

Report on the unannounced inspections
of four short-term holding facilities:

Communications House, London

Lunar House, Croydon

Electric House, Croydon

Dallas Court, Manchester

June – October 2004

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

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Introduction

This is the first set of reports of independent inspections of short-term holding centres. The four centres inspected, without warning, are non-residential centres. They are all attached to reporting centres, and hold those who have come to make claims, or report to immigration officers, or who have been picked up in enforcement operations.

For most detainees, this will be their first experience of detention, and for many it will be unexpected. We found that staff, in all four centres, treated detainees well and tried to minimise the stress of sudden detention. However, the first and most important finding of our inspections is that there is little external supervision or regular monitoring of these centres; and we recommend that there should be.

There were other deficiencies, common to all centres. There was inadequate, or no, access to telephones, to inform relatives and friends of the fact of detention. No centres had child protection policies. Training in self-harm and suicide prevention was inadequate; and no centre had approved fire or health and safety policies or procedures. There was too little for detainees to do, or read. Finally, there were no arrangements for detainees to arrange to recover or dispose of their property: aggravated by their inability to communicate by telephone.

There were particular problems in two centres. Dallas Court, at Manchester, is primarily used as a transit holding area for detainees being transferred between the north and south of the UK. The holding room was unfit for purpose: a cramped and shabby room was used to hold men, women and children. Moreover, there was insufficient oversight of some detainees in transit. Some arrived in the evening, after custody staff had left. Immigration staff were not informed about transit detainees and on one occasion discovered a young woman, held for six hours, who had recently miscarried and was at risk of suicide. We recommend that detainees must always be placed in the direct care of a responsible staff member.

Lunar House is the main route through which families are detained at Oakington Reception Centre. In spite of this, it had inadequate child protection procedures, and staff were not alert to the need to ensure that agreed safeguards on the detention of children were implemented.

These reports underline the importance of independent inspection of these facilities. Though they hold people for only short periods, they do so at a time of considerable stress, when detainees are suddenly cut off from the rest of the world. In these unannounced inspections, we found that staff were alert to these anxieties. However, these reports point to the reforms in procedure and practice that are needed to ensure they are safe and decent environments. Above all, they point to the need for regular oversight of these centres, both by senior managers and independent visitors.

Anne Owers
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

January 2005

Background

HM Inspectorate of Prisons inspects short-term holding facilities, residential and non-residential, which are under the control of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). An inspection programme of these places of short-term custody began during the summer of 2004. Reports on the inspections of non-residential facilities will be published in groups of four. The reports on residential facilities will be published in groups of three.

This report covers the first four unannounced inspections of non-residential holding facilities carried out during 2004. The report begins with a summary of significant findings and recommendations, followed by individual reports on each of the four facilities.

Short-term holding facilities covered in this report:

Communications House, London
Lunar House, Croydon
Electric House, Croydon
Dallas Court, Manchester

Global Solutions Ltd (formerly Group 4 or Wackenhut) runs all four facilities under contract with the IND.

The healthy custodial establishment

HE.1 The concept of a healthy prison was introduced in our thematic review *Suicide is Everyone's Concern* (1999). The healthy prison criteria have been modified to fit the inspection of short-term holding facilities, both residential and non-residential. The criteria for short-term holding facilities are:

Safety – detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position;

Respect – detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention;

Activities – detainees are able to be occupied while they are in detention;

Preparation for release – detainees are able to keep in contact with the outside world and are prepared for their release, transfer or removal.

HE.2 Inspectors kept fully in mind that although these were custodial facilities, detainees were not held because they had been charged with a criminal offence and had not been detained through normal judicial processes.

Safety

HE.3 The general level of care provided by Global Solutions Ltd (GSL) staff, and the awareness of detainees' needs, was impressive in all four short-term facilities. The facilities appeared to be well run, with good links to local immigration teams. However, there was an absence of operational or independent oversight, compared to other immigration detention facilities. There was no Independent Monitoring Board, and no on-site monitor to provide daily oversight of service provision, as there is in immigration removal centres (IRCs). Senior Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) staff visited only occasionally, and, with the exception of Dallas Court, had little involvement with the centres.

