



Annual Report

of the

Independent Monitoring Board

for

**Brook House
Immigration Removal Centre**

1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014

INTRODUCTION

This report is presented by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) for Brook House Immigration Removal Centre and covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2014.

The IMB for Brook House acts as a 'watchdog' on behalf of the Home Secretary and the general public by providing independent oversight of the Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). All members are volunteers.

The Board monitors the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held in order to ensure that these men are treated with dignity and respect. It is also the duty of the IMB to monitor how the contractors, G4S, comply with the requirements of the Detention Centre Rules 2001.

The IMB works closely with the staff of Brook House whilst maintaining independence and impartiality. Members normally raise concerns with the management before taking them further. It is pleasing to report that the management and the vast majority of staff are most helpful which is of considerable assistance as we carry out our monitoring duties.

A detainee can make application to see a member of the IMB to discuss his problems relating to his stay in Brook House. Our remit does not include a detainee's immigration status.

Should they wish, staff are able to discuss their own problems with the IMB and they are assured of the utmost discretion.

Jacqueline Colbran

Chair Brook House IRC

Section 1

STATUTORY ROLE OF THE IMB

The Prison Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every prison and 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.

Each Board is specifically charged to:

- (1) satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in IRCs.
- (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 IRC 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 right of access to detainees, the centre and also to the centre's records.

IMB Diversity Statement

Brook House IMB is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses and promotes greater interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds including; race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age. We also recognise that this fully inclusive approach to diversity must respond to differences that cut across social and cultural categories such as mental health, literacy and drug addiction.

The Board respects this approach to diversity within its own recruitment and board development practices. All members of Brook House IMB endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is acceptable to everyone in the Centre regardless of their background or situation.

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Section 3

DESCRIPTION OF BROOK HOUSE IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE

Brook House is a purpose built Immigration Removal Centre which was opened in 2009. The maximum operating capacity is 448 and the actual throughput of men passing through the Centre in the past year was 10699. The main contractor, G4S, provides the service for Home Office Immigration and Enforcement.

The purpose-built structure is about 200 metres from the main runway at Gatwick Airport. It was built to Prison Category B standard to provide secure accommodation for men awaiting deportation from the UK.

The building comprises five wings of double rooms with communal corridors to connect. Each room has two beds, desks and shelving, a wall-mounted television, washbasin and screened-off lavatory. The detainees do not have keys to their rooms but each man has a lockable cupboard for his personal possessions. There are table tennis and pool tables and some games consoles in the communal areas on each wing and fixed tables and chairs where men may take their meals. Men are only allowed to smoke in their rooms and in external areas to which they have access. Except in exceptional circumstances smokers do not share rooms with non-smokers. The men are locked within their shared rooms from 21.00 until 08.00 hours and for 2 short periods during the day. Early in the year one room was prepared for 3-man occupancy. The Board was concerned about the effects this would have on three detainees obliged to share a small space and on the operation of the Centre. However, we have heard nothing further about plans to increase the population.

Each man is supplied with a mobile telephone on arrival so that he can maintain contact with his family, friends and solicitor. He can buy credit as required.

The small Healthcare Centre provides 24 hour healthcare. G4S Medical won the contract to continue to provide medical services in August 2014 when NHS England took over as the Commissioners.

The contract to provide the catering and cleaning and a modest shop for detainees is held by Aramark. It also provides a cultural kitchen where men under supervision can cook their own food.

Brook House is designed for short-term stays and there is a shortage of space for activities. Facilities include a suite of computers with limited internet access and a gym. The library, education and arts and crafts departments are provided and staffed within the G4S contract. There are four outside courtyards, one of which has been made into a garden and the others are used mainly as sports pitches.

An officer is available to give welfare advice. Diversity and safer community matters each have their own coordinator. These three areas give much needed support to detainees.

The Religious Affairs department offers facilities for all faiths.

Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group and the Samaritans visit the Centre to give support to detainees. The Home Office Immigration Enforcement Department has an office within the Centre.

Section 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The IMB board judges Brook House IRC to be a well-run centre. It provides a decent environment where detainees awaiting removal are treated humanely and fairly. Management has high expectations of staff and there are many examples of good and dedicated work by officers and managers with a continuing commitment to safety. The Board is pleasantly surprised how open management is to suggestion and constructive criticism. There is a real will among the management team appointed to run the Centre in September 2012 to seek to improve and a “can-do” culture. This attitude percolates to the officers in their attitude to the IMB, which is one of cooperation and helpfulness.

The limitations of space cannot be overcome but G4S has tried to utilise the buildings to the maximum to create opportunities for activities to occupy the detainees held within the Centre. Plans for further alterations are in the pipeline but held up by lack of Home Office funding.

Staff have confidence in managing detainees and, generally, there is mutual respect between officers and detainees.

Issues requiring a response:

Support for the Welfare Officer This was mentioned in last year’s Annual Report and the burden carried by the one officer has continued to increase (see Para 5.2). His role is so important the Board judges that urgent action is needed.

Size of Mosque for growing Muslim population This has been mentioned in the Annual Report for the last two years. That there is a need is agreed in principle, but it is proving less easy to achieve (see Para 5.2).

Post of Education Officer This post has been filled on a temporary basis for over a year now and the Board believes that a permanent appointment is now urgently required (see Para 5.3).

Night Transfer of Detainees The Board continues to be concerned about the number of detainees being moved at night for routine transfers including those between centres, and this is echoed by colleagues at other centres (see Para 5.11).

Lost property Can the over-all system for monitoring property be improved? (see Para 5.10)

Departure delays The ending of the dual exit system is likely to increase the delays experienced by detainees waiting to be processed for a charter departure. Can the agencies not guarantee arrivals will not happen during the departure period? (see Para 5.10).

Last year’s issues

The Board was pleased to note that almost all of the issues raised in last year’s report were accepted by the Home Office and G4S.

- **Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) being brought to Brook House for interviews with Embassy staff but refusing to return to prison.** The Home Office rejected this on the basis that time-served FNOs are now left at the IRC if the risk is deemed satisfactory

while the escort company are more effectively moving the others back to prisons as intended. To our mind this implies the Board was correct in identifying a problem which has thankfully been resolved and we agree it no longer appears to be an issue.

- The IMB does not see the full process of complaints that detainees make against the Immigration Service. While the Board Chair sees the majority of complaints made by detainees the IMB does not know the outcome of those against the Immigration Service. The Home Office accepted this and IRC Chairs are being kept aware of steps being taken to improve the whole complaints' process. When completed this should ensure Boards can better monitor the complaints process (see Para 5.9)
- Some men are advised to purchase their own flight ticket home yet there have been cases where the departure has not been facilitated. They then ask for a refund which is not forthcoming. The Home Office accepted this in principle, saying that the case workers assess whether a refund is appropriate, but agreed to monitor it. The Board has not seen further complaints on this subject.
- Detainees are affected by the shortcomings of the in-country and removals escorting contracts. The Home Office accepted that the escort provider had fallen short in providing a satisfactory service for a period but it, and the IMB, have noted a significant improvement. Aborted removals are more the exception now.
- The one Welfare Officer is in great need of support. Both Home Office and G4S agree with the IMB in principle that the Welfare Officer needs reinforcements and the subject has been aired frequently through the year but we are not quite there yet (see above).

All figures quoted throughout this report are based on the IMB's analysis of statistics supplied by the Contractor, G4S.

Section 5

5.1 Population

The Board is pleased to report that a stay in Brook House is usually short. The average stay fluctuates considerably month by month but over the last four months of 2014 was 56 days. At the end of the year there was one detainee who had been in detention at Brook House for longer than two years and 4 for longer than a year. The Home Office updates the Board on a monthly basis on progress but this can be very slow indeed in the most difficult cases where a detainee refuses to cooperate and proof of origin can be very difficult to obtain.

