



Independent Monitoring Board
Dover Immigration Removal Centre

Annual Report 2014

Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prison Act and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and immigration removal centre (IRC) to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the prison or centre is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in immigration removal centres.
- (2) inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concern it has.
- (3) report annually to the Secretary of State on how far the Immigration Removal Centre or Short Term Holding Centre has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those held in the centre.**

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have the right of unannounced access to detainees, the Centre and also to the Centre's records.

Section 2

CONTENTS

Section 1:	The statutory role of the IMB	Page 1
Section 2:	Contents	Page 2
Section 3:	Description of the Immigration Removal Centre	Page 3
Section 4:	Executive summary	Page 4
	4.1 Concerns from previous report	Page 4
	4.2 Issues requiring a response	Page 5
Section 5:	Areas reported on	Page 6
	5.1 Equality and inclusion	Page 6
	5.2 Education, learning and skills	Page 7
	5.3 Healthcare and mental health	Page 8
	5.4 Purposeful activity	Page 9
	5.5 Movement of detainees	Page 10
	5.6 Safer detention	Page 11
	5.7 Care and separation	Page 11
	5.8 Residential services	Page 12
	5.9 Immigration matters	Page 14
	5.10 Serious incidents	Page 16
Section 6:	The work of the Independent Monitoring Board	Page 17
Section 7:	Glossary of establishment related terms and abbreviations used in this report	Page 18

Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE

- 3.1 Dover Immigration
Removal Centre (DIRC) is operated by the Prison Service on behalf of Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE). It holds adult male appellant or failed asylum seekers, ex-foreign national offenders and others with no right to remain in the United Kingdom while they await administrative removal, deportation or release.
- 3.2 Situated on high
ground overlooking the port, Dover IRC occupies the site of fortifications built in Napoleonic times and is surrounded by a deep dry moat. Previously used by the Army, it became a prison in 1952 and five years later housed young offenders, until April 2002, when it became an IRC operating under the 2001 Detention Centre Rules.
- 3.3 Dover IRC's statement
of purpose is *"to provide for the secure but humane accommodation of detained persons in a relaxed regime with as much freedom of movement and association as possible, consistent with providing a safe and secure environment, and to encourage and assist detained persons to make the most productive use of their time, whilst respecting in particular their dignity and right to individual expression"*.
- 3.4 Detainees are housed
in six residential units, named after the Cinque Ports. Many of these units consist of six-bed dormitories, though there are also two-bed and single-bed rooms. In 2013/14 work was undertaken to increase capacity from 316 to 401 detainees by changing some rooms from single to double accommodation and altering some other parts of buildings to house detainees. Other buildings within the IRC house departments which cater for the detainees' general welfare and recreational needs.
- 3.5 At the end of 2014 the average length of stay in total detention was just under two months. Most are held for less than two months; 21 detainees had been in total detention for 6-12 months, 16 for one - two years, and six for over two years.
- 3.6 One of the six units, Hythe, operates as a Care and Separation Unit (CSU). The CSU is used for detainees removed from association under Detention Centre Rule 40 or temporarily confined under Rule 42.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 Executive Summary

4.1.1 The Board considers that management and staff consistently showed commitment to ensuring the safety and security of detainees during 2014 and to treating detainees with dignity and respect. Several detainees wrote to the IRC after release to thank staff for their help and kindness. Some of the rules and conditions under which the IRC has to operate, however, such as the prison-like appearance of the establishment, the poor standard of much of the accommodation, the over-11 hours they spend locked in their rooms at night, and the fact of indefinite detention, cause most detainees unhappiness, loneliness and stress; in some cases the result is despair and mental illness. The care of staff is therefore crucial to detainees' wellbeing and most staff consistently deliver the standards expected.

4.2 Concerns raised in previous report

Dover IMB raised the following concerns in its 2011 Annual Report. Progress against these concerns has been detailed where relevant.

4.2.1 **Transportation of detainees:** The apparently unnecessary transfer of detainees continued, often at short notice, during the night and often without adequate refreshment and too often followed by transfer to another IRC within one or two days.

Progress since 2011: There has been some reduction in the number of detainees transferred from one IRC to another during the night, though moves to other IRCs for short periods of time continued. Owing to the negative impact this can have on detainee welfare, it continues to be a matter of concern to the IMB (see 5.5.3-5.5.5).

