

Border staff feared fewer checks put children at risk

By James Kirkup
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UK BORDERS staff warned that Theresa May's controversial secret relaxation of passport checks would "facilitate child trafficking", a leaked document shows.

Minutes show that at a meeting in September, officials heard some UK Border Agency workers had concerns about the Home Secretary's instruction not to check children arriving in the UK against a watchlist.

A second leak suggested border staff were pressured to use Mrs May's relaxed rules in order to get more resources.

The documents emerged as Mrs May faced fresh questions about her handling

forced to deny that he had given Mr Clark such permission.

Ministers have said the pilot did not risk national security or crime, and suggested it may have cut illegal immigration. But they have refused to publish any internal documents about it.

The first leaked document describes a meeting between Home Office border officials and staff on Sept 14. A senior official said UKBA managers had "received mixed views on the summer pressures work, including that not checking children on the WI may facilitate child trafficking".

In September, Mrs May decided that the pilot should be extended for another six weeks. She told MPs yesterday there was no evidence that it had increased the risk of trafficking.

The second document, a UKBA email, suggests border staff were put under pressure by the Home Office to relax passport checks in order to "make the case" for Mrs May's "risk-based" rules.

The email was sent on Oct 27 by Laura Budd, UKBA's deputy director for Heathrow. She suggested to her staff that being seen to make use of the "level 2" measures allowing relaxed passport checks would help the agency get ministers' support for more resources and other changes in the rules.

"Level 2 does not in itself provide much for us in terms of managing [passenger] pressures ... if we cant [*sic*] make the case for risk-based measures using what's has been provided through Level 2, we wont [*sic*] get that or indeed anything else," she wrote.

The documents were passed to Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, by UKBA staff. Miss Cooper challenged Mrs May to "come clean" about the extent to which her pilot had "weakened border controls".

Mrs May insisted she had done nothing wrong and attacked Labour's record on immigration.

Brodie Clark Payout 'could be six figures'

Theresa May's public criticism of Brodie Clark could mean taxpayers have to fund a six-figure payout to the UK border force chief.

The Home Secretary has publicly accused Mr Clark of improperly relaxing passport checks over the summer. He was suspended last week and resigned on Tuesday. He is planning legal action against the Home Office.

Alex Bearman, a partner at the Russell-Cooke law firm, said: "Saying someone is guilty before a proper process has been followed does risk a finding that the employment contract has been breached."

He added that Mr Clark could be entitled to a maximum of £68,400 for loss of earnings, plus up to six months' salary - £67,500 - in lieu of notice.

of Britain's borders. She denied any wrongdoing and was strongly backed by David Cameron.

In July, the Home Secretary ordered UKBA officials to stop checking biometric chips in European passports and cease checking children against a "warnings index" of people of concern.

The "pilot scheme" was suspended last week when Mrs May accused Brodie Clark, head of the UK border force, of extending it to non-Europeans. Mr Clark resigned on Tuesday. He accused Mrs May of misleading the public and said he had authority for his actions.

In the House of Commons, Damian Green, the immigration minister, was

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Mrs May is paying for failure to honour an implicit contract

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