



Independent Monitoring Board

**Harmondsworth
Immigration Removal Centre**

Annual Report 2013

Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

May 2014

Section 1

THE STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

Every prison and immigration removal centre (IRC) has an independent monitoring board made up of members of the public from the community in which the prison or IRC is situated. IMB members have access to all parts of the establishment they monitor and to all its records, and can speak to any prisoner or detainee. They are unpaid volunteers who are appointed by ministers – in the case of IRCs by the Minister for Immigration. This board monitors the Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, near Heathrow.

The board is specifically charged to:

1. Satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of the detainees held in the centre.
2. Inform promptly the Minister of State for borders and immigration, or any official to whom he has delegated authority, any concern it has.
3. Report annually to the Minister on how far Harmondsworth IRC has met the standards and requirements placed on it – and what impact these have on those held in the centre.

Harmondsworth IMB is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses formally recognised differences, such as race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation etc. and differences that cut across these categories, such as mental health or literacy levels.

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Section 3

DETENTION AT HARMONDSWORTH IRC DESCRIBED

Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) can accommodate up to 661 men and is located near Heathrow airport. It is run, on behalf of the Home Office (HO), by GEO, an American-owned company which also runs Dungavel IRC in Scotland. In February 2014 it was announced that the new contract, from 1st September 2014, had been awarded to Mitie Group plc.

Harmondsworth has two very distinct styles of accommodation:

Cedar and Dove are the two older hostel-style units housing 296 detainees (increased from 250 in late 2013), mostly in two-bedded rooms, but with some three- or four-bedded rooms. These detainees are restricted at night to their own corridors of about 20 rooms. Showers and toilets are on each corridor. Detainees have access to two courtyards; one suitable for playing games of cricket or football and one planted as a garden.

Ash, Gorse, Beech and Fir (the induction unit) are four newer, prison-style, residential units housing a further 365 men. This accommodation is built to Category B prison standard so the cells contain bunked beds, a washbasin and a toilet, with no seat, behind partial screening. Showers with three-quarter doors are located off corridors. Detainees in these units are locked into their cells from 22.00 hrs to 07.00 hrs. Detainees in Ash and Gorse share a courtyard suitable for outdoor games, those in Beech have their own similar outdoor space. The courtyard for Fir unit is extremely small but men in this unit have timetabled access to the Beech courtyard, for no more than two hours per day.

All detainees have access to multifaith rooms and the internet (some sites are blocked including social networks) on their own units. They also have timetabled access to a central area with gym equipment, shop, barber, library and education classes (art, English and IT).

There is a segregation unit (Elm) with six cells for detainees who are removed from association or temporarily confined (Rules 40 and 42 of The Detention Centre Rules).

The centre has the most extensive healthcare facilities in the immigration estate and is the principal centre for male Fast Track cases. Fast Track is a speeded-up asylum process for people whose cases the HO believes it can determine quickly and who are held in detention to make it easier for the HO to keep track of them while their cases are processed. During 2013 between 7% and 15% of detainees were men with a criminal record who had been transferred from prison into detention at the end of their sentences, pending deportation. Other detainees may be visa overstayers, illegal entrants or people who have violated the terms of their visas, for example by working.

There are two entirely different and separate teams of HO staff on site. The larger is a team of case-workers and support staff for the Detained Fast Track process, who deal exclusively with the asylum cases of Fast Track detainees. The second is a small team which is part of the Removals Directorate within the HO. It has responsibility to oversee the contracted

services provided by GEO and the welfare of all detainees. It has no hand in immigration casework but acts as the main conduit of information between detainees and caseworkers located around the country since direct communication is rare after someone enters detention.

The report on an unannounced inspection carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons in August 2013 was published in January 2014.

Section 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 Overall Judgement

The purpose of IMBs is to monitor fairness and respect for people in custody. During 2013 Harmondsworth IMB has tried to envisage what life is like for the men detained in the Centre.

Upon arrival, at any time of day or night, possibly after transfer from another IRC, possibly after being arrested or having claimed asylum at an airport, the detainee will find himself in a small reception area where he may have to wait some time in a queue with other men before all the procedures are completed, including answering medical questions. He is likely to feel disoriented and ill-at-ease and there may not be sufficient staff to allay these concerns (see section 6.4).

The detainee will firstly be housed in the induction unit, Fir, which is built to prison standards. He will have to share a room (cell), most likely with a stranger, and this room will contain the toilet close to the bunk beds. He may stay in Fir for several days, during which he will be given an induction to life in the Centre and also have his first Immigration interview. If he arrives on a Friday he will probably wait until after the weekend for this, and will be anxious as to what precisely is going to happen to him. Detainees in Fir have very limited access to education and other facilities, and the primary courtyard for the unit is unsatisfactorily small (see section 5.1).

