



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board

for the

Non-residential Short Term Holding Facilities:

London Heathrow Airport

London City Airport

Becket House Immigration Reporting Centre

Eaton House Immigration Reporting Centre

for the year

1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020

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Monitoring fairness and respect for people in custody

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1 THE STATUTORY ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

1.1 The London Heathrow and City Airports Independent Monitoring Board is appointed by the Home Secretary to monitor and report on the treatment and welfare of people in immigration detention in the Short-term Holding Facilities (STHFs) at four locations: London Heathrow Airport and, since April 2019, London City Airport and the Home Office immigration reporting centres at Becket House and Eaton House.

1.2 The Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018, part 7, set out the responsibilities of the Independent Monitoring Boards (referred to as Visiting Committees) which include visiting each facility at least once a month, talking to detained persons, having access to records, inspecting the premises and the administration of the premises, raising concerns, providing advice or suggestions as it considers appropriate and producing an annual report.

1.3 The Board has unrestricted access to every person detained in immigration custody and all facilities. At the airports this includes access to vehicles to monitor the treatment and welfare of people being removed from the country.

1.4 The Board meets monthly. All members of the Board are volunteers.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents the findings of the Board for the period 1 February 2019 to 31 January 2020. The evidence comes from observations made on rota visits, scrutiny of records and data, and informal contact with detainees and staff. During the reporting period members undertook 53 visits to Heathrow Airport holding rooms, 10 visits to London City Airport, 10 visits to Becket House and nine visits to Eaton House. They also monitored 46 removals of detainees, the majority of whom were individuals being removed to their destination under escort.

Main judgements

The accommodation at Heathrow Airport is adequate for short terms of detention but it is not satisfactory for overnight stays, nor for children to be held for more than a few hours. At London City Airport the accommodation is very cramped and unsatisfactory. The holding rooms at Becket House and Eaton House are often overcrowded due to unnecessarily long waits for transport to Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs). The facilities at London City Airport, Becket House and Eaton House are all due to move to new premises which the Board hopes will have improved facilities for detainees.

Detainees are not allowed access to any medication that they have in their possession, even though this may put their health and well-being at risk. The Home Office is now addressing this, but the Board is still very concerned about the present situation and the amount of time taken to reach a solution.

The Board is concerned that detainees at the airports cannot easily access legal advice. The services purported to be accessible through an advertised phone number are non-existent.

When detainees leave Eaton House almost all of them are handcuffed until they are inside the vehicle. Individual risk assessment should lead to fewer people being handcuffed and instead they should be guided with a light arm-hold.

Detention custody officers (DCOs) are usually kind and courteous towards detainees but, particularly at Heathrow, the Board is still not confident that inductions are consistently carried out to a high standard. During long hours of detention individual detainees can feel increasingly anxious and isolated and the Board is concerned that some DCOs do not engage sufficiently with the detainees to look after their needs.

The removal of detainees is generally undertaken in a satisfactory manner. Where detainees in escorted removals have been physically resistant, the use of force, as observed by the Board, has been proportionate, reasonable and necessary. We are nevertheless concerned that the lack of capacity for Board members to routinely travel in the new vehicles used for removals has compromised the Board's ability to monitor some removals effectively.

MAIN AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

TO THE HOME OFFICE

Detainees' access to medication

2.1 [Applicable to: All holding rooms] The Home Office should ensure that the new system is provided as quickly as possible to ensure that people in detention can access their own prescription medication and common non-prescription medication (paras. 9.2 - 9.5; 18.2 - 18.3; 26.2; 34.2).

Detainees' safety

2.2 [London Heathrow Airport T3] The Home Office should arrange for the layout of the Terminal 3 office/reception area to be modified to enable both DCOs to exercise continuous surveillance of the detainees in their care (para. 7.2).

Detainees' access to legal advice

2.3 [London Heathrow & London City Airports] The Home Office should arrange that detainees have effective and timely access to legal advice (para. 8.10 - 8.11; 17.4).

Improved translation and communication facilities for detainees

2.4 [All holding rooms] The Board repeats the request for dual handset phones so that Detainee Custody Officers (DCOs) and detainees can use the Big Word interpretation service more easily and with privacy (para. 4.10; 17.2).

2.5 [All holding rooms] The Home Office should speed up their introduction of electronic translation devices, which they have already trialled (para. 4.11; 8.4; 17.3).

2.6 [All holding rooms] The Home Office should arrange for Wi-Fi and internet access for detainees, even if it is only available when DCOs can supervise (para. 8.12 - 8.13; 12.13 - 12.15; 25.4; 33.4).

New facilities

2.7 [Becket House] The Home Office is requested to engage with the Board as soon as possible in consultation on the design of the new holding rooms in a facility in Warehouse K near to the Excel Centre, London E16 (para. 28.1).

2.8 [Eaton House] The Home Office should progress the provision of new, expanded, holding rooms in Eaton House as soon as possible. The expectation was that work would commence in April 2020 (para. 36.1 - 36.4).

2.9 [London City Airport] The Home Office is encouraged to progress the provision of new holding rooms in London City Airport as soon as possible. (para. 12.4 - 12.7; 15.4).

Improved facilities for families and children

2.10 [London Heathrow Airport T5] The Home Office should improve the facilities for families and children in Terminal 5 (paras. 6.10 - 6.11).

2.11 [London Heathrow Airport] The Board repeats its recommendation, previously rejected, that the Home Office should provide residential accommodation for children at Heathrow so that they are not restricted to small rooms with no natural light and no fresh air for many hours. For those waiting for turnaround flights, the family detention facility at Tinsley House is too far away for a long enough stay that would be beneficial to them. If any new buildings are planned for Heathrow this should be made a priority (para. 6.4).

Detainees' access to showers in the holding rooms

2.12 [London Heathrow Airport T5] The Home Office should provide a shower in Terminal 5 to comply with the National Holding Room Standards (para. 3.9).

2.13 [London Heathrow Airport] The Home Office should ensure that Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) make the necessary fitment changes to ensure that the showers in all the terminals are not subject to frequent closure due to concern about legionella bacteria (para. 3.9).

2.14 [Becket House] The Home Office should ensure that new holding rooms in a facility in Warehouse K, London E16 will include the provision of showers. (para. 21.6).

Transportation

2.15 [Becket House] The Board recommends that the Home Office arranges for the provision of more frequent transport between Becket House and the IRCs to avoid excessive waits for detainees and over-crowding in the holding room (para. 27.2).

TO THE HOME OFFICE AND THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR AND BORDER FORCE

Extended stay accommodation for detainees

2.16 [London Heathrow Airport] The Board recommends that the Home Office, the Detention Contractor and Border Force agree a protocol so that people waiting for return flights are allowed to stay in the holding rooms, if necessary beyond 24 hours, so that they are not sent to IRCs for stays that are insufficient to allow time to rest (paras. 10.4 -10.5).

2.17 [London Heathrow Airport] Additionally, or in the alternative, there should be an amendment to the Mitie Care and Custody (C&C) Service Level Agreement reducing the contractual window of 8 hours for providing transport between the Heathrow Airport holding rooms and the Heathrow IRC (paras. 10.4 – 10.5).

TO THE HOME OFFICE AND THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR

Use of restraints

2.18 [Eaton House] The Board remains to be satisfied that restraints are being applied by escorts only when it is appropriate to do so. The Detention Contractor is recommended to reinforce the briefing of its escort crews to ensure that restraints are applied only when a dynamic risk assessment indicates that it is necessary and proportionate to do so (paras 35.3 – 35.5).

TO THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR

Care of detained children

2.19 [London Heathrow Airport] The Detention Contractor should arrange for a DCO or other responsible adult to sit in the family holding room with a young or otherwise vulnerable unaccompanied child (para. 6.6).

2.20 [London Heathrow Airport] The Detention Contractor should ensure that DCOs are proactive in their care for older children (para. 6.7).

2.21 [London Heathrow Airport] The Detention Contractor should ensure that the toys are kept in good repair and in a clean condition and that the DVD boxes are stored so that children can easily see what is available (para.6.12).

Holding room inductions

2.22 [London Heathrow Airport] The Detention Contractor should ensure that DCOs use the Big Word interpretation service for inducting non-English speaking passengers and not just assume that passengers with a smattering of English really understand what they are being told (para. 4.9).

DCO continuing engagement with detainees

2.23 [London Heathrow Airport] The Detention Contractor should try new initiatives to encourage DCOs to be more proactive in their care of the detainees and to re-engage with them a short while after the initial induction and then at regular intervals (para. 4.13).

2.24 [All holding rooms] The Detention Contractor is encouraged to provide in each holding room a pack of translated information cards summarising key messages from the induction process, e.g. availability of hot meals, drinks, pillows, blankets, phone calls (para. 4.12).

DCO training

2.25 [All holding rooms] The Detention Contractor should ensure that DCOs are trained so that they know which of the meals from different manufacturers are halal (para. 8.5).

Respect

2.26 [London Heathrow Airport] We repeat the recommendation that the Detention Contractor should ensure that the DCOs check that the sacred books are in good condition and stored respectfully (para. 8.8).

TO BORDER FORCE

2.27 [London Heathrow Airport] For detainees brought from IRCs to the airport for interview, Border Force should ensure that their officers inform C&C when their enquiries have concluded so that the movement order for transport is activated (para. 4.5).

LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITIES

3.1 Each of the four terminals (Terminals 2, 3, 4, and 5) contains a holding room, with a locked door, where passengers arriving at the airport may be detained on the authority of Border Force on behalf of the Home Secretary. The Home Office contracts the management of the holding rooms to Mitie Care and Custody (C&C). Detention may be for periods of up to 24 hours, and in exceptional cases even longer. From the holding room passengers may be allowed entry to the United Kingdom, or be granted immigration bail or be taken to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). If a person is refused entry to the UK, they wait in the holding room until they are escorted to the aircraft door for their return flight.

3.2 Holding rooms are also used to accommodate people where there is a need for a further interview by Border Force. They may have returned voluntarily after one or more periods of immigration bail or have been brought back to the airport from an IRC.

3.3 There is a further holding room at Cayley House, part of Terminal 3, which is used for people brought to the airport for removal. This is a different type of facility, in that most of the men and women arriving there will have already spent varying periods of time in detention in an IRC. The contract with the Home Office allows them to be brought there for up to five hours before their flight departure time. They will then be taken to the aircraft door and travel unescorted to their final destination.

Accommodation and amenities

3.4 C&C have made significant improvements to the holding rooms since they took over the contract in May 2018. All the holding rooms are in good decorative repair, with canvas pictures on the walls, realistic looking plants in pots, and well organised notice boards. They have rows of standard airport seating and fixed tables with seats for eating meals. The family rooms have brightly painted murals on the walls. Daily newspapers are available in a few languages.

