



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Dover Short-Term Holding Facility

**For reporting years
01 January 2019 – 31 December 2020**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 requires every immigration removal centre (IRC) to be monitored by an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), appointed by the Secretary of State from members of the community in which the establishment is situated.

This requirement has been extended to short-term holding facilities (STHFs) by the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, Rule 52 of which requires 'Visiting Committees' under the 1999 Act (now known as Independent Monitoring Boards) to visit these facilities regularly and report on (Rule 53):

- the state of the STHF premises
- the administration of the STHF
- the treatment of the detained persons held at the STHF

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, Rule 52 provides for its members to have access at any time to every part of the STHF and to every detained person, and to have access to those records of the STHF necessary to enable the members to discharge their duties under the Rules.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen protection for people deprived of their liberty. The protocol recognises that such people are particularly vulnerable and aims to prevent their ill-treatment through establishing a system of visits or inspections to all places of detention. OPCAT requires that states designate a National Preventive Mechanism to carry out visits to places of detention, to monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMBs are part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

2. Description of the establishment

- 2.1 During the reporting period the Board monitored two short-term holding facilities: the Kent Intake Unit (KIU) at Dover Eastern Docks and Frontier House in Folkestone.
- 2.2 The KIU consists of a large room designed to hold up to 58 detainees with a small separate room for families. Both rooms can be observed by detention custody officers. Another room is set aside for the induction and searching of new arrivals and there are a number of interview rooms.
- 2.3 Frontier House - a smaller facility in Folkestone – is most commonly used at times of high demand, acting as an overflow facility for the Dover holding room. Frontier House is designed to hold up to 42 detainees. During the Covid-19 pandemic this facility has also been used as “bubble” area to accommodate detainees who have come into contact with Covid-19 positive cases or as an alternative location if positive cases have been detected in the KIU.
- 2.4 The purpose of the facilities is to detain migrants who have attempted to gain entry into the UK without detection, most commonly in small boats, in road vehicles, or via the Channel Tunnel. Additionally, migrants suspected of being in the UK illegally, for example by overstaying their leave to enter, are sometimes brought to the KIU following arrest by immigration enforcement officers or the police.
- 2.5 Most of the cases at the KIU are dealt with by officers from UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) based in the same building. Some are dealt with by other departments such as Immigration Enforcement or Border Force. Once screening interviews, fingerprint and other checks, or welfare interviews have been carried out, many detainees are temporarily admitted for their asylum claims to be assessed, whilst those who meet the criteria for continued detention are transferred to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). There are very few removals direct from Dover.
- 2.6 Management of the holding room is contracted out to Mitie (operating as Care and Custody), which holds the national detention and escorting services contract and who took over in 2018. Detention custody officers are responsible for the safety, security and welfare of detainees held in the holding room, and also perform other detention and escorting duties.
- 2.7 A medical contractor (Aeromed) has been contracted to provide a medic in the Dover holding room between the hours of 1000-1600, seven days per week.
- 2.8 Many detainees who are being temporarily admitted are admitted to an area adjacent to the KIU (known as the Atrium), to await transport.
- 2.9 In 2019 and 2020 most migrants arriving in small boats across the English Channel have first been held at a temporary facility at the Dover Western Docks, known as the Tug Haven, before then being transferred to other locations such as IRCs, the KIU or Frontier House. During the reporting period the IMB was not able to gain access to monitor this facility, as it is not considered to be a place of

detention; however since the end of the reporting period and at the time of publication some limited access for monitoring has now been granted.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

- 3.1.1 Short-term holding of detainees in Dover takes place in a unique and challenging context, which has attracted growing public attention during the reporting period. The number of detainees counted in the holding rooms in Dover and Folkestone increased to 6230 in 2019, representing an increase from 2018 and the highest numbers since 2015. This number increased further in 2020 to a total of 10624.¹ As with previous years, there was a seasonal variation in numbers, with higher numbers of detainees during the summer months. This is largely due to an increase in migrants crossing the Channel in small boats during the summer months when the weather is better. At the end of the reporting period and at the time of publication the numbers were continuing to increase. There appears to be no sign of this trend slowing or reversing.
- 3.1.2 The Board has also noted with concern a sharp increase in detainees entering the holding rooms having attempted to cross the Channel during the winter months of 2019 and 2020 compared to previous years, at a time when the weather is worse and conditions considerably more dangerous.
- 3.1.3 Since its last annual report, the Board has grown increasingly concerned about the ability of the holding rooms to cope with sudden influxes of large numbers of detainees and the impact that this can have on matters such as assessing healthcare needs, carrying out inductions and following up on detainees who are a cause for concern. This has in turn impacted on the length of stay in the holding rooms, with increasing numbers of detainees spending in excess of 24 hours in the holding rooms during the reporting period. This was further exacerbated during the Brexit transition period, when it was believed that those who seek to facilitate journeys across the Channel were informing potential travellers that if they wished to reach the UK, they should attempt to do so as a matter of urgency. There have been particular concerns about the initial reception facilities at Tug Haven, which the Board is now able to monitor regularly.
- 3.1.4 The Covid-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on the Board's ability to gather information and discuss the contents of this annual report. The Board has therefore tried to cover as much ground as it can in these difficult circumstances, but inevitably there is less detail and supporting evidence than usual. Much of the Board's monitoring during 2020 took place remotely. Ministers are aware of these constraints. Regular information is being collected specifically on the facilities' response to the pandemic, and that is being collated nationally. The Dover Board has been very low in numbers – with just three members during most of 2019 and 2020. Owing to the pressures this has created, this report therefore covers a two-year reporting period.

¹ Figures are management information provided by Mitie Care and Custody and are a count of detained persons within a 24-hour period and are not individual detentions. The Board were unable to provide overall figures for total individual holding room detentions for 2019 and 2020.

- 3.1.5 In addition to monitoring the STHF, the Board has more recently been granted limited access to the initial reception facilities at the Tug Haven for those crossing the Channel in small boats. In view of the concerns previously expressed by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, and some IRC IMBs, we are issuing a separate update on our initial findings there.

3.2 Main judgements

How safe are the short-term holding facilities?

The holding rooms in Dover and Folkestone were clearly not designed to cope with the high numbers of people arriving across the Channel witnessed in 2019 and 2020. This places considerable pressure on the ability to maintain a safe environment, particularly for children. A number of detainees entering the holding rooms during the reporting period were vulnerable, including large numbers of unaccompanied minors. Whilst there is a permanent safeguarding presence within the facility and active use made of the National Referral Mechanism, it is a concern that when there are large influxes of detainees, the assessment of detainee vulnerabilities comes under greater pressure and that some detainee needs may be missed. The small size of the family room means that children (sometimes unaccompanied) can be held in the same space as adults they do not know, sometimes for long periods of time. During 2020 there was particular concern about the welfare of unaccompanied children, following the communication by the Kent Local Authority that for a period of several weeks it could no longer admit children into care, resulting in increased waiting times for children both in the holding room and the post-detention Atrium area. Instances of violence and self-harm in the holding rooms are extremely rare and detainees have largely reported feeling safe. The Board was not permitted to monitor the facility at the Tug Haven during the reporting period. However, on the basis of conversations with detainees arriving at the KIU or Frontier House from the Tug Haven and the Inspectorate's report of 2020 the Board has been concerned about the safety and suitability of that site for the large numbers of people arriving. The Board was informed by IMBs at receiving IRCs that a number of unaccompanied minors had been incorrectly age assessed and been transported to these locations with adult detainees.