If the detainee is deemed suitable for 'unrestricted' accommodation he will in due course be housed in either Cedar or Dove wing. If partly or wholly 'restricted' the detainee will be housed in one of Ash, Beech or Gorse wings (see description in section 1).

How will he spend his time? If he is outside in the courtyard he is most often to be seen leaning or squatting against the wall, possibly smoking or chatting but with little outdoor seating available. He may be able to play cricket, football or volleyball, but only if staff are available to provide the equipment and supervise the activity. Detainees in Cedar and Dove have the advantage of the garden courtyard, which provides a more relaxing environment.

While indoors he will have access to the IT rooms on his wing and probably make use of the internet to try to advance his immigration case. He cannot use social networks (e.g. Facebook, Skype) to keep in touch with friends and family however but can use his mobile phone or send emails. He may play pool or watch TV or DVDs. At some point each day he will have access to education, library, gym, shop, barber, welfare office and so on, but this time varies from day to day and may make it difficult to get into a routine (see section 5.2). There is little comfortable seating so he may decide to spend most of the morning lying in bed.

If the detainee has a healthcare appointment, a visit from a legal representative or a visit from friends or family he has to be escorted to the relevant area by a Detainee Custody Officer (DCO) and timing may not always be exact. He may find that the healthcare team have not yet received his medical records from his previous health provider, or that he

misses an external hospital appointment because of lack of escorting officers (see section 5.3).

The detainee will only be allowed a small amount of his property in his room, with the remainder kept in the property storage area. He can access items within 24 hours of putting in a request, but has sometimes found that not all his property arrived with him from his previous place of detention, airport or police station. Welfare staff are seen to do a good job in helping with this sort of problem and religious affairs staff are very supportive. The detainee can ask for help from Hibiscus, a charity with a presence in the Centre, or from outside agencies such as Medical Justice or Detention Action, but finds it difficult to talk to his own caseworker, even by phone. Frustration regarding his immigration case leads him to make complaints, which is not always as simple as it should be (see Section 6.3).

The detainee has no certitude as to how long he will be kept in detention or what the outcome will be. Some express themselves as willing to return to their country of origin but encounter administrative delays, others do their utmost to find a way to remain in the UK. Many are in fact given temporary admission but others find themselves moved from one detention centre to another with little explanation, even though this can leave them distant from family and friends, or from planned hospital appointments (see Section 5.5).

The atmosphere is not relaxing and cannot be conducive to the well-being of the detainee. Stress and anxiety take their toll and can lead to behaviour which causes the detainee to be temporarily segregated. If he has shown a violent outburst he is kept in segregation until he has calmed down sufficiently to return to his wing, but if he appears to have some mental instability he is often kept segregated for a considerable period (see Section 5.7).

4.2 Previous Year's Concerns – progress on recommendations from 2012

4.2.1 Issues raised with the Minister for Immigration

4.2.1.1 Appropriate accommodation should be provided for those who have mental health or behavioural problems.

Response: Accepted. Statement that the remodelling of the healthcare at Harmondsworth (to introduce more single rooms) remains a priority for capital expenditure, subject to funding availability. This remains a concern.

4.2.1.2 Case-owners should meet detainees – as a start this should happen after detention of a year.

Response: Accepted in principle. Statement that the recommendation will be explored in terms of logistics, security and benefit to both the Home Office and detainee. This remains a concern.

4.2.1.3 The IMB remain convinced that an independent review of the application of Rule 35 of The Detention Centre Rules is required.

Response: Rejected. Statement that there are existing procedures and safeguards in place but these are being tightened by a range of measures to improve Rule 35 processes. This includes improved written instructions, with a revised Asylum Casework Instruction and Detention Services Order pending publication, and training for medical practitioners, other healthcare staff working in immigration removal centres and case owners. After full

implementation of these revised measures, the Agency will review compliance, quality and performance through an internal audit. This remains a concern.

4.2.1.4 A Memorandum of Understanding is needed between UKBA and Hillingdon Children's Services, in relation to the detention of young people claiming to be under 18.

Response: Rejected. Statement that Age Dispute cases need to be released into the care of a local authority because of the potential for the individual to be a minor. In practice IRCs will continue to accommodate the individual (putting in place the safeguarding arrangements they think are necessary) until the local authority arrange a placement. There is no agreement with Hillingdon that cases at Harmondsworth will not wait for more than 24 hours. Hillingdon will decide their own prioritisation for cases referred to them. A continuing problem in 2013 (see section 6.1).

4.2.1.5 UKBA should review its policy of blocking social networking internet sites.

Response: Rejected. Statement that a review of internet access and monitoring is being undertaken for all IRCs. Social networking sites are within the scope of this review. Any decisions to change current provision will require Ministerial approval.

