker case. My approach is to deliver first, then use that as a platform to argue for more resources with a specific case for it: what you want, why you want it, how you want it and what the benefits are going to achieve.



Q32 **Robbie Moore:** I want to turn on to the slightly different topic, if that is okay, of working patterns. The appointment is full time. My understanding is that you are working three days a week at the moment in your current role. Explain how you will move towards the expectations and demands associated with this full-time appointment.

John Tuckett: My current role is four days a week, and I actually work five days a week and spread it over the five-day period. Moving to a five-day working week is no problem for me at all.

Q33 **Robbie Moore:** My understanding is that, under your leadership, the Immigration Advice Authority moved to working fully remotely as a working model. What do you deem as the best balance in terms of working methodology for those who are involved in the organisation? What balance do you feel, should there need to be any change, would be best suited to this appointment and the organisation?

John Tuckett: We can probably get into a very long discussion about the pros and cons of remote working. Remote working works for some organisations, but it is very dependent upon the nature of the work, the geographical coverage of the work, and the workforce and the individuals within it.

Yes, within the IAA, as was the OISC, we moved after the covid lockdown into a fully remote model. We had done it for two years during covid. It had worked very well. The lease on our building was running out and I saw no reason to go for another expensive office lease and actually saved a lot of money that I could then invest in frontline staff. Furthermore, it gave us a geographical coverage across the whole of the United Kingdom, which we had never had before. We had otherwise been totally focused in London, so we were able to give ourselves an operational impact in ways that we had not been able to do before. We have also found that we have accessed a much greater talent pool than ever before, I think because we are a homeworking organisation. The talent that we have been able to draw in has gone up.

There has been a win-win-win there, but that was for the OISC/IAA, and for us it was probably the right thing to do and has proved right. For ICIBI, it is a totally different thing altogether. I understand that half the workforce is based at home and half in an office in London. Quite what the right balance is moving forward I do not yet know. I need to get in there and understand the working patterns of the organisation to see whether there should be any change or whether that hybrid model is working.

To answer your question of what the best balance is, I can only go back to what we do in the IAA. Although people are based at home, we bring them together very frequently. Every month or so we would have a staff conference. Everyone comes together. Training is done all together. Individual teams come together and either utilise government buildings or hire local facilities as a place to meet and do the work. So far, we have



found that it works very well. Staff satisfaction and engagement levels have been very high indeed, but that is for the IAA.

Q34 **Robbie Moore:** If you are lucky enough to get the new role and you came to the conclusion, “The current balance is not quite right. We need more of the team working more in the office permanently”, or whatever balance you came to, and that was not very well received by the team, would you then shy away from those decisions in terms of the balance?

John Tuckett: As I understand it, all the staff in the inspectorate are civil servants and are on civil service terms and conditions of service. That brings with it its own degrees of regulation and what is and is not possible. In the case of the OISC, we were all public servants, so we were in a different arena in terms of making changes to contracts and things like that. For people who are on, for example, home-based contracts, to change that can be quite a challenge. I would have to get in there, find out the detail and see what the best way forward was.

Q35 **Chair:** If you found that you needed to be in the office five days a week and because of the working patterns of Ministers and the way Parliament works you simply had to be there five days a week, that would be fine.

John Tuckett: Yes, it would be. I have done this kind of work before. When I was asked this question at my interview I said that my judgment is that you need time when you are available for Ministers, visits and all the things where you need to do face to face. You also need time where you can think, sit back and write, because you do not write a report in 10 spare minutes in between two major appointments. There is a 60/40 split—this is for the chief inspector—where you need to spend the bulk of the time available, doing the rounds as it were and being visible, and then you need dedicated time wherever doing that quiet reflection, thinking and developing plans, programmes or whatever it is.

Q36 **Chair:** You are able to do evening events. This place, as you know, has very strange hours. There is no problem at all with travel or doing evening events.

John Tuckett: No, not if necessary.

Q37 **Chris Murray:** Do you live within commuting distance of the London office?

John Tuckett: No, I do not. I have a family home in Finland and I come across to this country whenever I need to.

Q38 **Chris Murray:** You would be expecting to inspect the UK borders and immigration without being resident in the UK.

John Tuckett: No, I work in the UK and I would be in the UK.

Q39 **Chris Murray:** Are you resident in the UK?

John Tuckett: No, I am resident in Finland.



Q40 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Can I ask who would be expected to pay for your travel and accommodation?