Opportunities for resting and sleeping

3.5 However, these terminal holding rooms are not residential facilities and it is the Board's view that they are unfit for detaining people beyond relatively brief periods. There are no proper sleeping facilities. In the course of the reporting year, with the encouragement of the Board, the Home Office has rolled out a supply of low-cost fold-out mattresses to all the holding rooms, replacing unsatisfactory loungers and supplementing the hard z-shaped loungers in some holding rooms. A pillow with pillowcase and a blanket is provided for those wishing to rest or sleep and we have observed on many occasions that detainees are now able to get decent rest. By the end of the reporting period the IMB observed that some of the mattresses were looking stained and requested that washable mattress covers also be provided. We were pleased to find that C&C had started to supply mattress sheets too.

3.6 The rooms are windowless with no natural light and some suffer from fluctuating temperatures, sometimes being very cold at night, both in summer and in winter. Several IMB rota reports noted that the room in Terminal 3 was unacceptably cold at night. We understand that the air conditioning can be controlled by the DCOs locally, but this does not always appear to function properly.

3.7 Each terminal holding room contains separate accommodation for families with children, but at Terminal 5 this is only a partitioned off section of the main holding room. Family room accommodation is described in Section 5.

Male and female accommodation

3.8 In Cayley House there are separate holding rooms for men and for women. In the terminals men and women wait together. The IMB have observed that some women feel uncomfortable sleeping in proximity to men who are strangers. If the family room is unoccupied, they can be moved there to sleep.

Showers and toilets

3.9 Showers are available in all the rooms, apart from Terminal 5. However, due to recurrent episodes of concern about the presence of legionella bacteria, the showers are often closed for weeks or months at a time.

- The only shower in Terminal 2 was closed for the whole of the reporting year. It only came back into use in late February 2020.
- The family room shower in Terminal 3 was out of use during one or more of our visits for eight months of the year.
- Terminal 3's main room shower was out of use for one or more of our visits for four months of the year.

In Terminal 3, Steri-Showers have now been fitted which are intended to solve the legionella bacteria problem. The Board will monitor this.

3.10 In Cayley House there are separate showers for men and for women. In the early part of the reporting period there was a continuing noxious smell in the women's shower but this has now been addressed. Another improvement was the fitting of mirrors inside most of the toilet areas. After prompting from the IMB, some of the metal toilets were given thorough deep clean and they appear generally to be more hygienic. On weekly visits, IMB members reported that the toilets and shower rooms in all terminals were usually clean but there were problems during the year with the sanitary bins overflowing with rubbish. This has now improved with more regular bin collections.

General maintenance.

3.11 A summary of maintenance and facilities issues identified by Board members on rota visits is sent to the Home Office every month for their comment and for follow-up action with Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) or C&C as appropriate. The Board is very pleased to note that the number of outstanding issues has declined significantly during the year. For example several seats and tables have been repaired or replaced. Finger guards for child safety have been fitted on family room doors in Terminals 3, 4 and 5, though not yet in Terminal 2.

Food and Drink

3.12 All terminal holding rooms have water fountains and all have machines which dispense hot drinks. In some terminals these machines are situated in the holding rooms while in others they are located in the DCOs' offices.

3.13 Snacks including crisps, packaged croissants, biscuits and fresh fruit are almost always available in the holding rooms. This year yogurt and fruit pots have been added. A variety of hot microwaveable meals is also provided.

Smoking

3.14 Although detainees are not allowed to smoke, nicotine lozenges are available and there are usually sufficient stocks in each holding room.

Access to telephones

3.15 For security reasons, detainees are not allowed to use their smartphones which contain cameras. They are provided with a C&C phone with which to make a five minute call to family or friends either in the UK or abroad. A payphone is available in each holding room so that once they have the telephone number, friends and family can ring the detainee. However, if the holding room is busy, several people may all want to receive calls on this phone at the same time and there is also a lack of privacy.

Border Force officers

4.1 When Border Force officers have stopped an arriving passenger at the UK Border and need time to follow up inquiries regarding entry into the UK, they first take the person to wait in the Controlled Waiting Area (CWA), a seated area by the immigration desks. Food and drink are not readily available. Border Force try to sort out entry problems there rather than having to place passengers in formal detention. Ideally passengers should be kept waiting there for less than an hour, but IMB reports show that most days a few passengers, across the terminals, wait there for over two hours and occasionally up to four hours when Border Force are very busy. Border Force do their best to deal with passengers as quickly as possible and to move those cases requiring more interviews to the holding rooms.

4.2 Once passengers are in the holding room they may have to wait for several hours before their interview takes place. Sensibly Border Force give priority to families with young children, unaccompanied minors, and passengers with physical and/or mental health issues or other vulnerabilities. However adult passengers seeking asylum may have very long waits.

- A female asylum seeker had presented at the border at 18:00 and was not interviewed until 10:07 the following day, 16 hours after her arrival at the border.

4.3 The Board observes Border Force officers as they interact with detained passengers while they escort them to and from the holding rooms. The officers usually engage with the detainees in a professional and friendly manner, explaining what will happen. Many officers are multilingual and the detainees can be seen to benefit when the officer can communicate with them in a language they can understand. After interview when a decision has been made, Board members have observed officers acting with sensitivity towards the detainees and, where appropriate, providing helpful information.

- A 29 year-old man was informed by the Border Force officer that he was being refused entry and he accepted this calmly. We were impressed by the sympathetic approach of the officer who had taken time to listen to the man's back story and to counsel him on his future options.

4.4 During the year the Board has welcomed improved co-operative working between Border Force and C&C. When Border Force has several passengers to take to one holding room at the same time, they now stagger arrivals so that the DCOs have sufficient time to induct each passenger.

4.5 However the Board has highlighted an ongoing issue of failed communication. After detainees had been brought back to the airport from IRCs for interview, those being returned to detention have often had to wait many hours, often into the late evening, for transport back to the IRCs. It was found that Border Force officers were not informing C&C that their enquiries had concluded and that the person should be returned to detention. Consequently transport was not arranged.

- In October 2019 one woman was left in the holding room for over 24 hours when she should have been transported back to the IRC.
- In December 2019, a man brought back for interview was in the holding room for over 30 hours.
- In January 2020 a man was brought back for interview at 07:30 and was interviewed at 09:10. Eventually a DC realised that no return journey to the IRC had been requested. He did not leave until 19:40, nine and a half hours after his interview had concluded.

Border Force is now aware of this problem and is issuing instructions to all its officers to inform C&C when their enquires have concluded.

4.6 In addition to dealing with travellers who have made mistakes with visas, those deliberately trying to flout UK immigration laws, and those seeking asylum, Border Force have to determine when children or vulnerable adults are being trafficked. Board members recognise that they fulfil a difficult role and appear to do it well.

Detainee Custody Officers

4.7 Since 1st May 2018 the Home Office has contracted the management of the holding rooms to C&C. They provide male and female Detainee Custody Officers (DCOs) to staff the holding rooms. In each terminal the DCOs work from a reasonably spacious office which is the entrance to the holding room suite. Apart from Cayley House where there is a corridor leading to the holding rooms, the offices have glass-type walls, through which DCOs can see the detainees and the detainees can see them and attract their attention. The DCOs carry handcuffs and have the authority to search people and make them surrender their mobile phones, if they have cameras. C&C are also responsible for providing escorts for detainees being transported to and from IRCs and for those being removed from the UK. We have noted that some DCOs now wear body-worn cameras. The DCOs are responsible for the welfare and safety of the individuals in their custody.

4.8 For passengers being shown into a holding room for the first time, detention can come as quite a shock, so a good induction is important. Board members have observed some excellent inductions, kindly delivered with care and patience, with DCOs following their checklist. However, in the first half of the reporting year, they also observed some inductions which were conducted as more of a tick-box exercise. Members monitoring induction checklists reported finding lists of ticks, even against questions which were not relevant, which gave rise to concerns about the quality of the inductions. C&C managers have been addressing this and there has been some improvement.

4.9 The Board's greatest concern regarding inductions is that some DCOs do not recognise that a compliant detainee who initially says that they understand English, does not actually understand what they are being told. The BigWord interpretation service is available but is not used as often as it should be. Board members frequently reported that while the induction checklist recorded that the induction was conducted in English, when they spoke to the detainee they discovered that the person had no English at all. Two examples out of very many:

- In August 2019 the induction checklist was left unticked for BigWord for an Indian male. When the Board member spoke to him, he had almost no English and seemingly

little comprehension of what was being said. With some sign language and a few words, the Board member ascertained that he seemed comfortable but it was difficult to understand how his induction could have been meaningful without BigWord.

- In November 2019 an Arabic speaking father and his 17-year old daughter had been inducted in English. The daughter was out at interview when the Board member talked to the father. He was unable to understand any English or even any gestures. Despite the DCOs' assurances that the daughter had interpreted everything for her father, when she returned from interview the member found that she too was unable to speak even basic English.

Not only do the detainees need to understand about the facilities available to them, they also need to be able to ask questions and have them answered. Being in detention can be an isolating and distressing experience.

4.10 Even when the induction is conducted well using Big Word, it can be awkward.

- The Board member was surprised that the conversation via Big Word was conducted by passing the telephone handset across between the DCO and the detainee, which seemed rather laborious.

In response to last year's annual report the Home Office said they would provide dual handset phones to facilitate this process. They had not arrived by the end of this reporting year.

4.11 Another measure which should assist is the use of electronic translation devices. These have been trialled during the year and were found to be useful. The Home Office has said they will provide them for all the holding rooms, but they too are yet to arrive.

4.12 In each of the holding rooms there is a pack of laminated A4 cards explaining the role of the IMB translated into each of the standard languages. Board members have found these cards invaluable in breaking down barriers when talking to detainees. We suggest that similar translation cards summarising key points from the induction process, such as the availability of hot meals, drinks, pillows, blankets and phone calls would be equally helpful to settle detainees and to encourage them to request the facilities to which they are entitled.

4.13 Detainees may be kept waiting for several hours before interview. Board members have reported that some DCOs are most attentive to the detainees, checking quite regularly whether they need food and drink, offering showers and helping them to access fresh clothes from their baggage, or chatting to those who are very upset about their situation and need some friendly support. However other DCOs engage with the people in their custody minimally after the initial induction. C&C management have tried to introduce measures to encourage DCOs to spend more time interacting with the detainees during their long waits, but the Board has not observed much change.