4.2.2 **Removal delays:** The length of time taken to arrange the deportation of ex-foreign national offenders. The average length of stay during the year rose from 152 to 177 days.

Progress since 2011: Although the average length of stay for ex-foreign national offenders has decreased, the Board still considers the length of time unacceptable and this remains a concern (see 5.9.2).

4.2.3 **Legal surgeries:** The twice weekly surgeries held by firms with exclusive contracts under the Legal Services Commission's Detention Duty Advice Scheme do not meet the needs of most detainees.

Progress since 2011: Whilst the number of weekly surgeries has increased from two to three, the IMB continues to be concerned about delays in accessing and the quality of

some legal advice, which still does not always appear to meet the needs of many detainees (see Section 5.9.3).

4.2.4 Repairs and maintenance: Projects and routine requests for repairs and maintenance have often not been responded to promptly or efficiently.

Progress since 2011: There has been an improvement in responses to requests for repairs and maintenance and this is no longer a significant concern for the IMB (see Section 5.8.4).

4.3 2014 Issues requiring a response

The issues set out below should be of interest to the Minister, Immigration Enforcement and the Prison Service but, as required, are addressed to only one those three.

For the attention of the Minister

4.3.1 Detainee employment

Does the Minister agree that DSO 1/13, which prevents detainees who are 'non-compliant' from seeking employment in IRCs, should be amended to allow all detainees to undertake purposeful activity? (see 5.4.4)

4.3.2 Removal delays and length of detention:

Does the Minister agree that there should be a time limit on immigration detention and that detention should only continue if it is necessary to secure removal and it is likely that the detainee concerned will be removed within a reasonable time? (see 5.9.2)

For the attention of Immigration Enforcement

4.3.3 Transportation of detainees:

What action is being taken to make decisions about moving detainees between IRCs, especially at short notice and at night, consistent with the stated aim of treating them with dignity and respect; and should greater weight be given to being consistent with that aim rather than the operational convenience of those managing the detainee population? (see 5.5.3-5)

4.3.4 Legal advice:

What action is being taken to ensure that law firms contracted to provide the legal surgeries arranged under the Detention Duty Advice scheme deliver a service that they are required to provide? (see 5.9.3)

4.3.5 Complaints:

What action is being taken to create a system for investigating detainee complaints that is thorough, timely, and has an element of independence? (see Section 5.9.4-6)

AREAS REPORTED ON

5.1 Equality and inclusion

- 5.1.1. The Board has observed equality and inclusion within Dover IRC to have been given high priority and to have been handled sensitively. In 2013 and 2014 there was little evidence of tension between groups with different characteristics. Considerable effort has been made, both at a policy and a practical level, to promote equality and inclusion amongst detainees. Applications to the IMB on equality issues have been few and have not suggested any persistent underlying trends providing a cause for concern.
- 5.1.2. Dover IRC has an Equality Policy and provides a full-time Diversity and Equality Officer. There are three layers of diversity meetings held quarterly by the Dover Equality Action Team (DEAT), membership of which includes two peer support workers (PSW), volunteer detainees who attend in a largely observational capacity. There is also a monthly Detainee Consultative Meeting which all PSWs attend but which is open to any detainee to attend, and monthly PSW meetings. Monthly meetings are also held on each residential unit. The Board has observed these meetings, in particular the Detainee Consultative Meeting, to be open and constructive in inviting and dealing with detainee concerns. Detainees have told the IMB that they have found Detainee Consultative Meetings and PSW meetings to be a positive experience and the IMB has observed PSWs to generally be proactive and enthusiastic about their role.
- 5.1.3. Upon arrival at Dover detainees are provided with a diversity flyer and are given the option of a one-to-one talk with an officer regarding sexuality, disability, age-related problems or any other potential discrimination issue. Questions about sexuality, previously asked during the reception process, are now asked during induction, which has removed the public nature of the questioning and resulted in more data being gathered.
- 5.1.4. Although a regular drop-in centre next to the dining hall provides easy access for detainees, the Board is concerned that the high visibility of detainees using the service, could be off-putting for some.
- 5.1.5. Religious festivals for all major religions are celebrated and the IMB has observed that the Centre, in particular the religion affairs and catering departments, have worked hard to accommodate the needs of the various religious groups.