How fairly and humanely are detainees treated?

The holding rooms are suitably equipped for short stays of a few hours. However, neither the Dover nor the Folkestone holding rooms are suitable for stays in excess of a few hours and manifestly unsuitable for stays in excess of 24 hours. The holding room in Folkestone– which does not have a shower – is particularly unsuitable. Whilst the Board acknowledges the challenges reported to it that can result in stays in excess of 24 hours (including the time taken to arrange and conduct asylum interviews), the lack of proper sleeping facilities, fresh air and the general unsuitability of the environment is felt to be injurious to detainees' welfare. This situation has been exacerbated by the increasing numbers arriving in 2019 and 2020, with detainees often arriving at the holding facilities in a cold,

wet and confused state. Detainees have been observed being treated with respect and speak highly of the way they have been treated by holding room staff. Some groups with protected characteristics – such as pregnant women, older detainees and detainees with disabilities – are less likely to have their particular needs met in the holding room, though efforts are made to keep their detention short and the Board has witnessed a number of caring and supportive interactions between staff and detainees.

How well are detainees' health and wellbeing needs met?

Detainees' health and wellbeing needs are considerably better met since the introduction of a medic at the Dover holding room, however given the unpredictability of arrivals at the facility the Board expressed concern that this provision was only between the hours of 1000-1600. This provision was however expanded to be available 24 hours per day, seven days per week just after the end of the reporting period. Detainees with more serious medical issues have been taken to local hospitals. There is no formal mental health support, though vulnerabilities linked to mental health are sometimes identified whilst detainees are in the holding rooms. It is unclear however how far this information is passed on and acted on by any receiving facility. Working practices were adjusted in 2020 to manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, though there have been positive Covid cases amongst detainees and a period where a large number of staff at the KIU were required to self-isolate. Despite signage and attempts to keep detainees distanced, social distancing has not been realistic in either the KIU or Frontier House. The Board was concerned about the lack of proactive widespread testing of detainees for Covid-19 in 2020, though this improved shortly after the end of the reporting period.

How well are detainees prepared for return or release?

Detainees often report confusion about where they are and what will be happening to them next and, whilst inductions and interviews appear thorough, detainees can struggle to process everything they are being told. Written information provided to detainees is usually in English and can be difficult to understand. This has been exacerbated by the pressure created by the increasing numbers of arrivals in 2019 and 2020. Detainees' options for contacting families or outside contacts are limited. The provision of the Atrium facility – adjacent to the Dover holding room – is an excellent service for those who are being temporarily admitted, however this has come under considerable pressure during 2020 due to the increase in numbers and of unaccompanied children in particular. The impact of high numbers of arrivals, Covid cases and the need for Covid 'bubbling' have resulted in increasingly complex arrangements for moving detainees between the facilities in Dover and Folkestone, local hotels, IRCs and other intake units. Detainees who are being transferred to other parts of the immigration detention estate often seem unclear about where they are going or what is happening.

3.3 Recommendations

TO THE MINISTER

- The holding facilities in Dover and Folkestone are unsuitable for the numbers of detainees arriving and should be expanded or replaced as a matter of urgency.

TO THE HOME OFFICE

- Processes for dealing with unaccompanied minors arriving should be urgently reviewed to address the lengths of time spent waiting in the holding rooms or the Atrium before being placed in care.
- Age assessment processes should be strengthened to prevent further cases of minors being mistakenly transported to Immigration Removal Centres. This has been partially addressed since the end of the reporting period.
- Detainees should be provided with clearer verbal and written information about what will happen to them when they leave the facilities, with documentation provided in a range of languages.
- The facilities at the Tug Haven should be improved to ensure that detainees' urgent needs are better met earlier in the detention process (see Annex A).
- The IMB should be granted access to monitor the Tug Haven facility. This was a concern at the end of the reporting period, but was positively addressed in mid-2021.

TO CARE AND CUSTODY / MITIE

- The medical provision in the holding rooms should be expanded to ensure permanent access to more than one medical professional at busier times. The expansion to 24 hours per day was achieved just after the end of the reporting period; however more than one medic should be available.
- Showering and washing facilities should be provided at Frontier House.
- Supervision of detainees in the holding rooms should be improved during times when the holding rooms are close to full capacity in particular to safeguard the needs of children detainees who are vulnerable.
- Ventilation in the holding rooms should be improved.

3.4 Progress since the last report

- 3.4.1 **Expansion and upgrading of the facilities:** The Board was informed that the Dover holding room was due to be relocated to a larger facility in Folkestone. The Board received progress updates on this during 2019 and had been informed that the move would take place subject to agreement of the budget. By the end of 2019 the move had not taken place and progress appeared to have stalled. The holding room in Dover did however undergo some refurbishment in 2019, with noticeable improvements to parts of the facility, including the air conditioning and the general appearance of the holding room. The Board was informed in 2020 that plans were under consideration to relocate the Dover holding room to a larger facility overlooking the Western Docks, but by the end of the reporting period there was no timescale for this. The Board notes that the situation at Frontier House – the current overspill holding room in Folkestone – remains unchanged: there is still no shower facility and no separate space for children or families. Given the increases in numbers and the reported unsuitability of the current facilities at the Tug Haven, it is clear that the provision of expanded facilities which can hold more detainees and in more suitable conditions are now more urgently required than ever.
- 3.4.2 **More privacy in the induction room:** The Board raised the concern that the induction process at the KIU is carried out in full view and hearing of others in the induction room, including personal health questions. Personal searches were conducted behind a curtain. The situation in 2019 remained unchanged, however towards the end of 2020 the Board was informed that further work would be undertaken to improve privacy in the induction room and also to better accommodate social distancing. Whilst the induction room has undergone some refurbishment, the induction process still takes place in full view and hearing of others. Since the end of the reporting period two larger search cubicles with curtains have been installed. The Board is aware that a detainee can be seen by the medic, in a separate and confidential environment, however this is not a service automatically provided to detainees and less likely at times when the holding room is busy.
- 3.4.3 **Identifying and protecting vulnerable detainees:** Since the 2018 report, the Board has been routinely provided with basic statistical information about the number of detainees referred to the safeguarding officer and the number of people referred to the National Referral Mechanism. The Board is also given access to information from vulnerable adult warning forms. New and clearer signage, including anti-slavery helpline details, are now provided in the holding rooms. However, as the numbers have increased during 2020 the Board has become aware of the increasingly pressurised environment in which staff are operating and the impact that this may have on the ability to accurately and thoroughly identify and fully support all those detainees who may be vulnerable.