5 THE ADULT DETAINEE POPULATION

Length of stay

5.1 The detention services contractor C&C compiles monthly length of stay information.

Table 1: Number of adults in the holding rooms with the length of their stay for February 2019 – January 2020

	0-8 hours	8-12 hours	12-18 hours	18-24 hours	24+ hours	Total
Terminal 2	2814	552	311	137	15	3829
Terminal 3	1802	456	297	151	48	2754
Terminal 4	2318	585	392	206	34	3535
Terminal 5	1962	525	309	158	37	2991
Total	8896	2118	1309	652	134	13109
Cayley House	3814	27	2	0	0	3843
Grand Total	12710	2145	1311	652	134	16952

5.2 In percentage terms, the figures show that in the terminal holding rooms 68% of detainees in this reporting period were held from 0-8 hours (the same percentage as in the period May 2018 – January 2019), 16% from 8-12 hours (15% in 2018-19), 10% from 12-18 hours (10.5% in 2018-19), 5% from 18-24 hours (5% in 2018 -19) and 1% for over 24 hours (1.5% in 2018-19). Essentially therefore, the data on the percentage breakdown of the duration of stays from February 2019 to January 2020 are very similar to those in the previous nine months. Cayley House had the largest number of detainees (virtually all short term), followed by Terminals 2 and 4.

5.3 The main factors affecting length of stay in the holding rooms by passengers who have just arrived in the United Kingdom are:

- Time taken by Border Force to complete casework and decide what is to happen to the person. This will depend on the complexity of someone's circumstances, including the possible need to contact third parties, such as an employer or college, and the need to use telephone interpretation.
- For those being returned on a flight, the time taken by the Home Office to arrange a flight with the carrier, and then the flight's departure time.

- For those to be detained at an IRC, the time taken by the Home Office to allocate accommodation and by C&C to collect them to go there. The present contract gives C&C eight hours from the issuing of a movement order in which to collect the detainee.
- A few lengthy stays will be of people who have returned for a further interview by Border Force having been detained in an IRC, or who have previously been given immigration bail.
- Those seeking asylum are referred by Border Force to the Home Office's National Asylum Allocation Unit (NAAU) which finds them appropriate asylum accommodation in the community. They then have to wait for up to three more hours for the transport contractor Clearsprings to collect them. Those arriving in the evening may have to wait overnight for the NAAU to open at 09:00.

Detention of asylum seekers

5.4 Many asylum seekers are vulnerable and include people who have experienced civil war and other extreme privation. They may feel isolated, speak limited or no English, and are likely to be fearful of being returned to their country of origin. While unaccompanied children and family groups with children and grandparents are given priority by Border Force, single people seeking asylum may be detained for a long time, often longer than other detainees.

Vulnerable adults

5.5 The Board has observed that vulnerable adults are well-cared for in the holding rooms. Vulnerability is recorded by the DCOs on a Vulnerable Adult Warning Form (VAWF) which is sent to the C&C duty manager in Cayley House, so that extra support can be provided if necessary.

- An American passenger who was meant to be connecting with another flight had been found landside by police. After a visit to hospital where he was found to be suffering from a psychiatric illness he was brought by them to the holding room to be looked after as he waited for his next flight. He was asleep on a fold-out mattress when the Board member visited. A VAWF had been completed and his wife had been contacted to meet him when his flight landed. Meanwhile he was receiving a good level of care and consideration.

6 CHILDREN IN FAMILIES AND UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

6.1 By law every person under the age of 18 is deemed to be a child. The DCOs complete a paper copy of a Child Care Plan for each child, which names the DCO responsible for that child, whether or not a parent is also present. The DCO must check on each child every 15 minutes and record that on MEDS, their electronic records system. They also record the child's activities such as eating a meal, playing with toys, watching a DVD or sleeping. All families with a member under the age of 18 are accommodated in the family room.

6.2 Board members have observed children being inducted into the holding rooms in a friendly and sensitive manner by the DCOs. They search children using a wand rather than giving them a body search.

Numbers and length of stay

6.3 The service contractor C&C compiles monthly information on the number of children in detention*. The numbers of children detained were similar to those cited in last year's report for the 9-month period up to and including January 2019. Table 2 shows that, as in the previous year, Terminal 2 had the largest number of family units and the largest number of unaccompanied children.

Table 2: Children detained: February 2019 – January 2020 (12 months)

Location	Unaccompanied children	Family units with children	No. of children in family units	Total number of children
Terminal 2	123	338	611	734
Terminal 3	39	113	195	234
Terminal 4	44	215	359	403
Terminal 5	55	241	404	459
Total	261	907	1569	1830

*C&C have warned that there may be some inaccuracies because their figures are based on the daily count.

6.4 Examining the separate C&C data for children's length of stay in the holding rooms showed that 73 children had stays of more than 12 hours and, of these, 14 had stays of over 24 hours. The Board considers that the family rooms are unsuitable accommodation for such long

stays. Some examples of long stays by children with their families were noted by Board members during rota visits:

- In April 2019 children aged seven and nine, with their parents, were detained in the holding room for about 17 hours. Some consideration may have been given to allowing them to go to Tinsley House IRC overnight, but there would have been insufficient time to bring them back for their return flight at 09:20.
- In July 2019 a Turkish couple and their four-year old child were detained in the holding room for 11 hours 35 minutes before they were bailed. This was in addition to a 2 hours 50 minutes wait in the CWA, so a total of 14 hours 25 minutes in detention.
- Also in July 2019 an Afghani woman and her eleven-year old daughter were detained for about 11 hours 30 minutes in the holding room, also having spent just under three hours in the CWA.
- In February 2019 a family of five from Bulgaria with girls aged 17 and 14 eventually spent 31 hours in the holding room because there had been a problem with their first booked turnaround flight. Tinsley House was again too far away to ensure that there would be sufficient time to get them back for their flight.

Unaccompanied children

6.5 Children who arrive unaccompanied are a priority for Border Force. Often the complexity of their situation involving safeguarding issues and/or concern that they may be victims of trafficking, may mean that they are detained for several hours. In addition, if they are to be looked after by Hillingdon Social Services, then they have to wait for collection by a social worker. Board members met children during their stays:

- A 16-year old girl from China appeared dreadfully unhappy. She was seeking asylum and she was detained in the holding room for 9 hours until she was bailed to social services.
- A 17-year old girl from Ghana was also detained for 9 hours. There were safe-guarding and trafficking concerns to be checked. Then she was released to the care of a family member.

6.6 Sometimes a child's situation changes during detention.

- An adult female and two children aged seven and eight arrived at the border at 21:00, as a family, and were accommodated in the family room overnight. At 08:10 the following morning Border Force suspected and eventually found that the female was not related to the boys and that they were not related to one another. The female was removed elsewhere. The two boys remained together in the family room, under the care of the DCOs in the office until they were taken into the care of social services at 14:45. They had been unaccompanied in the family room for 6 hours 30.

In the Board's view in such circumstances C&C, who have responsibility for the children, should arrange for a DCO or other responsible adult to sit with the child or children.

Care of children by DCOs

6.7 The DCOs are generally attentive and helpful to parents with small children. However, for older children, while they fill in the 15 minute checks and offer refreshments, they are not proactive with suggestions for keeping older children from getting very bored during their long waits or keeping them comfortable. On rota visits members have had to encourage such interventions.

- A 16-year old girl from the USA said that she was being well looked after, but she was bored with the children's DVD and was desperate to sleep. She asked for a pillow but did not know about the fold out mattresses as none were in the family room. The Board member suggested to the DCO that a mattress be brought from the main holding room and the girl was comfortably settled and able to sleep before her late evening flight.
- A 10-year old girl and her aunt had an 11 hour wait for a return flight. The Board member found that the girl was bored and restless, there was nothing to keep her amused and the TV was on a news channel. The Board member suggested to the DCO that some suitable DVDs would be helpful, which proved to be the case.

Children are often upset and disappointed and distressed when refused entry after their long journey. By being proactive the DCOs can improve the experience of detention.

6.8 The Board was pleased to learn that it is normal practice for there to be an independent adult present when unaccompanied children are interviewed by Border Force. At present the independent adult is a staff member of another airport body. A Board member observed a vulnerable looking 15-year old being introduced to such an adult before being taken for interview. Border Force is at present asking for volunteers from different airport organisations to act as independent adults. These people will be trained so that they understand the role and they will be a resource that can be called on by Border Force.

Family room facilities

6.9 In Terminals 2, 3 and 4 there are separate family rooms situated directly beside the DCOs' offices, with glass-type windows. Each is furnished with a fixed table with seats and a bench seat, underneath which are pull-out boxes for toys. There are payphones and water fountains. The rooms all have toilets and baby changing facilities for the sole use of the family room occupants. However the rooms are small and sometimes have to accommodate two families. With no natural light, no fresh air and no space for running around, the Board considers that the holding rooms are unsuitable for the detention of children beyond the very briefest period.

6.10 In Terminal 5 the family room is a small partitioned area within the main holding room, with frosted glass. It is small and narrow with a table so positioned that it is difficult for occupants to lie down to rest. It can only hold one family at a time.

- In August 2019 an Iraqi family comprising mother, father and three children aged four, seven and nine years old had arrived in the holding room after two and half hours in the CWA. The children were lying on two fold-out mattresses which took all of the floor space between the table and the door.

This room is uncomfortable and claustrophobic with its frosted glass and lack of space. In addition, to use the toilets, the parents and children have to go into the main holding room,

where adults are being detained, and use their facilities. Similarly a parent has to take their child through the main holding room to access the baby-changing facilities.

6.11 The small size of the Terminal 5 family room also may also lead to families being kept waiting for long periods in the CWA.

- On the August day cited above, there were two other families waiting to be admitted to the family room. An Iranian family of five waited in the CWA for 3 hours 40 minutes. (A Border Force officer did take them some refreshments.) A third family of five with children aged 12, 9 and 6 waited in the CWA for four and half hours. There were two adult males in the main holding room.

Improved facilities for children are urgently required in Terminal 5.

Toys and activities for children

6.12 The Board has a member who has taken responsibility for regularly checking the family room provisions. She reported there had been a general improvement since the purchase of replacement toys, colouring books, pens and crayons during 2018. In some terminals these were found to be kept tidily and in good repair. In other Terminals the toys were in a jumbled state and in others the toy boxes had food crumbs and were sticky. In some terminals there were DVD boxes on display to show children and teenagers the films available, but in others there were none. The C&C managers have responded that the DCOs should be responsible for the good condition of these provisions.

7.1 The holding rooms can reasonably be said to provide a safe environment. In most cases staff are able to keep detainees under observation, either directly or through CCTV.

7.2 However, in the Terminal 3 holding room the layout of the DCO's office/ reception area is such that if a DCO is seated at the computer workstation their view of the CCTV monitor is completely obscured by a large pillar. This does affect the DCOs' ability to maintain continuous surveillance of the detainees in their care.

