



OAKINGTON IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRE

Independent Monitoring Board.

Annual Report

January 2009 to December 2009.

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Annual Report January 2009 to December 2009

1. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POINTS OF CONCERN

- **Provision of a suitable Close Supervision suite. Page 18**
- **Closure date reported throughout report.**
- **Calculation and length of stay for detainees Pages 4 and 25**
- **Ablution areas Pages 4, 7 and 8**
- **Telephone provision and top up facilities Page 9**
- **Television provision Page 9 and 12**
- **Provision of second night nurse Page 20**
- **Ability to calculate a detainee's total length of stay in detention. Pages 5 and 24**
- **Provision of secure storage facilities. Page 9**
- **G4S Badges. Page 22**

Until a firm date for closure of the Centre is set, the Board will continue to push for improvements to the Centre to enhance the environment and buildings in which the detainees live.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report covers the period January 2009 to December 2009 to which all of the Independent Monitoring Board members at Oakington have contributed in various ways.

In many ways during the year, the lifestyle of the detainees has been improved by the additional and refurbished leisure and educational amenities, and the smooth running of the Centre, but the Board, as of last year, continue to record at their monthly meeting, to senior UKBA management and the Minister, frustrations felt at the length of time it takes for problems to be solved. Two cases in point have been the length of time it took to get the shower heads replaced; this did not happen until October/November, and the provision of mobile telephones for the detainees without their own, and 'top up' facilities for those who do. This point of concern was raised in the 2007 and 2008 reports and is still yet to happen. It was recorded in the UKBA Action Plan for the 2008 that it would.

The detainee bed numbers remain at 408 male detainees and have been occupied close to full occupancy for the majority of the year. The movement of detainees into and out of the Centre during an average month is high. The total number of arrivals in 2009 was 6711 detainees. The constant use of the Centre, which requires total refurbishment, continues to strain the fabric and infrastructure. There have been failures in the electricity supply and also to the heating supply during the year. The toilets, showers and bath areas continued to be problematic throughout the year again.

A meeting of senior UKBA personnel was held in April 2009 to decide on a 'Life Cycle' plan for Oakington and to decide priority issues.

The Board was finally notified that funds were being made available to deal with 'life span' items that were getting critical, electricity, roofing, kitchen refurbishment, ablution areas refurbishment etc. At the year end of this report the work is still waiting to get underway. The Minister has stated that the Centre will close at the latest in 2011. Feasibility studies are underway looking into alternative sites for Oakington

The United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) continues to hold detainees prior to removal. Unfortunately in some cases it is taking many months to achieve this, with a number of detainees being held at Oakington for over 12 months with one particularly difficult case where the detainee has been in the Centre for over two years. This is not solely a problem for Oakington. It is of concern to the Board and also to the Forum of Chairs to Immigration Detention Centres who have the same problem within their Centres they monitor. The system of recording length of stay does not give a clear indication of the length of detention time, for when a detainee is transferred out of the Centre to another Centre, or for a bail hearing, the timing starts again. UKBA does not have this information readily or easily available.

2.2 G4S Ltd. Officially changed their name from GSL (UK) Ltd in the early part of the year. They continue to manage the Centre under contract to UKBA. The contract which was agreed back in 2000 has had a number of 'add ons' and because it was originally written for a Short-term Fast Track Centre, the change in the status of the detainees held and the UKBA process carried out, has highlighted areas where the contract does not cater for this change.

2.3 There have been several incidents during the year involving a large number of detainees. **These have been dealt with and managed by the officers within the Centre in a well controlled manner resulting in all finishing peacefully.** The Board feel that this is largely due to the good relationship the staff has with the detainees allowing the situation to be talked down. UKBA and G4S have held talks with detainees after these instances to ascertain the concerns of the detainees.

The percentage of ex Foreign National Prisoners (FNPs) has gradually decreased during the year.

3. IMMIGRATION PROCESS

The work carried out by the UKBA teams at the Centre is as follows:

UKBA Detention Services Team

THE UKBA Manager is responsible for monitoring the contract between G4S and the Home Office, and for providing a contact management service for detainees. Staff in the team liaises between detainees, case holding ports, solicitors and others in order to respond to detainees' requests for case updates, etc. and to conduct interviews and serve paperwork, such as removal directions, on behalf of caseworkers. The team consists of the manager, one deputy and four administrative assistants to carry out this high workload.

UKBA Screening Unit.