4.2.1.6 Deaths of detainees recently released from immigration detention should always be investigated by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO).

Response: Accepted in principle. Home Office will refer cases to the PPO of individuals who die after being released from detention, but cannot instruct the PPO to investigate. If the PPO is unable to investigate, the Home Office will consider asking the Professional Standards Unit to investigate, as the department did with an individual who died in 2013.

4.2.1.7 An analysis of complaints received by UKBA should be undertaken and made public comparing one IRC with another and one year with another.

Response: Rejected, on basis that The Detention Services Customer Service Unit already reports on the performance of all IRCs each month looking at the number of complaints allocated and responded to against the set timescales for each. NB. The IMB's point was actually regarding nature of complaints rather than timescales e.g. do all IRCs get a high level of healthcare complaints?

4.2.2 Issues raised with the Contractor

4.2.2.1 During 2012 there have been many recommendations relating to healthcare, which need to be followed through.

Response: Accepted. Statement that 'we will continue to work to all Action Plans in place on this area. Once the commissioning handover to the NHS is complete, we will support our partners where necessary to address any outstanding issues.' NB. Handover to NHS commissioning will not be taking place until late August 2014.

4.2.2.2 Action should be taken to ensure better use of the sport and education facilities.

Response: Accepted. However, although figures produced by GEO show a better take-up, this is not borne out by IMB observations on rota visits (see section 5.2).

4.2.2.3 More frequent consultation meetings between staff and detainees might reduce the number of complaints, especially those relating to staff behaviour.

Response: Accepted. Statement that programme of meetings would be reviewed to improve communication with detainees. However, IMB members found that several such meetings scheduled were then cancelled (see section 6.2).

4.2.2.4 Detainee Individual Support Plans (DISPs) are to be encouraged, with staff fully trained and aware of how to put the care plans into practice.

Response: Accepted. An e-learning training package to be developed for all staff to cover effective practical use of the DISP.

4.2.2.5 The IMB would like GEO to make sure that its proposed programme of maintenance and enhancement continues up until the new contract starts in 2014. UKBA needs to ensure that if GEO does not retain the contract there is no let-up in the maintenance programme.

Response: Accepted. Statement that planned maintenance would continue. However, there has been an increase in complaints about accommodation (see section 6.3).

4.2.2.6 Fir Unit courtyard is still inadequate.

Response: Rejected. Detainees in Fir get access to a larger courtyard for two hours per day. However, one hour (08.00 – 09.00) is at breakfast time and the other (16.00 – 17.00) is during the hours of darkness in winter, not conducive to playing sport. This remains a concern.

4.3 Issues for the Minister arising from this Report

4.3.1 As last year, the IMB believes that appropriate accommodation should be provided for those who are rendered vulnerable by mental health or behavioural problems (see sections 4.2.1.1, 5.3 and 5.7).

4.3.2 As last year, the IMB would like to see much greater contact between Home Office caseworkers and detainees (see sections 4.2.1.2 and 6.2).

4.3.3 There should be less movement of detainees from one IRC to another, unless in response to a specific request from the detainee (see section 5.5).

4.4 Issues for the Contractor arising from this Report

4.4.1 Steps should be taken to allow detainees in Fir unit greater access to all facilities (see section 5.1).

4.4.2 As last year, the IMB would like to see more effort to involve detainees in the educational activities provided (see sections 4.2.2.2 and 5.2).

4.4.3 Refurbishment of the accommodation, particularly in Cedar and Dove wings, is required to provide a more welcoming atmosphere (see section 5.8.1).

4.4.4 There should be more rigour in complaints handling, to ensure that all procedures are properly adhered to (see section 6.3).

4.4.5 Larger reception facilities, with more staff in place, are required (see section 6.4).

Section 5

KEY REPORTING AREAS

5.1 Equality and Inclusion

A number of GEO staff make up the EDI (Equality Diversity and Inclusion) team and their photos are displayed throughout the Centre for detainees to be aware that they may be contacted. There is a strong religious affairs team, including visitors from various minority faiths. The Muslim fasting period of Ramadan was very well handled with good planning beforehand. The LGBT liaison officer continues to provide good support, as mentioned last year.

A discrimination issue raised during the year by detainees in wings Cedar and Dove related to the provision of TV programmes. It transpired that the in-room TVs in the newer wings were able to provide Asian programmes (via cable) which in the older wings were only available on the TVs in the association rooms, meaning detainees in Cedar and Dove had less access (e.g. at night) than those in Ash, Beech and Gorse. The IMB was informed that the cable provision to the rooms in the newer wings had in fact been an error, and the inequality of provision would be difficult to rectify but would be looked into. The situation remains the same.