John Tuckett: I pay for that myself. I always have done.

Q41 **Robbie Moore:** Expanding on the questions that have been asked around the ability to challenge Ministers and building up that balance of trust with Ministers but being in a position to robustly challenge them, can you give us an example of when you have previously put forward a very strong case, in a previous employer arrangement that you have been involved in, that has not been well received and you have then elevated that challenge to a position of getting an outcome that you have been satisfied with?

John Tuckett: I would go back to a review that I led in the Department for Work and Pensions, where a Minister had at the last moment changed the implementation date on a major new IT programme, causing very considerable concern and havoc within the programme. We were going in to do a review of the programme, and the programme director and SRO when I arrived said, "We need your help because we think we have a real problem on our hands that this has been changed at the last moment".

We did our initial interview, as we always do, with the Minister concerned. It was quite clear that he was adamant that he wanted to impose this change upon the system. It was also quite clear that, from a professional programme perspective, this was causing major concern and threatening the ability of the programme to deliver in the longer term. The question was how one could, as it were, bring about an understanding of the situation that was acceptable to all parties.

The way we did it at the end of the day was to ask what level of risk assessment had been provided by officials when the Minister's proposal had been under consideration before he took the decision. Our recommendation was that we thought that a further risk assessment should be undertaken to see that the Minister was properly apprised of all the risks before finalising his decision. That way, we managed to get a bit of a resolution to the issue.

Q42 **Robbie Moore:** A bit of a resolution to the issue.

John Tuckett: I cannot remember whether he actually changed his mind or not, but we certainly got him to think about it. I am afraid that it was quite a long time ago.

Q43 **Robbie Moore:** To pose a scenario to you, let us assume that you have produced a report in the role that you are going for and then the Home Office decided to maybe delay its publication or potentially redact some of the recommendations, conclusions or wording that you had come to that you felt strongly and passionately should be kept in, but this report was not going to be published until those changes had taken place. How would you respond?



John Tuckett: If I had set up, as I indicated earlier in this discussion, a compact about how we were going to run an inspection, that would include timings around factual checking and what to do in case anyone wanted to redact. If those issues had been honoured, I would be content. If they had not been honoured and people were delaying or redacting in a way that was not in line with the compact that we had agreed, I would raise it, first of all, with the director general of the area concerned and say, "Look, this is not in line with what we have agreed with your people. Why? Can we please have an understanding of what is going on here?" If that did not work, I would escalate it to the second Permanent Secretary. If that did not work, I would escalate it to Ministers. If that did not work, I would escalate it to the Home Secretary. I would work up the tree.

This is the value of having that agreement or compact right at the outset: you have established standards that you expect to work to.

Q44 **Robbie Moore:** Just finally, you have kindly outlined roles that you have had previously and levels of interaction with various parts of the Government, whether it is DWP or the Home Office, as well as other scenarios that you have given, such as having worked for the Archbishop of York in some form or another. You have had various public sector-facing roles. Would you accept the conclusion that you are part of the system as it is at the moment and that you do not have the fresh thinking we need in this role?

John Tuckett: No, I would not. I would not agree with that at all. I can bring fresh thinking. I bring fresh thinking because I have such a variety of backgrounds on which to draw. I have worked with many people who have come from the private sector into the public sector. They do bring fresh thinking. Sometimes they bring very different thinking. I like to think I can bring the best of both. I bring the knowledge of the public sector and the experience of having worked in the public sector, so I know what it is like. I know what is the art of the possible and what is the art of the impossible.

I also bring a freshness of thinking from the different areas in which I have worked, which are so very different. The environment around the Church of England is totally different from defence, health or immigration. They are totally different.

Q45 **Robbie Moore:** In terms of your CV, have you had a long part of your life working in the private sector?

John Tuckett: No, I have never worked in the private sector at all.

Q46 **Chair:** You will be working in an incredibly sensitive field: human beings, but also drugs, potential unlawful behaviour, smuggling, et cetera. You may go to a seaport, carry out an inspection and see something that is clearly, in your view, a risk to the UK's national security. If you take it to Ministers and they do not want to know, what do you do?

John Tuckett: You have to continue to take it to Ministers for as long as you can. If, at the end of the day, they do not want to do anything about



it, that is the Minister's prerogative. If you are asking whether I would go to the press or go outside, no, I would not.

Q47 **Chair:** What if the press came to you about it?