5.1.6. During 2013 and 2014 the number of detainees speaking good English decreased (according to information gathered during the Reception process and by the Education Department) with the number speaking no or poor English having increased. Formal interpreting arrangements with a telephone translation service are in place within Dover IRC, although during normal day-to-day activities within the Centre, most interpreting is undertaken by fellow detainees, particularly PSWs. On occasion, detainees have been reluctant to engage with the translation service, preferring the direct face-to-face contact which they have when a fellow detainee interprets. It is not easy to ascertain the quality of interpreting skills at this level and the Board considers that more use of the translation service should be encouraged.

5.2 Education, learning and skills

5.2.1. The Board acknowledges the challenges faced by the Education Department in seeking to engage with an extremely diverse detainee population, not required to undertake educational activities, whose length of stay at Dover IRC may be only a few days or weeks. It has therefore been encouraging to see an improvement in course uptake, an increase in outreach work by the Education Department, and a stronger emphasis on practical skills useful to detainees after detention. Course take-up rose from 39% in November 2012 to about 80% throughout 2014. The Board did not receive any detainee applications on the subject of education during 2013 or 2014.

5.2.2. Outreach work has also proved worthwhile and has stimulated detainee interest and course take-up. Virtually continuous detainee reviews have helped to positively inform course provision. Short courses offering typing, book-keeping linked to IT, English and Maths, and Personal Development, all with accreditation, have enabled the department to meet the needs of detainees who in the main are not in the Centre for long and also provide them with knowledge and skills for the future.

5.2.3. A welcome expansion in the past two years has included the introduction of practical courses, often in participation with other areas within the Centre, for example a Healthy Eating course in conjunction with the Gymnasium and a Hygiene in the Kitchen course in conjunction with the Catering Department. The most popular practical course is Barbering which has proved so popular that in 2014 it was moved into a bigger area within the Education Department. A significant consequence of the Barbering course has been that waiting detainee clients have come into the Education Department and the Library and have seen what both have to offer. Beekeeping and horticulture were introduced in 2014, with over 100 detainees gaining some experience in the art of beekeeping. The Board welcomes the news that a cultural kitchen will be established in 2015, a feature popular in some other IRCs.

5.3 Healthcare and mental health

- 5.3.1. During 2013 and 2014 the Board expressed concerns about the number of detainees missing medical appointments, the cancellation of transport to external medical appointments by the escorting contractor, the impact of national policy on the availability of dental treatment and staffing levels within the Healthcare Department. The Healthcare contractor and the management of Dover IRC have taken steps to address many of these issues. Medical concerns are a frequent subject of detainee applications to the IMB, though the confidentiality of medical information can restrict the ability of the IMB to respond to these concerns effectively.
- 5.3.2. The Healthcare Department is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with a doctor attending daily for a three and a half hour session. Well attended nurse-led clinics are held, covering issues such as smoking cessation, diabetes, asthma, hypertension and a counselling clinic. The mental health in-reach team from Oxleas has been of benefit as have the visits, when necessary, by a psychiatrist to assess and review patients. Since the commissioning of healthcare services, the Centre has also benefited from access to the community learning disability team.
- 5.3.3. There have been five different healthcare managers over the past two years. A new manager has been in post since June 2014 and more data is now collected and easily accessible. Arrangements for healthcare provision in 2015 include: nursing staff provided by IC24 (Integrated Care), a private sector company; GPs provided by the Minster Medical Practice; a dentist provided by Kent Community Care Trust; mental health services provided by Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, substance abuse services provided by RAPt; and pharmaceuticals provided by Oxleas. These contracted companies are accountable to the commissioning board. For optical services, detainees are escorted to an opticians in Dover town.
- 5.3.4. At a quarterly Partnership Board, Centre managers meet representatives of each of these companies. It has been difficult to ascertain who co-ordinates these processes although the healthcare manager has day to day responsibility.
- 5.3.5. The Board continues to have concerns about the policies relating to dental treatment. The DSO sets out that anyone in detention in excess of twelve months will be entitled to a free routine dental appointment and subsequent treatment. If a detainee has been in detention for less than 12 months, he must prove that he has not had a dental appointment for more than two years in order to get a check-up. Emergency appointments can be made but there is little control over the timings. Some fillings may be just temporary and made permanent only if the detainee has been in the Centre for over a year.
- 5.3.6. During 2012 and 2013 the Board expressed concern about the number of detainees missing appointments although there was some improvement following

a change to the system. Previously, notes were often left on a chair in detainees' rooms and, if they slept in, they missed the appointment. Some detainees were not aware they had an appointment. Healthcare tried to address the problem by giving out appointments the night before but this issue needs to be continually monitored. It is compounded by the need to screen new detainees who have arrived during the night.