Many men arrive in the Centre for very short periods before their scheduled or charter flights. The Board is aware that the fast turn-around of the population puts stresses on the operation of the Centre. The discharge and reception areas are regularly working at full capacity. This is especially noticeable when charter flights are being assembled. There are men arriving and leaving at all times of the day and night. Most of the night movements are unavoidable and related to airport departures (but see Para 5.11). New arrivals have to be settled and assessed quickly to establish that they can cope with life at Brook House. The larger Arun Wing has now become the Induction Wing for men coming in to the Centre.

Just under 6400 detainees arrived at Brook House during the reporting period and just under 3500 left for flights out of the country; the others being transferred or released. The Centre has been the departure point for more charter flights than in previous years. 1185 detainees left on charter flights in the reporting period.

Serving Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) arrive at the Centre for consular visits or other similar meetings. These prisoners are usually held on Eden Wing as they cannot mix with

the other detainees. Home Office policy is now to accommodate time-served FNOs in the removal centres unless the nature of their crime or behavior dictates it is safer they should remain in prison. In the last four months of the year FNOs represented on average 22% of the population at Brook House. Just before a charter there is likely to be an influx of these men from the prisons. They, and detainees likely to resist removal, are also accommodated on Eden Wing.

There was a very quiet period in August when the Centre was closed for the chicken pox outbreak and, with the summer lull, it took weeks to build up again to normal numbers.

5.2 Equality and Inclusion

The Board is impressed with the leadership of this area, feeling it has a real interest in and respect for the widely diverse cultures and religions among the Centre's population. Detainees in Brook House come from all over the world – in December 2014 there were 76 nationalities speaking many different languages and they will be of different ages, religions, etc. IMB members often attend the regular monthly Equality meetings, when there is usually a good representation of detainees ready and willing to participate with their concerns, alongside staff from all relevant areas. An excellent report published monthly contains clearly laid out information on all aspects of equality.

A programme of cultural celebrations runs throughout the year and the Centre celebrates most national days; All Nations Week, Black Awareness Week, Chinese New Year, Holocaust Remembrance Day. The end of Ramadan was celebrated with prayers and a special Eid meal was provided for the whole Centre. This year there was no involvement of outside guests at the Christmas service which made it less of a feature for the Christian community. The Carol Concert took place instead of the usual Sunday service and was an exhilarating experience with detainees providing music. The Women's Institute made a small present to each man in the Centre of a card and a pair of socks and the Kitchen provided a special meal. Some of the smaller religious groups are not catered for but the Chaplaincy will do their best for them.

The Centre is meeting the needs of most faiths but struggles with the high numbers of Muslim residents. There are frequently well over 200 at Friday prayers, more than 50% of the total population. Finding space for a bigger mosque has, therefore, been an urgent problem for the past years, mentioned by the IMB in its last two Annual Reports and by HMCIP in its inspection of 2013. Friday prayers currently takes place in the Visits' Hall rather than the mosque. The Board is aware of on-going discussions and of the difficulties involved and hopes a solution can be found in the coming year. The celebration of Ramadan began in June this year. The large number of men observing Ramadan has a significant impact upon the regime and the operation of the kitchen. Other than a hiccup on the first day, when Muslim detainees considered the cold provisions in their overnight pack unfair, the IMB observed that the preparations by Chaplaincy and Centre had been well-made and functioned smoothly. Kitchen management deserves much praise for its work ensuring that the hot meals and cold were prepared and ready for the breaking of fast each evening, in spite of working at the time with equipment problems. The Board took the opportunity to welcome one of the Imams to a board meeting so it would be better informed.