As detailed in the section below, detainees residing in Fir wing have very limited access to education, gym, shop etc. Whereas most detainees are only in Fir for a few days on arrival at the Centre, there are some who remain or are placed there for longer periods. These detainees also have only limited access to the larger courtyard space (see sections 1 and 4.2.2.6). The IMB would like to see both types of access increased.

There is a noticeable lack of ethnic minority staff at the management levels within GEO.

5.2 Education, Learning and Skills

All detainees have daily access to classrooms where IT skills, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and Art are taught. There is a library with a good stock of DVDs and books in various languages which can be borrowed. A variety of magazines and daily newspapers are available there for the men to read and there are posters and contact details for external sources of help. A music room is sometimes open but this is not a contractual obligation. Visiting music professionals (e.g. 'Music in Detention', 'Good Vibrations') normally get good attendance at their workshops. A detainee commented that the opportunity to try playing gamelan music was appreciated because it was relaxing and good for the soul, helping relieve some of the stress of detention.

The access for most of the detainees is on a rolling timetable, with sessions being morning, afternoon or evening in turn for the different wings (Cedar and Dove together, Ash and Gorse together, Beech on their own). Detainees resident in Fir wing have regular daily access from 17.15 to 18.30, which is also the time they are served their evening meal. During these daily sessions detainees may also wish to visit the shop or the barber's, speak

to a welfare officer in the dedicated welfare office, or use the gym, and it seems that extended periods in any one area are unusual. Certainly the comments on the IMB's rota reports throughout the year tend to show that there are frequently only one or two, if any, detainees present in ESOL and Art and that the classrooms are sometimes not open. Figures supplied by GEO show that the footfall for education averaged 2918 attendances per month, which is an increase on the previous year but works out at under 100 per day, whereas the average number of detainees held at any one time during the year was 587. The Board was told that the numbers included attendance at cinema screenings. Some detainees take external tests in IT and ESOL and art work is impressive but the facilities are clearly underused. Yoga was offered on alternate Sundays from March.

The gym is well used and courtyard games are organised, particularly cricket, football or volleyball. The sports hall appears less often used. Numbers taking part in PE activities are shown as an average of 3194 per month, ranging from 2523 in December to 4287 in August.

5.3 Healthcare and Mental Health

Throughout 2103 healthcare was provided by Primecare, but they withdrew from the contract at the end of the year, to be replaced by Medco. All medical staff have transferred to the new provider. Healthcare commissioning will transfer to the NHS from the end of August 2014, coinciding with the change of contractor.

The healthcare manager resigned in February 2013 and the post was not finally filled until July.

The IMB was pleased to see the use of a mobile TB screening unit in March.

Healthcare is the area within the IRC which attracts the greatest number of complaints, both to the IMB and to the HO. There were 68 clinical complaints, of which just over 10% were substantiated (see section 6.3).

Non-clinical complaints included delays in medical notes being transferred from GPs to the Centre, resulting in delays of appropriate medication being prescribed, and missed hospital appointments due to lack of escort staff or breakdown in communication.

On account of the high numbers of complaints about healthcare, IMB members made a point of spending periods of about 30 minutes observing Healthcare level 2 (where detainees see the nurse or visiting medical professionals), between 21st Oct and 31st Dec. There was no disruption reported and no particular problem recorded with regard to waiting times although sometimes detainees had a long wait before being taken back to their wings.

For several months there were large numbers of detainees refusing both food and fluids, as a protest against their detention. At one point in July there were 15 such men. Many of these were declared by the doctors to be unfit for detention, but the final decision as to whether they should be transferred to hospital, released or deported remains with the HO. Caseworkers do not see these men in person, as IMB members do, and do not therefore see how distressingly frail they appear. The men tell the IMB that they would rather die than remain in detention and, often, that they are driven to such extremes because of what they perceive as unfair decision making by the Home Office, or indeed a lack of any decision.

One detainee became a focus of media attention in the autumn. He had been refusing food and fluids and was found unfit for detention. He was nevertheless considered fit to fly and deportation was attempted, only for him to be refused entry to the country and returned to detention in Harmondsworth. Thankfully he did start eating again in due course, and was later deported without further incident.

A number of men who appeared seriously mentally disturbed were held in healthcare for varying periods during the year. Although there is visiting counselling provision it does not always seem to the IMB that such men can be satisfactorily treated in the Centre. It appears likely that a number of issues may go undiagnosed and untreated because of lack of proper resources to provide mental health care.

The IMB considers that men declared unfit for detention as a result of starving themselves should always be considered as falling under Rule 35 (1) of the Detention Centre Rules i.e. 'The medical practitioner shall report to the manager on the case of any detained person whose health is likely to be injuriously affected by continued detention or any conditions of detention'. This rule surely applies equally to men whose mental health is frail, whether that frailty existed before they entered detention or was brought on through the detention itself. It is recognised that such judgments have to be made by health professionals, but there is at present no appropriate therapeutic environment within the Centre for those men who appear to need help (see also section 5.7).