3.4.4 **Monitoring of holding rooms in Calais and Coquelles:** In late 2018 the Board was asked to make preparations for the monitoring of the short-term holding facilities in Coquelles in Northern France and undertook a familiarisation visit in October 2018. The Board was unable to commence this monitoring due to being informed that appropriate agreement had not been reached with the relevant French government and port authorities. Despite enquiring about this throughout 2019 and 2020, no further progress has been made and monitoring in Coquelles has yet to start. In the meantime the Board became more urgently concerned with the monitoring of the Tug Haven facility, limited access to which was agreed after the end of the reporting period.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception and induction

- 4.1.1 New arrivals are generally initially seated in an induction room, next to the main holding room. IMB members have observed induction interviews being conducted in a respectful and thorough manner, with frequent use made of telephone interpreting services. Detainees arriving in Dover are often tired and sometimes distressed and the Board has observed staff members conducting inductions responding to these detainees in a sensitive and considerate way.
- 4.1.2 The nature of Dover as a seaport holding facility, in which large numbers of detainees can arrive at any time of day or night and with little notice, inevitably impacts on the induction process. The induction area can at times become crowded and when large numbers of detainees arrive at the facility, detainees may be temporarily held in adjacent locations such as in vans or the Atrium. This was often the case during 2019 but became considerably more pressured during 2020 due to the impact of increased numbers and the need to socially distance during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Board was aware of inductions being conducted more briefly at times of increased pressure.
- 4.1.3 The Board continued to be concerned during 2019 and 2020 that there was a lack of privacy for detainees in the induction area. Whilst personal searches take place behind a curtain, questions about medical matters can be overheard by others present in the induction room. However, at the end of 2020 the Board was informed that the induction room would be upgraded to improve privacy through the introduction of individual search cubicles with curtains. Since the end of the reporting period these have been installed.
- 4.1.4 The induction process involves the transmission of a considerable amount of information. The Board has observed that detainees often do not fully recall everything told to them during the induction process, particularly when they are tired. This has been particularly noticeable during times when the holding room has been busiest, particularly in 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Detainees often have questions once they enter the main holding room and ask the IMB about matters which were covered in the induction. The Board has however observed staff dealing appropriately with these follow-up questions.
- 4.1.5 The induction room underwent a refurbishment in 2019 and was a more pleasant environment, with useful information now displayed on a TV screen on the wall. Further changes were begun towards the end of 2020, including the introduction of booths to allow more detainees to be inducted simultaneously.

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in detention

- 4.2.1 There were no deaths in detention in 2019 or 2020 or reported cases of self-harm taking place within the holding facilities. The IMB observed several examples of holding room staff paying close attention to detainees who had been identified as a cause for concern on IS91 forms and on self-harm warning forms. However, the Board has observed that staff had difficulty doing this as thoroughly at times when the holding room was busy, particularly in 2020 when numbers have been high.
- 4.2.2 Staff carry anti-ligature equipment, though there have been no reports of these needing to be used in 2019 or 2020.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

- 4.3.1 Instances of violence within the holding rooms have been extremely rare and there were no reported incidents in 2019 or 2020. Whilst the holding rooms were never reported as exceeding their designated capacities, the rooms can feel a crowded environment when full, with pressure on limited facilities such as the single shower. The Board has noticed the positive way that staff have managed detainee relationships in what could potentially be a volatile environment.
- 4.3.2 The Board has on occasion observed holding room staff speaking calmly and respectfully to detainees to de-escalate tense situations within the holding room, for example when detainees have begun to argue about use of the shower.

4.4 Vulnerable detainees, safeguarding

- 4.4.1 The Board believes that safeguarding of vulnerable detainees, in particular families and unaccompanied minors, is generally dealt with appropriately, with cases referred to the safeguarding officer present in the building and referrals made to the National Referral Mechanism. However – as has been observed throughout this report – the Board is aware that at times when the holding room is busier due to large influxes of detainees the pressure on staff increases considerably and the chance of issues of vulnerability being missed or not considered in enough depth is likely to increase.
- 4.4.2 The Board has welcomed the routine provision of holding room data and basic information about vulnerable detainees by UKVI and Care and Custody, satisfying concerns raised in previous annual reports. Vulnerable adult warning forms are utilised within the holding rooms.
- 4.4.3 **Unaccompanied minors:** As noted in previous annual reports, the Board is extremely concerned by the number of unaccompanied minors who enter detention, though acknowledges that this is largely beyond the control of the local management of the holding rooms. In 2019 there were 356 unaccompanied minors held at the KIU and at Frontier House. In 2020 this almost doubled to 696. It is positive that the cases of unaccompanied minors are prioritised in order to

keep the length of stay in detention as short as possible. However, the situation has grown progressively more challenging during 2019 and 2020 and reached a critical point in the second half of 2020 when Kent local authority was no longer able to admit unaccompanied minors to care. The Board has been aware that this has at times impacted both on the length of time children have spent in the holding rooms and also in the post-detention Atrium facility whilst waiting for social workers from other local authorities to make arrangements for care. The average length of stay of children in the KIU and Frontier House per month in 2020 ranged from 5 hours, 6 minutes (January 2020) to 42 hours, 26 minutes (September 2020). The longest single stay for a child in the holding room was 114 hours, 55 minutes (August 2020). The Board has also been concerned about the effectiveness of age assessments conducted at the facilities in Dover and was informed during 2020 by monitoring colleagues at receiving IRCs of a number of instances of minors arriving at these locations, having been incorrectly age assessed and transported with adults. Whilst these cases will have primarily passed through the Tug Haven rather than the KIU or Frontier House, this nevertheless paints a troubling picture about the overall context. Just after the end of the reporting period the Board noted that some improvements had been made to age assessment processes, both at the Tug Haven and in providing Home Office employed social workers at the KIU.

4.4.4 Trafficking: The Board is aware that the port of Dover can be a conduit for the trafficking of people and that staff at Dover – both UKVI and Care and Custody – have received training in anti-trafficking. The Board has been informed about – though has not witnessed – a number of examples of holding room staff identifying signs of potential trafficking, such as one person exerting control over another and where particular effort has been made to separate the parties and to deal with them under the modern slavery regulations. The Board has also been informed about a number of cases in which detainees have been specifically advised by UKVI staff that they are at risk of being trafficked and have been able to refer detainees to appropriate sources of support. The pressure to detect and deal with cases of suspected trafficking has grown during 2020 in particular, as numbers of small boats crossings have increased. The Board has been informed that a team based at the Tug Haven will now conduct investigations into the criminal activities involved in facilitating journeys across the Channel. However the Board was not able to monitor the issues surrounding trafficking at the Tug Haven until access was granted.

4.4.5 Families and unaccompanied minors in the holding room: A separate small, family room is provided in the holding room in Dover. This can be used for families, unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and other detainees who may – for safety or welfare reasons – need to be kept separate from the main detainee population. However, the Board is concerned that the small size of the room means that it is not always possible to separate out all children from the main holding room and has observed many instances (particularly during 2020) where children have been held in close proximity to adults they do not know. The Board has observed staff managing this situation by observing the holding room closely, however it is noticeable that this is less easy at busier times. The Board is also concerned at the lack of a separate family room in the holding room in Folkestone, though has noted that the holding room in Dover was often used for

families and unaccompanied minors wherever possible, with the Folkestone room used for single males.