HE.4 Lunar, Communications and Electric Houses were fit for purpose; Dallas Court was totally inadequate.

HE.5 All four holding centres had inadequate provision for childcare and child protection. None had a child protection policy in place, and staff likely to be in contact with children had not undergone enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.

HE.6 The incidence of self-harm was low in all facilities, but staff were not sufficiently, or recently, trained in this vital area. None of the centres had an anti-bullying policy.

HE.7 None of the holding centres had a designated fire officer, and knowledge of evacuation procedures, for detainees and staff, was insufficient. None had a health and safety policy or a completed workplace risk assessment.

Respect

- HE.8 In all four holding centres, GSL staff were respectful in their dealings with detainees. They attempted to allay understandable anxieties and to make detention less traumatic. The use of first names was common and all staff wore name badges.
- HE.9 No information was available to detainees about the role of the centres or their facilities; nor did detainees have information about how to make complaints, or report racial incidents. There was no reading material available in languages other than English. None of the facilities had a disability policy or officer.
- HE.10 Access to telephones was completely inadequate, given detainees' urgent need to contact family, friends and advisers following their detention. There were no telephones in Communications House, and only coin telephones in the others. Detainees were not allowed to use their own mobile phones. Telephones did not have privacy hoods.
- HE.11 There was no provision for hot meals, though detainees could be held for more than six hours. Some centres provided only biscuits and drinks; others offered pre-packed sandwiches.

Activities

- HE.12 There were insufficient activities to alleviate boredom in all four holding centres. None had provision for outside exercise, or reading material. Communications House did not have a working television.

Preparation for release

- HE.13 There was very limited opportunity to prepare for release, transfer or removal. Detainees were not allowed visitors, nor were they generally allowed home to collect possessions. Many had to leave issues unresolved before transfer or removal, leading to considerable and understandable anxiety.

Main recommendations

- HE.14 The National Council of the Independent Monitoring Board should be invited to consider a mechanism for regular, independent monitoring of short-term holding centres.
- HE.15 There should be regular, documented supervision of each holding room by on-site immigration managers, reporting to senior managers at the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND).
- HE.16 All centres should have documented and approved fire and health and safety policies and procedures.

- HE.17 All centres should have a comprehensive child protection policy agreed with the local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC). Staff in contact with children should receive appropriate training and all staff should undergo enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.
- HE.18 Custody records of those held under the authority of IND should record all time spent in successive places of detention, including police cells.
- HE.19 Written reasons for detention should be provided in a language the detainee can understand.
- HE.20 All centre staff should be aware of the procedures for detaining children and should report to IND if those procedures appear not to have been carried out; all those claiming to be children should be treated as such until independent medical examination confirms otherwise.
- HE.21 Custodial staff should receive training in suicide and self-harm prevention and adequate policies and procedures should be in place.
- HE.22 Detainees should either be provided with adequate telephone facilities, including a free phone call on arrival, or be able to use mobile phones to contact families and advisers and sort out practical problems.
- HE.23 Holding rooms should contain newspapers, books, notices and other reading material in different languages, including basic information on the facility, legal assistance and process, fire/health and safety procedures, anti-bullying and anti-racism policies.
- HE.24 Arrangements should be in place to allow detainees to recover or arrange for the disposal of their property and detainees should be informed of this.
- HE.25 There should be a complaints procedure.
- HE.26 Health and safety risk assessments should be produced for the facility.

Section 1

Communications House 210 Old Street London EC1V 9BR

Inspected: 2 June 2004
Inspectors: Hindpal Singh Bhui
Eileen Bye

Overview

- 1.1 Communications House is the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) reporting and enforcement centre for north London. It has a small non-residential holding area where people are detained for up to a few hours pending transfer. Wackenhut, which has recently become part of Global Solutions Ltd (GSL), was responsible for care of detainees in the holding area and in most escort vans. The building also houses Immigration Service enforcement staff who detain immigration offenders with a view to removal.
- 1.2 Most detainees were detained when they came for their regular reporting appointment at the centre, which meant they were unprepared for detention. On-site staff were respectful and professional in their dealings with detainees. The holding room was clean and managed in an efficient and friendly manner.
- 1.3 However, detainees had no access to a telephone to let legal representatives or family know what had happened to them, or to ask them to bring belongings prior to transfer or removal. A specialist family removals team sought to minimise detention of children, taking families direct to a removal centre with family accommodation. However, there was no formal child protection policy. There was a need for more thorough health and safety and self-harm risk assessments, policy and staff training. Immigration staff oversight was minimal and there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Arrival and accommodation