7.3 There was one incident of attempted self-harm in the holding rooms during this reporting year. A man returned from an interview with Border Force, saying that he would kill himself if he was refused entry and returned to his own country. The Border Force officer explained this to the DCOs who filled in a VAWF, informed their duty manager in Cayley House and started 30 minute welfare checks. The Border Force officer returned to tell the man that entry had been refused. Welfare checks continued but, while both DCOs were involved with other detainees, this man attempted to self-harm quite dramatically in the men's toilet. Fortunately, another detainee saw him and called for the DCOs, who were immediately able to stop him, help him and call for back up. Other officers arrived and a paramedic arrived to look after him until the ambulance came a few minutes later. He was taken to Hillingdon Hospital. Border Force and C&C both assured the IMB that the incident had been investigated and they had put measures in place to reduce the risk of a similar occurrence.

7.4 The Board has observed DCOs being proactive to keep detainees safe.

- A 17 year old girl was waiting in the main holding room because the family room was closed for repairs. When a man, who had convictions for sex offences, was to be detained in the same room for a short time, the DCOs arranged with Border Force for the girl to be taken temporarily to one of their rooms elsewhere.

8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

8.1 DCOs have received diversity training and they are generally aware of the particular requirements of major religions and cultures.

Access to translation and interpretation

8.2 The Board is pleased to note that C&C have provided information in 17 different official languages both on paper and also displayed on video, one language at a time, in the holding rooms. Complaint forms that can be sent to the Home Office are available in the same languages. The Board has suggested adding Romanian and Russian.

8.3 This year the IMB has also provided, for every holding room, a set of laminated A4 pages in 19 languages, including Romanian, describing their role. Members have found these very useful when attempting to explain who they are to detainees with little or no English. This then facilitates questions and responses in regard to basic welfare.

8.4 As described in Section 4, from the Board's perspective, Big Word interpretation is not used as often as required for inductions. The Board hopes that the introduction of the electronic, hand-held translation devices will improve communication and so promote equality and fairness for non-English speakers.

Dietary requirements

8.5 In addition to snacks and fresh fruit, microwaveable hot meals are available, including vegetarian meals. In each terminal there is a list stating which meals are halal. However, as the meals are supplied by different manufacturers the DCOs are often unclear as to which meals are actually halal at any one time. There needs to be clearer signage and training for the DCOs. Kosher meals are usually available.

Multi-faith prayer rooms and sacred texts

8.6 The newest holding rooms in Terminals 3 and 4 both have multi-faith rooms adjacent to the main holding rooms. These have seats, a qibla and a cupboard containing prayer mats and a selection of sacred books relevant to many faiths. Cayley House has quiet rooms situated off both the male and the female/family holding room which are suitable for prayer, contemplation or quiet rest. There are no separate rooms in Terminals 2 or 5 but prayer mats and sacred books are available in these holding rooms.

8.7 There is no consistency between the terminals regarding the selection of sacred books and it is difficult for the Board to ascertain whether they fulfil what is required for those following major religions. The Board has suggested that the Chaplaincy may assist with this.

8.8 Following the recommendation in last year's annual report, C&C agreed that DCOs should take responsibility for keeping the sacred books stored respectfully, in good order and not intermingled with secular books.

- In January 2020 a couple of days after an incident in Terminal 3 where the cupboard containing the sacred books had been damaged, the sacred books were piled higgledy-piggledy on a chair in the multi-faith room and were mixed up with DVDs and detective novels. Unfortunately, they were in the same state more than two weeks later.

We repeat our recommendation.

Support for people with disabilities

8.9 The DCOs are well-trained in this respect and the Board has not reported any issues of concern this year.

Access to legal advice

8.10 As reported last year passengers who have just arrived at Heathrow and been detained by Border Force cannot easily obtain independent advice or legal advice. Their only possible route is to contact a family member or friend, get them to contact a lawyer and have the lawyer phone the holding room. The Board has very rarely observed this happening.

8.11 Last year the Home Office responded that a poster advertising the services of the Offices of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) was available. Whenever Board members have tested the OISC telephone line it has invariably gone to answerphone and does not lead to advice. The Board considers this to be wholly inadequate and unfair. In February 2020 they met with Home Office representatives and discussed ways in which this could be addressed. The Home Office agreed to consider these and we await their response.

Access to Wi-Fi and the internet

8.12 The Board finds it unsatisfactory that, despite previous recommendations, detainees still have no direct access to the internet. The internet is an essential communication tool for both text and voice-based communication such as WhatsApp to contact family, friends and employers. While one or two of the holding room offices can receive mobile data or Wi-Fi connections and DCOs can assist detainees to use WhatsApp on their own devices, other holding rooms have no such connection and this use is only ever limited. Board members have observed distressed detainees who have no means of contacting their families.

8.13 As is common practice now, many detainees have details of their travel arrangements, bank accounts and other personal information stored electronically. These detainees have no opportunity in the holding room to prepare this information for their Border Force interview. The Board repeats the recommendation that, even if it takes place under supervision of the DCOs, detainees should have access to Wi-Fi and the internet.

General health issues

9.1 If a person detained is demonstrably unwell, one of the London Ambulance Service's paramedics who patrol the airport can be summoned. If there is any doubt as to the person's condition they are taken to hospital. The Board sees many examples of good practice by DCOs seeking outside help and advice when this is necessary.

- In August 2019 the DCOs were also prompt in calling for assistance in an emergency. A detained passenger was complaining of pain and holding his chest. An ambulance was called and the DCOs were advised to get a defibrillator in case the man was having a heart attack. A defibrillator was obtained quickly and CPR was administered by a DCO and a HAL manager. The paramedics arrived and took over and were of the view that the man was suffering from a severe panic attack. He was taken to hospital. The Border Force report of the incident stated that all the personnel involved behaved in a professional and caring manner which aided the man's recovery.

Accessing medication

9.2 The Board continues to be seriously concerned by the policy of denying detainees in the holding rooms access to their own prescribed medication. Due to concern about the safety of the medication, DCOs and Border Force officers are instructed that for a detainee to be allowed to take their medication it must be authorised by a doctor or the airport paramedic service. Understandably the DCOs are unwilling to keep calling out the emergency service and the paramedics are increasingly unwilling to attend when it is not an emergency.

9.3 The Board has observed detainees growing particularly anxious or upset because they cannot take their regular medication. Just a few examples out of many:

- In February 2019 a passenger with diabetes had arrived the previous evening. He had three medications labelled in Bulgarian and listed on his IS91. (The Board member on rota visit happened to know that one was a regular medication for diabetes, at the highest dose.) The Port Medical Inspector (PMI) had been phoned but refused to authorise the administration of the drugs over the phone. As the length of stay for this individual extended to 30 hours, the PMI eventually authorised the medication.
- In July 2019 a man from Sri Lanka was admitted to the holding room at 08:15. The DCOs moved him into the family room because he was feeling cold and 'irritable'. He wanted to take his medication, which was listed with dosages and strengths, but he was having to wait for medical approval. When he felt unwell the paramedics were called. They authorised the medication and gave it to him at 13:48.
- In September 2019 the IS91 for an American girl (an unaccompanied teenager) recorded that she was carrying an EpiPen and an asthma inhaler. The DCOs told the Board members that these were in her baggage. They decided not to ask her whether she was concerned about not having immediate access to this medication.

Denying detainees quick access to their prescribed regular medication is potentially dangerous for those who suffer from conditions such as epilepsy, and those with asthma or allergies who may require instantaneous access to EpiPens or inhalers. We have observed detainees in distress because their medication for diabetes or chronic high blood pressure has been

removed. We do not know if there have been health repercussions for any of the detainees in the days after they have left the holding room.

9.4 This Board first notified the Home Office of this situation in January 2017. We are pleased to know that the Home Office is at last, with the help of NHS England, appointing a pharmacist to set up a system for training DCOs in all STHFs, so that they can get advice and be allowed to enable detainees to access their medication under their supervision. We recommend that this be put in place speedily.

9.5 The Board suggests that this new system should also allow detainees to access common non-prescription medication such as paracetamol. At present DCOs can provide cool-strips which, when applied to the forehead, can give some comfort to those suffering from headaches.

9.6 The DCOs are good at caring for detainees where medication is not the issue. For example they were looking after a woman who was seven months pregnant by providing pillows and ensuring that she was as comfortable as possible.

Mental health issues

9.7 Over the last few years the Board has reported that people arriving in the UK with mental health problems were detained in holding rooms for many hours and sometimes days because it was extremely difficult to find them suitable accommodation, especially if they were seeking asylum. We are very pleased to report that the Mental Health Toolkit introduced in April 2019 and used by Border Force appears to be working well. We have reported no long stays for people with mental health conditions for this reason during this reporting year.

9.8 However when a doctor is required in a holding room, it can take some time for one to arrive.

- A man who had arrived the previous evening asked for his morning medication for a mental health condition. Paramedics assessed him and said he was fit to be detained but did not authorise his medication. At his interview Border Force officers found he was confused and they required another medical assessment. As the PMI was not available, an out of hours doctor was called. By the time a doctor arrived some 6 hours later, the man was pacing up and down in a very agitated state. His medication was well overdue. The doctor administered the medication. Eventually the man calmed down and could be bailed.

9.9 When detainees are observed to be in poor mental health, Border Force officers often recognise their vulnerability and are concerned for their welfare. The Board has observed good practice with such passengers being escorted to Hillingdon Hospital for assessment before Border Force book their return flights. In at least one case the passenger had to be detained in a mental health facility.

10 TRANSPORTATION

10.1 C&C are contracted to supply transport for detainees being taken from the holding rooms to IRCs. They also transport detainees from IRCs and from prisons to the airport when they are to be removed from the UK or are returning to the airport for interview. A separate firm called Clearsprings supplies transport to take those seeking asylum to asylum accommodation.

10.2 C&C's contract with the Home Office gives them eight hours from the issue of a movement order in which to collect a detainee from the holding room to go to an IRC.

10.3 For taking a detainee to the airport for removal, the contract states that the person due to be removed should arrive at the airport no earlier than five hours before departure time.

Passengers refused entry taken to IRCs before return flight

10.4 If a passenger is refused entry to the UK and has to return to where their flight departed, this can lead to a long wait, as the carrying airline required to return them may not operate a frequent service. Anyone detained from late afternoon onwards is most unlikely to be returned before the following day so will have to spend a night in the holding room. However, Heathrow is a STHF with a detention time limit of 24 hours unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there is sufficient time before the flight, detainees may be taken to Heathrow IRC to allow them to rest or sleep. Unfortunately waits of up to eight hours for collection can create a situation where somebody has to be brought back to the airport after only a brief stay at the IRC.