- 5.3.7. The specialist substance misuse service room appears to be little used and the Board will want to monitor usage in 2015 given the pressure for services as a consequence of the increase in the Centre's population. The Board has some concern about nursing staff having access to the room at night but they are issued with a sealed pouch containing keys. In an emergency, the pouch's seal can be broken so staff have access to the appropriate keys.
- 5.3.8. The Board is aware that recruitment can be challenging, a problem exacerbated by the long delays caused by vetting processes.

5.4 Purposeful activity

- 5.4.1. Dover IRC provides a range of purposeful activities that can be undertaken by detainees, in addition to services provided by the Education Department. Detainees have been observed to benefit from their engagement with these activities and the Board recognises their importance in helping to cope with the realities of life in detention. Many, however, do not take advantage of the opportunities available to them, and the Board appreciates the challenges inherent in encouraging detainees to engage in activities which are optional.
- 5.4.2. Detainees can undertake several types of paid work, earning £1 per hour for a maximum of 30 hours. Over 150 positions are available including:
- **Work in the kitchens and dining hall:** up to 30 detainees can work in the kitchen and dining hall, but few of these places were filled because of an unfortunate national direction that all jobs are paid at the same rate - and the catering work is more arduous than most other jobs.
 - **Bicycle repair shop:** up to 12 detainees repair bicycles provided by Kent Police and other agencies for export to the Gambia. They also repair wheelchairs.
 - **Cleaning work around the Centre:** Over half the jobs fall into this category, particularly within the residential units and the gymnasium. Many receive industrial cleaning training.
 - **Recycling materials.** Up to 12 positions.
 - **Peer Support Workers:** Up to 14 positions for detainees who help new arrivals settle into the Centre and represent them in the consultative processes.

- 5.4.3. Other activities and facilities made available to detainees include a popular and well-attended gym and weights room and an internet suite. The Board has welcomed the gradual expansion of supervised access to the internet.
- 5.4.4. Detainees frequently make applications to the IMB, complaining that they have been refused work having been deemed non-compliant with immigration processes. They often struggle to comprehend these decisions and further explanation is usually required. The IMB continues to disagree with the national policy of refusing paid work to detainees deemed to be non-compliant, believing that it is not consistent with the stated aim of providing detainees with purposeful activity. It runs counter to the IRC's statement of purpose (see para 3.3 above).

5.5 Transfers of detainees, reception and induction

- 5.5.1 The Board has observed reception and induction to be conducted in a friendly and helpful manner, with staff trying hard to minimise the discomfort of detainees and to communicate essential information during these stressful processes (but see 5.1.6 above).
- 5.5.2 Reception and induction processes can be especially challenging for both staff and detainees when a number of men arrive simultaneously at the Centre at night. Although the IMB understands that advanced warning by the escorting contractor of detainee night moves has improved over the last twelve months, it nevertheless remains a cause for concern that groups of detainees can arrive at the Centre in the middle of the night, with some having to wait in vans for long periods. The availability of staff, including medical staff, and the fact that only one detainee can be dealt with at a time, can result in the reception process being long and stressful for detainees, often despite the best efforts of staff.
- 5.5.3 The IMB highlighted as an issue of concern in its 2011 report the high number of detainee movements taking place during the night. A particular area of concern was the number of moves taking place between one IRC and another. This is a frequent subject of complaint by detainees, who often fail to understand the reason for such moves and on occasion express concern about being moved away from nearby family members.
- 5.5.4 The nature of immigration enforcement operations will often necessitate the arrival at an IRC of detainees at night, for example following detention at a port of entry or following an arrest. However, the IMB continues to be concerned at the apparently unnecessary transfer of detainees from one Centre to another at night, which can cause distress to detainees and which presents challenges to IRC staff. Greater priority should be given to the welfare of detainees rather than the need to move people just to free up space.
- 5.5.5 The IMB recognises that these concerns have been shared by the staff and management of Dover IRC and that responsibility for the movement of detainees

lies primarily with the Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit (DEPMU) and the escorting contractor (Tascor).