Expected outcomes:

Detainees taken into custody are treated politely and courteously, given reasons for this course of action in a language they understand and kept in safe and decent conditions

- 1.4 Detainees were given a rubdown search on entering the secure area and their property was put into lockers. There was one small holding room, directly observed by staff at all times through a security glass window. The holding room itself was clean and in reasonable repair, but the lack of decoration made it an unwelcoming environment. It was a no smoking area with direct access to separate male and female toilets with steel bowls. There were eight chairs around two fixed tables, which was sufficient provision for the throughput of detainees. There were usually no more than four or five people in the holding room at any one time.

- 1.5 Apart from a small sign saying that holy books were available on request, there were no other notices in the holding room and no information in different languages. The television was not switched on because, according to staff, the aerial was not good enough to ensure adequate reception.
- 1.6 A nearby interview room was used as a family detention room. It was also used when staff wanted to separate people from disruptive detainees in the main holding room.
- 1.7 Detainees were not allowed to make any phone calls from the centre and were instead advised to wait until their transfer. We were told that an immigration officer might on occasion make a call for detainees if requested to do so, but this was neither consistent nor an acceptable substitute for routine access to a telephone, particularly as most people were detained when they came to report and were therefore not expecting to be detained. Mobile phones were not allowed in the room and were retained securely by staff until transfer. We found no written evidence of supervisory visits to the holding area by senior IND staff and, custody staff told us that they were unaware of routine supervision by local senior IND staff. Unlike in immigration removal centres (IRCs), there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Escort vans and transfers

Expected outcomes:

Detainees under escort are treated courteously, provided with refreshment and comfort breaks as required and transported safely

- 1.8 Escort vans transferred detainees to other places of detention or to ports for removal. Communications House had two unmarked cellular vans and two minibuses. These were used when they detained people during enforcement operations. The vehicles were clean, had seatbelts and a first aid box. They contained a supply of large laundry bags, given to people to pack their possessions. Most journeys in these vans were of short duration, within north London.
- 1.9 The GSL staff in the holding room worked from 8.30am to 5.30pm. Custody staff told us that if detainees were held after that time, immigration staff monitored the facility until the escort vehicle arrived to transfer them. They might be transferred to a police station if they could not be taken to a removal centre.

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to obtain expert legal advice and representation from within the facility. They can communicate with legal representatives without difficulty to progress their cases efficiently

- 1.10 Detainees seen had the IS91R notice of detention, issued in English. We were told that all detainees were issued with this as soon as they were detained. However, there was no opportunity to communicate this information to legal representatives, as there was no telephone in the holding room and detainees were not offered a telephone call. We were told their first opportunity to make a call would be following transfer to a place of further detention.

- 1.11 There were no leaflets or notices of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), with detailed advice about how to get legal advice, in the holding room. Sources of advice, such as the Refugee Legal Centre or Immigration Advisory Service, were not advertised. The only conspicuous advice notices in the reporting centre were about the International Office of Migration (IOM) which helps with voluntary repatriation.

Casework

Expected outcomes:

Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated.

Detention is for the minimum period necessary

- 1.12 Those detained generally came from the reporting centre. In the six months to April 2004, a monthly average of 85 had been detained. Staff had access to the IND casework information database (CID). Once Communications House took responsibility for a removal, staff obtained the case file from wherever it was located within IND. Records seen indicated that most were removed within two weeks of detention. Many of the documents examined did not show all the time spent in detention or the location. Written reasons for detention were only provided in English.

Duty of care

Expected outcomes:

The centre exercises a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm

Bullying

- 1.13 There was no anti-bullying strategy. Staff believed that this was unnecessary, because of the short length of time detainees were held in the room. There was good observation into the room and staff were attentive to need.