4.5 Use of force

- 4.5.1 There were no reported uses of force during 2019 or 2020. Holding room staff have received appropriate HOMES training. The Board has observed that instances in which detainees behave violently or aggressively within the KIU and Frontier House are rare, with detainees generally being cooperative.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Escorts, transport, transfers

- 5.2.1 The Board occasionally monitors the vans used to transport detainees, either just before they depart the holding room or just after they have arrived. Vans have generally been observed to have been clean and adequately equipped with refreshments for detainees. The Board has occasionally observed detainees being guided in and out of vans with staff using a guiding hold on the arm.
- 5.2.2 The Board is aware that many detainees entering the holding room will have had long periods waiting in locations such as dock side or beach areas, and that some detainees have spent considerable time being transported from other locations following arrest. The cumulative impact on detainees' welfare of the time spent in the holding room without proper sleeping facilities and – in some cases – further transport to another location (such as an IRC) is a cause for concern. This concern increased considerably during 2020 as the numbers of small boat arrivals across the Channel increased and large numbers of people were held temporarily at the Tug Haven facility at the Western Docks.
- 5.2.3 The Board observed throughout 2019 and 2020 that there could sometimes be delays in the provision of transport to other parts of the immigration detention estate, for example when a detainee is being taken on to an IRC, in turn impacting on some detainees' length of stay in the holding room. In particular, the increase in detainee numbers in 2020 resulted in an increase in the length of time waiting for onward transportation for many detainees.

5.2 Accommodation, clothing, food and activities

Accommodation

- 5.2.4 The holding room in Dover has a capacity of 58 and contains rows of metal chairs, fixed to the floor, as well as a small number of tables with chairs, also fixed to the floor. Towards the end of 2020 a number of folding sleeping mats were introduced allowing detainees to sleep overnight on the floor. There is a small separate family room, which will seat up to six people. There are separate toilets for men and women and a single shower, accessed through the main holding room.
- 5.2.5 The smaller holding room in Folkestone has a capacity of 42 and also contains rows of metal seating, fixed to the floor. There are separate toilets for men and women but no shower. There is no family room.
- 5.2.6 The Board considers the holding rooms to be adequate for short periods in detention only, however not for stays approaching or in excess of 24 hours. Both holding rooms are fundamentally unsuitable environments to hold detainees overnight and in the numbers witnessed during 2019 and 2020. This concern has grown considerably as the numbers of small boat arrivals have increased during 2020. For example:

- Until the sleeping mats were introduced, detainees often reported to the Board that they had difficulty sleeping in the holding rooms, owing to the difficulty in comfortably lying flat – made more challenging when the holding rooms are busy. The introduction of the sleeping mats has partly addressed this concern, however detainees also report difficulty sleeping due to the brightness of the lights which are kept on all night. The Board has observed detainees sometimes being provided with eye masks, however this practice does not appear to be consistent. Some detainees also reported finding it hard to sleep in such crowded conditions and in such close proximity to others.
- The Board is aware that the seating, which is hard and inflexible, does not provide sufficient comfort for longer stays and that alternatives that have been previously used (such as bean bags) are not always suitable for all detainees.
- The holding room is not well-ventilated, though some improvement work took place on the air conditioning in 2019. The air conditioning unit leaked into the holding room on a number of occasions during 2019 and 2020, with the water having to be caught in a bucket. Detainees do not have access to fresh air and have no opportunity for outside exercise. The lack of effective ventilation was of particular concern during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Facilities such as the shower can come under considerable pressure when the Dover holding room is busy, with detainees often having to wait for long periods of time to be able to use the shower. The lack of a shower in Folkestone makes this holding room even less suitable for longer stays, with detainees unable to properly wash themselves at all. This is of particular concern given the nature of many detainees' journeys prior to entering short-term holding, with many detainees already having gone for long periods of time without being able to wash and having spent long periods in small boats or concealed within lorries. The Board had been informed in 2020 that the possibility was being explored of a wet room being installed at Frontier House but this does not appear to have progressed.
- The Board has observed that the holding room – including the toilets and shower – can quickly become dirty when the holding room is busy.

5.2.7 The Board had been informed in early 2019 that – subject to budgetary issues – a move to a new holding room facility in Folkestone was anticipated to take place within 12-15 months, however by the end of 2019 there was no further news about whether or when this would be taking place. In 2020 the Board was informed that the Dover holding room was likely to be relocated to alternative and larger premises elsewhere in the port, likely to be at the Western Docks. The Board is very concerned that swifter progress has not been made in moving to more appropriate facilities, particularly in light of the significant and still-growing numbers of detainees.

5.2.8 The Board remains concerned about the length of time it can take for contractors to fix essential facilities such as sinks and the shower when these do break. The

shower stopped working a number of times during 2019 and 2020 and Care and Custody staff reported often having to chase the contractor to complete the repairs.

Clothing

- 5.2.9 Many detainees arriving at the holding room require fresh clothing, having undertaken long journeys or having become wet whilst travelling in small boats. There are plentiful supplies of clothing available at the holding rooms and the Board was not aware of any instances of clothing not being available, though supplies did come under increased pressure in 2020 when the KIU also supplied clothing to the Tug Haven facility.
- 5.2.10 Detainees are provided with fresh clothing when needed and the Board has observed this generally being provided promptly. However, during 2020, as numbers increased, detainees often had to wait for longer in wet clothing – in some cases several hours – usually whilst waiting to be admitted to the KIU. This situation began to improve towards the end of 2020.
- 5.2.11 The Board has also observed blankets being provided to detainees, either for those detainees who wish to sleep or for those who are cold whilst waiting (for example upon first arriving). The Board is aware that on limited occasions the supplies of blankets have run out and that the laundry required cannot always be turned around quickly enough at times when the holding room is busy. During parts of 2020, blankets were also provided from the KIU to the Tug Haven facility.

Food

- 5.2.12 The food provided to detainees in the holding room consists of pre-packed snack-style food such as sweet croissants, crisps and biscuits, microwave meals such as pasta and curries and some limited fresh fruit. Water fountains are available and detainees can also be provided with tea, coffee or hot chocolate on request.
- 5.2.13 The Board has observed that all detainees are offered food and – apart from when the holding room is very busy – will be provided with meals promptly upon request. The provision of food is recorded in the holding room log.
- 5.2.14 The Board considers the range of food provided to detainees within the holding rooms adequate for short stays in the holding room, however not for stays in excess of 24 hours. Detainees generally inform the Board that the food is acceptable, though the Board has observed that the microwave meals are sometimes left half-eaten.
- 5.2.15 There is a small range of menu options available, catering for most dietary requirements, together with a small range of baby food.

Activities

5.2.16 Both holding rooms contain a range of newspapers, magazines and books, mostly in English. Detainees can also watch TVs in both holding rooms and a limited number of DVDs are available. There is a TV available in the family room in Dover. Toys are available in the family room and a range of age-appropriate activity packs are available for children.