One officer works full-time to help detainees with any welfare problems they may experience. His brief covers any topic from a man's family welfare to dealing with his missing property. He is doing an excellent job but it is apparent to the Board that another person is needed urgently to help in this role in order to provide proper cover throughout the week. As an indication of the workload in December the one officer covered 1044 sessions in the 22.5 working days, spread across 56 different nationalities. The Board always notes a queue waiting outside his door in opening hours to ask for help.

The majority of men arriving in Brook House are aged below thirty five years and are physically able. A physically impaired detainee can be given one of the few ground floor rooms with showers but, as most of the various activities available to detainees are located on the upper floors, the Centre is not ideally suited to these men.

The IMB received no specifically racial applications in 2014 and the Centre a total of 17, none of which were upheld as racially motivated on investigation. Both the Board and the Equalities manager are of the opinion that this correctly reflects the atmosphere in the Centre – equality raised in a complaint is usually shorthand for anger about another issue.

5.3 Education Learning and Skills

Both Art and Education rooms are a pleasure for IMB members to visit, hives of activity with hugely committed teachers. Both work well with other departments in the Centre, for example running activities associated with the diversity programme. There is some evening activity. The Board could only wish for better facilities, space-wise and more instructor hours.

The art work produced by detainees under the care of the resident tutor is of a very high standard. It is well displayed around Brook House and softens the somewhat sterile environment. This year the art department has provided work for the walls of Healthcare and ran an anti-bullying poster design competition in conjunction with Safer Community. There were several entries from detainees for the annual Koestler awards in October at South Bank and Brook House detainees achieved both a Commendation and First Time Entrants award. Teacher and detainees are already well on their way with preparations for the next one. A poetry book has been produced for the Koestler awards and copies put in the Centre library. One detainee is preparing work hoping to apply to the Koestler mentoring scheme.

The education classroom has been blessed with a highly enthusiastic teacher this year who has worked imaginatively to involve detainees and introduced many initiatives. Despite the small classroom space which is risk assessed for only 18, he has evolved a system of different groups working on different topics, often with a detainee as classroom assistant. This includes the English (ESOL) courses, as well as Spanish and French. He runs short courses on a variety of topics: Health and Safety in the Kitchen and Served, Drug Use, Life in the UK. These have a dual function of improving English as well as providing much needed mental stimulus for detainees. Sometimes he shows a film and then holds a discussion group on the topic. On one occasion he organized a paella session. Board members often meet the teacher touting for business around the wings. Attendance is high and comments positive. In the Safer Community survey mentioned elsewhere, his classroom was noted as the safest place in the Centre. Throughout the year the teaching post has been filled on a temporary basis and the Board believes that this facility would benefit from a substantive appointment.

5.4 Healthcare and Mental Health

In August it was announced that G4S Medical had won the new contract to provide health care services under the new commissioners, NH England. IMB attendance at governance meetings and reports from healthcare management indicate that some positive and exciting changes are in the offing.

Healthcare has to deal with a very needy population within the Centre. Many men arrive with apparent mental health issues or behavioural problems. These men may be in considerable distress at what is happening to them and are, perhaps, facing their first time in detention. Self-harming and the threat of self-harm is frequent. A common sight when members visit Eden Wing is to see an officer sitting outside one of the two constant watch rooms watching and making 5-minute observations in the record. The department has also had to deal with several cases of TB, or suspected TB over the year and in August there was a total closure

of the Centre to arrivals and departures because of an outbreak of chicken pox. It was successfully contained.

When mental illness is diagnosed detainees will generally be held in the Care and Separation unit and, if necessary, transferred to a secure mental health unit elsewhere. In the past this process has been very slow. Detainees with severe mental health issues can be cared for but not treated adequately in a Removal Centre. Under the new plans there is to be an increase in mental health nurses (RMNs), a new post of Learning Disability nurse, regular visits from a psychiatrist and links are being made with the local mental health unit so that transfers, where deemed necessary, are easier. Mental health transfers are taking place within the guidelines. An Emotional Welfare group is also to be offered to detainees needing such support in the New Year.