UKBA Midlands and Eastern Region provide an on-site screening capacity at Oakington. The unit is a hybrid unit, combining both a screening capacity and asylum case working function. The primary function of the unit is to respond to clandestine lorry drop events in the Midlands, Eastern, Thames Valley areas and other Local Immigration Teams (LITS). The process allows for all male clandestine individuals to be brought to a semi-secure environment based at Oakington, allowing individuals access to on site medical screening. Each subject will then be fingerprinted, photographed, screened and appropriately routed into Third Country Unit (TCU) Detained Fast Track (DFT) or New Asylum Model (NAM). The unit's secondary function is an asylum case management function, primarily for asylum applicants who are currently detained within the prison estate, completing a custodial sentence

External Agencies on site.

There is now only one external agency on the site.

Immigration Advisory Service. (IAS)

Currently, the IAS is the only on-site provider of legal services on Immigration and Asylum issues to detainees. There was a review of legal service provision at Immigration Removal Centres by Legal Services Commission in early 2009. It was decided that as a result of the phasing out of processing Fast Track detainees at Oakington the contract with IAS would be for a Monday to Friday service rather than a full seven day service. IAS maintains it is still able to offer their legal service to all new detainees. Many detainees will already have their own solicitor.

4. DETENTION CENTRE AND GROUNDS

4.1 As stated the Centre now holds a maximum of 408 male detainees and the actual numbers detained sits mainly towards the 400 mark.

4.2 As recorded in a great number of the Boards previous annual reports the same problems and concerns still exist. A painting and deep cleaning programme was started towards the latter part of the year. This is continually needed. Graffiti and vandalism add to the poor condition of the Centre. Already some new shower heads are broken. **Good quality refurbishment of the ablution areas is desperately needed.** The replacement of individual tiles, re-grouting in some units is just not enough to keep on top of these areas. Again throughout the year house blocks at times were without an adequate number of toilets, baths or showers.

The Board re-iterates the view that the Centre has passed the life-span expectancy and was pleased to hear that the Minister has put a time scale to Oakington's closure, and that plans are in place to find an alternative site.

4.3 The grounds still provide an enjoyable alternative to the poor condition of the fabric and infrastructure of the Centre. The detainees make good use of the playing field – to the point that it needs reseeding every year.

5. RESIDENTIAL UNITS 19, 20, 26.30.AND 39

5.1 The house block layouts have remained the same after the changes made in 2008 apart from the spare laundry rooms being used as extra sitting areas after the loss of the upstairs television room. The Board has pressed for this but were disappointed with the 'hit and miss' availability of these rooms when they were not automatically unlocked every day. Towards the end of the year this facility was in better use.

5.2 There are still dormitory sleeping arrangements, with a few single rooms for those people with health or sleeping problems and for age dispute cases. A number of issues arise from this communal living resulting in arguments, complaints, etc.

5.3 The Board still has concern over the condition of these units. As stated a painting and deep clean programme was started towards the end of 2009. Unfortunately with the high usage of the Centre this needs to be a constant rolling programme. There are problems with drains in certain areas with seepage causing unacceptable smell and concerns regarding health.

One block was without heating for 3 weeks, boiler and heat exchange breakdowns occurred, and one block without hot water for 3 days.

Even after the fitting of new showerheads and shower controls in the ablution areas, house blocks are still experiencing breakdowns in these and the toilets. Bath panels are missing and the areas are unhygienic at times. This is unacceptable when the house blocks are nearly full to capacity. Keeping these areas clean is an ongoing problem because of the amount of usage they get from 80+ detainees. The Board have asked for a second daily clean to be funded. Detainees can now ask for cleaning cloths and solution to clean baths and showers before use.

5.4 **For the third year running we are again complaining about the lack of provision of top up facilities for detainee's mobile telephones, also the inadequate telephone system in place in the Centre for those detainees without mobile telephones. This is exactly as was recorded last year. The Board has raised this monthly through the year and has written to UKBA senior management. The UKBA Action Plan bought out after 2008 report stated this would be dealt with as a priority. At the end of 2009 we are still waiting.**

5.5 The units supporting the hot water machines in the house blocks are in a precarious state and are in need of refurbishment. The Board understands this work is to be undertaken.

5.6 **The same problems still occur due to the provision of only one 'Freeview' television in the house blocks for 80+ men, causing altercations and fights between detainees, resulting at times to detainees being removed from association under Rule 40 and the television being switched off.**

The provision of a second large television room has been under discussion for the most part of the year, but as of yet this has not come to fruition.

5.7 A new hairdresser was employed early in the year and this works well, although the demand for appointments is very great. There is now a deputy hairdresser also employed.