5.4 Staff-detainee relationships

5.5.1 The Board has observed many examples of respectful and supportive interactions between staff and detainees, who are often in a state of distress.

5.5.2 When asked, detainees often inform the Board that they are very happy with the way that they have been treated by staff in the holding room and report feeling safe and well looked after.

5.5.3 The Board is conscious that detainees often experience a range of emotions which can impact on their experiences within the holding room and the feedback they provide to the Board. This can range from relief at being in a safe location, to caution and suspicion of authorities and concern about their immigration status.

5.5.4 On a small number of occasions the Board has also observed that staff can come across as less responsive and patient at times when the holding room is extremely busy, however the feedback from detainees in these situations has usually been to complain that they are still waiting for a particular item (such as shower access or a meal) rather than to complain about the way staff have behaved towards them.

5.5.5 Staffing levels within Care and Custody were occasionally impacted by Covid-19, with large numbers of staff required to self-isolate in late 2020. At one point December 2020 it was reported to the Board that nearly 80% of Care and Custody staff were self-isolating. However, Care and Custody were able to deploy staff from other locations and the Board observed that holding room operations were largely unaffected.

5.6 Equality and diversity

5.6.1 **Children, families and pregnant women:** The Board considers it positive that priority is given the processing of the cases of detainees who are pregnant, part of family groups or who are unaccompanied minors, allowing them to move on from the holding room as a matter of priority. However, the Board also recognises that this is one of a number of factors that can cause the length of detention of other detainees to exceed 24 hours. The Board is also aware that extra support is provided for families, children and pregnant women in the Atrium area, though has not been permitted to monitor this area which is not technically

part of the holding facility. Sanitary products for women are made available in the women's toilet.

- 5.6.2 **Children and families:** The holding room in Dover includes a separate family room, equipped with a TV screen and a range of age-appropriate toys and books. The room can only seat six people however and the Board has observed multiple occasions when the number of families or unaccompanied minors has exceeded the capacity of this separate room. This can result in children mixing with unrelated adults and can potentially place children at higher risk. The Board has observed holding room staff closely monitoring interactions within the holding room on occasions when this has happened, though note that this is more challenging at times when the holding room is busy. Baby food and booster seats are provided in the holding room stores. Age-appropriate activity packs are available for children. Despite these measures, the Board considers the holding rooms fundamentally unsuitable environments for children.
- 5.6.3 **Detainees with disabilities / older detainees:** The Board has observed that the holding room facilities – which are not suitable for stays in excess of a few hours – are particularly uncomfortable for detainees who have restricted mobility or who are older. The only alternative to the hard waiting room-style seating in the holding rooms had been bean bags, which were often unsuitable for these groups as they required detainees to lower themselves to near to the ground. Access to the holding room is via a flight of steps, with detainees with limited mobility requiring assistance, though a stair lift for wheelchairs is installed. The holding rooms can be very noisy at busy times and can present a challenge for detainees who have hearing impairment – this has been noticeable when the Board has been communicating with some detainees at busy times. Holding room staff do, however, make use of disability care plans.
- 5.6.4 **Religion / belief:** Religious texts including the Bible and the Koran are available in both holding rooms, together with prayer mats. During Ramadan, fasting times were clearly displayed and the IMB observed staff making appropriate provision for detainees who were fasting. The IMB has been informed by staff that in cases where no available food is suitable to meet religious or dietary needs, staff will purchase food from a local shop using petty cash.
- 5.6.5 **Language:** The majority of detainees held in the holding rooms speak limited or no English and extensive use is therefore made of telephone interpreting services, both by UKVI and Care and Custody staff. Some information – including on the new TV information screens – is displayed in a variety of languages. The Board has observed some improvements in the way information is provided to detainees on TV screens (with key information displayed in a number of languages) during the reporting period. In addition, staff also make use of visual cues to communicate with detainees in situations where interpreting is not immediately available. The Board feels it would be beneficial to make use of translation facilities available on mobile devices -albeit basic – to aid communication with detainees. The Board is concerned however that some important information, such as legal paperwork provided to detainees, is not translated and that detainees may not therefore fully understand what is happening to them. The IMB has observed this during discussions with

detainees, who often seem confused about what they have been told or what is happening to them next. The Board is concerned about the extent to which understanding is checked for. This concern increased during 2020 as the numbers of people passing through the holding room increased.

5.7 Complaints

- 5.7.1 The Board has not been notified about any complaints submitted by detainees whilst held in the Dover or Folkestone holding rooms. Whilst information is provided to detainees about the complaints process and is displayed on the wall of the holding room, the Board is aware that most detainees held in the holding rooms are anxious about their immigration status and unlikely to engage with any complaints process at this point, in the fear that this will impact on their case. The writing and submitting of a complaint whilst in the holding rooms is also a highly visible process and detainees may find this off-putting.
- 5.7.2 Before 2020 the Board has not routinely been provided with information about complaints submitted by detainees. This was queried and this information was then made available to the Board part-way through 2020. There were no complaints submitted during this time.

5.8 Property

- 5.8.1 Detainees' property is transferred into large plastic bags when they arrive, with detainees being shown this being transferred onto shelving in the induction room and seeing items such as money being counted and recorded in front of them. Owing to the nature of the journeys undertaken by most detainees before arriving in detention, most detainees arrive with very limited property.
- 5.8.2 Other than requests to be given access to cigarettes, in 2019 and 2020 the IMB was not aware of any detainee concerns about the handling of or access to their property whilst in the holding rooms.
- 5.8.3 Detainees sometimes express concern to the Board that they are not allowed access to cigarettes. Nicotine lozenges can be provided as a temporary alternative.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1 Detainees sometimes arrive at the holding rooms in a vulnerable physical state, having often completed long, uncomfortable or dangerous journeys. The IMB has observed a number of detainees arriving in the holding room in wet clothing, including in the winter months. This includes detainees who have arrived from the Tug Haven facility. The number of detainees arriving with injuries has been relatively small, however many detainees report medical conditions, with only the most urgent needs being treated in the holding room.

6.1.2 The holding room in Dover is unique in providing an on-site paramedic, provided by medical contractor Aeromed. The paramedic is present from 1000-1600, seven days per week. The service provided is roughly comparable to that provided by a paramedic in an ambulance. Whilst acknowledging the vital role performed by this service, the Board was concerned about the lack of medical provision outside these times, given that detainees will often arrive during this period and if they require urgent medical attention may have to be sent to hospital. Shortly after the end of the reporting period the medical provision in the KIU was extended to 24 hours per day. There is no medical provision at the holding room in Folkestone, though the Board has been informed that detainees identified as being in need of medical attention at Folkestone can either be transported to Dover or to a local hospital. The Board has been informed that if needed, the medic based in Dover can be sent to Folkestone. Whilst the expansion of the medical provision is an improvement, given the continuing increase in numbers and the fact that medical needs can arise both at the KIU and Frontier House, it is the view of the Board that a second medic should be provided at busier times.

6.1.3 Facilities available include a range of medications, an automatic external defibrillator and a basic electrocardiograph machine.