5.4 Purposeful Activity (includes work)

A large number of detainees are employed as cleaners or kitchen workers, with others used as wing 'buddies' or as volunteer chaplaincy assistants. There may sometimes be opportunities for them to be employed in repainting areas of the Centre. The men appear grateful for the chance to have something to occupy them, in addition to the benefit of earning a small amount. They can be trained in Health and Safety, Manual Handling and Food Safety Level 1. The detainees employed as barbers seem to particularly enjoy their work, to be able to demonstrate their skills in the attractively buzzing 'Chop Shop'.

5.5 Resettlement, Movement of Detainees

While the purpose of an IRC is to hold people whom the HO wishes to remove from the UK, in fact during 2013 15.5% of the detainees held at Harmondsworth were in due course given temporary admission to the country. 51.5% were removed from the country, including on charter flights, and the remaining 33% were transferred to other IRCs, to prison, to the police or to hospital. With regard to those arriving at Harmondsworth, 31% came from ports or airports, 12% from prisons or the police and 57% from other IRCs.

It is likely that a large number of the transfers in from other IRCs were in order to place men closer to the airport for subsequent removal, but it is unclear what purpose is served by transferring men away from Harmondsworth in such large numbers. The IMB suspects this is purely for administrative convenience and received complaints from a number of men during the year that transferring them to another IRC made it too difficult for family members (including in some cases women with new-born babies) to visit. The IMB would like to see

detainees considered by the relevant HO department more as human beings than, as sometimes seems, numbers on a spreadsheet.

5.6 Safer Custody

5.6.1 Deaths in custody

On 10th February a detainee who had been in the healthcare ward at Harmondsworth IRC died in hospital. The death is being investigated by the Prison and Probation Ombudsman, in accordance with required procedures. It is not appropriate for the IMB to comment further at this point, other than to extend its condolences to the family and friends of the man in question.

5.6.2 Support for those who may self-harm and other vulnerable detainees

In addition to opening ACDT (Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork) files on any detainees who either self-harm or threaten to do so, which are common across the detention estate, GEO sets up DISPs (Detainee Individual Support Plans) for detainees who are vulnerable in other ways, for example those who are being reintegrated after a period in segregation or those who claim to be under 18 (see also section 6.1). Detainees with physical disabilities have plans drawn up for staff to be aware of their special needs, in particular if an evacuation became necessary.

5.7 Segregation, Care and Separation

Table showing incidence of use of Rules 40, 41 and 42 in 2013, 2012 and 2011

	2013	2012	2011
Rule 40 (removal from association)	217	246	338
Rule 42 (temporary confinement)	76	93	143
Rule 41 (use of control and restraint)	99	89	87

Numbers of detainees placed in the segregation unit (Elm) have decreased again, but there remain occasions where men are held in the area for considerable periods. Three examples:

Mr A, who exhibited disturbing behaviour (with an apparent sexual fixation), was held in Elm from 22nd December 2012 until late January 2013, before being removed from the country.

Mr B was in Elm from 20th June until late July, then being transferred to Colnbrook IRC. He neglected his personal hygiene and communication with him was difficult as he apparently spoke only an unusual village dialect. GEO did what they could to try and arrange appropriate interpreting services.

Mr C was in Elm for nearly 4 weeks from 11th October and eventually spent some time on the healthcare ward before his deportation on 22nd November. He was also difficult to

communicate with, as although his command of English was very good his statements were illogical and incoherent.

The IMB understands that mental health assessments were carried out on each of these men. Even if they were not found to be actually mentally ill, it was felt that their behaviour did not render them fit for residence on the normal wings. However, the IMB believes strongly that the segregation unit is not the appropriate place to hold men displaying these sorts of behavioural abnormalities. This said, the attitude of Elm staff towards them was generally observed to be patient and helpful.

5.8 Residential Services

5.8.1 Accommodation

Extra bed space was created on Dove wing in the autumn, by converting some of the association rooms into bedrooms and putting bunks into some previously single rooms. There are now some 4-bedded rooms (two bunks). An additional 46 detainees puts pressure on the facilities and the IMB has frequently been told that the washing machines in Dove wing have broken down. No sooner does GEO state that repairs have been carried out than detainees advise of further breakdowns. In the same area there have been boiling water taps out of order and problems with showers being either too hot or too cold. Toilets and showers in Cedar and Dove wings were also often found to be unacceptably dirty.