5.8 There is still an ongoing problem with the lack of secure storage of personal belonging in the dormitories, resulting in incidents of theft. The provision of some locks by G4S helped but the problem still remains. A Notice of Change for funding was resubmitted in February 2009. This has been ongoing since HMIP report June 2008.

5.9 A new laundry system was introduced during the year where a detainee worker deals with personal laundry on each block. After a few teething problems this system seems to be working well. It is hoped that it will cut down on breakdowns to the laundry equipment.

5.10 A number of mattresses and pillows within the Centre are getting into an unacceptable condition before they are changed. Mattresses have been recognised as part of the 'Life cycle' issue at Oakington.

6. DETAINEE RECEPTION, (DET.REP) INDUCTION BLOCK, VISITS ROOM AND WAITING ROOM.

6.1 Detainee Reception and Induction block

The detainee reception (Det Rep) still faces the same pressure of a large number of movements into and out of the Centre daily, averaging 216 per month. Some nights 50 plus detainees have arrived.

The induction block continues to work well. There is a regular staff survey of this area and a number of suggestions have been implemented permitting improvements to be made.

The new pictorial welcome booklets are now eventually in use. A great deal of work went into these but the Board would have welcomed their introduction earlier.

6.2 Visits Room

The same problems remain as reported in all previous years, the limited amount of space this room provides on busy days. The provision of extra visiting hours has helped to alleviate this and the majority of visitors can be accommodated on their chosen day. The use of the outdoor gazebo was very limited due to the need of extra staffing which is not funded for. This continues to be disappointing.

Again there has been a number of drugs finds during the year both from initial searches and random searching throughout the Centre. This aspect of the Centre life has increased since the intake of ex foreign national prisoners (FNPs).

6.3 Waiting Room

This is still located in a Portacabin by the main gate.

The same comments apply from last year. It is not a particularly pleasant room but does provide toilet facilities.

7. AMENITIES BLOCK.

7.1 Games Room

This room now contains 5 pool tables, 2 table football games, a large stand-up 'Connect 4', a darts board and, in an adjoining room, one table-tennis table. There are two drinks/snack machines. The fitness suite and library are accessed through this room.

7.2 Gymnasium (Fitness suite)

In 2009 the gym was relocated to its present larger custom-built room and was equipped with a large range of additional exercise machines. These are mostly well-maintained, although delivery of replacement parts sometimes takes very many weeks owing to their being sourced from the USA and having to be shipped., leaving the machines unusable during this time.

The gym is open for about 7 hours a day and an average of 150 detainees are inducted at any one time to use the equipment. Approximately 75 one hour sessions are booked each day.

7.3 Shop

Opening onto the games room there is a small shop where detainees can buy, sweets, biscuits, a few other food items, toiletries and cigarettes. The detainees occasionally ask via the Food and General Detainee meeting, for other specific items to be made available, e.g. Pot noodles, sauces, etc. When possible, Aramark, the contractor who provides the meals at the Centre, do supply these.

Profit from the shop fund is used to provide further amenities for the detainees, such as extra DVD players and films, Christmas boxes, Boules courts, etc. The expenditure for these are discussed and agreed by the Centre Manager, the UKBA Manager and the IMB Chairman so that appropriate use is made of the fund.

7.4 Library

The new re-located larger library is a great improvement. It came into being at the start of 2009 after many years of complaints by the IMB and others about the previous inadequate facility. The new library provides a more congenial area for the detainees. The Board is always concerned about the length of time it takes to introduce new newspapers to cater for new nationalities within the Centre. After repeated requests from the IMB in 2008 for the re-instatement of broadsheet newspapers these are now routinely included in the daily delivery. A survey of detainees in August/September showed that a Farsi newspaper had been requested. At present the Centre is unable to provide this despite repeated requests from detainees.

7.5 Restaurant

This is the largest room in the Centre and outside of meal times is used for Bingo and various other indoor entertainments, such as visiting musicians, when large number of detainees may be involved.

7.6 Television Room

There is a Television room with a large wall mounted screen. This is the only Sky television provision on site, providing a number of world channels. The room is extremely popular and is equipped with a Sky+ machine which is used to record programmes requested by detainees. Unfortunately it is one of the 'flash point' areas in the Centre for detainee arguments and fights. The incident reports raised at the Centre demonstrate this problem.

The feasibility of a second television room was looked at in June 2009. There have been more problems on health and safety grounds than was first envisioned. The Board still press for the provision of this.