John Tuckett: It would depend entirely on the context. It is very right that the ICIBI has a form of public profile. Indeed, in all my roles I have always encouraged discussion with the media. If you have good relations with the media and they understand what you are doing and why you are doing it, when something does go wrong, you are in a much better position to help mitigate it than if you come from, as it were, a completely blank sheet of paper. It would depend entirely on the circumstances.

Q48 **Chair:** If you had seen something that you had concerns about in an inspection, you had taken it to the Home Office, the Home Office had not taken action and then a journalist had come to you having found it, how would you handle that kind of situation? We are all politicians around this table, so we are always thinking the worst.

John Tuckett: I would play for time. Whatever it was, I do not see my role as betraying the trust of Ministers by saying, "You have not taken any notice of me. I am therefore going to go to the press".

Q49 **Chris Murray:** Is "independent" not a key word in your title?

John Tuckett: Yes.

Q50 **Chris Murray:** The public would expect you to act independently of the interests of Ministers. If you saw something such as serious immigration crime or drug smuggling through the border and Ministers refused to do anything about that, would it not ultimately harm the office of the ICIBI and all your staff, who are on the frontline inspecting this stuff, if you accept that and do not act independently? Would that not also have huge ramifications for public trust in our borders and immigration system?

John Tuckett: The independent nature of the ICIBI is defined by a number of things. It is defined in statute. For example, the ICIBI can inspect whatever he or she likes in whatever way he or she likes. At the same time, there are agreements with the Home Office that, for example, the Home Secretary will publish reports. The ICIBI does not have the right to publish reports in a way that perhaps other inspectors do. The independence of the role of the ICIBI is a framework that has been set up by the way that the organisation is set up, the way it is funded and the agreements that exist between the Home Office and the ICIBI.

That is the formal side. What stakeholders expect of the ICIBI may be something different. To take your description of the word "independent", they may have expectations that the word "independent" means something very different. They may have the expectation that "independent" means you can publish reports whenever you like, but that is not the framework that is in place at the moment.

It is about managing expectations of stakeholders. On joining, assuming I have been approved by this Committee, I would want to talk with all the



key stakeholders groups and get clarification on their expectation of what this word “independent” means and how they see it manifesting itself.

- Q51 **Chris Murray:** If you need clarification, you accept there is a lack of clarity at the moment. Should the operating model that you have just described also apply to other chief inspectors? For example, if the chief inspector of constabulary sees police brutality, should they get clearance from Home Office Ministers before they tell the public?

John Tuckett: It is not my place to answer for the other chief inspectors on how they are set up, what their frameworks are and what their agreements with their parent Departments are. I do not know.

- Q52 **Chris Murray:** You have no view on that.

John Tuckett: I could not answer that, I am afraid.

- Q53 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Other independent chief inspectors have raised as a problem this issue about the Home Office not implementing their recommendations. You have explained why you will not necessarily take certain actions, but is it a huge concern to you as well?

John Tuckett: Yes, it is. At the end of the day, the aim is for the chief inspector to produce a set of recommendations that are implemented and then give rise to increases in efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. That is what we are all here to do: to get that increase. If recommendations are not implemented or accepted, it implies that something has not gone right in the process.

When I led previous reviews, I always made it a goal to discuss the emerging recommendations with the people I was reviewing. That means you can craft them in such a way that, when it comes to it, you have a set of recommendations that ideally are all accepted and can all be implemented because they have been talked through and you have got assurance from the other side: “Yes, this looks like a sensible recommendation. We can implement it”. If you are pursuing a recommendation and the other side says, “No, this one feels very difficult” for whatever reason, you can consider whether there is any scope to reshape the recommendation to achieve the same outcome or aim in a way that makes it better for them.

Recommendations that are not accepted or only partially accepted raise the question of what has happened before then to give rise to that situation. Have they been discussed between the inspectors and the other parties? At the end of the day, an inspection has to be done with the people. You have to do it with the people to get the best possible outcome. If you do it unto them and lay down a set of recommendations that have not been checked for their implementability, if that is the right word, or appropriateness within the context, the danger is that you get pushback, the recommendations do not get owned, and then nothing moves forward.

- Q54 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** Would that not just be allowing them to mark their own homework?



John Tuckett: No. To come back to Mr Murray's comment, this is where, as an independent chief inspector, one's integrity says, "No, I am not going to be pushed around and just write recommendations that the body wants to achieve". This is where I have to stand up and say, "No, there needs to be something more robust than what you might want yourself".