- 5.5.7 Dover IRC aims to provide named Personal Officers who will work with detainees to develop an individual Welfare Plan. Whilst the Board has welcomed the principle behind the introduction of this role, its function and operation still appears not to be understood by many detainees and staff. A welfare office also provides help and advice.
- 5.5.8 Samphire, a charity based in Dover, is assisted by Centre Management to provide valuable help, advice, and volunteers to listen to detainees and holds a weekly drop-in surgery in the Centre. It also runs a project to help ex-detainees from any IRC in the country.
- 5.5.10 The IMB is concerned that owing to the short notice often provided when a detainee is released, and the fact that an IRC cannot lawfully hold someone once their release has been authorised, some detainees leave the Centre with very little prospect of supporting themselves.

5.6 Safer detention

- 5.6.1 The Safer Detention Team's monthly meetings are well organised and issues are reviewed in detail and followed up. A wide range of attendees include representatives from the Samaritans. The Board has been involved in discussions about the use of the observation suites, the attendance at reviews and the management and recording of detainees refusing food.
- 5.6.2 The number of detainees made the subject of special care plans (ACDTs) has increased in the past two years with much discussion to analyse the reasons for the increase following a few years of a downward trend. A total of 110 documents were opened in 2014, although the number of incidents of self harm (35) was far fewer than the previous year (63). Officers, healthcare staff and pastors work together to monitor those on special care plans and provide constant support.
- 5.6.3 Board members make visiting detainees on ACDTs a priority in their monitoring and record their visits in some detail; wherever possible, they attend reviews and check the files of detainees. In most cases reviews were conducted skilfully with good rapport being created with the subjects of the reviews. Sometimes, however, there was concern about the number of staff attending review meetings which could be intimidating for some detainees.

5.7 Care and Separation

- 5.7.1. Under Detention Centre Rule 40 detainees may be removed from association with other detainees for 'reasons of safety or security'. Under Rule 42 a detainee may

be temporarily confined if he is 'refractory or violent'. In practice action under these rules entails removal to the Care and Separation Unit (CSU).

- 5.7.2. The reduction in recent years in the number of detainees taken to the CSU did not continue in 2014: 189 were taken there compared with 147 in 2013. This increase is almost certainly due, and is proportionate to, the increase in DIRC population in 2014. There has been a huge reduction in CSU numbers from 419 in 2008, when the population was much lower, probably due in part to a fall in the proportion of foreign national offenders. Credit for the low incidence of disruptive behaviour should also, however, be given to staff who have contributed to a relaxed atmosphere through treating detainees respectfully and helping them with their problems. In most cases the stay in the unit was very short, the average length of time being 34 hours, much lower than the previous two years (54 (2013) and 42 (2012) hours).
- 5.7.3. Various types of disorder or disruptive behaviour accounted for nearly half of removals to the Unit. The other main reasons were: refusal to be moved for transfer or deportation or to prevent disruption on removal (18, down from 32 in 2013); for constant watch of specially vulnerable detainees (30 cases, up from 17 in 2013); and for the investigation of offences (22 cases, up from 7 in 2013). There was a marked increase in the number of serving prisoners lodged overnight because their prisons do not have 24-hour reception (23 cases, up from 11 in 2014). The Board is concerned that many of these prisoners have to spend long periods in vans travelling from distant parts of the country.
- 5.7.4. The number of occasions when force was used by staff fell slightly in 2014, from 42 to 40. The special accommodation, a safer room for particularly violent or refractory detainees, was used on only four occasions, the same number as the previous year.
- 5.7.5. The IMB was informed promptly when detainees were removed to the CSU and in most cases members visited them within 24 hours to check that they had been treated respectfully, afforded the facilities to which they were entitled, and to ensure that separation was correctly authorised. Experienced officers are selected to work in the CSU and they consistently show respect, patience and understanding to help minimise the effects of separation. There is generally good compliance with the rules regarding record keeping and authority levels.

5.8 Residential services

Accommodation and facilities

- 5.8.1 The residential facilities at Dover IRC have been certified fit for purpose with regard to Home Office standards. The Board considers, however, that many of the dormitories and rooms are dingy and depressing, the beds are small, the metal frames sag, and the mattresses are too flimsy. In the past year much has been

done to try to smarten up the establishment but with limited success given the age of the buildings and prison-like appearance of the estate.