- In July 2019 a man from Brazil was admitted to the holding room at 17:40. At 01:45 he was taken to Heathrow IRC, only to be collected from there at 06:45 to be brought back to Cayley House for a flight to Rio de Janeiro at 12:20. Given the time taken to admit and discharge him from the IRC, he would only have been there for four hours at the most, an insufficient time to rest.
- In July 2019 a man who had travelled from Anchorage had arrived in the holding room at 14:50 and had left for the IRC at 19:50 arriving at 20:47. He was collected to be taken back to the airport at 02:03 arriving at Cayley House at 03.00, leaving there for his flight at 06:30. He told the Board member that he had insufficient time to rest.
- In December 2019 a Chilean man arrived at the IRC at 03:30 and left again at 10:25 for a flight at 16:55. Allowing for the induction process and meal times at the IRC, the man had little time to rest.

Border Force explained that their officers are mindful of the 24 hour limit so do not intentionally keep a detainee close to that time. Unfortunately with the present C&C transport contract, the detainee may have a much shorter time at the IRC than the Border Force officer intended when they made the refusal decision and booked the return flight. The 24-hour limit is meant to safeguard the welfare of the detainee but does not always function in their interest.

10.5 The Board recalls that there was an understanding with Border Force and C&C that a detainee could be offered the option of staying in the airport holding room whilst waiting for

their return flight and sign a waiver with the consent of Border Force to extend the 24-hour limit. However, the DCOs are not always aware that the detainee can be given this option.

- In November 2019 a man from China submitted a written complaint that he was threatened with use of force if he did not agree to go to the IRC whilst waiting for his return flight. In the event he complied but he was only there for two or three hours and had no rest.

The Detention and Escorting Team at the Home Office who authorise the movement from the airport to the IRC with C&C should also check that there is sufficient time for proper rest with regard to the C&C contract times. The Board suggests that Border Force, the Home Office and C&C agree a protocol with the detainees' welfare as their priority to reduce the number of journeys to IRCs for short stays.

Early transportation resulting in long waits

10.6 Sometimes people to be removed are transported much earlier than necessary which inevitably means that they have long waits. Just a couple of examples:

- A female passenger brought from Yarl's Wood IRC arrived at Cayley House at 01:00 for a flight leaving at 10:25. C&C explained that this was due to the availability of female escorting officers on the night crew. They might not have been available on the day shift.
- A man picked up from Morton Hall IRC arrived at Cayley House at 12:20 for a flight departing at 21:00, so 8:40 hours early.

10.7 On occasion detainees are brought from IRCs for interview very early in the morning, so disrupting their night's sleep and again causing unnecessarily long holding rooms stays.

- Another female was collected from Yarl's Wood IRC at 02:40 for a 09:00 interview. C&C responded that it was necessary for a night crew to carry out the move, within their contractual obligations, as the day crews were all assigned on other priority moves.

Complaints regarding missed flights due to late transportation

10.8 During the reporting period the Home Office received seven complaints from individuals who were to be removed but had missed their flights due to the late or delayed arrival of their transport. All these complaints were upheld. While motorway closures can be viewed as unfortunate, the Board is concerned that at least three removees were already in the airport, waiting at Cayley House, but missed their flights because the escort vans taking them to their flight terminals were late.

Vans used for removals

10.9 As reported last year, in summer 2018 C&C introduced a new fleet of vans to transport removals into the airport. These vans are narrower and smaller than the original vans and they also have a weight limit of 800kg. They have one less seat in the front and sometimes insufficient baggage space in the back. The change in vans has had an impact on the Board's ability to monitor some removals, which is described in section 11.

10.10 Other problems with the design of the van were reported last year. Some of these have been addressed. While the doors still cannot be opened from the inside by the escorts, which

could be a safety hazard in the event of an accident, each van now has a hammer for breaking a window for escape. The hammer is concealed, out of the view of the detainee. Some, but not all, of the interior lights have been covered or dimmed so that outsiders can no longer view the occupants through the tinted window when the light is on.

11 REMOVALS

11.1 The Board monitors the removal of detainees from the United Kingdom through Heathrow Airport up to the point when the aircraft door is closed. Some of these people fly 'unescorted' in the sense that they are brought from an IRC to Cayley House, are taken to the aircraft by DCOs and then fly by themselves. These are known as in-country removals and the vast majority of these are completed successfully. Any problems that occur are likely to be at Cayley House, if the person refuses to go, perhaps because there are continuing legal proceedings. They will then be returned to detention without any further attempt being made to remove them at that point. Occasionally there are administration errors, with detainees arriving at Cayley House to find that passports or travel documents are missing, or the removal has been booked for another day. This is disappointing and potentially stressful for the person already prepared for their flight to find themselves returned to an IRC until another removal flight is booked.

11.2 Other removees are escorted during the flight to their final destination, wherever in the world that may be. These are known as overseas escorted removals and usually take place because the person may have refused to go voluntarily, is assessed as presenting a risk to themselves or to others or is being deported having served a prison sentence for a serious offence. The escorting team usually comprises a lead and two or more other escorts, plus somebody with medical training if there are any anticipated health-related issues. The team is usually larger for longer journeys or if it is anticipated that the removal will be problematic.

11.3 The procedure is for the team to collect the detainee from the IRC and stay with them throughout the journey until they reach their destination airport. To monitor an overseas escorted removal a Board member usually tries to meet the removal party at Wilson James, the facility where removees are brought for the luggage search and personal search prior to airport entry. Practice over several years has been for the Board member to travel in the van, where they are able to observe the interaction between the escorts and the removee, so observing the latter's demeanour and the way they are treated. They continue to observe the removal during the boarding of the aircraft and the seating of the removee, before leaving the aircraft themselves.

11.4 The introduction of new vans has had an impact on the Board's ability to monitor the whole process. Quite frequently this year there has not been sufficient weight allowance or room for the monitor to travel in the van from Wilson James. This is particularly the case where the removal is anticipated as being more difficult and there are additional escorts. In such cases the Board member arranges to meet the escort party and the removee at the terminal airside on the tarmac. The monitor then only has a limited amount of time to assess the nature of the removal and whether any use of force is appropriate, proportionate and necessary.

11.5 If a removee is resistant to being removed, the escorts are authorised to use waist restraint belts (WRBs) to restrain the use of arms, leg restraints, and rigid handcuffs and to apply pain to gain compliance. Six of our members have attended the one-day training course

on HOMES (Home Office manual for escorting safely) run by the Prison Service's National Tactical Response Group to increase their awareness of the restraint techniques being used. HOMES is being further developed and the whole Board will attend training when this has been updated.

11.6 The primary and most important technique used by the escorts is to talk to the removee, explaining exactly what will happen at each stage of the removal. Engaging in conversation is also a method of stemming their understandable anxiety about what will happen when they return to their own country, where some may not have been for many years. The Board has been impressed by very many instances when escorts have gone out of their way to be helpful.

- One of the escorts was using a smartphone to help the removee to plan his journey from Delhi to his family home in the Punjab. The removee had planned an 8 hour journey but the escort found a quicker, inexpensive route, which he wrote down for the grateful man.
- A female escort spent time talking to a woman about what she could do when reaching Luanda, including researching reasonably priced accommodation, by using her own mobile phone. She also wrote down contact details of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Angolan Red Cross. She advised her not to leave the airport until she had found somewhere definite to stay.

11.7 When a removee becomes agitated as the time for flight approaches, they are often talked down into becoming cooperative. However this does not always work and Board members have frequently observed removees in WRBs, with an escort holding them by the arms and walking them swiftly up the rear steps into the aircraft, sometimes protesting loudly. They are manoeuvred into their seat in the rear of the plane, usually before the paying passengers are boarded. We have often observed the good practice of an escort explaining to the other passengers what is happening and also saying that their noisy charge will quieten as soon as the aircraft takes off, which is almost always what happens.

11.8 In some of their removal reports Board members have questioned whether removees of apparently gentle and cooperative demeanour really needed to be placed in WRBs at the beginning of the journey. The Home Office have pointed out that there might be a previous history of resistance or violence but there should be dynamic risk assessment throughout the removal and consideration given to removing restraints where possible. The Home Office have suggested to C&C that they should consider using the hands free position more often and only to use a restricted position or secure position for hands when the risk was more obvious. The Board did report instances where removees with violent histories were removed without the need for a WRB. However, they also observed incidents when a removee who had remained calm throughout the whole removal process suddenly put up a violent struggle as they were about to board the aircraft. When the removee was already in a WRB he or she was easier to control and to protect from harming themselves or others.

11.9 Some removees were observed to refuse to get out of the van or walk to the aircraft, being both physically and verbally resistant. This year there were several removals where leg

restraints were used and the removees were carried in a four-person lift up the back steps into the aircraft.

- A tall female, who had already had one failed removal, was placed in a WRB. Before leaving the van the escort put her hands in the secure position so that she could not grab the handrail. She had been completely cooperative. As she was escorted out of the van and as her feet touched the tarmac she dropped to her knees and began to struggle. The escorts managed to control her legs and carried her headfirst and face upwards onto the aircraft. Despite her very loud screaming, the aircraft took off, she settled down and the removal was successfully completed.

While it is never pleasant to monitor this, it is the Board's opinion, based on their observations of the use of such manoeuvres, that in the vast majority of cases they were reasonable, necessary and proportionate to effect a legal removal.

11.10 Not all removals are successful. The Board has observed many removals where the removee has been in the van on the tarmac next to the aircraft, but the Captain, having been briefed, has not given permission for the boarding. Sometimes this is because the flight is particularly full or has many children onboard or that paying passengers may be distressed. On other occasions the boarding has been allowed, but the removee has remonstrated so loudly that the Captain, with concern for the comfort of the other passengers, has ordered the removal party off the aircraft. On these occasions the removee is taken back to an IRC.

11.11 This year the Board has frequently reported on the calm and professional way that escorts have worked as a team to carry out difficult removals.

Family removals

11.12 The Board is informed in advance of planned removals of families from the United Kingdom. This year the vast majority of the removals planned to go through Heathrow did not go ahead. The Board monitored just one family removal.

11.13 The observed removal was of two parents from Iran and their children aged nine and eleven. They were asylum seekers but as they had first claimed asylum in Ireland, they were to be removed back to Dublin, under the Dublin convention. The family had spent two days in Tinsley House IRC preparing for the journey. On the coach transporting them to the airport the children were very well-behaved and the parents were completely cooperative. However, the parents were depressed and worried because they were sure that the escorts were tricking them into returning on a flight to Iran. They had formed this impression because there were so many escorts, three for each adult, and two for each child. There was also a medic and a cameraman. It took a great deal of talking by the escorts to convince them that they really were only going to Dublin. They probably only believed it when they were on the aircraft. In similar circumstances in the future the Board suggests that families are pre-warned that there will be a large number of escorts to look after them on their removal journey.