Cedar and Dove wings are not particularly inviting. The stairwells are not always clean and the small association rooms are relatively devoid of comfortable seating. A rota report at the end of the year had this to say: *“5 rooms on Cedar and 1 on Dove had only wide ‘shelves’ by way of soft seating, some with cushions, some with carpet, one bare. In other rooms I counted one 3-seater sofa, eight 2-seater sofas and 13 soft chairs (as opposed to the chair and table sets). This gives comfortable seating to only 32 men on sofas and chairs. The rooms do not look appealing and are often slightly dirty and messy. It is not surprising that they never seem to be much used when we walk round.”* It is worth reiterating that wings Cedar and Dove now hold a total of 296 men. TV sets in the association rooms on those wings were sometimes out of order. The newer wings have central association areas, with a small amount of soft seating close to the TV sets and large provision of table and chair sets, mainly for eating the meals. There is virtually no seating in the main courtyard areas, so that men either squat on the ground or lean against the wall.

Bed bugs were an issue at various points during the year. Although fumigation was carried out, GEO stated that it was likely that detainees doing their own laundry might have misunderstood instructions as to the high temperatures needed to kill off bugs on bed linen.

Pigeons are frequently to be seen in the courtyards and the detainees cannot resist feeding them, although notices forbid this. In October at least one dead pigeon was to be seen outside and in November it was reported that pigeons had gone inside Ash wing. GEO stated that this would be dealt with by a pest control company.

5.8.2 Food, catering and kitchens

Food is prepared for all detainees in a central kitchen. Meals for Ash, Beech, Fir and Gorse wings are taken on trolleys to serveries on each wing, where they are kept hot during the mealtimes. Detainees on these wings have occasionally complained that the food runs out or is cold but these complaints are rare. Detainees on Cedar and Dove wings eat in a dining area served directly by the kitchen. Staff also eat in this area, as do IMB members if they wish to test the food. It is generally found to be satisfactory, with a vegetarian choice and provision of halal meat. Detainees are provided with their own hard plastic plate, bowl, cup and cutlery, which they are expected to wash up after their meals in a sink outside the dining area. Queues build up and the floor often becomes quite wet around the sink.

Food and drink should be provided for detainees upon their arrival at the Centre. The Board has noted a lack of coffee, milk or sugar in the reception area upon occasion. Microwave meals are provided there but both the fridge and the microwave have been noted as dirty on more than one visit.

Section 6

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

6.1 Children in Detention

In the IMB Annual Report for 2012 a recommendation was made that there should be a Memorandum of Understanding between UKBA (now the Home Office) and Hillingdon Children's Services, in relation to the detention of young people claiming to be under 18. This recommendation was rejected (see section 4.2.1.4).

Figures provided by GEO show that in 2013 a total of 12 young men claimed to be under the age of 18. Of those, seven were found to be over 18, one was discharged and four were found to be under 18 and removed to the care of Social Services. Although the age assessment is supposed to be carried out in the community, this did not generally seem to be the case. The IMB was particularly concerned about the case of Mr D, who was first detained in November 2012 and who stated in late February 2013 that he was aged only 15. He remained in Harmondsworth IRC, where all in contact with him concurred that his behaviour and demeanour were childish, until he was finally handed to Hillingdon Social Services in late June. For part of the time he was in detention an ACDT file was opened for him, indicating that he was at risk of self-harm.

At the time of writing, the IMB notes that detainees claiming to be under 18 now appear to be taken into the care of Hillingdon Social Services much more speedily.

6.2 Official Communication with Detainees

GEO aims to hold monthly consultation meetings with detainee representatives from each wing. Where possible an IMB member will attend. One such meeting was attended in May and found to be well-managed. However, in August, October and November the meetings were cancelled.

HO staff from the Detained Fast-Track (DFT) office had run an office in the central area of the Centre for detainees to talk to them face-to-face about their cases. The IMB noticed in late September that the office was not open at the time shown on the notice on the door. This was mentioned in a rota report and gained the response that it should be taken up with the DFT staff. A phone call to them made it clear that the office had in fact not been open for a few months. Not only had the notice not been taken off the door (and in fact was still there in late October) but it appears neither GEO nor the other HO staff were aware of the closure and had possibly (as had the IMB) been directing detainees to attend the office, leading to detainee frustration. To call the procedure 'fast-track' appears to be a misnomer, as people are often on it for weeks or months, including some whose cases are very complicated. Detainees are often very confused about the process and sometimes complain that they lack representation.

6.3 Official Complaints

Towards the end of the year an IMB member conducted a small survey with detainees who had made an official complaint to the Home Office. Most of the complaints had been referred back to GEO as they were about issues connected with the running of the Centre. It was found that even though the record of complaints showed that the target timescales for responses being sent to detainees had been mostly met that was not actually the real situation. When some detainees were asked about the letter of response they should have received it came to light that a number had not received the letter even though it was “signed off” on the complaints register. Procedures have now been reviewed and the IMB has been assured that in future detainees will receive a timely written response to complaints.