- 5.8.2 The maximum detainee population at Dover increased during 2013/14 from 316 to 401. Although the Board has been assured, both by the Centre Management and by Immigration Enforcement, that the facilities and services provided to detainees will continue to meet the prescribed standards, the Board will be keen to monitor that this is the case. In particular the Board has been concerned to see that some detainee rooms previously used for one detainee are now designated for two. Approximately 20 such rooms now have poor quality bunk beds and a shared toilet with inadequate screening.
- 5.8.3 Some detainees comment to the Board that they feel the standard of repair of Dover's residential facilities is lower than that experienced in other IRCs, in particular those built more recently. Some, however, say that they prefer the layout of Dover to other IRCs, with its range of separated buildings allowing more space for exercise and fresh air. But the open and exposed nature of the clifftop site can deter detainees from moving around between facilities during periods of bad weather.
- 5.8.4 Detainees have occasionally reported problems to the Board such as non-functioning heating and showers, some of which can be attributed to the age and layout of the buildings and are challenging to address. For example, the electrical systems will not support detainees to have kettles when they are locked up for over 11 hours at night. The Board has, however, observed that most repairs are generally dealt with by the Centre more swiftly than was the case at the time of the last annual report.

Food

- 5.8.5 The Catering Department provides three meals a day to detainees in a central dining hall, with menus operating on a cycle and offering six choices for lunch and five for evening meals. The dining hall facility itself is suitably equipped and appropriate to the needs of Centre life, though detainees often tell the Board that they dislike the fact that during periods of bad weather there is not sufficient overhead cover to provide shelter for all those queuing to gain entrance. Menus include pictorial symbols to aid detainees in their food selection and detainees are provided with printed tickets detailing their food choices to present to kitchen staff.
- 5.8.6 The Board routinely monitors the provision of food at Dover IRC, often eating with detainees in the central dining hall. The standard and variety of food provided to detainees is good, given the budgetary constraints placed upon the Catering Department and the diverse and changing nature of the population.
- 5.8.7 The Catering Department works hard to ensure that the food provided to detainees reflects their needs and views, frequently consulting them and making comment books available to them. The Catering Manager attends detainee consultative

meetings and uses surveys to gather feedback. Detainee comments to the Board about the food at Dover IRC tend to be mixed. When specific issues are brought to our attention they have always received a positive response from kitchen staff and attempts have been made to act on them when appropriate. Examples of detainee concerns have included the way in which rice is cooked, the sizes of portions and the provision of bread.

- 5.8.8 Suitable arrangements were made to cater for religious and cultural festivals including Ramadan, Chinese New Year, Baisakhi, Rakhee and Christmas. A number of detainees have expressed their appreciation of the efforts made in these arrangements.
- 5.8.9 Detainees sometimes comment to the IMB that they would welcome the introduction of a cultural kitchen, along the lines of those offered in some other IRCs. Funding has been secured and such a facility is planned for 2015.
- 5.8.10 Staffing in the kitchen and dining hall is supplemented by detainee labour. The number of detainees available to work in the kitchen is variable, particularly given the high turnover of detainees in the Centre and the fluctuating popularity of the role (see 5.4.2). Although this has created challenges for resourcing in the Catering Department, a consistent service has nevertheless been provided.

Property

- 5.8.11 Detainees frequently make applications to the Board with concerns about property. These applications tend to focus on property that has been lost, or slow access to property held at Reception.
- 5.8.12 Whilst the Board is aware that the management of property can be challenging and is an issue of concern across the immigration detention estate, we are sometimes concerned about the length of time it can take to provide detainees with access to items of property.

5.9 Immigration matters / legal advice / complaints

- 5.9.1 Many of the applications from detainees to the IMB concern their immigration cases, often focusing on lack of information about progress. Local Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) staff are intermediaries between distant case workers and the detainees themselves and sometimes have difficulty obtaining and passing on information to detainees who often do not understand the messages they receive. The Board is grateful, however, for the positive response received from local staff who invariably try to provide IMB members with the information requested or promptly see the detainee concerned.
- 5.9.2 At the end of 2014 the average length of stay in total detention was 59 days. Most are held for less than two months; 21 detainees had been in total detention

for 6-12 months, 16 for one - two years, and six for over two years. Many of the long-stayers are ex prisoners who have served their sentences. There is no time limit on detention so they have no idea how long they will be detained. The Home Office claims that detention is only used when it is necessary to secure removal and there is a reasonable prospect of removal. And yet, in the UK as a whole in the last quarter of 2014, only 43.5% of those leaving detention after being detained for over a year were removed (*HO quarterly immigration statistics published 26.2.15*). The rest were eventually released. According to the Home Office, the reasons for lengthy detention include non-cooperation by detainees, lengthy legal challenges to removal, and slow action by some foreign countries to provide travel documents. The Board considers, however, that it should be possible to determine whether there is a reasonable prospect of removal in a much shorter time than a year. Alternatives to detention should be used, as recently recommended by an all party Parliamentary committee which proposed a limit of 28 days.