7.7 Internet Suite

This facility has been extremely popular. There are 20 computer terminals and detainees use an advance- booking system to ensure fairness of use. Unfortunately it cannot cater for a large number of detainees at a time but up to 180 detainees use it each day under this system. The room does get unbearably hot, and there is no built-in air conditioning unit, although portable units are provided to help with circulation. There has been – due to a number of reasons – inadequate provision of printing facilities at times throughout the year.

The introduction of a new restriction programme to certain internet sites for security reasons has caused a number of complaints, resulting in a petition being put forward by detainees. The system can block sites that contain certain images or words that are not allowed, but this is not always in the right context. The Centre tries to look at individual sites to see if they are suitable.

7.8 Outdoor facilities

The Centre has a large grassed area which is used on fine days throughout the year and it is extremely popular with the detainees. The constant use means that areas of the surface are extremely worn causing uneven ground. This, coupled with the lack of proper sports footwear, has resulted in a number of injuries over the years, although there is some basic footwear that detainees can borrow. The Board understands this problem is being looked at from a Health and Safety perspective and hopes that this will not result in any curtailment of the amenity.

The Board understands that the playing area, particularly the cricket pitch, is to be levelled and reseeded in the Spring 2010. (The Board now understands that this will now wait until Autumn)

The Activities Committee in 2009 discussed the idea of a Boules pitch as mentioned in item 7.3. It is hoped this will be available in early 2010.

There is also the provision of Sports Days, quizzes, Karaoke evenings, etc by the staff.

7.9 Support and Advice Office

This facility has proved very beneficial being used extensively by the detainees in trying to solve some of their problems regarding welfare, etc. The IMB have a good working relationship with the staff in this area, sharing information and contacting IMBs at other centres and prisons.

Unfortunately this is not a 'funded' office and at times due to operational needs the office is not open during the published hours, which causes the detainees to complain.

THE BOARD IS PLEASED TO RECORD THE IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO THESE AMENITIES ADDING TO THE WELFARE OF THE DETAINEES. THEY ALSO COMMEND THE GOOD WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE AMENITIES TEAM.

8. EDUCATION

The education provision, owing to increased numbers of detainees, is unable to give sufficient access to all detainees wishing to use the service. **A proposal to re-furbish a further room to increase teaching capacity was refused on grounds of cost, given the uncertainty of Oakington's future.**

The study centre is just one room containing 19 computer terminals. There is serious overcrowding in the room (HMIP criticises this) but the facility is highly appreciated.

Opal Education (the providers) bought more lap-top computers in 2009 and hopes to be able to use these to expand access in 2010. One of the objectives of the Education Dept for 2009 was to get internet access installed in the study centre and in the teacher's office. This has been achieved. A broadband connection has been installed, also telephones for the Art Room, staff room and small classroom.

As part of the detainees' paid work scheme, mentors help out in the study centre. In 2009 G4S improved the procedure by which detainees sign up to this scheme and the number of mentors has increased.

The Education Department has worked hard to produce the new Welcome Booklet for the centre. This provides a more accessible introduction for new arrivals. It is written in simple English with pictures supporting the text.

Arts and Crafts Classes

The Art Room was relocated in 2009 to a larger room which had been partially refurbished for the purpose. The space allows for more students at a session from 8 to 12 detainees.

There are still many outstanding maintenance requirements. E.g. installing the water heater bought 7 months ago! Securing shadow Boards for tools – again a very lengthy wait delaying the full use of the amenity - rewiring and repositioning inaccessible power points, and hanging the larger paintings and murals, also the installation of appropriate lighting.

The art classes are very popular and are run by a well-qualified and enthusiastic teacher. In 2009 for the first time, artwork and writing by Oakington detainees were entered for the Koestler Exhibition held at the Royal Festival Hall, London. Oakington entered 5 visual art works and 3 pieces of creative writing and won two prizes – one in each category. This out of a total of 5867 entries! It is intended to enter more in 2010.

Preparations are underway to stage an exhibition at Oakington, open to the public, in the Spring of 2010. This will cover many aspects of the Centre as well as detainees' achievements in arts and crafts.

Many of the larger paintings and murals are displayed in corridors and communal rooms brightening up the Centre.

9. DIVERSITY

9.1 Significant efforts have been made at Oakington in 2009 to raise the profile of the issues surrounding diversity, not just the narrower sense of religion, race and culture, but also of age, gender, disability, sexual orientation gender assignment and health issues. A member of the senior management team (SMT) has assumed overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with G4S's Diversity and Equality' Policy. The monitoring of day to day performance is through Rule 38 complaints and through the Safer Detention and Race Relations' Forum. The Safer Detention Manager reports back to the SMT on a monthly basis.