Self-harm and suicide

- 1.14 Custody staff were trained in first aid, but could remember little training specifically on managing self-harm. They could remember no self-harm incidents, but thought their response would be to use control and restraint (C&R) techniques and call immigration staff to deal with the detainees.

Use of force

- 1.15 Custody staff were trained in the use of C&R. No incidence of use was noted.

Health and safety

- 1.16 Fire prevention equipment was checked on a fortnightly basis. There was a lack of clarity among staff about what they would do in the event of a fire, and no visible guidance for detainees in the holding room. There was a designated fire officer for Communications House but facility staff were unaware of this. We were told that members of Immigration Service arrest teams received some police training which included health and safety. However there was no health and safety policy document or risk assessment in place.

Recommendation

- 1.17 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible.

Childcare and child protection

Expected outcomes:

Children are detained only in exceptional circumstances. Children's rights and needs for care and protection are respected and met in full

- 1.18 Communications House had no child protection policy. There were no protocols agreed with the Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) and there was no designated child protection coordinator. Any family with children was briefly held in an interview room separate from the holding room pending transfer. We were told that members of a dedicated immigration family detention team had received some police training, which included child protection elements and undertook annual refresher training. Staff coming into contact with children were not vetted to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced level.

Positive relationships

Expected outcomes:

Those detained are treated respectfully by staff, throughout the duration of their stay

- 1.19 Staff appeared sensitive to the needs of detainees, treating them with humanity and respect. The door to the holding room was open during much of our visit, and we observed staff taking detainees out of the room and into the external secure area, a yard in the car park, when they wanted to smoke.

Diversity

Expected outcomes:

There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural norms. Detainees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, nationality, gender or religion and there is positive promotion and understanding of diversity

- 1.20 There was no racial incidents complaints book, nor were there any religious facilities. A notice in the holding room said that religious texts could be requested. There was a ramp for people with disabilities coming from the vans into the holding room area. There was a designated disabilities officer for Communications House but custody staff were unaware of that: there was no disability policy in the facility.

Recommendation

- 1.21 There should be a disability policy in place.
-

Facility rules

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to feel secure in a predictable and ordered environment

- 1.22 There was no written information available to detainees on the rules of the facility or complaints procedures.

Services

Expected outcomes:

Services available to detainees allow them to live in a decent non-punitive environment in which their everyday needs are met freely and without discrimination

- 1.23 Pre-packed sandwiches and drinks were provided free to detainees. If what was available was not appropriate, staff told us that they would go out and purchase food to meet special needs. No hot meals were available, even if people had been detained for several hours.

Recommendation

- 1.24 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times.
-

Activities

Expected outcomes:

The facility encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well being of detainees.

- 1.25 There were no activities to alleviate boredom. Some detainees might be in the holding room all day, without access to reading material or a working television.

Recommendations

- 1.26 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air.
- 1.27 There should be a working TV in the holding room.
-

Preparation for release

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, and are given notice of their release, transfer or removal.

- 1.28 For those detained when they came to report at the reporting centre there was limited opportunity to prepare for release, transfer or removal. They were unlikely to have more than the clothes they were wearing and they were not generally allowed to return home to collect anything. They could not make telephone calls or receive visitors. They were told they could do this if and when they were transferred to a removal centre. However, this might not be the case if they were transferred to another short-term holding facility.

Section 2

**Lunar House
40 Wellesley Rd
Croydon
CR9 2BY**

Inspected: 10 September 2004
Inspectors: Jim Gomersall
Hindpal Singh Bhui
Eileen Bye

Overview

- 2.1 Lunar House in Croydon is the principal Home Office site where applications to stay in the country are received and processed. It includes the asylum screening unit, where asylum seekers who do not claim at the port of entry present themselves with any dependants, to make the asylum application. Both administrative grade and Immigration Service staff of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) work on site.
- 2.2 The holding area, run by Global Solutions Ltd (GSL), is used almost exclusively to detain people claiming asylum who are to be sent to Oakington Reception Centre for 'fast-track' processing.
- 2.3 Lunar House holding room provided separate accommodation for men and women or families. People were rarely detained there for more than a few hours. Although contracted custodial staff treated detainees respectfully, they did not appear to have appropriate self-harm and safety procedures. Although Lunar House is the main route for detained families going to Oakington Reception Centre, it had inadequate child protection procedures. Immigration staff oversight was minimal and there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Arrival and accommodation

Expected outcomes:

Detainees taken into custody are treated politely and courteously, given reasons for this course of action in a language they understand and kept in safe and decent conditions

- 2.4 Admission was speedy and courteous. Custody staff supervision was good with male and female custody officers present whenever the facility was in use. Custody staff were caring and attentive and all wore name badges. The detention suite was in a very good state of repair, with modern equipment throughout. The rooms were, however, spartan and most of the walls were bare. There were separate facilities for male detainees and women/families. The rooms had a television and a pay phone, which accepted coins or cards. No free telephone call was available to enable detainees to inform legal representatives or family of their detention. Detainees could only use the pay phones if they happened to have a BT card or had the necessary coins. The minimum charge was 30p.

- 2.5 Staff were unaware of any limitation on the number of people who could be held in the rooms but we were told that up to 25 could be held in the male room and two or three families in the family room.
- 2.6 There were no notices in any language about important issues such as detention, bail and appeals processes, fire/health and safety procedures or policies on anti-bullying and racist behaviour. The only notice in the holding room was a 'no smoking' sign. Hot and cold drinks were available free of charge on request, as were biscuits. No other foodstuffs were available. We spoke to one woman detainee with a two-year-old child during the mid-afternoon. She and the child had been in other areas of the building since 8am that morning. Neither she nor her child had been offered anything to eat during that time and had to wait for relocation to a residential centre that evening. This is unacceptable.
- 2.7 There was no access to a professional health worker on site but first aid trained staff were available within Lunar House. We were told that detainees requiring medical attention would be escorted to local hospitals.
- 2.8 Detainees were allowed to make telephone calls to friends, families and legal advisers, but the public telephones did not afford privacy and detainees could only use it if they had a BT card or the necessary coins. Mobile phones were not allowed and were retained securely by staff until transfer.
- 2.9 Detainees had access to single sex sanitation, and sanitary protection for women was available but there was no baby changing facility.
- 2.10 Detainees were searched on admission. Strip-searching did not take place and same sex procedures were used for adults in all cases. Women custody officers searched children. Observed searching was carried out thoroughly and sensitively.
- 2.11 We were told that the holding rooms were never used to house detainees overnight and a records check of movements confirmed this. During the inspection, contracted custody staff did not come on duty in the holding room until the afternoon. There appeared to be no routine supervision of the holding area by senior IND staff, and there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Recommendations	
2.12	Telephones in holding rooms should have some form of privacy screening.
2.13	A baby changing facility should be provided.

Escort vans and transfers

Expected outcomes:

Detainees under escort are treated courteously, provided with refreshment and comfort breaks as required and transported safely

- 2.14 GSL was responsible for transfer of detainees to Oakington Reception Centre. A private hired coach arrived daily at Lunar House, Monday to Friday, to collect and transport detainees to Oakington. It arrived at lunch time and left around 4.30pm, reaching Oakington around 7pm. If

people were identified as suitable for detention but the coach had gone they would be told to come back the next day. Although the coach held no passengers before arriving at Croydon at lunchtime on the day of the inspection, it was smelly and still had the litter left by previous occupants. The on-board toilet and sink did not appear to have been cleaned and checked that day. The fridge contained a few drinks and a packet of biscuits.

- 2.15 In addition to the hire company driver, three GSL detainee custody officers accompanied the detainees on the coach. They carried the IS91 authority to detain and the case file from Lunar House, which was to be handed over to IND staff at Oakington. During the trip, a video, available in many languages, was shown to passengers, to explain what to expect on arrival at Oakington.

Recommendation

- 2.16 Escort vehicles should be clean.

Good practice

- 2.17 *The GSL video shown on the coach to people who had just been detained explained what would happen to them during and following reception at Oakington. It was available in a range of languages.*

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to obtain expert legal advice and representation from within the facility. They can communicate with legal representatives without difficulty to progress their cases efficiently

- 2.18 Decision documents were served by an immigration officer, with an interpreter who accompanied the detainee as far as the holding room. Information (in English only) on the back of the IS91R (summary reasons for detention) included telephone numbers of the Refugee Legal Centre and Immigration Advisory Service. We saw no notices or leaflets for the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), advising detainees how to find and recognise qualified immigration advisers. We saw no notices advising detainees of their legal rights and how to get free legal advice. We were told that it was up to detainees to inform legal representatives of their detention and location as IND staff did not normally fax this information: however, there was no access to free or private phone calls.