A new initiative - the Supported Living Plan - was introduced in October, partially in response to a suggestion from HMCIP. This is completed by the reception nurse at a detainee's initial interview on arrival, providing that the detainee is willing to share his health concerns with staff. The idea is that officers have access to this document and with that knowledge better support the individual. Take up has been slow but as staff become accustomed to them they should prove a useful tool.

We understand from the healthcare manager relatively few complaints are received. It has to be said that applications to the IMB concerning healthcare are joint second highest (see Annex B). Detainees often seem to disagree with their medication or treatment. Much of healthcare has to be confidential, but the IMB meets with helpful responses from medical staff when investigating detainees' queries and complaints. Explanations are clear and as far as the Board can judge detainees receive the care they need.

Covering nursing vacancies has been problematic at periods during the year, not helped by the lengthy recruitment process and the need to wait for security clearance. Potential new staff sometimes give up and take a job elsewhere. In the Board's opinion the recruitment and maintaining of a full healthcare team is a priority, not only to assist the detainees but to relieve pressure on the team

Healthcare has a satisfactory arrangement with Boots at Gatwick for the provision of medication. Orders are faxed and the target is delivery within 24 hours. Controlled drugs are not used in the Centre so anyone needing them would be transferred to another IRC.

5.5 Purposeful Activity

Considering the limitations of what was designed as a short term facility every effort is made by staff to provide detainees with activities which are meaningful and attractive to the different age groups and cultures. Detainees are unlocked for a total of 13 hours a day. There are currently 133 paid work spaces, some full and some part time, which provide those who choose to work with a small source of income as well as giving the men a sense of self-worth and contributing to the smooth running of the Centre. These cover activities such as cleaning the wings, running the laundry room, cooking and serving meals and acting as orderlies for the other areas of centre life. The Gym, Library and IT rooms are available daily, supervised by an officer. A Yoga class is available fortnightly. There is a music room run by Chaplaincy. Education and the Art Rooms are open 25 hours a week, including some evenings. There is a sporting activity every day – the courtyards resound to the noise of vigorous football games. The Cultural Kitchen where, under the supervision of the contractor Aramark, men can prepare food according to their own culture and preferences and enjoy meals they have cooked with their friends is in great demand and well appreciated by detainees. Quizzes, competitions, bingo and computer games are regular features. A recent addition to facilities has been the conversion of a surplus WC into a barber's shop, complete

with striped pole outside the door. The activities programme is detainee-led through a steering committee. The Board praises the efforts of all staff involved.

5.6 Safer Community

Regular monthly meetings are held, which representatives of the detainees attend and in which they participate freely. These orderlies take their role very seriously, identifying and supporting needy detainees and bringing problems to the notice of officers and managers. A question always asked at the meeting is whether they feel safe in the Centre. There was a Safer Community Survey mid-year of all detainees: 87% saying they felt safe or very safe.

A number of men find detention in a removal centre to be a distressing experience and threats and indeed incidents of self-harm do occur. The Centre has monitoring procedures in place (ACDTs = Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork) and men at risk are included in planning their own care programme. An average of 27 detainees in Brook House were on ACDTs each month, a proportion of whom will have arrived with one already in place from a previous place. This is usually because an observant officer or other staff member notices a man appears low in mood or there has been an act or threat of self-harm, including frequent food refusals. In extreme cases this may require a man to be kept under constant supervision. The Board accepts that this level of care may be necessary, but it is a great intrusion upon a man's privacy and a drain on available staff resources. Are there more appropriate ways of dealing with these needy men? Certainly, where mental illness is diagnosed as a factor the Board is pleased to note that greater urgency is now given to the transfer of those assessed as needing specialist care.