Diversity features in the New Officers Training Course and a period of time is set aside annually for refresher training. Identified trainers are working to update the 'Actively Inclusive' package. An ESOL publication of the 'Welcome' document devised by a member of the education team supports the existing document published in eight languages only. The new publication has been widely appreciated by detainees and officers. This document spells out that discriminatory behaviour is not acceptable.

Oakington is not able to accommodate wheelchair users as the religious, recreational and educational facilities at the Centre are all located on a first floor. All house blocks do have ramps as does the ground floor of the Restaurant and Amenities building.

Every effort is made to cater for the diverse needs of the people who live and work at Oakington. By its nature Oakington Centre holds very many different nationals who cultural, faith and food requirements are catered for in various ways.

9.2 Religious and Cultural Affairs. (R and CA)

In 2009 R and CA have been managed full-time by a member of the Senior Management Team. This appears to have been a successful decision which has resulted in team cohesion, improved communication and collective effort.

Some 40% of the detainee population is Muslim and an Imam is present 5 days a week. His presence has had a very positive influence in the Centre and resulted in a largely settled community. He has successfully set-up tutorials for Muslims with few literacy skills, whose understanding of the Quran has been handed down verbally and may bear little resemblance of the actual text of the Quran.

Other faith leaders, such as Sikh and Hindu, visit the Centre once a week, and the R and CA Manager is able to call on a wide and diverse range of leaders for other faiths. Different denominations of the Christian faith are represented by a number of regular clergy at the Centre.

One of the new Manager's aims has been to build on and improve the way in which religious festivals are celebrated. Highlights of the year for the Christian community have been the Harvest Festival and the Carol Service. Both were well supported and enjoyed by both detainees and staff. Ramadan, Festival of Eid, Divali and Chinese New year were also celebrated. Feedback was excellent.

The presence of the Senior Manager on site full-time and his good working relationship with the Imam ensured that preparations for and the running of Ramadan have been much improved. Feed back again was excellent.

There have been physical improvements to the infrastructure in the chaplaincy areas benefiting Christians and Muslims. The Chapel has been repainted and re-carpeted, and a new electronic keyboard purchased. The Muslim Prayer Room has been deep-cleaned and repainted. New mats have been installed and hot running water has finally been provided, after much pressure from the IMB, for the foot washing area. A Muslim Prayer Clock has been installed.

Further painting work is to be carried out in the 'Other Faiths' room

9.3 Action for Safer Detention Committee

There is little new to report this year. The Induction Block has now bedded in successfully, highlighting any 'At risk' incomers who are monitored under the Safer Custody procedure.

Seriously depressed, suicidal, self-harming detainees and those on food and fluid refusal are still monitored in Room 1 of the Detainee Departure Unit/Segregation area (DDU) which was 'softened' to look less cell like. **Although the Board understands that this is currently the best option for G4S, given financial restraints, it unanimously feels that this is a completely unsuitable place for anyone at risk or mentally ill to be housed. We would appreciate and ask UKBA to revisit this matter, given the ever ongoing extensions to the life of the Centre as an IRC, and offer the investment to upgrade redundant office space into dedicated accommodation suitable for purpose along with funds for staffing.**

The Detention Custody Officers (DCOs) working with At Risk detainees continue to perform wonders with their care and kindness. The Board appreciates all the very professional work they do, along with the Health Care staff, to help and support these cases, which can be extremely challenging.

There have been few bullying incidents recorded during the year, all of which were between detainees. Investigations were carried out in each incident resulting with the problem being swiftly curtailed.

Unfortunately one Mental Health Nurse left the Centre in December which brought, hopefully only a temporary halt, to the Mental Health Clinics offered, which contributed considerably to the wellbeing of the detainees. Detainees with mental health issues are seen by the HCC Manager who is a fully trained Mental Health Nurse.

The provision of a telephone link to the Samaritans was discussed with them during the year. Unfortunately they did not have the resources available.

9.4 Rule 38 Complaints Procedure

For the majority of 2009 the Board were unable, under the new system, to have sight of complaint forms, which made the monitoring of them and the Centre more difficult. The Forum of Chairs of IMBs monitoring Immigration Removal Centres have been pressing with senior UKBA management in Croydon for this particular area of the new procedures to be revisited. We intermittently received a log of complaints put forward, but with no detail. It is now agreed that the Chairman of the IMB at each Centre can receive more details under the secure e-mail system. This is proving to be better but still has its problems.

10. HEALTH CARE CENTRE (HCC)

Medical care continues to be provided by Primecare Forensic Medical Services (PFMS). According to the Manager, nurse retention and recruitment is the biggest current challenge, made significantly worse by the continuing uncertainty over the future of Oakington as an Immigration Centre. Recruitment of Doctors to cover surgeries and clinics has also been difficult.

Funding is still not forthcoming for a second nurse at night in spite of concerns over workload of multiple admission of detainees at night as well as being available for medical emergencies, DDU, etc. There was an incidence after the Use of Force under Rule 41 when the nurse did not visit the detainee straight away because of the admissions workload.

The Board was told in January 2009 that money was not available from UKBA for transfer of the Close Supervision Suite for monitoring detainees with mental health problems away from the DDU. The Board as recorded above has expressed its concern, for some time, the inappropriateness of the DDU as a venue for this suite.

PFMS has now set up its own complaints process which detainees can use if they are not satisfied with their medical care. If they do not wish to reveal details of their medical condition they can make their complaint directly without having to go through the official Rule 38 system or the IMB. To-date it has been very little used, possibly because detainees are not sufficiently aware of it. PFMS also now hold a 'Patient Forum' for detainees every two months, when detainees can put any concerns directly to them.

Emergency dental care is now provided by Hinchingsbrooke hospital, which, according to the PFMS manager, has a more flexible attitude to providing appointments for detainees than the previous providers.

After much encouragement by the IMB to the Centre management Reading glasses can now be purchased directly by detainees in the Amenity block, which is a positive step as previously all detainees with problems relating to their vision would have to wait for the infrequent visits of the optometrist and then wait again for their spectacle prescription to be made up.

Personal hygiene of some detainees causes problems for others. PFMS do hold Well Man clinics and try to deal with this problem. Fungal infections, scabies and parasitic worms – sometimes necessitating removal from normal location – are ongoing within the Centre, thought to be brought into the Centre from the clandestine 'lorry drop' cases.

11. RESTUARANTS AND KITCHENS

11.1 Aramark Ltd. still is the provider of food and cleaning at the Centre under contract to G4S.

11.2 The dining room continues to cope with the large number of detainees, given the size of the room and tables available. The house blocks come through on a rotational basis so as to give fairness to all in their first choice of food.

11.3 The kitchen still requires major refurbishment to the infrastructure. Tiling, painting, etc. are just some of the areas requiring attention. The Area Catering Manager for the Prison Service set out in his report in December 2008 that there were a number of maintenance issues that needed to be completed. Some new equipment was provided later during the year to replace items that were inoperable.

11.4 The Area Catering Manager also provided an action plan of best practice in the use of utensils, etc for food handling, especially with regard to Halal food and pork.

11.5 Rota members on occasion have reported dried and frozen food being out of its use by date in the kitchens.

11.6 A large petition and protest was held during the year regarding food, although there was not one single issue more of a general complaint over a number of issues. A second protest was held later in the year with food being cited as an issue, but it seemed the main problems were with UKBA.

11.7 Aramark continues to try to provide suitable ethnic style food for the detainees but it is a western interpretation of it. The food produced does not always match what is advertised on the menu. The labelling of the food at the servery could be improved. The IMB during their monitoring rotas eat with the detainees to ascertain their comments, etc. On the whole the food is found to be acceptable but boring repetitious and institutional. There are at times problems with the temperature of the food.

11.8 Food Committee

This committee was amalgamated with the General Detainee committee and is chaired the Centre Manager. Detainees are able to attend and give their views and air their problems on any topic but food is usually the main subject. A number of issues brought forward have been accommodated by the Centre. Items on sale in the shop have changed through requests put in at this meeting. A member of the IMB tries to attend this meeting.

12. DETAINEE DEPARTURE UNIT

The role and layout of this unit remains unchanged, with cell like rooms. The close observation room for people considered at serious risk remains located here. **The Board continues to find this an inappropriate place for detainees who self-harm, attempt suicide, and with varying degrees of mental health problems.** UKBA attempts to have these people moved as soon as possible but there are cases where they have been detained in this area for a number of days, which is unacceptable.

The Board continues to closely monitor all detainees who are located under Rule 40 Removal from Association, Rule 41 Use of Force and Rule 42 Temporary Confinement.

The use of Rule 40 has risen year upon year, reaching 485 in 2009. **(See paragraph below) We are pleased to note that the Rule 41 Use of Force fell by 11 to 64, but unfortunately Rule 42 Temporary Confinement doubled to 8.** These trends follow a similar pattern since the purpose of Oakington changed from the Fast Track system to a Removal Centre and the acceptance of ex. Foreign National Detainees (ex FNPs).

The high number of Rule 40s logged each year can give a distorted view of unacceptable behaviour in the Centre. In August 2009 Oakington bought about a change to the logging of Rule 40s by pre-fixing the number with initials E.F. early flight, O.P. own protection and U.B. unacceptable behaviour. This will show a clearer breakdown of the Rule 40 figures. It will enable future records to demonstrate the actual reasons for its use and remove any possible distortion of unacceptable behaviour.

The Board queried in June if there were published Rule 40 rules available to be given to the detainees when they are located in the DDU. These were finally issued in 2010.

13. G4S LIMITED (Previously GSL UK LIMITED)

13.1 G4S

The Centre continues to be managed by G4S Limited, who has run the Centre since it first opened, and on the whole it runs smoothly with a good detainee/staff relationship. The Centre contract has never been retendered due to the initial short life expectancy. With the continued uncertainty since 2005 the initial contract has continued to run with 'add ons' being introduced when there were major changes. The original contract was not specific with staff numbers or the provision of dedicated staff in certain areas. This has and does at times create problems with supply of the welfare staff, certain amenities and static post officers.

The move from GSL to G4S completed this year with the introduction of new uniforms for members of staff. This has brought about problems. The uniform is of a far more casual style making it very difficult to observe Officers from detainees. The open nature of the Centre with its large outdoor area makes it virtually impossible to differentiate from a distance. The Board wrote to a G4S Director to share their concerns. We were notified that the uniform was being reviewed, but as of present there has been no change. The current staff have complained to the Board about a number of issues with the uniform.

The Board have also complained on a great number of occasions about the inability to read officer name badges or even see them, or for them to be shown when challenged. Badges should be seen and legible at all times. **It makes it very difficult and intimidating for detainees if they wish to complain about an officer.** The matter has been raised a number of times during the year at our Board meetings. We were informed at the September meeting that the Centre management were looking at providing different badges but as of yet nothing has transpired and the problem still exists even after a staff notice being issued reminding officers that badges should be visible and readable at all times.

The ongoing problem as to the life expectancy of the Centre remains. As previously stated the Minister reported in the House of Commons that the Centre would close, but at present no definite date has been set creating uncertainty. The Board can report and recognises that all staff remained committed and focused on the work at Oakington but are concerned about their future employment.

13.2 Security

The number of escapes this year has fallen dramatically from 25 to just 2. G4S Ltd is to be applauded for this meritorious improvement. The improvement to the physical security and the enhanced dynamic security has brought this about.

There have been two large passive incidents held on the playing field with detainees refusing to go in for roll counts and into the restaurant for meals. During this time certain detainees were observed coercing others into food refusal. There were a number of issues involved included lengths of stay, case information and food issues. In both instances G4S and UKBA management met with detainees to see what resolution could be reached. The incidents finished peacefully. Unfortunately 4 officers were injured whilst removing someone to the DDU.

There were two incidents of violence between two national groups involving a large number of detainees. These were resolved by good staffing and staff relationships with the detainees. Unfortunately one member of staff and one detainee was injured.

The Centre were advised by the News of the World newspaper group that they were carrying out a 'sting' type operation in September on a Saturday, entailing advertising for 'workers' to carry out work in East Anglia, but in reality they would be brought to Oakington Centre. Approximately 40 people would be involved. A large number of UKBA enforcement staff was called in on overtime; staff at the Centre was on alert. The local Constabulary sent in officers and the IMB local UKBA and Centre Management attended. Of the Forty-four people who arrived on the coach, 30 were released including one British Citizen and 14 detained for having incorrect paperwork and overstaying their visas.

A great deal of time and expense was wasted on such a farcical scam. All the workers who were released needed transporting back to London and the overtime expenses mounted up.

The Board understood that a claim was to be made for these expenses but does not know the outcome of it.

13.3 Incentives and Earned Privileges. (IEP) and Paid Work

The system still runs as in previous years. Removal of the privilege to use certain amenities and being unable to take up paid work are the main areas that can be used as a deterrent.

Paid work continues to be popular and the allocation of this now runs more smoothly than in last year.

14. INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

14.1 The Board continues to work as a dedicated team covering their rota and Rule duties with their usual thoroughness.

14.2 Two new members were appointed during the year, but unfortunately one member has as of yet been unable to take up the work due to ill health. It is hoped he will be able to commence in the near future. The other member completed her initial training and took up rota duties in early 2010.

One member is still on long-term sick leave, but has been able to assist with DDU cover and attend Board meetings. It is hoped that she will be able to take up rota duties some time in 2010

14.3 The Board was successful in arranging for an 'advertorial' to be published in the local newspaper which bought forth two more interested parties who are currently going through the appointment system.

14.4 The Triennial review took place this year and all Board members were re-appointed. The Board also took this opportunity to carry out the Annual Team Performance Review to discuss any topics that they felt needed reviewing and to set out an action plan.

14.5 The Chairman attended the annual meeting with the Local Parish Councils.

14.6 The IMB good practice paper for monitoring the DDU was reviewed and re-written. Also good practice on Rotas was reviewed.

14.7 In an attempt to broaden the diversity of the Board various ethnic communities were contacted to see if there were any interested people who would wish to apply to the Board. Unfortunately there was no interest shown at that time.

14.8 The Board, on a number of instances, wrote to senior UKBA directors and G4S directors and the Minister on topics that had been dragging on for far too long that impacted on the welfare of the detainees.

14.9 The Board takes it concerns to the Forum of Chairs for IRCs, regarding the length of stay for some detainees, but especially the way in which this is calculated. There is no easy cumulative record for a person's entire stay in UKBA Detention Centres. Every time a detainee is moved their stay calculation starts again. This makes it very difficult for the Board to monitor this area within the Centre. The Forum has taken this matter up with Senior UKBA personnel and would like to see a resolution to the problem.

14.10 Representatives of the Board continue to observe when they can at a number of the meetings held in the Centre. The Chairman attends the IRC Forum of Chairs of Immigration Removal Centres.

14.11 The Board provided details of local welfare groups for a central data base to be produced by UKBA. It also completed surveys and questionnaires as requested.

14.12 The Board provided talks to new Detention Custody Officers about the work of the Board, as part of their induction training.

14.13 The Board continues to take applications 'on the hoof' from detainees along with any written request or complaint. A number of these, concern the length of time it takes for their case to be finalised. These concerns are taken up with UKBA and the reason for any delay queried, prior to reporting back to the detainee.

Another frequent complaint is with regard to the rules of the centre, which some of the detainees consider unnecessary and petty, particularly the time detainees need to get out of bed in the mornings and the time of lights out at night. The Board has discussed these over the years, and accept they are necessary to the running of the Centre and the communal living at Oakington.

15. IMB TRAINING

The Board continues to undertake in house training incorporating the Annual Team Performance Review within this. A Triennial review was also undertaken.

The Board received talks and training from people from various departments within the Centre including G4S, UKBA, PFMS and Aramark. It gives the opportunity to share concerns and ideas face to face which is beneficial to all parties.

The new member completed her in house and shadowing training, also the security training given by G4S.

The Board is able to sit in on different training sessions within the centre and The Board Development Officer has a good working relationship with the Training Department.

Aspects of IMB monitoring were also reviewed during the year.

16. OAKINGTON FUTURE – CLOSURE

At the end of the 2009 year the future of the Centre is still uncertain. The Minister has said that the Centre would close in 2011 but there is no definite date set at present. This again is making the upkeep of the Centre very difficult. As stated earlier in the report the Board is pleased with the extra funding put into the amenities side, but the fabric and infrastructure is still in a very poor state.

The expenditure on the new shower heads and piping was much appreciated but unfortunately every rota report shows that they are either broken or damaged. The toilets and baths are now not being renovated.

Money previous allocated under the lifespan of Oakington survey has been curtailed. The kitchen tidy up, street lighting and roof repairs has been carried out but it would seem that is all there is to be.

It is understandable that the public money should not be spent on the Centre if it is to close, but a definite date needs to be announced sooner rather than later and a controlled plan put into place.

The Board are regularly approached by members of staff who report their concern over future employment. This is reported to the Centre Management.

17. STATISTICS FOR 2009

	2007	2008	2009
Rule 40	328	402	485
Rule 41	53	75	64
Rule 42	7	4	8
Incident Reports	1752	2371	2368
Handcuff Use	27	13	
Escapes	63	25	2
Attempted Escapes	28	30	7
ACDT (Includes food and fluid refusal and cause for concern)	55	117	113
Arrivals	4005	5860	6646

Total number since Centre opened = 73,004

Average number of nationalities 56

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

IMB Monthly Board meetings – 12

Rota Visits – 58

Rule visit outside of rota visits – 79

Incidents – 3