- 5.9.3 The Legal Aid Agency oversees a system whereby certain law firms are contracted to provide legal surgeries in IRCs. Several firms alternate to provide this service at Dover on three days each week. The Board is concerned that the attendance of one of the firms was erratic in 2014, and many detainees have to wait a number of weeks before attending a surgery. Several detainees have told us that most have their requests for legal assistance refused, usually without any written reason. Surgeries could be longer and see more clients if there was not a lengthy lunch break, necessary according to Centre management because of staffing issues.
- 5.9.4 The Board is aware that a national review of the way detainee complaints are investigated is underway. During 2014 there were many concerns about the system. All detainee complaints are forwarded to a national Detention Services Complaints unit, where they are allocated to the department or unit which is the subject of the complaint. Complaints about services provided within DIRC are thus returned to Dover where they are allocated to the manager of the department concerned for investigation. The Board considers that investigations should be conducted by a manager from a different department to introduce some independence. Several complainants have told Board members that their complaints have been investigated by the person they are complaining about.
- 5.9.5 Some complaints were 'substantiated' but in many cases complainants received brief stilted written responses dismissing their claims without them or detainee witnesses being interviewed or other evidence being examined. Some complaints could be resolved quickly if managers intervened and spoke to the detainees concerned without waiting for the complaint to be returned from Detention Services Complaints. On one occasion there was a two-month delay in the return of a complaint. Nobody picked up this delay and went to speak to the complainant.

5.9.6 The Board acknowledges that the Centre Manager has taken some action to improve local management and investigation of complaints but considers this must be sustained and taken further if detainees are to have confidence in the process.

5.10 Serious incidents

5.10.1 The Board monitored two serious incidents in 2013 – a barricade and an incident at height. Both incidents were resolved successfully and the Board did not raise any concerns. The Board's monitoring of these incidents was appropriately facilitated by the Centre. There were no serious incidents in 2014.

Section 6

THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

6.1.1 Towards the end of 2014 a number of resignations and retirements led to the strength of the Board falling to half the recommended level. We nevertheless managed to complete a full visit and written report weekly and to visit most detainees held in the CSU within 24 hours. We have several potential members waiting to join in 2015 and as we grow we plan to expand our monitoring through individual members developing areas of special interest. We are grateful to the Centre and Immigration Managers for providing the facilities we need and for attending our monthly meetings at which they respond positively to the concerns we raise. We are especially grateful to our clerk who helps us efficiently in spite of having many other duties. The work of the Board is summarised below:

Recommended complement of Board members	12
Number of Board members as at January 2014	9
Number of Board members as at December 2014	6
New members joining in 2013	1
Members leaving during 2013	4
Average number of attendees at Board meetings	7.3
Visits to IRC by one or more members (incl. meetings)	194
Numbers of written applications received	71

SUBJECT OF IMB APPLICATIONS

(NB: Applications received may have covered more than one subject)

Complaints process	2
Accommodation/related facilities	5
Equality	3
Food	8
Immigration matters	20
Medical	11
Property	7
Transfer between establishments	2
Shop/catalogue	1
Treatment by Centre staff	7
Treatment by escorting contractor	2
Visits	1
Detainee employment	6

Peter Finnimore
Chair
Dover Independent Monitoring Board

GLOSSARY OF ESTABLISHMENT RELATED TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACDT	Assessment, Care-in-Detention and Teamwork (the care plans for detainees at special risk)
CCD	Criminal Casework Directorate (the UKBA directorate managing the cases of ex FNOs)
DDA	Detention Duty Advice Scheme
DEAT	Dover Equality Action Team
DEPMU	Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit
DIRC	Dover Immigration Removal Centre
DSO	Detention Services Order
Ex-FNO	Ex-Foreign National Offenders
HMCIP	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
HOIE	Home Office Immigration Enforcement
IMB	Independent Monitoring Board
IRC	Immigration Removal Centre
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
PSW	Peer Support Worker
RAPt	Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust