



C E D A R S

Pre-Departure Accommodation

Independent Monitoring Board

2014 Annual Report

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Chair
On behalf of the IMB Board

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Section 1

Statutory Role of the IMB

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 requires every immigration removal centre to be monitored by an independent board appointed by the Secretary of State. The board is represented by members of the community in which the 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 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 residents, the centre, and also to the centre's records.

This report has been produced to fulfil our obligation under (3) above.

IMB Diversity Statement

Members of the Cedars Independent Monitoring Board, ("the Board"), are committed to an inclusive approach to diversity, and one which promotes interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds. Our commitment encompasses race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability and age.

The Board also recognise that a full and inclusive approach to diversity must respond to differences that cut across social and cultural categories such as: mental health, literacy and substance abuse.

This approach to diversity is incorporated in our recruitment procedures and board development practices. The Board aims to increase its repertoire of skills and awareness and ensure it is able to positively reflect the diverse needs of the population within Cedars.

All members of the Board will endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is acceptable to everyone within Cedars regardless of their background or social situation. The Board will monitor to establish that the experience and interaction between staff, residents and visitors is fair and without prejudice. Where this is not the case, the Board will alert appropriate authorities and individuals including the respective managers, Director of the Returns Directorate, and the IMB Secretariat.

Introduction

This report is presented by the Independent Monitoring Board for Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA). It should be seen as a sequel to our 2013 annual report, and covers the period January to December 2014.

The Board sees its primary role as ensuring that all residents of Cedars are cared for humanely and with dignity. As Board members we are committed to the task entrusted to us. Our concerns for the establishment are expressed in the body of the report, and form the basis of the recommendations we make. The figures quoted in this report are based on the IMB's analysis of statistics supplied by the Home Office Immigration Enforcement Team, G4S, and local records. These statistics have not been independently audited.

For ease of reference our key findings and recommendations are summarised in the Executive Summary of the report, on page 8.

Section 2

About Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation

Cedars Pre-Departure Accommodation, (PDA), is located near Gatwick Airport in West Sussex. It provides accommodation for families subject to immigration control before their removal from the UK. Families are only held at Cedars as a last resort, and when all other options such as the assisted voluntary return process have failed.

Cedars was opened in August 2011 and is so named after the principles staff work to, namely: Compassion, Empathy, Dignity, Approachability, Respect and Support. Its purpose is to ensure that the highest level of care and support is provided to immigration families prior to their removal from the United Kingdom. A red cedar tree believed to be 200 years old is located in the grounds.

There are 9 self-contained apartments of varying sizes capable of accommodating a total of 44 people. Each apartment has a kitchen and lounge area, family bathroom and between 1 and 3 bedrooms for up to 6 people. One apartment, Snowdrop, is compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act, and two apartments, Lavender and Orchid are designed for vulnerable individuals with behaviour management needs. There is also a 'cool down' separation room. All apartments are designed to create a family-friendly environment.

Cedars is run by three agencies: Home Office Immigration Enforcement which has overall responsibility for overseeing the contracted services provided by G4S. G4S are also responsible for providing security services and facilities management. Barnardo's provide welfare, safeguarding, and social care services to the families. The immigration team have no hand in immigration casework but act as the main conduit of information between the residents.

Families are referred to Cedars on the advice of the Independent Family Returns Panel, which is an independent body of child welfare experts. They are taken to Cedars as a matter of exception. Residents will typically stay for up to 72 hours before their removal from the UK. However, in exceptional circumstances, and with ministerial authority, this may be extended to 7 days.

Families are free to move about the interior of the facility at all times, and have unrestricted movement within the grounds during daylight hours. They may also leave the facility with a staff escort for supervised activities. Families can eat in the communal areas or take food from the cafeteria to cook in their own apartments. Other facilities include:

- several lounges and play areas for children
- a fitness center, basketball court, and equipment for football and other outdoor sports
- a well-stocked library offering a range of books in different languages and suitable for different age groups
- access to information technology, and controlled access to the internet
- 24 hour healthcare, including daily access to a GP
- chaplaincy support including a multi-faith prayer room and mosque

Residents also have access to organized recreational activities, childcare staff, qualified social workers, and welfare and counselling support to enable families to prepare for their return and receive assistance to manage emotional distress.

Legal advice is available and all newly arrived families are offered access to a solicitor. The take up of this facility is variable as most residents will already have sought legal advice before arriving at Cedars. During the reporting period 5 families requested help from the legal duty advice service.

Population Profile during 2014

Fewer families were held at Cedars during 2014 than in the previous year, and the number of individuals detained has clearly fallen as a result of changes in procedures. 18 families were accommodated during the reporting period, showing a marked reduction.

	2014	2013
Total families accommodated:	18	42
Men	6	17
Women	16	49
Children	32	99
Average length of stay	3.25 days	3 days
Number of pregnant women held	1	Not recorded
Longest length of stay	111 hrs 27 mins	144 hrs

The families represented 8 different nationalities of which the top three were Pakistan, Nigeria and Albania. The top three religions were Christian, Muslim and Jehovah's Witness.

Of the 18 families, 10 were removed from the UK, and 8 were released into the community.

Although considerable efforts were made to avoid the use of force during residents' stay, force was used on two separate occasions both due to adult residents attempting to harm themselves.

- On one occasion an adult male tried to harm himself by banging his head on a table. Force was used to prevent him further harming himself, and assist with moving him to another area of the Centre.
- On a separate occasion a female resident self-harmed by cutting her wrist with a cutlery knife. She was helped to her feet by two officers, and received care.

On both occasions we considered the intervention used was proportionate.

Suicide and self-harm procedures (ACRT's) were initiated 7 times, and there were 2 recorded incidents of actual self-harm. On 4 occasions residents needed to be placed on constant watch. One family was detained on more than one occasion.

Utilisation of Cedars

Barnardo's association with Cedars is determined by a published set of "Red Lines". These outline the terms of their involvement for providing family support to the Centre. The conditions are underpinned by robust policies covering child welfare and safeguarding. One such condition requires that not more than ten percent of the families going through the Family Returns Process are held at Cedars. As a result Barnardo's have expressed the opinion that the underutilisation of Cedars is a testament to the success of the returns process, and that more families are now accepting assisted voluntary return.

Section 3

Executive Summary

This is the IMB's second report of Cedars and our overall findings are positive. Conditions at the Centre have been consistently good, and we are satisfied that the ethos of respect and care was maintained throughout. The dedication, training and commitment of staff across all levels have clearly contributed to this. The IMB's effectiveness has been enhanced by the sound working relationship established with senior management and staff across all the three agencies.

Recommendations

As stated above, we feel the services at Cedars were operated to a high standard. The concerns and recommendations outlined below are not specific to Cedars, but rather to wider immigration policies and procedures which the PDA is subject to. We will continue to raise these concerns until the issues are improved:

1. Detention of pregnant women

Although there was only one instance of a pregnant woman being held at Cedars the Board recommend that pregnant women should only be detained in exceptional circumstances, and that future detention of pregnant women in immigration removal establishments should only be considered in line with the Home Office's published policy on the detention of pregnant women.

2. Family splits

The number of families separated during the removal and returns process was not recorded locally, and as a result accurate data was not available at the time of reporting. However, we express our concerns based on the anecdotal reports received of family separations during their arrest, and family members escorted in separate vehicles over long distances, and whilst at their most vulnerable.

The Board recommend that the Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit (DEPMU), and Home Office Arrest Team Managers should conduct more frequent and robust monitoring of the teams responsible for the arrest and escorting of families, so that the effects can be monitored and appropriate training given.

The Board further recommend that any potential family split should take place for the shortest possible time, and only as part of a justified and documented return plan or contingency. As such, family splits should be authorised by the Minister and the outcome reviewed by all agencies

3. Night moves

An area of continued concern had been the level of distress caused to families and their children when transported over considerable distances late at night or during the early hours of the morning.

The Board echo previous concerns regarding the night-time transportation of vulnerable families and their children. We acknowledge that in a number of cases such moves are determined by the availability of scheduled flights. However we are aware that families are often left waiting at airports for long periods thereby adding to an already stressful experience. Wherever possible night-time moves should be avoided, failing which the reason (or reasons) for night-time moves should be recorded locally in writing.

4. In-country arrest and escort

Escort staff were generally sensitive to the needs of families during the removal process, by providing appropriate care and ensuring families were treated with dignity and respect. However, we learned of anecdotal reports of families subjected to disproportionate and heavy handed treatment at the point of arrest, which would have been upsetting for the children witnessing such treatment.

The Board recommend the Immigration Compliance Engagement Team should undertake safeguarding training, which should be refreshed regularly, and all team members should be familiar with safeguarding policy and protocols.

Section 4 - Areas of general interest

Operational management

We are pleased to report that Cedars was managed and operated to a high standard during 2014. This was largely attributed to the collaborative efforts of the three agencies, (Home Office Immigration, G4S and Barnardo's). The agencies each have very distinct roles, and in our opinion staff worked effectively in promoting the care and welfare of the residents at Cedars. The relationship between the management teams and members of the IMB continues to be one of mutual respect and appreciation of the tasks in which all are involved.

The Home Office Immigration Enforcement Team have overall responsibility for the management of the Centre, and the detailed preparation of the family welfare data. G4S have responsibility for the Centre's operational management and security facilities. Family activities are also overseen by their Family Care Officers. Barnardo's provided a good level of family support, including social work and welfare protection services to the children and families accommodated within Cedars. Notable contributions during the reporting period included: the provision of training on Safeguarding and Child Development for inter-agency staff; and preparation of "Family Information Packs", which provided tailored information and advice to assist families with their reintegration when returned to their final destination. These have generally been well received, especially where parents had not prepared children for their return, and therefore left them confused about the removal and return process.

A key feature of the inter-agency working arrangement is the regular joint reviews undertaken after a difficult and often challenging family removal. "Lessons Learned" practice reviews were attended by representatives from the three agencies to discuss the issues, and where appropriate develop action plans for improvement. The meetings were chaired by either a Barnardo's manager or social work practitioner, or a Home Office manager. The IMB were notified of all lessons learned reviews, and had the opportunity to observe the meetings and contribute to the discussions.

The following section considers the operational activities undertaken by the agencies to ensure the smooth running of the Centre.

The Residential Environment

Cedars operates a safe and secure regime within a family friendly environment. The PDA is surrounded by boundary fences, and families are allowed pre-arranged supervised trips outside the grounds, subject to a risk assessment.

It is our opinion the residential services were provided to a good level, and the facilities maintained to a high standard. One of the apartments, Tulip, underwent extensive refurbishment following storm damage earlier in the year. The Centre's low occupancy during the reporting period has enabled staff to focus on regular contingency exercises including training in security procedures. Time was spent reviewing policies, and increasing staff's professional attainment thus making good use of the available time. A total of 18 contingency exercises were conducted during 2014.

Education, Learning and Purposeful Activities

There is a good range of facilities and equipment available to Cedars' residents. Activities on the whole were well planned, including age appropriate and stimulating activities for children. The indoor facilities include a well-equipped play area for younger children, a multi-sensory room, and a lounge and gymnasium for older children. The small library is well stocked, and includes six computers with controlled internet access, a printer, and a range of newspapers and magazines. All residents are allowed to have a mobile phone which does not have a camera or internet access. The outdoor facilities include landscaped gardens, a variety of play areas and a basketball court which can also be used for football and other sports.

Cedars does not provide schooling facilities for children due to families average length of stay of 72 hours. This generally does not allow sufficient time to receive school reports or make continuing education arrangements. Where possible the Family Returns Team will try to obtain up to date school reports in advance or during the family's stay, and if requested Barnardo's will develop educational activities specific to the needs of a family within the time constraints.

Healthcare

The Centre has access to healthcare facilities including registered mental health nursing. We consider the quality of healthcare was of an appropriate standard and included provisions for residents with stress-related behavioural problems. During the reporting period a total of 7 assessment care plans (ACRT's) were opened for residents to enable staff to better manage and reduce their distress. A registered children's nurse was also available, and staff had child safeguarding training.

There was one emergency hospital visit during the reporting period to investigate a family member reporting chest pains.

Care Assessments

Throughout the reporting period the IMB operated an on-call and weekly visits rota as part of our monitoring role. We received regular statistics covering security issues, reports of incidents, and notifications of where the Assessment, Care in Residence and Teamwork (ACRT) procedures were applied. ACRT's were raised, usually because of self-harm or child safeguarding concerns. There were 2 recorded instances of actual self-harm. We were able to attend case reviews, lessons learned, and safeguarding meetings which were held at regular intervals, and plans for improvement were usually actioned promptly. During the reporting period suicide and self-harm procedures were initiated 7 times.