6.1.4 Clinical records are scanned and retained and are forwarded with any detainee who is moved to another place of detention. The Board has observed that at times when the holding room is busy, the likelihood of detainees being seen by the paramedic decreases and is concerned that there is an increasing risk that detainees may be moved elsewhere in the immigration detention estate – with a potentially lengthy journey – without medical issues having been identified and documented for the receiving facility.

6.1.5 On a small number of occasions during 2019 and 2020, detainees were transported to a local hospital for the treatment of injuries or medical conditions.

6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1 The IMB is aware that detainees arriving in the holding rooms will have often experienced trauma, may be experiencing a range of mental health issues and will often have been impacted by the challenging journeys they have undertaken. Whilst the Board has often observed detainees being treated with care and

understanding by staff, the Board recognises that there is no specific provision made for the assessment or treatment of mental health at the Dover and Folkestone holding rooms. However, detainees are sometimes identified on vulnerable adult warning forms as having disclosed mental health issues, most commonly anxiety or depression.

- 6.2.2 Whilst the Board recognises that it may not be possible to adequately identify or address mental health needs within a short-term holding environment, it is unclear how effectively concerns are initially identified about detainee mental health or are passed on when a detainee is moved elsewhere within the immigration detention estate.
- 6.2.3 The Board observed a number of examples in 2019 and 2020 of holding room staff closely observing detainees who had been identified as being in distress and responding proactively and sensitively to their needs. However, the Board has also observed that it has been more challenging for staff to do this at times when the holding rooms have been busier.
- 6.2.4 The Board is aware that some limited advice about mental health support is provided to detainees who are released through the Atrium.

6.3 Covid-19

- 6.3.1 The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the operation of the holding rooms in 2020. Given the unpredictable nature of detainees' arrivals and the role of the holding facilities as initial places of detention upon arrival, the holding rooms have had to remain open throughout the pandemic.
- 6.3.2 The Board has observed the considerable logistical challenges created by the pandemic in the context of a system that was already struggling to effectively manage the large numbers of people arriving. Positive Covid tests amongst detainees, either before or during their time in the holding rooms, sometimes resulted in detainees being diverted to other locations or in one or more holding rooms being used as Covid 'bubbles', at times further restricting the number of people who could be admitted.
- 6.3.3 A number of new working practices were introduced in response to the pandemic, including Covid testing, the use of masks and personal protective equipment, informational signage, designating a holding room for use as a Covid 'bubble' when required and blocking off areas of seating to encourage social distancing. However, the Board repeatedly observed that attempts at social distancing were largely impractical and that at busy times true social distancing was simply impossible. The Board was also aware that for part of 2020 Covid testing at the Tug Haven was either not taking place or not effective and was concerned at the low uptake of voluntary Covid testing within the holding rooms.
- 6.3.4 At times during the latter part of 2020 a large number of holding room staff were required to self-isolate, however Care and Custody were able to deploy staff from

other locations and the Board observed that holding room staffing was largely unaffected.

6.4 Exercise

- 6.4.1 There are no realistic opportunities for detainees to exercise whilst held in the holding rooms. Moving around within the holding rooms is particularly difficult at times when they are at or nearing capacity.
- 6.4.2 Detainees are not provided with any access to fresh air. There is a small fenced area outside the main entrance to the holding facility, however the Board has been informed that this is not a secure enough area nor is the staffing available to utilise this area to provide detainees with fresh air. Detainees present in the holding room for longer may therefore go for long periods without access to fresh air or space to properly exercise (sometimes as long as two days).

7. Preparation for return or release

7.1 Length of stay in detention

An overview of the length of stay in the KIU and Frontier House in 2019 and 2020 is as follows:

		8-12 hours	12-18 hours	18-24 hours	>24 hours
2019	930	764	928	679	663
2020	1189	1381	1378	1044	1426

The IMB remains concerned that a number of detainees remain in the holding rooms in excess of the 24 hours specified in the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules. In 2019, 663 detainees were held in the KIU or Frontier House for longer than 24 hours. In 2020 this figure increased to 1426. The reasons most commonly provided to the Board to explain stays in excess of 24 hours include the following:

- The time taken to interview detainees in connection with asylum claims, which can be complex;
- Pressures on staffing created by the sudden arrival of large numbers of detainees;
- The need to prioritise the interviewing of and outcomes for families and unaccompanied minors, creating delays for other detainees;
- The time taken to wait for transport to other locations for those detainees being taken to IRCs.
- Allowing detainees time to sleep during the night, not moving them on until the following morning.

7.1.1 Whilst the IMB accepts that the unpredictable context in which the holding rooms in Dover and Folkestone operate can make it challenging for some detainees to be moved on within 24 hours, the Board nevertheless continues to be deeply concerned that the holding rooms are not suitable environments for stays of this duration. This situation worsened during 2020 and appears likely to continue into next year. Many detainees will arrive in the holding rooms having first spent considerable time waiting at other locations such as the Tug Haven.

7.2 Case management

7.2.1 UKVI staff are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week, in Dover to conduct screening interviews, security checks, welfare checks and related

activities. The time taken to complete these interviews and checks can be impacted by the number of detainees in the holding room.

7.2.2 UKVI reported that staffing was being placed under increased pressure towards the end of 2019 and at times during 2020, particularly when the numbers of detainees crossing the Channel noticeably increased. This sometimes contributed to longer time spent in detention and increases in the number of detainees spending in excess of 24 hours in detention has been noticeable at busy times. The Board is concerned that if there continue to be large influxes of detainees, time spent in detention may continue to increase and it may prove more challenging for staff to complete interviews and assessments effectively in the time required.

7.2.3 Whilst UKVI make use of telephone interpreting services when interviewing detainees, key documentation relating to immigration detention (such as the IS91 form and information provided to detainees) is only available in English. The Board has spoken to a number of detainees who have stated they do not fully understand what is happening to them and the Board considers – as highlighted in the 2018 report – that documentation provided to detainees should be made available in a wider range of languages.

7.3 Contact with the outside world

7.3.1 Whilst there is a coin-operated payphone available in both holding rooms, the IMB did not witness any detainees making use of these during 2019. The IMB feels that it would be more appropriate to provide detainees with limited Internet access in order to be able to contact families or legal advisers. A number of detainees have expressed a wish to be able to contact their families or friends to alert them to the fact that they are safe, with a number asking whether they can have access to WhatsApp or email. The Board has occasionally raised this issue and has been informed that this could create a risk for detainees' safety and welfare, for example because some detainees would make use of such a facility to contact a person who may have been trafficking them. Nevertheless, the Board feels that more thought should be given to ways of supporting detainees in making contact with family members.

7.4 Planning for return or release

7.4.1 The majority of detainees in 2019 and 2020 were temporarily admitted in order for their asylum claims to be considered.

7.4.2 Upon release from detention, detainees are provided with access to the Atrium area, adjacent to the Dover holding room. This area consists of a large, airy set of rooms with shower, toilets and vending machines. Camp beds are available in this facility when required. A worker from the charity Migrant Help attends when required to offer advice on how to access legal support and to provide assistance with asylum support paperwork. A Refugee Council worker is available 24 hours per day to support families with children, as well as unaccompanied minors,

including liaising with social services for the placement of unaccompanied minors in care.