Q55 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** How would you go about holding the Home Office to account if it did not implement certain recommendations that you had put forward? You have talked about what you would not do. What actions would you take?

John Tuckett: Again, it would be a similar answer to the question that came from Mr Moore. You would escalate it up through the various levels to find out what is going on. The key is why. Why are recommendations not being accepted? Why are they not being implemented?

From having been a chief executive, I know only too well that, when you are inspected or reviewed, you get a whole raft of recommendations and you think, "Oh my goodness. Everyone is working flat out on the business as usual, and I now have 10 additional recommendations that I am meant to implement". Sometimes there is that dimension to things. People are already so busy that to implement other recommendations is very challenging.

There is something about understanding why recommendations are not implemented. There may also be disagreements with the recommendations. In a good inspection, you would have bottomed that out early.

Q56 **Bell Ribeiro-Addy:** How would you look to secure evidence as to whether the efficiency and effectiveness of border and immigration systems have improved as a result of implementing the ICIBI's recommendations?

John Tuckett: It comes back to measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the process or function that you are looking at and establishing a baseline before you start. Ideally, once your recommendations have been made, you can measure whether that baseline parameter or performance indicator has improved. That will inevitably take time, but that is the way to come to a conclusion, at the end of the day, whether efficiency and effectiveness have improved.

Q57 **Chris Murray:** Can I follow up on that very quickly? If you want to work with the Home Office in advance of publishing the recommendations on their implementability to ensure that they are all implemented, is the risk that the Home Office will only agree to things that it was already going to do anyway? How are you ever going to push the Home Office to do anything transformational if it is going to have the signoff and probably give you things that it was already planning to do?

John Tuckett: This is where you have to have an escalation route. This is where I would raise it up to the DG level. I would say, "Look, you have a process within this function within your remit. I am saying to you, as a



chief inspector, that this is where it ought to be improved”.

Q58 Chris Murray: Why keep that conversation internal? If you publish it, we can see and then the rest of society and our constituents can hold us to account for it not happening. A conversation between you and a DG is not the most robust way of ensuring that the Home Office changes, surely, given the huge ecosystem that exists around the Home Office.

John Tuckett: I sincerely hope that we are all on the same side and looking for the same thing.

Chris Murray: This is politics.

John Tuckett: Sorry, perhaps that was a naive response. In terms of improving efficiency and effectiveness, I would hope that I, the Home Secretary, Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and DGs are all on the same side. We want to improve the systems. We know there are areas where they are not optimal. We want to identify those areas and get them up as much as we can.

Q59 Chris Murray: I understand the point about all working towards the same broad objectives, but what if the obstacle is competence? What if the obstacle is that the Home Office is not competently achieving it? What if the willingness is there, but not the capacity?

John Tuckett: When I approach an inspection or review, I adopt a methodology—whatever the scale or size, it is the same methodology—that looks at the issue or function through six lenses. You look, first of all, at what this function is trying to achieve and how you will know whether the function has been successful. Are there critical success factors?

Secondly, you look at the governance and the decision making. Is there a clear line of accountability and responsibility for delivering this function?

Thirdly, you look at what is important. Have priorities been established within this function that provide a framework for people to make the right or appropriate decision? That might be an asylum or visa application, or something like that. Are the priorities laid down? This goes back to what we were talking about much earlier, migrants’ rights. Is migrants’ rights laid down as a key priority for this particular function? In that, you also look at assumptions. What assumptions are being made? It is all answering the question, “What is important?”

Fourthly, you look at the resources. You look at the people, the skills and the money that the function has available to it. Does it have enough people with the right skills? This comes back to the competence level.

Fifthly, you look at the actual process itself. Is the process well defined? Do people know what they are meant to be achieving? Are they being line managed in a competent way to deliver the daily outcomes that are delivering your top-level aim?

Finally, you look at the stakeholders, the external environment and end users. You look at their experiences and you understand what their views are. If necessary, you might also look at the IT systems supporting the



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business processes.

You look at those six levels. I have used this model for 25 years now. If you apply it rigorously, you very quickly start seeing which level is the one where you think, "We have an issue here".

Q60 **Chris Murray:** If it is about competence, not willingness, why do you maintain the conversation between you and the director general and not go public?

John Tuckett: Sorry, I do not understand the question.

Q61 **Chris Murray:** The discussion was about whether you would ever go public, and you used the example of a director general. I asked, "What if you found that they were not competent to implement your recommendations?" Would you still keep the recommendation in a report and go public with it?

John Tuckett: I cannot publish a report. The Home Secretary publishes the reports. If I felt that competence was an issue and that skills training was missing in a particular function I would certainly put that into a report, but I cannot publish it.

Q62 **Mr Kohler:** I would like to go back to my previous line of questioning. Am I right that you worked for the Archbishop of York between 2011 and 2014?

John Tuckett: Yes, it was about that period.

Q63 **Mr Kohler:** While you clearly were not there when the safeguarding review occurred, you were there when the safeguarding failures that were the subject of that review occurred. Were you aware of any of those safeguarding failures?

John Tuckett: No, never.

Q64 **Mr Kohler:** What about the letter from the victim in June 2013? You had nothing to do with answering that.

John Tuckett: That was nothing to do with my work at all.

Q65 **Mr Kohler:** Should you have been aware?

John Tuckett: If there had been a major safeguarding issue within one of the three dioceses with which I was working, which were Ripon and Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, I would have been aware of it.

Q66 **Mr Kohler:** Are safeguarding failures by your boss not something that you should have been aware of?

John Tuckett: My boss was the Archbishop of York at the time, but I was totally unaware of a huge amount of his agenda. I was only one small microcosm of the totality of his work.

Q67 **Mr Kohler:** Reading the review, you have not reflected at all on what you might have done in that period.

John Tuckett: All I can say to this Committee is that I was never aware



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of any issues of that nature during the time I worked with the archbishop.

- Q68 **Mr Kohler:** That is not what I am asking you. Once those failures were made public knowledge in the review, did you reflect on whether, in your role, you should have been aware? Have you gone through that process? Have you thought about that?

John Tuckett: What I do remember discussing was, as you brought three dioceses together, how the safeguarding issues of three separate organisations would be handled within one larger organisation. There was a discussion of that, but nothing, I am afraid—

- Q69 **Mr Kohler:** I am just asking whether you have reflected in the light of the review. You are saying that you have not reflected in the light of the review. Okay, thank you.

You have described the role as being perceived as something of a toothless tiger. Presumably you do not want to be a toothless tiger. How are you going to address that perception?

John Tuckett: That was the perception as of probably about a year ago, when there was quite a hiatus going on. Things have stabilised to a degree now. The current chief inspector has brought a degree of stability to it.

I certainly do not want to be a toothless tiger. I certainly want to issue reports that are accurate, are evidence-based and have good recommendations that will bring about the results that we all want: efficiency, effectiveness and consistency. I do not want them to be hard-hitting for the sake of being hard-hitting; I want them to be good in the sense of having good, implementable recommendations that will make a difference at the end of the day. That is what I am after.

- Q70 **Mr Kohler:** Do you see a media role in publicising what you are doing?

John Tuckett: Given the level of concern from the public about immigration, which I mentioned right at the outset, for the chief inspector to have no media-type presence or profile seems unusual. As I mentioned earlier, in all my roles in the past where there has been a media element, I have tried to develop linkages with the media such that, if things did go wrong or there was an issue, one had an understanding of the media and how they worked, and vice versa. I always found that worked in your favour rather than if you were doing it with no such understanding.

Yes, I would see the chief inspector as needing to have some form of a media profile. Just what that is and how it manifests itself is something that I have yet to work through with the staff as to how we would do it.

- Q71 **Mr Kohler:** Do you feel you have enough media experience to do that?

John Tuckett: Yes. I have done that.

- Q72 **Mr Kohler:** You are very accepting of the limits of the role and the fact that you cannot publish. Your predecessor but one said that there should be a review of the limits and a push for the right to publish. Should there be a review or are you accepting of the limits of your role?



John Tuckett: I would agree with my predecessor but one, who is sitting behind me at the moment. There are some anomalies with the chief inspector role as it is set up at the moment. As I understand it, if the Windrush recommendations are being revisited and there may be an intention to do some kind of review of the role and remit, I would welcome that. There are areas that would need to be explored. What I have tried to articulate to this Committee is what I see as the framework, as it is at the moment, which is not necessarily the most appropriate framework moving forward. I would welcome a review. It is probably timely. That can look at all kinds of things, whether it is publishing reports, size, resources or other issues.

Q73 **Mr Kohler:** You have not previously suggested that a review would detract from the work of the office.

John Tuckett: Reviews, in my experience, can impact on an office, particularly when it is a very small office. If you find that a review is asking for loads of detail about how the office works, what it has done here and what it has done there, you find that your staff are then chasing around trying to find data to feed the beast of the review, rather than getting on with their work. That has been my experience in the past and it is a risk.

Q74 **Mr Kohler:** Have you expressed that in consideration of a review here? Have you said, "It might detract from our work"?

John Tuckett: I am not in the role yet so I am not in a position yet to influence this. My understanding is that a review is under consideration. If I were in the role, I would be saying, "How are we going to do this in a way that has minimum impact on the core work of the staff within the inspectorate"?

Q75 **Mr Kohler:** Have you suggested that it might detract from the work? Have you suggested that?

John Tuckett: No, because I have not had those discussions yet with the Home Office.

Q76 **Chair:** What do you see as the anomalies with the role at the moment?

John Tuckett: A lot of them were articulated in the NAO report, which was 10 years ago, but they are still extant. The set-ups for the chief inspectors of prisons, of fire and constabulary, and of borders and immigration are slightly different. There is the funding issue. There is the report publications issue. There are redaction issues. There are differences between what are doing fundamentally the same kind of job in a different context.

There is also scope for definite improvement in the learning of lessons between the various inspectorates. The chief inspector of borders and immigration overlaps particularly with the inspectorate of prisons and the inspectorate of constabulary. There are all kinds of overlap issues that



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perhaps need looking at and addressing, let alone overlap issues with other Government Departments.

You asked me what the other anomalies were. One is that we have to look at the remit of the chief inspector within other Government Departments and how that gets addressed in the future. At the moment, that remit does not exist but so many issues go across other Government Departments. There are issues such as access to contractual details. There are a number of anomalies.

Q77 Chair: All these roles have been set up at different points, usually because there has been a new piece of legislation and therefore an opportunity to put an inspector or commissioner role in, or possibly because there has been a public outrage about something and it is a good position for a Minister to put somebody independent in so they can give the public confidence. How are you going to make sure that the public do have confidence in the borders and our immigration system?

John Tuckett: For one person to bring around a complete change in public perceptions of borders and immigration is even beyond the independent chief inspector. Public opinion is largely swayed by the media coverage. It is how one interacts with the media and that is why it is so important that the chief inspector going forward has some form of media contact and profile to be able to influence if possible.

Of course, this comes with risks. As soon as you expose your head to the media, you expose yourselves to challenge, questions, embarrassment or other things, but that is a risk we all take. My view would be that there is a degree of public accountability in this role. It is a sort of informal accountability. It is not an accountability that is laid down in letters or whatever. To go back to your question, Mr Murray, about what the public expect, the public has expectations of this role. It is right that this role should, as far as possible and sensible, meet those expectations and keep the public informed through perhaps appropriate media contact, so that one can hopefully start turning the dial.

Q78 Chris Murray: Can I ask a final question about stakeholders? In the first six months to a year of being in post, who would you identify as the key stakeholders for the chief inspector and how would you go about building those relationships?

John Tuckett: If I can answer the second question first, I would go out and visit them. I would go out and meet them face to face, not on Teams, unless Teams is absolutely necessary. I would go out and meet them face to face, and then let them get the measure of me. I build credibility with them and start understanding where they are coming from and what their rationale is. The challenge here is that the stakeholder list is huge.

Q79 Chris Murray: To be clear, I mean outside the Home Office.



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John Tuckett: Yes, I was going to say “outside of the Home Office”. I can start running down the list if you like.

Q80 **Chris Murray:** Let us go in order of importance.

John Tuckett: End users and their representative bodies are absolutely critical here. All these borders and immigration services are there for an end user to experience in some shape or form. Finding the views of the representative bodies and the various refugee and migration groups is a very important business.

There are then all the other agencies involved with the illegal migration, because that is a top priority for this Government, understanding how that is going and where a chief inspector can add value and inspect, along with other agencies. You have all the various local authorities and other Government Departments that have impact upon the various functions that we have talked about. I am not sure that I am getting them in an exact order of priority here, but there are the ports, the airlines, the airports and the port authorities, all of which are, on a day-to-day basis, managing the border and what actually happens at the border.

You have the other inspectors—goodness knows how many there are—that we have mentioned already. You have the other chief inspectors. You have the other inspecting bodies, such as the National Audit Office, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, and Government Internal Audit Agency, all of which are carrying out reviews and inspections that potentially overlap with those of the ICIBI. There is a question of ensuring that we are getting cohesion, not duplicating and not stepping on one another’s toes, as it were.

Q81 **Chris Murray:** It is interesting to me that the two groups that were absent from that list were anyone political, so No. 10, the Home Affairs Committee and the House of Commons were not mentioned in that, and anyone media or representing the public. That could be the wider press, trade unions or anything like that. Was that a deliberate omission?

John Tuckett: No. As I was, I was trying to flick through my notes because I had a list as long as your list and I could not remember all 15 of them. Undoubtedly, Parliament and this Committee as a representative of Parliament, but also of your constituencies and the views as fed through to you, are vital stakeholders that must be engaged with.

Q82 **Chris Murray:** What would you do if there were tensions between those stakeholders?

Chair: If I can add to that, often in this area there are a lot of lobby groups. There are an awful lot of organisations. They do not all have common cause. Some have different agendas and reasons for the work they are doing. How do you manage that? That links to Chris’s question.

Chris Murray: That was my question, exactly.



John Tuckett: I agree with you totally. They all come with different agendas. They will all have different expectations. We go back to the issue of the expectation of independence. What independence means to one group can mean a totally different thing to another group.

The way I would tackle this is to try to get to each of these groups as quickly as I could—there will have to be some form of prioritisation; I am not quite sure what priorities would come first, but we will come to that one later—to understand what their expectations and main concerns are. Their concerns are a main feeder into driving a programme of inspections. An inspection programme should be driven by the concern of Ministers, the concern of the DGs about the functions that are delivering the services and then the end user concerns through their representative bodies or any of this mass of stakeholders. It is a question of getting to them, understanding what their concerns are, what they expect of the ICIBI and how far I can deliver on that expectation, or not, as the case may be, but being explicit about that, and then taking it forward after that.

Q83 Bell Ribeiro-Addy: Following on from that, whose expectations are the most important? In other commissioner and independent inspector roles, one thing that is very clear is that there is meant to be scrutiny. I know that you are appointed by the Government but who, in your view, do you work for? Who is the key stakeholder? Whose views matter the most?

John Tuckett: That is a very good question, if I may say so. It is not one that there is an immediate answer to. In one sense, this is a public appointment. The framework that I mentioned before within the Home Office ensures that the Home Office pays the salary, if you like. I can be sacked, or the role can be sacked, by the Home Secretary, but there is not that formal accountability to a set of objectives that you would normally have within just about any other role that I have ever worked in, where you have a defined hierarchy of accountability, responsibility and authority. This sits independent. If your question was who is the most influential, they are all influential.

Q84 Bell Ribeiro-Addy: Are they equally influential?

John Tuckett: No. It depends on the context. It would depend on whether I was formulating a programme or looking at a particular issue, function or area of work as to which stakeholder has the impact and influence in that area. It will vary and it will not stay the same.

Q85 Chair: We are almost at the end. I know that we have kept you quite a long time and we had the break for the vote. You have all these stakeholders and organisations with different agendas, and they are going to criticise you. If they come to you with some criticism of what is going on at the borders, treatment of migrants or a gap in the system, and you take this to the DG and escalate it up but nothing further happens and they go public to criticise you, what do you do at that point?



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John Tuckett: Take a very deep breath and not take it personally, though it probably would be aimed personally. You have to acknowledge that the criticism is probably at the role, rather than at the person as a person. No one particularly likes criticism and in this area criticism can get quite vitriolic and nasty.

Equally, that is something I have experienced before. When we were running a health authority we had in our area a child who was murdered by someone who had been receiving mental health services from within the health authority's area. The public was holding us, the health authority, and me, as the chief executive, responsible for the murder of the child. It got very personal. All one can do then is hunker down, rely on one's colleagues, recognise that it is the role rather than you the individual and then manage it as best you can.

Q86 **Chair:** As a Minister, you can hide behind collective responsibility. You are not governed by collective responsibility.

John Tuckett: No. I am quite ready for that. I understand that. I recognise it. It is part of the turf, if you like. It is part of the job. I am quite happy to do that.

Chair: Maybe Ministers do not hide behind collective responsibility. They are just governed by collective responsibility. Can I thank you for giving your time today? As I say, we have kept you for a very long session and I apologise for the break at the beginning of it for the vote. Thank you very much. We will now meet in private to discuss conclusions.