11.14 In all other ways the removal was very well managed. There was a stop at Cayley House where everyone could stretch their legs and have refreshments. Whilst there some of the escorts kept the children happily engaged with a balsa wood aircraft and playing card games.

Others talked to the parents. After another short coach ride to the plane, the family boarded calmly walking up the back steps in single file, with escorts beside them but not holding them. The escorts were friendly and considerate and engaged well with all the family members. The removal was concluded successfully.

LONDON CITY AIRPORT

12 DESCRIPTION OF THE SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITIES

12.1 In 2018 the remit of the Board was extended to include the STHF at London City Airport (LCY). After a preliminary visit in June 2018, Board members conducted their first monitoring visit of the holding room in April 2019 and have continued to visit approximately monthly since then.

12.2 Passengers arriving at the airport may be detained on the authority of Border Force on behalf of the Home Secretary. There are several types of detainee in the holding room: arriving passengers who are in the process of being questioned by Border Force officers; asylum seekers who are awaiting transportation to asylum accommodation or to an IRC for detention; passengers who have been refused entry and are being removed; and detainees from other places of detention in the UK who are being removed.

12.3 The Home Office contracts the management of the holding rooms to Mitie Care and Custody (C&C). The holding room opening times are:

Weekdays: 07:00 – 22:00

Saturday: 07:00 – 15:00

Sunday: 10:00 – 22:00

There is no overnight detention, but if detainees arrive late in the evening, DCOs or Border force officers stay with them until transport arrives to collect them.

Accommodation

12.4 Situated on the ground floor of the main airport building, close to the Border Force office, the holding facilities comprise an oppressively small holding room which also functions as the reception/office area for the DCOs, and an even smaller family room. There is no natural light. The main holding room has one desk and chair for the DCO behind a Perspex screen. The seating for detainees is three large old retro seats which form a sofa. There are three other desk chairs. The room also houses a broken drinks machine, filing cabinet, payphone and a small, wall-mounted TV. There is no table. To eat, the detainee must sit with a tray on their knees or use a desk chair as a table. The room is cramped with too much furniture and too little storage space. It is claustrophobic. When there are no detainees the door to the corridor is kept open for air.

12.5 Adjacent to this is the very small family room with a full length Perspex panel enabling the DCOs full view of any detainees. There is a sofa seat, a notice board and wall frieze pictures, which are intended to be welcoming for small children. This room has a door behind which female detainees can be searched in privacy.

12.6 Next to the main holding room and opposite to the family room is the unisex toilet, with a small wash basin. There is also a drop-down baby changing surface. There is usually a small but sufficient supply of sanitary products. There is no shower.

12.7 Detainees have minimal opportunity for privacy when praying, using the phone or going in or out of the toilet. When a family is detained both rooms are used to give maximum space. Given the limitations of the rooms, managing a family or a restless detainee for any period longer than a few hours can be a challenge to both the staff and the detained passengers.

New accommodation

12.8 There are plans for a temporary but more new spacious holding room facility with a shower. The airport building which will house this is under construction.

Food and drink

12.9 The drinks machine has not been working for some time, but cannot be removed. The DCOs provide hot and cold drinks from their small kitchenette along the corridor. There are the standard microwaveable meals and snacks, including crisps, biscuits, foil wrapped croissants and fresh fruit. The DCOs also sometimes purchase fresh food and sandwiches from airport shops to suit the requirements of the detainees.

Access to telephones

12.10 For security reasons, detainees are not allowed to use their smartphones if they contain cameras. In addition to the payphone which receives incoming calls, detainees can be given a mobile phone for both UK and international calls to contact their families and friends.

Amenities

12.11 For those wishing to rest on the sofas, there are pillows, sheets and blankets.

12.12 For detainees needing warm clothing, there is a stock of new quilted jackets in addition to jogging bottoms and other items of emergency clothing.

Access to Wi-Fi and the internet

12.13 Although internet access is available on the DCOs' computer, it cannot be used by the detainees. In some instances, such as booking return flights, Border Force will provide internet access to a detainee in one of their interview rooms.

12.14 The Board finds it unsatisfactory that detainees have no routine access to Wi-Fi or the internet. The internet is an essential communication tool for both text and voice-based communication such as WhatsApp to contact family, friends and employers.

12.15 As is common practice now, many detainees have details of their travel arrangements, bank accounts and other personal information stored electronically. These detainees have no opportunity in the holding room to prepare this information for their Border Force interview. The Board recommends that, even if it takes place under supervision of the DCOs, detainees should have access to Wi-Fi and the internet.

13 BORDER FORCE OFFICERS AND DETAINEE CUSTODY OFFICERS

Border Force officers

13.1 Border Force officers bring each detainee to the holding room with an IS91 form, authorising detention.

13.2 On the rare occasion when there are too many detainees to be held together in the holding room, Border Force will keep some detainees in their interview rooms. This arrangement also works if one detainee needs to be separated from another, whether due to vulnerability or for another reason.

Detainee Custody officers

13.3 There is always at least one male and one female DCO on duty at any time.

13.4 Board members' visits have rarely coincided with times when detainees were present. The few interactions that have been observed indicated that the DCOs treat the detainees kindly, and with respect and that they make them as comfortable as possible.

14 THE ADULT DETAINEE POPULATION

14.1 The detention services contractor C&C provides monthly data detailing the number of detainees and their length of stay. In the twelve-month period (February 2019 to January 2020) a total of 253 persons were detained at London City Airport. The vast majority - 92% (233 persons) - stayed between 0 and 8 hours. Just one person was detained for more than 12 hours.

15 CHILDREN IN FAMILIES AND UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

15.1 By law every person under the age of 18 is deemed to be a child. The DCOs complete a paper copy of a Child Care Plan for each child, which names the DCO responsible for that child, whether or not a parent is also present. The DCO must also check on the child every 15 minutes and record this on MEDS, their electronic records system. They also record the child's activities such as eating a meal, playing with toys, watching a DVD or sleeping.

15.2 The table shows the number of children detained. There were no long stays.

LCY Table 1: Children detained: February 2019 – January 2020

Location	Unaccompanied children	Family units with children	No. of children in family units	Total number of children
London City Airport	5	6	11	16

15.3 Board members only observed one child being detained in the holding room, a boy aged 15 in the company of a 20-year-old friend, both awaiting a turnaround flight. A Child Care Plan had been prepared. In August 2019, DCOs described the four hour stay of a mother from Nigeria and her 22-month-old daughter that had taken place three days previously. They reported that the mother had been very tired. Whilst she was resting on the sofa she was happy for the DCOs to look after the child.

- She was kept occupied with Lego blocks and a drawing book, but mostly enjoyed games of ‘peekaboo’. She had some space to run around in as the holding room door to the corridor had been kept open, allowing a little air to circulate. The child had not wanted any of the food, even porridge prepared for her, but had drunk several cartons of fruit juice. She was using nappies and the DCOs provided all the baby changing items that were required.

Mother and daughter were released on bail. The Child Care Plan had been fully completed.

15.4 In December 2019 a Board member noted that there were eight people on the log for one day: a family from Namibia seeking asylum, a further male asylum seeker and a male who was to be removed, and who was also known to have been convicted of sex offences. That latter male spent about 10 hours in the holding room. Border Force officers and DCOs worked together keeping the family with four children away from the holding room during their 2 hour 45 minute wait for transport.

Family room facilities, toys and activities for children

15.5 There is a ‘baby box’ in a cupboard in the holding room with supplies of nappies and two potties. These potties can convert into trainer seats to be placed over a normal toilet. DCOs purchase nappies, baby food and milk from airport shops when required.

15.6 There are boxes containing toys and books. The selection of books is suitable for a variety of ages, including some bilingual books. The toys include some duplo-style building bricks, toy cars, a tea set, crayons, and drawing and puzzle books. Although there is a DVD player it is difficult for the DCOs to access, as are the DVDs.

16 SAFETY

16.1 Board members have not been made aware of any safety concerns.

17 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

17.1 Some sacred books and a prayer mat are available for detainees of different faiths. Vegetarian and halal meals are available and other dietary requirements can be purchased by DCOs from airport shops.

17.2 There is access to Big Word interpretation. However, the process is awkward. As the Board has suggested for the London Heathrow Airport holding rooms, the provision of dual handset phones would facilitate this process.

17.3 Another measure which should assist communication between the DCOs and the detainees is the use of electronic translation devices. These have been trialled elsewhere during the year and were found to be useful. The Home Office has said they will provide them for all the holding rooms, but they are yet to arrive.

17.4 There is no access to legal advice for incoming passengers unless they already have a lawyer. The Board considers this to be unfair. In February 2020 we met with Home Office representatives and discussed ways in which this could be addressed. The Home Office agreed to consider these and we await their response.

17.5 Detainees being removed can access their lawyer by telephone, but not via email or the internet.

18 HEALTH ISSUES

18.1 If a detainee falls ill in the holding room, the DCOs call 111 for advice or they call the London Ambulance Service. The Board have not been informed of any such instances during the period they have been monitoring.

Accessing medication

18.2 The Board continues to be seriously concerned by the policy of denying detainees in the holding rooms access to their own prescribed medication. Due to concern about the safety of the medication, DCOs and Border Force officers are instructed that for a detainee to be allowed to take their medication it must be authorised by a doctor or the airport paramedic service.

18.3 As at present in all STHFs, the DCOs may not allow detainees to have any over the counter medications such as paracetamol. After recommendation by the IMB, cool strips have

been provided to apply to foreheads to ease headaches. Nicotine lozenges are also available for smokers.

19 TRANSPORTATION

19.1 Detainees seeking asylum are collected by the transport firm Clearsprings to take them to asylum accommodation. During the reporting period there were some long waits.

- A family from Iran including an eight-year old child had arrived at 10:05. The parents' interviews were completed before 12:00. They did not leave for accommodation at Barry House until 19:50, a stay of 9 hours 45 minutes.

In January 2020, the Board were informed by Clearsprings that they now collect within three hours of notification.

19.2 Detainees who are being taken to IRCs frequently have long waits. C&C, who have the escorting contract, have up to eight hours in which to collect detainees.

- In August a female had arrived at 15:10 and left for detention at Colnbrook IRC at 21:35.
- In October a movement order was requested at 22:38 to take a detainee to Harmondsworth IRC. He was collected at 03.15, reaching Harmondsworth at 05:30. Later that morning he was collected again at 10:40 and delivered back to LCY at 12:28. He was eventually granted bail at 21:15. He had had a very long day.