Catering

The food available to residents was of a consistently high quality. Families were able to dine together or cook for themselves in the well-equipped kitchens, or eat in their apartments. Every effort was made to meet family's individual dietary requirement and residents were regularly consulted to ensure their preferences were catered for.

Family Separation

Where there is the potential for a family member to become disruptive and frustrate the removal process the family may be separated in order to foster compliance.

According to Home Office policy, families may be separated: 'where there is potential for an ensured return to fail as a result of disruptive behaviour by the family, and it is considered in the best interests of the children to be temporarily separated from their parent(s) in order to safely ensure the family's return'. In our experience Cedars Immigration Enforcement team have sought wherever possible to avoid separating families during their stay at the PDA, and during the removals process from the PDA. The process was used sparingly in 2014, and on the occasion family members were separated the resident concerned was transferred to Brook House on the advice of the Family Returns Panel. The number of families separated during the removal and returns process was not recorded locally and was not available at the time of reporting.

Arrest and Escort

Although residents generally speak highly about their treatment at Cedars, the IMB have been informed of heavy handed treatment by arrest and escort staff. On one occasion we were informed that a father and his son were separated from his wife and daughter on arrest. The father arrived at the Centre with superficial injuries to his head which he sustained when attempting to run away. His distress was further compounded because the locks on his house were changed after his arrest preventing access to the family's remaining possessions. Fortunately Cedars Immigration and Enforcement Team were able to track down the new keys which were placed with the local police for safe keeping.

On a separate occasion, and just prior to our 2014 reporting period, a family arrived at Cedars with few belongings, and on arrest the children were dressed in wet clothing by the arrest team and brought to Cedars dressed in pyjamas. During 2014 we learned of further anecdotal reports of families subjected to disproportionate and heavy handed treatment at the point of arrest which would have been upsetting for the children witnessing such treatment. One such incident resulted in the family making a formal complaint.

We do not monitor the arrest or in-country escort teams, or the methods they use to expedite the removal process. This is outside our remit. However, we raise the above concerns on behalf of the residents in the expectation that arrest and escort procedures will improve.

Use of Force

Force, mostly of a low level nature was used on 2 occasions. The force used was proportionate and used for the safety for the individuals, and did not include the use of handcuffs.

Our previous concern about the initiation of force / physical intervention against pregnant women and children has been allayed as staff have since been instructed not to use force against them unless it is to prevent harm. This has been the case during the reporting period.

Diversity and Equality

The Board can confirm that the Cedars ethos of diversity, equality and inclusion has been a common theme across all the Centre's activities.

The Diversity and Equality Committee was set up under the leadership of the Cedars chaplaincy and performs well. The committee meets quarterly and comprises representatives of the Home Office, G4S, Barnardo's, G4S Healthcare providers, and Aramark Catering services. Its policy statement aims to work towards "a vision of respect, humanity and fairness and embrace a positive commitment to equality". Throughout the reporting period the Equality and Diversity team were actively involved during the family arrivals process, and ensured these aims were met.

Complaints

Complaints forms are available in a range of languages, and information on how to raise a complaint is readily available to residents. Cedars received one complaint during 2014, in relation to a family arrest, and one clinical complaint which when investigated was later unsubstantiated. Residents have good access to staff, and Care Officers are responsive to their welfare needs. Religious observance plays an important part in the life of the Centre, and spiritual and pastoral support is available on request.

The IMB have not received any complaints since the PDA opened in 2011. Families have in the main been consistent in complementing staff on the care and attention they received.

Section 5 - Progress with previously reported matters

2014 HMIP Inspection

Cedars was the subject of a full independent inspection by HM Inspector of Prisons, (HMIP) in January 2014. The inspectors gave a favourable assessment of the Centre's operational activities and found the PDA to be a high quality, well managed facility. Their findings cited good practice in the arrangements for supporting families at risk of self-harm, and preparations for families arriving at the PDA. However, the inspection also noted that some practices by arrest teams were disproportionate, and reported problems of lateness of the escort crews.

At the time of reporting, the HMIP report contained 28 recommendations for change relating to all stages of the family removal process. An action plan was put in place to address the issues raised. Of the accepted recommendations, 23 were completed, 3 were 'complete and on-going', 4 were rejected, and 2 of the recommendations remain outstanding (ongoing).

Family arrivals

We are pleased to report that a number of the issues raised in our 2013 annual report have been addressed. For example detailed planning procedures have ensured relevant health and welfare information were received in advance of the families arrival. These ensured staff had good understanding of the family's needs and was able to better facilitate their requirements.

The time taken to book families into the Centre was often a lengthy and stressful process, especially so for families arriving late at night and where a translation service was required. The booking in process has now been shortened and some induction procedures postponed until the following morning when families were better able to assimilate the information given to them.

Night time moves

An area of continued concern had been the level of distress caused to families when removed from their homes and transported over considerable distances late at night, or during the early hours of the morning. Despite efforts to reduce such moves, families (including those with very young children) were still subject to journeys over considerable distances, further adding to their anguish during the removal and return process.

In-Country Escorts

We are pleased to report that in-country escort arrangements provided by Tascor have improved on the previous year, during 2014. This was due in part to the introduction of Tascor's dedicated family overseas escorting contract following the IMB's recommendation in our 2013 Annual Report.

IMB Annual Report - 2013 Recommendations

In our 2013 annual report we made 9 recommendations, of which 4 were completed, 3 rejected, 1 accepted, and 1 recommendation remains under review. Table 1 below provides a summary of our recommendations, and their status as at the time of reporting.

Table 1

IMB Report 2013 – Key issues arising		Status
1. Home Office	Utilisation of Cedars: Consideration should be given to reduce the unit cost per family, or take actions to reduce the overall cost to the tax payer.	Complete
2. Home Office	Arrivals to and departures from Cedars: Arresting officers only wear protective clothing under certain circumstances	Complete
3. Ops/DepMu	Arrivals to and departures from Cedars: Families being escorted should be transported in unmarked vehicles	Rejected
4. Home Office	Arrivals to and departures from Cedars: The Home Office should only use specialist escort teams trained to deal with distressed children	Complete
5. Home Office	Use of force: A behaviour management policy should be developed to minimise the likelihood of using physical intervention, and used only as a last resort.	Under review
6. Home Office	Separation of children from parents: Children should not be separated from their parents at any stage of the removal process, unless there is a safeguarding or welfare concern. Separation should only take place with the support of the Independent Family returns Panel.	Rejected
7. G4S	Location of medical facilities: Concern that the consulting rooms are too far apart, not properly furnished, and pose privacy and hygiene issues.	Rejected
8. G4S	Use of handcuffs: medical assessments of residents should always take place when handcuffs have been used on them.	Accepted
9. Home Office, G4S, and Barnardo's	Staffing levels: Concern about whether Home Office/G4S and Barnardo's current staffing levels could meet an increase in family occupancy rates at Cedars in the future.	Complete

Section 6

The Role of the IMB

The IMB make at least one unannounced weekly visit in our role as independent monitors. We make further visits to observe family arrivals and removals, attend meetings, and ad hoc activities as required. Our board membership is relatively new in terms of member's average length of time on the board. At the end of the reporting period all members had successfully completed their probationary year and undertaken personal protection training.

During 2014 the number of IMB Board members fell to below the recommended level of 12. This was due to five resignations and unavoidable delays during the recruitment, vetting and training procedures. Our current membership represents a reasonable cross-section of the community, and members bring a good balance of skills and experience to the task entrusted to them. It is a credit to serving members that we were able to maintain the regular board meetings, attend national conference and training events, and fully discharge our monitoring role without interruption. Following extensive consultation with Cedars senior management, the IMB Board and Secretariat agreed to change the frequency of our Board meetings to quarterly, to reflect the fall in utilisation of the Centre.

The IMB Board Statistics are as follows:

Cedars 2014 IMB Statistics	Board Numbers
Recommended complement of Board Members (Covering Cedars PDA and Tinsley House IRC)	12
Actual number at start of 2014	6
Actual number at end of 2014	8
New members joining during 2013	6
Members leaving during 2013	5
Total attendances at Board Meetings	28
Attendances for other than Board meetings	71
Complaints received by the IMB	0

We are pleased to highlight the work that all staff have done to extend the care given to the residents at Cedars. The Board would also like to extend our thanks to our IMB Clerk for her continued support and assistance during the reporting period.