- 7.4.3 The Board is aware that the Atrium facility provides a range of support to detainees who have just left detention, at a point when former detainees are particularly in need of support. However, the Board is aware that in 2020 in particular the Atrium facilities have struggled to cope with the number of former detainees passing through the facility, in particular the numbers of unaccompanied minors, some of whom have stayed at the Atrium overnight and for several days. The Board is aware that the Atrium facility was not designed to accommodate people for longer than a few hours at a time and is not equipped with proper sleeping facilities.
- 7.4.4 The Board continues to be disappointed that it is not allowed access to detainees in the Atrium; whilst the Board recognises that it has no role to perform in monitoring the Atrium facility itself, it would be beneficial to the Board's monitoring to be able to speak to former detainees about their experiences.
- 7.4.1 The Board has observed that many detainees appear confused about what will happen to them next. The Board is aware that those detainees who are released to the Atrium are provided with information and support, however those being transported to other parts of the immigration detention estate are often unaware of where they are heading and what to expect when they arrive. The Board is aware – having liaised with monitoring colleagues at IRCs – that detainees are often still confused about their journeys and what will happen next upon their arrival at an IRC.

8. The work of the IMB

- At the start of 2019 the Board only had four members and only three during 2020. A recruitment campaign conducted in late 2019 resulted in two candidates being recommended for appointment to the Board, however both candidates withdrew from the process owing to the delays created by the Covid-19 pandemic. A further recruitment campaign was started in late 2020. Owing to the low numbers on the Board it was not always possible for a member of the Board to visit the facilities every single week but a minimum of visit was carried out in each fortnight. Two Board members from other IMBs were appointed on a temporary basis at the end of 2020 to support Dover IMB whilst further recruitment takes place.
- Due to the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person monitoring of the facilities in Dover and Folkestone was suspended in March 2020. This resumed on a limited basis in the late spring. Owing to Covid-19 restrictions and health guidelines, only one member was initially able to conduct in-person monitoring, however all members had resumed in-person monitoring by the end of 2020. All members were able to conduct remote monitoring by making telephone calls, requesting and scrutinising information provided by the establishment. Board meetings throughout 2020 were conducted remotely.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	8
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	4
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	3
Total number of visits to the establishment	2019: 49 2020: 32

Initial findings at the Tug Haven reception facility in Dover

Dover Independent Monitoring Board

August 2021



Background to this report

In June 2021 the IMB at the Dover STHF was granted access to monitor the Tug Haven facility at the Western Docks on a weekly basis, having previously been able to carry out two familiarisation visits. This small facility occupies the site of a car park adjacent to a jetty area where migrants arrive from small boats having completed journeys across the Channel. The facility is not classified as a short-term holding facility but is intended to operate as a short-term measure to hold migrants before they are taken to onward locations such as holding rooms, immigration removal centres, bail accommodation or hotels used for Covid-19 quarantine purposes. Whilst the Board does not have access to overall figures at the Tug Haven, the Board is aware that the average numbers arriving at the Tug Haven have been considerably higher in 2021 than 2020 and that there have been a number of days in the summer of 2021 when in excess of 400 or 500 people have arrived within a single day, including one day in August when over 800 people were received.

When the Board carried out an initial visit in February 2021 the facility consisted of an L-shaped military-style tent used for initial screening, searching and as a waiting area for single male detainees, a purpose-built, two-roomed portacabin used to hold women, families and unaccompanied minors, as well as toilets and staff offices. This was an improvement on the shipping containers and gazebos reported by HM Inspectorate in October 2020, with detainees provided with more protection from the weather, more space under cover to wait for transfer to other locations and better arrangements for keeping families and children separate from the general population.

In early July 2021 the facilities were slightly upgraded to introduce a large event tent which provided more space for staff and detainees to move around and for detainees to wait. By August 2021 this tent had been divided into separate sections for arrival and screening, searching and waiting, with some sections being used exclusively for families and children. The military-style tents had been moved behind the main tent and were used for the searching of women and the holding of families. A double-decker bus is permanently parked alongside the facility and is used as an additional waiting area for detainees after they have left the tent. Detainees are transferred to coaches or other vehicles to await transfer to other locations as and when this transportation arrives.

A new, permanent facility is currently being constructed on an adjacent piece of land though it is unlikely that this will be ready for use until late in 2021.

Overall, the Board has so far observed that the Tug Haven is a facility struggling to cope and fundamentally unsuitable for holding detainees for anything in excess of a few hours and in the numbers currently arriving. Whilst there have been a number of small improvements since the time of the Inspectorate's visit in 2020 and the Board's initial visit in February 2021, these do not go far enough to address the basic needs of detainees held at the facility. Given that the arrival of large numbers of people over the Channel has now been a regular occurrence for two years, it is deeply concerning that swifter progress has not been made in creating more appropriate holding facilities.

The Board's specific monitoring observations up until August 2021 are as follows.

1. Safety

There have been some recent improvements to the Tug Haven facilities which have slightly improved processes for induction and the separation of groups within the facility. Families, children and women are generally kept separate from single male detainees, however the dedicated portacabin for families is no longer in use. Age assessment processes have been strengthened. The Tug Haven is not a suitable environment to hold children or vulnerable people.

- **Induction:** The installation of the new tent now provides more room for the induction of new arrivals and more – separate – space for searching detainees. Detainees are kept in a separate induction area of the tent until Covid-19 tests are completed and are called one by one to speak to officers who obtain basic information about the detainee, issue wristbands to indicate the group with which they arrived and take a Polaroid photograph. Medical screening is then carried out by medical staff provided by Medevent, including Covid-19 testing. Once the Covid-19 test results are known, detainees are then moved to wait in another area of the tent where they are briefly interviewed by immigration officers in order to enter information onto electronic Home Office records, assisted by hand-held translation devices. Induction processes have been observed being conducted in a respectful way. However from conversations with detainees at the Tug Haven and those who have then moved on to the Kent Intake Unit or Frontier House it is evident that many detainees are still confused about what is happening to them and sometimes where they are.
- **Women, families and unaccompanied minors:** Women, families and unaccompanied minors are kept largely separate from single men at the facility, usually being taken to separate screened-off areas of the main event tent, or taken to the additional tents behind the main tent. However, the purpose-built Portacabin which had initially been used for families and children is now used as a staff rest and wellbeing area. The Board was informed that the Portacabin is now too small to accommodate the numbers of families and children arriving. Women, families and unaccompanied minors are generally transferred to the KIU and single men to IRCs or other intake units. The Board has been informed that families, women and unaccompanied minors are moved on as a matter of priority.
- **Age assessments:** The Board has observed that processes for conducting age assessments have generally improved since the Inspectorate reported on this in 2020. Age assessments are now generally conducted by Home Office social workers at the KIU, with age dispute cases now more routinely transferred to the KIU. This appears to have addressed the previous concern about minors being incorrectly transferred to IRCs.
- **Searching:** Detainees are searched once they have been initially inducted and the results of Covid-19 tests have been received. At this point objects such as lighters, razors and knives are removed. All staff are required to wear body armour in the pre-search areas of the facility. In August 2021 the Board at Dover was made aware that two detainees who had arrived at Harmondsworth from the Tug Haven had been found with knives on their person.