20 REMOVALS

20.1 Board members have not observed any removals at LCY.

BECKET HOUSE IMMIGRATION REPORTING CENTRE STHF

21 DESCRIPTION OF THE SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITIES

21.1 In 2018 the remit of the Board was extended to include the STHF in Becket House. The first monitoring visit took place in March 2019 and Board members have continued to visit the holding room approximately monthly since then.

21.2 Becket House is a Home Office immigration reporting centre in London SE1. The centre is used by Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) arrest teams and Home Office caseworkers. People admitted to the country on immigration bail are required to report there at regular intervals. This may result in some of them being detained in the holding room, for example if it has been decided that they now should be removed. Other detainees will have been brought in by the ICE arrest teams. Nearly all of those detained will be taken later in the day to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), but are likely to have to wait until early evening for transport to arrive, even if they have been detained during the morning. This leads to stays of up to eight hours or even more in some cases.

21.3 The holding room is open between 09:00 and 19:00 daily. The DCOs stay until the last detainee is collected. There are no overnight stays.

Accommodation

21.4 The holding room is entered by the DCOs' office, which is of reasonable size. Behind a glass-type screen there are two separate holding rooms, one for men and one for women. Each room has a maximum seating capacity of fifteen. The rooms might best be compared to railway waiting rooms, rows of upright seats lining the walls. They are not expected to accommodate children.

21.5 At the end of each of the two rooms is a toilet cubicle with a wash hand basin. The toilets are clean but they lack seats and lids. There is usually a small supply of sanitary products in the females' toilet.

Showers

21.6 The lack of a shower in the current facility is an issue. The holding room may have to accommodate detainees who have been brought in from sleeping rough who need to freshen themselves up. Hopefully this omission will be addressed in the design of the new facility (section 28 below).

Food and Drink

21.7 Hot and cold drinks are available. There is always a good supply of microwaveable meals, including halal and vegetarian. Within the holding room detainees can usually help themselves to snacks including crisps, biscuits, foil-wrapped croissants and fresh fruit. On one rota visit the DCOs had to be prompted to put the fruit out for the detainees.

Access to telephones

21.8 For security reasons, detainees are not allowed to use smartphones which contain cameras. A payphone is available in the holding room which can receive calls. Detainees are allowed to make telephone calls to their family, friends and legal advisers.

Maintenance

21.9 During the limited time that the Board has been visiting Becket House we have not noted any significant maintenance issues. The facility is in good decorative order and, on the evidence of our visits, it has been kept clean and tidy.

22 IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND DETAINEE CUSTODY OFFICERS

Immigration Enforcement officers

22.1 Immigration Enforcement officers authorise the detention of people in the holding room while they wait for transport to take them to IRCs. Occasionally detainees are released from the holding room after enquiries have been satisfied.

22.2 The majority of the people detained at Becket House have been brought there by the ICE arrest teams, who have arrested them that day in the community, often in their homes. Additionally a few people who have come to the centre for their routine reporting are then detained. To those detained it may feel completely unexpected, even though they may have been warned that this could occur.

22.3 The Immigration Enforcement officers escort each detainee to the holding room after interview and produce the IS91 which is the written legal authority for detention.

Detainee Custody officers

22.4 The Home Office contracts the management of the holding room to Mitie Care and Custody (C&C). C&C are also contracted to transport detainees to and from IRCs. The contract states that they have up to eight hours in which to collect a detainee.

22.5 There are usually three DCOs on duty, with at least one male and one female at any time. Board members have observed examples of very good care and concern for the welfare of detainees.

- A detainee was trying to make contact on the telephone with his prospective mother-in-law and, through her, with a solicitor. The DCO was most assiduous in trying to help him.
- An Iraqi Kurdish female had been very distressed on arrival in the holding room because she was fearful of being sent back to Iraq. The DCO told the Board member that she had spent time with her and had managed to comfort her. She was monitoring her on the CCTV and was talking to her regularly although she had little English.

22.6 This good care was in contrast to occasional reluctance to provide amenities at other times. For example a Board member observed:

- There was a reluctance to provide detainees with access to a telephone when there was no obvious reason for the restriction. The detainee had already made a couple of phone calls, but he told the Board member that he wanted to make more. His phone was in the reception area. When this was initially brought to the attention of the DCOs, they responded that he had already had his two calls. However this was remedied when, a little later, they allowed him out to the reception area to make his calls.

23 THE DETAINEE POPULATION

23.1 C&C supplies information monthly regarding the number of people in detention. A total of 1066 persons were detained in Becket House during the twelve-month reporting period (February 2019 to January 2020), 92% of whom were detained between 0 and 8 hours. No person was detained beyond 12 hours.

23.2 Approximately 85 people were detained for over 8 hours in Becket House.

- On 26th June one woman was there from 11:00 – 20:00, a stay of nine hours.
- In January 2020, a man was brought in by an arrest team at 09:20 and left for Tinsley House IRC at 18:05, a stay 8 hours 45 minutes.

The Board considers this to be a very long waiting period in surroundings with only upright seating. A Board member observed the following:

- In November 2019 three men had been brought in by the arrest team at 09:25, 09:35 and 09:45. One was currently asleep covered by a blanket in what seemed an incredibly uncomfortable position on the floor under one of the benches. They were collected at 16:45, stays of over 7 hours.

23.3 On some occasions the male holding room has been very full indeed. Given the limited size of the room this can be very uncomfortable for the detainees even for a few hours.

24 SAFETY

24.1 The holding room can reasonably be said to provide a safe environment. The Board is not aware of any incidents of self-harm during the year. The staff are able to keep detainees under observation, either directly or through CCTV.

24.2 DCOs are alert to detainees' movements. During a rota visit a Board member observed that a DCO was concerned that a detainee had been in the toilet for an excessively long time. He knocked on the toilet door to check that all was well. The Board member was impressed that the DCO had acted promptly on his concern.

25 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

25.1 There is a speaker phone which is used for interpretation. A Board member reported that when a Chinese woman, who did not speak English, was brought into the holding room, the Immigration Enforcement officer explained the reasons for her detention through telephone contact with an interpreter. This was a quick and efficient process, helping the woman to understand her situation.

25.2 Sacred books and prayer mats are stored separately and respectfully.

People with disabilities

25.3 The Board has not observed detainees with significant physical disabilities in the holding room.

Access to legal advice

25.4 Detainees can get in touch with their own lawyers by telephone but they do not have email access. There is no Wi-Fi or internet access.

26. HEALTH ISSUES

26.1 If a detainee becomes ill while in the holding room, the DCOs call the London Ambulance service. They can also call the 111 helpline for advice.

26.2 As in all STHFs the DCOs may not allow detainees access to their own prescribed medication or to common non-prescription medication such as paracetamol. Following an IMB request, cool strips to apply to foreheads have been provided for detainees suffering from headaches. Nicotine lozenges are available for smokers.

27. TRANSPORTATION

27.1 C&C are contracted to transport detainees from the holding room to IRCs. The contract with the Home Office allows them up to eight hours from the issue of a movement order in which to collect the detainee.

27.2 On some occasions the male holding room has been very full indeed. This can be very uncomfortable for the detainees given the limited size of the room.

- On 26th June there were ten male detainees in the men's holding room. Eventually seven of them were collected at 19:00, mainly to go to Brook House IRC. All of these seven had stays over five hours. The three men who had arrived mid-afternoon had stays of between two and four hours before their transport arrived at 19:45.

With such large numbers detained in a small space, the Board asked why earlier transport collections had not been arranged. The gist of the C&C response was that they were acting

within the contract. The Board considers that such long waits in a crowded and uncomfortable room are detrimental to the welfare of the detainees.

27.3 Vans arriving to transport detainees from Becket House to IRCs park just outside the holding room exit in a secure car park, which means that there is no need for restraints to be used when detainees leave the holding room and enter the van.

28. NEW ACCOMMODATION

28.1 In January 2020 the Board was informed that the Becket House building was due to be vacated in September 2020 and that the Home Office was planning to move the reporting centre and the STHF to Warehouse K near the Excel Centre. The Board hopes that the move will lead to improved facilities for the detainees.

EATON HOUSE IMMIGRATION REPORTING CENTRE

29 DESCRIPTION OF THE SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITIES

29.1 In 2018 the remit of the Board was extended to include the STHF in Eaton House. After a preliminary visit in March 2019, Board members conducted their first monitoring visit of the holding room in April and have continued to visit approximately monthly since then. A problem with entry pass renewal in October resulted in no visit taking place that month.

29.2 Eaton House is a Home Office immigration reporting centre in Hounslow, West London. It is situated within a large four storey office block, which houses Border Force staff and acts as a base for regional Immigration Enforcement arrest teams. It also provides reception and interview facilities for individuals who are required to report to the centre. The holding room within is staffed from Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 19:00.

29.3 The current holding room is on the ground floor at the western end of the building. It is immediately adjacent to a secondary entry/exit door to the building which is used by escorts who are removing detainees to their vehicles to take them to IRCs. The door opens to an open car parking area which is designated as insecure.

Accommodation

29.4 The facility is entered via the DCO's office/reception area which is adjacent to the holding room. The DCOs on duty have a good view of the holding room through a glazed partition. However, this area is very cramped. It has a floor area of about 30m² but it holds a desk, office and easy chairs for three DCOs, a large drinks machine, microwave, filing and storage. There is no separate search area, although a portable screen can be used for privacy.

29.5 The holding room itself has windows and so benefits from natural light. There is one fixed table in the room with four seats around it and banks of three and four seats respectively arranged along two walls, a total of 11 seats. There are also two bean bags. A bookshelf holds sacred books, secular books and magazines.

29.6 The room has to accommodate both men and women. This can be an issue because the room is small and cramped with an effective area for seating and circulation of only approximately 28m². It is too small for the numbers it sometimes has to accommodate.

29.7 On one side of the holding room there are adjacent cubicles for male and female toilets, with doors that open directly into the holding room. There are handwashing facilities in the cubicles. The female toilet has good supplies of sanitary products.

Showers

29.8 The lack of a shower in the current facility is a serious issue. The holding room sometimes has to accommodate detainees who have been brought in from sleeping rough who need to freshen themselves up. A supply of emergency clothing is available if required.

Food and Drink

29.9 Hot drinks are available from the drinks machine and the DCOs can also provide cold drinks. There is always a good supply of microwaveable meals, including halal and vegetarian. Should kosher meals be required, the DCOs have petty cash to purchase acceptable food locally. Within the holding room detainees can help themselves to snacks including crisps, biscuits, foil-wrapped croissants and fresh fruit.

Amenities

29.10 Following a recommendation from the Board, a daily English newspaper is now provided, brought in by the DCOs when they come on duty. There is a meagre supply of magazines. Detainees are not allowed to smoke but nicotine lozenges are available.