When discussing the complaints system with detainees there was a general view from them that they only used the complaints system with issues they had a very high concern about as they had little confidence in the objectivity of any investigation into any complaint that they made. It appears that detainees also fear that making a complaint may harm their relationships with staff or will affect their immigration case.

It had been noted and mentioned by the IMB during the year that obsolete versions of the official complaints form were still being used, even though the current version dates from May 2011, and that the forms were badly displayed and often hard to find. When the complaints ‘postbox’ on Dove wing was moved from its original location in September because of building works wing staff were initially unable to state where it had been moved to. In November one of the boxes was found to be unlocked, due to a faulty lock. The IMB would like to see a more rigorous checking of all aspects of the official complaints system put in place by both GEO and HO staff.

Figures provided by the Central Services Unit of the HO show a breakdown of official complaints as follows:

Type of complaint	Number	Substantiated	Partially substantiated
Service delivery (includes accommodation, property, catering, communication etc)	192	17 (9%)	14 (7%)
Misconduct (16 of which were referred to the Professional Standards Unit as serious)	85	4 (5%)	5 (6%)
Clinical in confidence	68	7 (10%)	4 (6%)
Caseworking	60	Not given	Not given

Of the substantiated service delivery complaints, the majority related to lost property. Of the misconduct complaints, those substantiated related mainly to officers swearing at detainees. In one case this was reported by a visitor to the Centre.

6.4 Reception and Departure Area

The reception area in particular is cramped and unsuitable if large numbers of detainees arrive at the same time. Only one computer is available for the checking-in process. A larger area, with more staff, would be beneficial. The provision of information leaflets and posters has been patchy and staff often appear too busy to take the time to point out this information to detainees while they are in the waiting area. The departure area is used not only for detainees leaving the Centre but also for them to come to retrieve items from their stored property. If staff are too busy logging out departures then detainees may be denied access to their property for some time, although they are normally able to do so within 24 hours of requesting it.

Harmondsworth IMB undertook a 24 hour monitoring from 06.00 on Friday 22/11/13 to 06.00 on Saturday 23/11/13. Six members came in, each monitoring for four hours. The primary aim was to monitor the reception area, but when that was empty the focus shifted to the departure area. Details of this monitoring exercise can be seen in the Appendix.

Section 7

THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

IMB members typically make 4 visits a week to the Centre, collecting applications to see them from the post boxes on each Residential unit, talking to detainees and monitoring what is happening. There is a procedure in place for ensuring that members visit all parts of the Centre and that special attention is paid to the segregation unit, the healthcare wards, and first and last night accommodation.

Board Statistics	
Recommended complement of Board Members	18
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	13
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	10
Number of new members joining within the reporting period	4
Number of members leaving within the reporting period	7
Total number of Board meetings during the reporting period	12
Total number of visits to the establishment	233 (on 197 dates)
Date of Annual Team Performance Review	January 2013

From the visits to the Centre in 2013 a total of 1100 conversations with detainees were recorded. Many of these were in response to the 405 written applications to see the IMB, others were through detainees approaching IMB members as they walked round. Some people wished to raise more than one topic. An analysis of the conversations is shown in the table below, followed by the figures for 2012 for comparison:

Table showing contacts and conversations between IMB members and detainees

	2013	2012
Health issues (includes conversations with inpatients and men at risk of self-harm)	326	299
Immigration and legal issues	264	259
Conversations with detainees held in segregation	171	206
Conversations with young men whose age was disputed	45	52
Property issues	80	86
Staff behaviour	59	
Accommodation	37	
Food issues	17	18
Other issues, not categorised separately	101	152

Notable increases are in complaints about staff behaviour and also accommodation, which saw an increase through the year, and which had not been numerous enough in 2012 to warrant separate entries. The same pattern of concerns, with the same increase in concerns about staff behaviour and accommodation, can be seen from the breakdown, below, of the requests to see the IMB during the year, which again shows the breakdown for 2012 for comparison.

Table showing analysis of applications to see IMB

Code	Subject	2013	2012
A	Accommodation (inc. Showers, clothing, bed bugs)	48	30
C	Equality & Diversity (inc. religion)	3	6
D	Education (inc. library, gym) / employment	6	5
E 1	Visits, mail, phone, internet, fax	8	16
F	Food / kitchen related	14	8
G	Health related	95	96
H 1	Property (within current establishment)	18	14
H 2	Property (during transfer/in another establishment)	19	19
H 3	Shop and barber	2	2
I	Immigration related, including legal representation	75	88
J	Staff-detainee interaction, detainee concerns inc. bullying, poor communication, Rules 40, 41 & 42	75	43
K	Transfers, removals, reception and departures	18	8
	Complaint handling	2	4
	Age dispute cases	5	11
	Compliments to Centre staff	1	5
	Miscellaneous	9	5
	Feelings of depression, self-harm	7	
	Total number of applications	405	360

APPENDIX

Report on the intensive monitoring exercise November 22nd and 23rd 2013.