Another aspect of Safer Community which is monitored is bullying. The officer in charge suspects by its nature this is under-reported, though in the survey mentioned above 86% claimed not to have been bullied at Brook House and 84% were not aware of any bullying having taken place. Plans are afoot to highlight bullying with posters and booklets produced in various languages advising how a detainee should report his concerns, including a hotline to the coordinator. A course of 4 sessions is being offered to detainees explaining what bullying is and how it can be tackled. When a fight occurs between two detainees DCMs now check that bullying is not at issue.

The shop is a popular and well-stocked resource but can be an area of friction – detainees complain about staff and staff about detainees. There is often a lot of noise in the area. Much is explainable by misunderstandings. A microphone has been installed and closing times are clearly posted.

5.7 Care and Separation and Constant Supervision

The table below shows a significant increase in 2014 in the number of detainees held in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) under Rule 40. The number of disruptive incidents resulting in detainees being held under Rule 42 and the occasions force was used is broadly the same. The IMB is always advised of any detainee being put on Rule 40 (removal from association) or the much rarer Rule 42 (temporary confinement). Detainees are almost always held for a minimal period in CSU and following a satisfactory review restored to normal location. The increase in the use of Rule 40 can largely be explained by unusual spikes: an incident involving nine detainees hoping to abandon their Jamaican nationality in April, two incidents of concerted indiscipline by large groups of Albanians disgruntled by their non-removal, one in May and one in August and occasional particularly disruptive detainees. When the Command Suite is opened, as happened in the incidents of concerted indiscipline, the IMB is in attendance to monitor throughout. In the many situations they have observed the Board reports highly professional conduct. Officers and management are at pains to reduce confrontation and avoid the use of force unless absolutely necessary to ensure everyone's safety.

Statistics for the Use of Removal from Association and Temporary Confinement

	2014	2013(9mths)	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
No of admissions to RFA (Rule 40)	281	157	752	644	1644
No of admissions to TC (Rule 42)	25	19	25	49	85
Number of times when force was used (C&R) (Rule 41)	134	93	108	112	110

N.B; the significant decline in the number of Rule 40 admissions in 2013 compared to previous years was largely the result of a policy change whereby serving prisoners, arriving at Brook House for interview or removal, were not automatically held in the CSU on Rule 40.

5.8 Residential Services

The atmosphere on the residential Wings is usually calm, with detainees going about their daily activities, using the showers and laundry, playing pool, eating communally and talking.

Food tends to be an emotive topic. Detainees choose in advance from a varied menu. Fresh fruit and vegetables, soup and sauces accompany the main dishes. It is impossible to serve foods to suit everyone all the time, with some sixty-five nationalities who are from time to time in residence. There are complaints about the size of food portions or because the food is too spicy, or not spicy enough, but it is the Board's view, observing and sampling meals as it does, that the Kitchen does a good job. Managers runs a monthly food forum for each wing, which is an opportunity to express opinions, complaints and suggestions. Detainees need to be encouraged to take advantage of this.

There was a period in the first part of the year when G4S staffing levels were affected by a central failure to ensure staff certification was kept up to date, resulting in a number of officers being suspended from duty while their clearances were renewed. The Board was assured that detainees were not adversely affected. By the end of the year a significant number of officers had resigned leaving gaps in key areas. In November-December the Board picked up grumbles from wing officers about the shortage of colleagues to cover duties. We were told that often wings only had 2 officers which they felt insufficient to cope with the myriad demands on their time. In addition, there were occasions when officers were unable to have lunch breaks until late because of lack of a relief. This was particularly acute when a big charter group was leaving. At the same time there was an increase in complaints from detainees about rude, unhelpful attitudes of staff towards them, both to the IMB and in the ones directed to the Centre management that we have seen. This came as a surprise to Board members, who usually see good rapport between officers and detainees. We wonder if there is a connection between these things. The Board understands that management is aware and intends to take steps.

5.9 Home Office Immigration Staff

There were many changes within the Home Office during the first half of the year; vacant posts, senior members of staff moved to other offices to help out and staff acting up to cover such absences. The department was pushed to cover its workload and the Board was not always confident that detainees were seen within target times. Talking to detainees, the impression was sometimes they were lacking information. A quick look at the applications

received by the IMB shows those concerning immigration issues top the list by far. Often detainees hope the IMB can sway decisions but our remit does not include a detainee's immigration status. There were two concerted indiscipline incidents in May and August, both triggered when groups of a certain nationality had their flights cancelled. This was through no fault of the Home Office at Brook House but could perhaps have been communicated better. The Board understands lessons have been learnt and managers are confident a repetition is unlikely. Our judgement at the end of the reporting period is that the Immigration team is committed to completing the reception interviews and the monthly reports, which now have to be given in person to the detainee, within the correct timeframe. Recent successful recruitment is encouraging for the department and a new managerial post has been created to oversee all the Gatwick immigration facilities. The IMB finds the local office unfailingly helpful with its queries.

All complaints from detainees, excepting medical ones, are processed by the Immigration staff who forward them in the first place to the Detention Services Complaints Team. Those which concern the contractors are then returned to Brook House and dealt with locally, apart from more serious complaints which would be investigated by the Professional Standards Unit in Croydon. The IMB is given access to all complaints and receives copies of the replies from those involving the contractors but not those involving Immigration. That the IMB needs to see and monitor answers was raised as an issue in last year's Annual Report and the Home Office accepted a solution was needed. We are aware that an Immigration director has recently been given the specific remit to look at the whole question of complaints. We are informed this will include the unwieldy format of the reply template, IMB access to answers and the circuitous route complaints take. We await developments confident of a good outcome.

An issue picked up by a board member was that of the flight manifests and how the initial estimate of those travelling steadily reduces towards the time of the flight. In a particular example 43 detainees to travel and 8 reserves one week before the flight had become 17 to travel and no reserves on the day, but the same two large coaches turned up. We appreciate a number of factors are outside Home Office control, such as asylum applications, and judicial reviews – but it would seem an inefficient and time-consuming system, of little help to the detainees in many respects.

5.10 Reception and Discharge

Arrivals and departures from the Centre are day and night. The Board observes that both Centre staff and those employed by Tascor, the escorting contractor, behave professionally and courteously, often under the considerable stress of a large-scale charter departure. The processes must be daunting to detainees; searches by Brook House officers and again by Tascor staff, property checks, the signing of four or five forms, which are explained but one wonders if all understand. Above all is the stress of the length of time it takes to process everyone. In one instance when one of our members was monitoring a charter departure, the first detainee left the wing at 16.05 and the eighth and last was still not on the coach by 17.25. Most charters are much bigger. Then if, as in our example, the flight does not leave until 23.00 that means a long wait in the coach, waiting room and airport. The Board acknowledges Brook House has made attempts to reduce waiting times. Departing detainees are no longer all left sitting in a spartan waiting room to be called to the desk but remain on the wing as long as possible. Another innovation was the introduction of dual exiting – using both reception and departure channels to process detainees, a first in the country. Its success depended on cooperation from all agencies, particularly DEPMU and the in-country Tascor team, to respect the need to halt all transfers into Brook House until the charter detainees had left the establishment. Unfortunately, this proved impossible to achieve and the initiative foundered at the end of the year.

Another complaint the IMB frequently hears is that of property lost. This happens at other centres, during transfer between centres and once detainees arrive at Brook House. It can be very distressing for men and can involve items of considerable emotional value for them. Considerable efforts are made to locate property and managers will uphold claims for compensation where there is clear evidence that Brook House is responsible. However, the Board understands there is no card system to itemise property brought into the Centre, such as there is in the prison system. It can be difficult for detainees to prove their loss. The Board understands that individual checking and recording of items might delay the constant throughput of arrivals and departures. Might there be a better way of dealing with this?

5.11 In-country and Removals Escorting Contractor

The Board is pleased to note that many of the problems mentioned in last year's report as being experienced with the escorting contractor Tascor have been resolved during 2014.

Instances such as men missing their flights because the escorting team has not arrived in time or failing to send the correct team for a difficult removal are more exceptional. An issue raised in last year's report was that often a man's property was searched out of his sight in the departure area. Belongings kept in a numbered, sealed bag should only be opened in the presence of the detainee who then signs that all his valuables are leaving with him. Board members saw no evidence of incorrect procedures over this year.

One matter which has concerned boards in immigration centres nationally is that of unnecessary night moves, sometimes, we suspect, for convenience of the contractor. The principle appears to be accepted by senior Home Office management that it is not decent to move an immigration detainee from one centre to another in uncivilized hours, disturbing his sleep as well as that of other detainees who may even be sharing a room with him. The Board understands that under the contract Tascor provides a 24-hour escort service and it may well be convenient, and sometimes essential, for them to use a team in the quieter hours of the night or when a vehicle is going in the same general direction for another purpose. From examining the records the Board sees that the majority of night moves, ie between 23.00 pm and 07.00 am, are due to flight departures. In December we calculate that about 20% of the departures during these hours were to other immigration centres or prisons. We think this worth continuing to monitor.

Section 6

THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

The somewhat dismal state of membership at the start of the reporting period has largely been rectified with more members on the board and four more very close to appointment as we start the new year. Most board meetings have begun with a training session to inform members about aspects of the Centre. In our turn the Board has been involved with the induction of each new intake of officers. Most members enjoyed and successfully completed the personal protection course run by the Use of Force department. Other activities have been a visit HMP East Sutton open women's establishment, the Immigration Workshop at a Croydon hotel over two days and the IMB Annual Conference in Leicestershire in February. This was the triennial year since its last reappointment, so the Board carried out an assessment exercise of each member's effectiveness. Pleasingly, all members were recommended for reappointment by the Minister for the next three years.

One rota member covers the week, carrying out monitoring visits, attending meetings, dealing with applications from detainees and taking out of hours' calls, including the initial response to a serious incident. As the Board increases it may be possible to expand the number of rota members weekly and provide better coverage.

Annex A – Summary of applications to IMB

Code	Subject	2014	2013 9 mths	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
A	Accommodation	2	13	18	8	1
C	Diversity related	1	0	2	1	4
D	Education/employment/activities	4	2	4	7	2
E	Family/Visits	1	0	0	2	2
F	Food	8	4	8	12	2
G	Health Related	14	7	20	13	17
H	Property	9	4	12	16	16
I	Concerning Immigration Status	23	36	49	42	43
J	Staff/detainee related	14	4	9	14	17
K	Transfers	5	3	12	3	8
L	Miscellaneous	1	8	1	4	
M	Matter settled or detainee no longer in Centre	14	10	6	5	
	Total (excluding M)	82	91	141	127	125

During the reporting year the IMB has had relatively few application from detainees to answer. It is true that the IMB often pick up queries as they make their way round the wings

and these are often resolvable on the spot with a word of advice. However, the Board largely feels this is due to the excellent service provided by the Welfare Officer (see Para 5.2). Looking at the spread of subjects, immigration issues, healthcare, staff attitudes and food are the principle subjects the IMB have dealt with and these are dealt with more fully in the appropriate section of the report.

Annex B – The work of the IMB

Board Statistics	2014	2013 9mths only	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
Recommended complement of Board Members	12	12	12	12	12
Number of members at start of reporting period	4	5	8	9	5
Number of members at the end of reporting period	6	6	5	8	9
Number of new members joining	4	1	2	1	5
Number of members leaving	2	1	5	2	1
Total number of Board meetings	12	8	11	12	12
No of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	33	18	40	47	35
Total number of visits to the IRC including all meetings	189	168	220 approx.	246	191
Total number of applications received	83	91	141	127	125
Date of ATPR	22/10/14				