Access to telephones

29.11 For security reasons, detainees are not allowed to use their smartphones which contain cameras. A payphone is available in the holding room which can receive calls. There is a plentiful supply of basic mobile phones which detainees can use with their own SIM-cards.

Maintenance

29.12 During the limited time that the Board has been visiting Eaton House we have not noted any significant maintenance issues. The facility is in good decorative order and, on the evidence of our visits, it is kept clean and tidy.

30 IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND DETAINEE CUSTODY OFFICERS

Immigration Enforcement officers

30.1 Immigration Enforcement officers authorise the detention of people in the holding room while they wait for transport to take them to IRCs. Occasionally detainees are released from the holding room after enquiries have been satisfied.

30.2 The majority of the people detained at Eaton House have been brought there by Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) arrest teams, who have arrested them that day in the community, often in their homes. Additionally a few people who have come to the centre for their routine reporting are then detained. To those detained it may feel completely unexpected, even though they may have been warned that this could occur.

30.3 The Immigration Enforcement officers escort each detainee to the holding room after interview and produce the IS91 which is the written legal authority for detention. Observing their entry into the holding room, Board members have noted that the officers relate to the detainees in a professional and friendly manner. If they speak the detainee's language, they sometimes assist with the induction into the holding room.

- Looking frail, the middle-aged detainee was seated and being talked to gently by the officer in his own language (either Punjabi or Urdu). Since he had little English the DCO

asked the officer to stay and translate for the search and induction, which he did. Both were carried out in a gentle and relaxed way, systematically but sensitively.

30.4 Board members have observed good co-operative working practice between the Immigration Enforcement officers and the DCOs, so that the latter have advance warning about the detainees they can expect to receive in the holding room.

Detainee Custody Officers

30.5 There are three DCOs, two males and one female on duty throughout the day. For the three DCOs usually on duty this is their main place of work and they take pride in their role. On each rota visit Board members have been impressed with the way they relate to the detainees. For example:

- DCOs had a caring and respectful attitude to the detainees and treated them with kindness.

30.6 Inductions into the holding room have been observed to be thorough, conducted in a friendly and informal manner. Observing an induction the Board member reported:

- The Immigration Enforcement officer used a translation service using the speaker on a mobile phone to speak to the gentleman and the DCO used the same service to complete his induction. This was friendly and welcoming and included an explanation of the role of the IMB.

30.7 Arriving detainees are given plenty of time to copy down phone numbers before their mobiles with cameras are taken from them. The detainees are often distressed at finding themselves in detention and Board members have seen DCOs listening attentively and assisting where possible.

- A DCO was helping [the young detainee] to make phone calls, to explain to agencies that he was in detention and to convey a message to his social worker, asking them to ring back on the holding room phone. The phone rang for him a few minutes later.

31 THE DETAINEE POPULATION

31.1 The Home Office contracts the management of the holding room to Mitie Care and Custody (C&C). C&C are also contracted to transport detainees to and from IRCs. The contract states that they have up to eight hours in which to collect a detainee.

31.2 C&C supplies information monthly, regarding the number of people in detention. During the twelve-month reporting year from February 2019 to January 2020 inclusive, 1079 individuals were detained at Eaton House. 99% of these stayed between 0 and 8 hours. Seven individuals stayed between 8 -12 hours and no-one longer than that.

31.3 The number of people detained at any one time varies from none to up to eight or nine. Even eight makes the holding room feel very crowded and uncomfortable for its occupants.

The number of arriving detainees is unpredictable. An example of full holding rooms occurred on two consecutive days in November:

- On 26th November, eight males had been detained. Seven of these were taken to Harmondsworth after fairly short waits, but the eighth waited from 10:05 till 16:30, a stay of 6 hours 25 before going to an IRC.
- The busiest day had been Wednesday 27th November with 13 on the log, comprising two married couples, a mother and adult son, a couple where a woman had decided to depart voluntarily leaving her husband to go into custody, and five single males. At its most crowded there were 8 people in the room.

DCOs have told Board members that they phone for transport to IRCs to come quickly once they have six to eight detainees. Board members have not actually visited on a day when the holding room was so full, but this occurs approximately two or three times per month.

32 SAFETY

32.1 The holding room is a safe environment. The Board is not aware of any incidents of self-harm during the reporting year.

33 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

33.1 Detaining men and women who are not related in the same room can be problematic. The greatest concern is that there is no separate safe space for women. The DCOs do their best to look after women who they think may feel uncomfortable or intimidated in a room full of men. Although the Board has not observed this, the DCOs have reported that if a single woman appears vulnerable, they will seat the woman with them in the office.

33.2 As mentioned above, different dietary requirements can be accommodated.

People with disabilities

33.3 The Board has not observed detainees with significant physical disabilities in the holding room.

Access to legal advice

33.4 Detainees can get in touch with their own lawyers by telephone but they do not have email access. There is no Wi-Fi or internet access.

34 HEALTH ISSUES

34.1 If a detainee becomes ill while in the holding room, the DCOs call the London Ambulance service.

34.2 As in all STHFs the DCOs may not allow detainees access to their own prescribed medication or to common non-prescription medication such as paracetamol. Following an IMB request, cool strips to apply to foreheads have been provided for detainees suffering from headaches and the DCOs have reported that these have been helpful.

34.3 DCOs reported a concern that sometimes the ICE teams told detainees at the time of arrest that they would be able to take their medication when they reached the holding room. However, they actually have to wait until they reach the IRC.

35 TRANSPORTATION

35.1 C&C are contracted to transport detainees from the holding room to IRCs. The contract with the Home Office allows them up to eight hours from the issue of a movement order in which to collect the detainees.

35.2 This eight hour contract contributes to the crowding of the holding room mentioned above (para. 31.3). It is not unusual for detainees to have to wait for six or seven hours for collection.

- A married couple from Ukraine had arrived at 11:35 and did not leave for Yarl's Wood until 18:30, a stay of 6 hours 55 minutes.

Handcuffing

35.3 At the beginning of our visiting period in April 2019, members observed that when a detainee was about to be transported by van to the IRC he was put in handcuffs.

- From leaving the office to sitting in the van he was held lightly on the elbow by the male escort. As soon as he was seated in the van the handcuffs were removed. The members asked the escorts if the use of handcuffs was standard procedure and they explained that it was, because the outside of the building is not a secure area.

In response to written questions C&C replied that there is a risk assessment in every case before passive restraints are used and that a Passive Restraints report is filled out each time they are used.

35.4 The Board has been monitoring this. We completely accept that some detainees will try to escape if given an opportunity and they do need to be handcuffed. However very many of the detainees at Eaton House are completely compliant and are not likely to attempt to escape when being taken from building exit to van. Responses from C&C and from the Home Office all state that risk assessments are undertaken and forms completed for every detainee, but the Board's observations suggest sometimes otherwise. Whilst a Board member was observing, a

DCO was subtly trying to remind an escort to take a Passive Restraints form for their handcuffed detainee, as if this was not their automatic practice.

35.5 Board members have also observed that some detainees are distressed by the handcuffing experience.

- On this occasion the procedure was fully explained to each of three detainees at the start. The DCOs were respectful, friendly and unhurried as they applied handcuffs and the Passive Restraints Form was completed for each person. The second middle-aged detainee was clearly upset to be handcuffed and talked at some length about how this was the first time in his life...he did not get angry, he just appeared shaken.

The observing member commented that while handcuffing appeared to be justified for one of the detainees, it seemed to be over cautious for the other two. The Board remains to be satisfied that restraints are being applied by escorts only when it is necessary and proportionate to do so. If there are genuine concerns about the risk of absconding during these moves, a simple and low-cost mitigation measure would be to install a short length of fencing on either side of the exit from the building, to form a more secure corridor to the van door.

36 NEW ACCOMMODATION

36.1 Plans are ready to create a new and much larger facility with segregated male and female holding rooms on the lower ground floor directly beneath the existing facility. The Board was informed that work on this conversion was due to start before the end of the financial year in April 2020. We now understand that this may be delayed by up to a year.

36.2 The new male holding room is planned to have a floor area of approximately 38m², with seats for 24 persons. At one end there will be a toilet and a separate shower. There will only be indirect access to natural light in this room through a part-glazed partition separating the room from the female holding room.

36.3 The new female holding room is planned to have a floor area of approximately 28m² with provision for 16 seats. At one end there will be a toilet, but no separate shower. It is not anticipated that female detainees will require showers but, if they do, suitable arrangements could be made for them to use the male shower. This holding room will benefit from some natural light, albeit limited as the room is located on the lower ground floor.

36.4 These new holding rooms should address many of the Board's present concerns. However, the building exit to the van will remain the same and so the issue of handcuffing will still need to be considered.

37 THE WORK OF THE BOARD

37.1 Each week two members of the Board visit Heathrow. One makes an unannounced visit to the holding rooms to monitor the facilities and to talk to the detainees. The other observes people being removed, usually monitoring an escorted overseas removal. After each visit a report is circulated to the Home Office, Border Force and to C&C. The Board appreciates the regular responses it receives to the issues raised.

37.2 The Board's remit has been broadened to include London City Airport and the reporting centres of Becket House and Eaton House. Since April 2019 Board members have visited each place once per month. They too write reports after each visit which are circulated to the same bodies and similarly receive responses to the issues raised. The Board may increase visits to twice monthly when all new members have been fully trained.

37.3 The Board Chair and Vice-Chair attend the Quarterly Heathrow Detention Board, which is convened by Border Force and is attended by representatives of Border Force, the Home Office and C&C. These have been very useful fora for the agencies and the Board to raise matters of concern and to find ways of working to resolve issues. During the year Home Office representatives have twice attended Board meetings which have been most productive. Similarly C&C attended a Board meeting where some new initiatives were suggested and discussed. In addition the Board Chair and Vice-Chair have held individual meetings with Border Force, the Home Office and C&C all of which have been very useful and led to generally improved conditions for those in detention.

37.4 In May 2019 a member of the Board resigned when his work took him abroad for several years. In December a very experienced member and founding Chair of the Board retired as her tenure was complete. The Board thanks them both for their hard work and commitment.

37.5 In May 2019 two new members were appointed and were able to carry out full monitoring duties by the end of January 2020. In January 2020 three more new members began their training.

37.6 The Board's Vice-Chair is the IMB's regional representative for Short Term Holding Facilities.

Appendix A

BOARD DATA	
Recommended Complement of Board Members	12
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	11
Total number of Board meetings in reporting period	12
Number of visits to London Heathrow Airport	99
Number of visits to London City Airport	10
Number of visits to Becket House	10
Number of visits to Eaton House	9
Total number of monitoring visits by the Board	128