At 06.00 on 22/11 there were no detainees arriving, but the log showed that during the previous night there had been six arrivals between 22.30 and midnight and a further nine arrivals between midnight and 01.50. Staff stated they had already received notifications of some twenty expected arrivals, without timings. At that point there were 15 frozen meals in the freezer.

Departures observed up to 12.15 (not all information is available)

Time brought to	No. of detainees	Destination	Escort arrival	Departure time	Detainee waiting time
07.15	2	Hatton Cross	10.20	10.20 or	> 3 hrs 5 mins
7.23	1	Heathrow (Romania)	08.00	08.35	1 hr 12 mins
07.30	1	Haslar	07.33	08.21	51 mins
07.40	4	Haslar	07.33	08.21	41 mins
07.40	3	Eaton House	07.55	08.55	1 hr 15 mins
07.44	1	Eaton House	07.55	08.55	1 hr 11 mins
08.08	2	Heathrow (Canada, USA)	08.00	08.35	27 mins
09.13	1	Hatton Cross	10.20	10.20 or	> 1 hr 7 mins
?	1	Sudan (escorted)	11.25	12.15	?
11.55	2	Pakistan High Commission	?	12.30?	35 mins?
12.05	1	Pakistan High Commission	?	12.30?	25 mins?

The excessive delay for those going to Hatton Cross was occasioned by the late arrival of Tascor escorting staff. The two men who had been waiting since 7.15 were not offered their packed breakfasts until this was suggested by IMB at 9.00 (having observed Eaton House detainees leaving with theirs).

The arrivals table indicates further information about those detainees who went to Eaton House, Hatton Cross and the Pakistan High Commission. It will be seen that the two who had been in departures from 7.15 did not get back to their wings until 17.25 after their return from Hatton Cross.

At least five detainees spent over four hours in the reception area before being taken to a wing and a further nine spent between two and four hours there. There was at one point a delay of nearly an hour before the nurse arrived (see arrivals at 17.43).

Arrivals (a total of 30 detainees)

Arrival time	How many?	Where from?	Time left	Transit time	Times to nurse	Food given	Times to wing	Time in reception
12.00	3	Morton Hall	08.00	4 hrs	?, ?, 14.10	?, ?, 14.20	17.25 (1), 14.50 (2)	5 hrs 25 mins (1) 2 hrs 50 mins (2)
13.05	3	Pennine House	10.00	3 hrs 5 mins	14.12, 14.35, 15.00	Not wanted	17.25	4 hrs 20 mins (3)
14.02	1	Eaton House	13.00	1 hr 2 mins	N/A	14.20	14.50	48 mins
14.55	2	Haslar	11.45	3 hrs 10 mins	15.45 (and 18.25) 16.10	18.06 16.05	19.17 ?	4 hrs 22 mins (1) > 1 hr 15 mins
15.00	3	Hatton Cross	?	?	?, ?, 15.20	16.05	16.20 (1)	1 hr 20 mins
17.05	3	Eaton House	16.30	35 mins	N/A		17.25	20 mins
17.43	2	Maidenhead police station	16.15	1 hr 28 mins	Nurse called 17.50 Seen 18.50, 19.25	18.55	20.17	2 hrs 34 mins (2)
18.30	3	P'stan High Commission	?	1 hr 30 mins?	N/A	19.15	20.17	1 hr 47 mins
20.40	2	Tinsley House Dover	16.20 15.11	4 hrs 20 mins 5 hrs 29 mins	21.45? ?	20.55 Not wanted	? ?	? ?
21.05	1	Heathrow	20.08	57 mins	?	21.25	00.25	3 hrs 20 mins
21.40	1	HO Croydon	20.15	1 hr 25 mins	?		22.40	1 hr
22.50	3	Heathrow? (2) Tinsley House (1)	22.00? 15.30	50 mins 7 hrs 20 mins	00.50, 00.40 23.50	23.05 23.05	01.10, ? 00.30	2 hrs 20 mins (2) 1 hr 40 mins
23.30	1	Heathrow	18.30?	5 hrs?	01.05		01.30	2 hrs
01.40	1	Morton Hall	19.45	5 hrs 55 mins	02.10	Had sandwich	02.30	50 mins
03.00	1	Heathrow police	02.50	10 mins	04.15	03.20	04.20	1 hr 20 mins

Eleanor Griffiths – Chair 2014

Independent Monitoring Board
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Notes: All statistics in this report, except where stated otherwise, have been obtained at Harmondsworth IRC and are not audited.

References to individual detainees (A, B, C and D) do not use letters relating to the actual names of the detainees concerned.