2. Fair and humane treatment

The Tug Haven is clearly overstretched, manifestly unsuitable for holding detainees overnight and should be replaced with a new facility as a matter of urgency. Whilst the facilities at the Tug Haven have been slightly improved in recent months, the site is only suitable for stays of a few hours. Food provision can be insufficient or improvised and there are no appropriate facilities for washing or sleeping.

- **Overall environment:** The large tent is an improvement on the previous L-shaped tent arrangement, with more space for staff and detainees to move around and better arrangements for keeping different groups – such as families and children, single males, detainees who are awaiting Covid-19 test results and detainees in Covid-19 bubbles – separate from one another. However, the tent can still feel crowded at times when there are large numbers of detainees present. The overall environment is fundamentally unsuitable for stays in excess of a few hours and it is evident that the facilities struggle to cope with the number of people arriving and the length of time that many detainees have to wait before being transferred. The seating in the tents consists of narrow wooden benches. Detainees have also been observed sitting on the floor.
- **Detainees staying overnight:** On some days in July and August 2021 – when there were large influxes of people arriving at the Tug Haven – many detainees slept at the facility overnight. The Tug Haven is not suitable for overnight stays. There are no proper sleeping facilities and whilst provided with blankets, detainees have had to either sleep on narrow wooden benches or on the floor, both of which are high unsuitable. The Board has been informed that this is due to the availability of spaces at suitable onward locations and the time taken to arrange appropriate transport. The Board has observed these environments used for sleeping to be crowded. It is a concern that these arrangements will be even more unsuitable if these facilities are still being used for overnight stays in the colder months.
- **Food:** Food provision at Tug Haven is limited. Upon initially arriving detainees will be provided with water and plain biscuits only. The Board has been informed that this is due to the need not to provide food that could be problematic for detainees who are dehydrated or have unidentified dietary needs. However, it is clear that this very basic snack provision is not acceptable for detainees who spend more than a few hours at the facility. The Board has recently observed a wider range of snacks being provided at later stages, but this is still not suitable for detainees who may be staying overnight. The Board has been informed that staff now make ad hoc arrangements to provide more substantial food to those staying overnight (such as ordering pizzas or providing food supplied by the Red Cross). The Board has been informed that more permanent arrangements for providing food are being investigated, however at the time of writing these ad hoc arrangements continue.
- **Washing:** There is no running water at the Tug Haven. Other than hand-washing facilities in the toilets, there are no facilities at the Tug Haven for detainees to wash. A number of detainees attempt to wash their feet in these sinks and are asked by staff not to do so. Detainees transferred to Frontier House will continue to have no access to proper washing facilities.

- **Clothing and blankets:** The Board has been informed that all arriving migrants are provided with alternative clothing and blankets. This has been directly observed by the Board on all monitoring visits and there have been no recent reports of clothing or blanket stocks running out – when needed these have either been provided from the Kent Intake Unit or purchased from local shops. In 2020 the Board observed many detainees being transferred from the Tug Haven in wet clothing and this now appears to have improved.
- **Dignity:** The larger tent now provides a larger, and screened-off, area for the searching of detainees, with searching generally being conducted by two officers in curtained cubicles. This process offers more privacy and space than was available in the previous tent arrangement. Women are searched in a separate tent. Whilst the new tent offers more privacy from public view than was previously the case, the area where detainees first arrive at the docks can be viewed from a public area and the Board is aware that members of the public do sometimes watch and film detainees arriving. It has observed staff inviting detainees to shield their faces with blankets as they are escorted, if they wish to do so.

3. Health and wellbeing

Dedicated medical staff are present at the Tug Haven to conduct initial screenings and deal with emergency medical issues, however social distancing is not always possible and some health and welfare needs are not fully identified until detainees have moved on to other locations.

- **Medical screening:** There is now more space within the tent to conduct medical screening. The Board has observed up to five medical staff present in the tent to conduct medical screenings. Medical staff are on-site whenever the facility is open. These screenings have been observed to be brief and the Board is aware from monitoring at the KIU and Frontier House and from feedback from IMBs at receiving IRCs that some medical issues are not fully identified until detainees are transferred to those locations. The Board has been informed about a number of cases of detainees with serious injuries or health issues being taken straight to hospital in the private ambulances provided by Medevent (including a head injury following a road traffic collision in France, stab wounds and a detainee with schizophrenia and without medication).
- **Covid-19:** Arrangements for Covid-19 testing appear to be more robust than at the time of the Board's initial visit in February 2021 and than reported by HM Inspectorate in 2020. Newly-arriving detainees are kept separate from other detainees until the results of their Covid-19 tests are known and areas within the tent or specific vehicles are used as Covid bubbles if required. However, the Board has observed that social distancing is difficult to maintain in the Tug Haven environment and almost impossible when the facility is very busy. In August 2021 a positive Covid-19 case was reported at the KIU, despite the fact that the detainee had previously tested negative at Tug Haven.

- **Health issues identified at IRCs:** In 2021 there were occasions when IMBs at receiving IRCs reported concerns about the health and wellbeing of detainees arriving from the Tug Haven. Concerns included:
 - Detainees arriving from the Tug Haven with chemical burns, having been transferred by coach to an IRC without these injuries having been detected. The Board was informed that this was being formally investigated.
 - Detainees arriving from the Tug Haven with bed bugs in their property and on their person, resulting in part of the IRC being closed whilst fumigation took place. The Board at Dover was informed that bed bugs had not been detected at the Tug Haven and that all detainees had been provided with clean clothing and their property placed in plastic bags.
- **Detainee welfare:** Many detainees have been observed by the Board to be exhausted and sleeping where they could – on the floor of the tent, on their backs on the wooden benches or in the coach or bus seats.

4. Preparation for return or release

The large number of detainees arriving at the Tug Haven has resulted in many detainees waiting at the facility for long periods of time in uncomfortable conditions, often unclear about what is happening to them. Detainees are often transferred to other locations – such as the KIU, Frontier House and IRCs – in large numbers, causing receiving facilities to become crowded.

- **Detainee awareness:** The Board has observed that detainees are often confused about where they are, where they are going or what is happening to them.
- **Moves to onward locations:** The Board is aware that the unpredictable nature of detainee arrivals and the huge fluctuations in numbers make planning for onward moves a challenge. The Board has observed a number of occasions when the facilities in Dover and Folkestone have all appeared crowded and, as stated above, that the facilities in general were not designed to cope with this number of people or for stays of any length of time. Detainees will often have to wait for long periods of time in uncomfortable conditions – sitting on wooden benches or the floor or waiting in vehicles. IMBs at IRCs have reported throughout 2020 and 2021 on large numbers of detainees arriving having spent long periods of time waiting on coaches. The Board has observed a number of coaches at the Tug Haven which have been used for onward transportation and has observed these to be air-conditioned and appropriately stocked with water and a range of snacks.



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