Casework

Expected outcomes:

Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated.

Detention is for the minimum period necessary

- 2.19 The asylum screening unit at Lunar House supplied detainees to Oakington Reception Centre to be detained for consideration of the claim rather than for imminent removal. Under the Oakington process, asylum claims which a caseworker deemed to be straightforward were assessed and decided within a couple of weeks, following which the detainee might be transferred to detention elsewhere or granted temporary release.
- 2.20 The case file was usually opened at Lunar House and passed with the detainee to Oakington where on-site staff took responsibility both for the asylum casework and detention review. The initial stage at Lunar House typically involved asylum applicants joining a large queue in the morning and, when seen, fingerprinted, photographed and given a screening interview. They were required to bring all dependants with them. The identity and grade of the official authorising detention was often illegible. Consequently, it was not possible to check that the decision to detain children had been made at an appropriate senior level, in accordance with IND detention criteria.
- 2.21 Although an immigration officer explained the reasons for detention with the help of an interpreter before delivery to the holding room, detainees with a limited understanding of English could not easily ask questions to obtain information during their subsequent detention. The holding room staff, though sympathetic, tended to rely on immigration officers to provide all relevant information.

Recommendation

- 2.22 Detention of children should be considered and authorised at a senior level and this should be documented. Signatory, grade and date should be indicated legibly.
-

Duty of care

The centre exercises a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm

Bullying

- 2.23 There was no anti-bullying strategy and staff believed that this was unnecessary because of the short length of time detainees were held in the room. There was good observation into the room and staff were attentive to need.

Self-harm and suicide

- 2.24 Detainees were in the holding room for short periods of time – rarely for more than a few hours according to the holding room log – and staff could remember only one instance of self-harming behaviour in the previous two years. However, detainees were likely to be distressed by their detention, with the potential for self-harm. Consequently, it was surprising that staff were unaware of any clear policy or guidance on the management of self-harming behaviour in the holding rooms, beyond general control and restraint (C&R) procedures.

Use of force

- 2.25 All custody staff had been trained in C&R by GSL. There were no records of usages of force.

Health and safety

- 2.26 There were smoke detectors in the holding areas, but staff were unclear about what they would do in the event of a fire. They could remember no guidance on evacuation procedures, and there was nothing to inform detainees about what to do or what would happen in the event of a fire. The fact that many staff were new to the building and inexperienced in its layout made it even more important to have clear policies and evacuation guidance. There was no health and safety policy document and no evidence of risk assessments.

Recommendation

- 2.27 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible.

Childcare and child protection

Expected outcomes:

Children are detained only in exceptional circumstances. Children's rights and needs for care and protection are respected and met in full

- 2.28 There was no child protection policy available in the facility, there were no protocols agreed with the Area Child Action Committee (ACPC).
- 2.29 Staff were not screened to enhanced levels by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and none of the custody staff had been given child protection training. The Immigration Service executive officer responsible for children had attended a 'minors training' course run by social services. There was no child protection policy document in the facility but we were told that GSL was formulating a national policy.
- 2.30 During the working week, by arrangement with Croydon social services, a social worker attended Lunar House to assess and assist unaccompanied minors who appeared to have a connection with Croydon. We were told that a Metropolitan Police child protection officer attended the building two or three times each week. Unaccompanied children and those suspected of non-biological relationship to accompanying adults were referred to the social workers by immigration staff; any instances of the apparent abuse of accompanied children were also referred to them for advice.
- 2.31 Families were detained together in the family room even if some individuals were over 18 years of age. There were no recreational facilities for children, other than the television in the family room.
- 2.32 IND's operational enforcement manual directed that decisions to detain women and children should be authorised by an officer of at least the rank of inspector or assistant director. From our conversations with staff and inspection of documentation we were not satisfied that this was happening systematically. Two families were detained during the inspection: a couple with

three children, aged 11, nine and two, and a young woman with a child aged two. In the first family's documents we could not identify an inspector's or assistant director's authorisation.

Recommendation

2.33 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children.

Positive relationships

Expected outcomes:

Those detained are treated respectfully by staff, throughout the duration of their stay

2.34 The relationships between custody staff and detainees appeared to be good. Staff were aware of the impact of detention and were proactive in trying to minimise the effects. They were attentive to detainees' needs on arrival and made efforts to engage with them in the holding rooms. They helped with immediate issues and referred matters relating to detention to immigration staff. Staff were courteous when addressing detainees and introduced themselves using their first name.

Diversity

Expected outcomes:

There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural norms.

Detainees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, nationality, gender or religion and there is positive promotion and understanding of diversity

2.35 We were told that detainees could obtain religious books (specifically the Koran and the Bible) on request, but staff were unable to find copies of these texts when asked to do so. Moreover, there were no notices or leaflets to inform detainees that holy books were available.

2.36 There was no procedure for detainees to make racial complaints. No one was able to name a designated disabilities officer. Staff from GSL told us that they received some initial training in diversity issues, and some had also received refresher training.

Recommendations

2.37 Sufficient religious texts should be freely available to detainees, who should be informed of their existence.

2.38 Detainees should be aware of how to make racial or other complaints, and assisted to do so.

2.39 There should be a designated disabilities officer in post and a disability policy.

Facility rules

Detainees are able to feel secure in a predictable and ordered environment

- 2.40 There was no written information available to detainees on rules or complaints procedures.

Services

Expected outcomes:

Services available to detainees allow them to live in a decent non-punitive environment in which their everyday needs are met freely and without discrimination

- 2.41 Very little food was available. The contractor responsible for the holding centre had only drinks and biscuits available, since people were generally only in the holding room for an hour or two. On the coach the contractor had only drinks and biscuits available for the journey to Oakington. This meant that a young woman with a two-year-old child who had been at Lunar House since 8am arrived at Oakington around 7pm that evening without having had a meal for at least 11 hours.
- 2.42 Some hygiene materials, including nappies, were available from holding room staff if requested, but there were no notices advising availability.

Recommendation

- 2.43 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times.

Activities

Expected outcomes:

The facility encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well being of detainees.

- 2.44 There was a television, but we saw no magazines or other reading material in the holding rooms. Although detainees were usually held for several hours in the room there was no exercise area.

Recommendation

- 2.45 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air.

Preparation for release

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, and are given notice of their release, transfer or removal.

- 2.46 Detainees could not receive visitors and, although they had access to a pay phone, if they had no money they were not given a free phone call. Unless they had their property with them, they were likely to be ill-prepared for transfer as they were unable to collect or have belongings delivered to them at Lunar House.

Section 3

Electric House 3 Wellesley Rd Croydon CR0 2AT

Inspected: 10 September 2004
Inspectors: Jim Gomersall
Hindpal Singh Bhui
Eileen Bye

Overview

- 3.1 Electric House is a reporting centre of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). The building also houses Immigration Service enforcement staff who detain immigration offenders with a view to removal. A single holding room at Electric House holds detainees from both the reporting centre and the enforcement teams. It is run by Global Solutions Ltd (GSL).
- 3.2 Men, women and families with children were accommodated in a single area. Those without money had no access to a free telephone call to inform legal representatives or family of their whereabouts. There was no child protection policy and staff did not have Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to enhanced level. Some of those detained were distressed or agitated and, although custodial staff were conscientious and respectful, staffing levels, training and procedures were inadequate to ensure a safe environment. Immigration staff oversight was minimal and there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Arrival and accommodation

Expected outcomes:

Detainees taken into custody are treated politely and courteously, given reasons for this course of action in a language they understand and kept in safe and decent conditions

- 3.3 Detainees were searched on reception. Strip-searching did not take place and we were told that same sex procedures were used for adults in all cases. The searches we observed were carried out thoroughly and sensitively.
- 3.4 Admission to the facility was quick and courteous, and we observed positive interaction with detainees. Male and female custody officers were present whenever the facility was in use. The custody officers wore name badges. The single holding room was in a good state of repair, with modern equipment and decoration throughout. The room was, however, spartan and most of the walls were bare. There were no notices in any language about the detention, bail and appeals processes, fire/health and safety procedures, anti-bullying or racist behaviour policies.

- 3.5 There were no separate facilities for male detainees and women/families. The holding room had a television and a pay phone, which accepted coins or cards. We were told that up to 35 detainees could be held in the room.
- 3.6 There was no access to a professional health worker on site but first aid trained staff were available within Electric House. We were told that detainees requiring medical attention would be escorted to local hospitals by ambulance.
- 3.7 Detainees were allowed to make telephone calls to friends, families and legal advisers, if they had money with them, but the public telephone did not afford privacy. Mobile phones were not allowed in the room and were retained securely by staff until transfer.
- 3.8 Detainees had access to single sex sanitation and sanitary protection for women was available but there was no baby changing facility.
- 3.9 The holding room was not used to house detainees overnight and a records check of movements confirmed this. However, we noted a number of instances of detainees spending 10 hours or more in the holding room before being moved.
- 3.10 There appeared to be no routine supervision of the holding area by senior IND staff and there was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.

Recommendations

- 3.11 Men, women and families with children should be detained separately.
- 3.12 A baby changing facility should be provided.

Escort vans and transfers

Expected outcomes:

Detainees under escort are treated courteously, provided with refreshment and comfort breaks as required and transported safely

- 3.13 Many occupants of the holding room were detained when they came to the reporting centre within the building. The enforcement teams who operated externally brought detainees in using Immigration Service unmarked vehicles. The IS91 authority to detain was retained by custodial staff and passed on to the escort when detainees were moved. Generally they had little property with them when detained. Transfer of detainees to other places of detention generally involved private security contractors, whose vehicles were not available for inspection during the visit. Electric House had a secure yard where vehicles were parked and detainees transferred.

Recommendation

- 3.14 Detainees should be given prior written notice of where and when they will be going, and allowed to pass this information to legal representatives and family or friends.

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to obtain expert legal advice and representation from within the facility. They can communicate with legal representatives without difficulty to progress their cases efficiently

- 3.15 Detainees were brought to the holding room after officers had served decision papers. There was likely to be an interpreter present to explain the decision when someone was detained in the centre, but this was not necessarily the case when people were picked up in other places. No information about legal rights or how to access legal advice was posted in the holding room. We saw no notices or leaflets for the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), with advice about how to find and recognise qualified immigration advisers.
- 3.16 Information on the back of the IS91R (summary reasons for detention) included telephone numbers of the Refugee Legal Centre and Immigration Advisory Service. This document was in English only.
- 3.17 No free telephone call was offered following detention, although one member of the security staff said she had allowed people to use an official telephone when they clearly had no means to use the payphone.

Casework

Expected outcomes:

Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated. Detention is for the minimum period necessary

- 3.18 A transient and diverse population passed through the holding centre and much of their casework had been carried out at other IND offices. On-site staff generally only had responsibility for effecting the detention and the initial period following detention. Electric House officers issued the authority to detain and, to detainees, the IS91R reasons for detention in English only.
- 3.19 Interpreters were available to assist with interviews. While immigration officers explained the reasons for detention with the help of an interpreter, detainees whose understanding of English was limited could not easily ask questions to obtain information during their detention following interview.
- 3.20 There was no guarantee that an interpreter would be available to provide explanation to those detained during external enforcement operations and, whether or not an interpreter was available at the time of detention, it could not usually be anticipated where they would be taken next. Arrangements were often notified late and at short notice, therefore staff could not tell detainees what to expect and detainees could not inform family or representatives.

Duty of care

Expected outcomes:

The centre exercises a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm

Bullying

- 3.21 There was no anti-bullying strategy and staff believed that there was no need for this because of the short length of time detainees were held in the room. There was good observation into the room and staff were attentive to the needs of detainees.

Self-harm and suicide

- 3.22 Staff told us that there had been one incident of self-harm in the facility. Although their annual refresher training did not include any input on managing self-harm, they remembered receiving initial training on this subject.

Use of force

- 3.23 The lack of a family room or separate 'cooling off' room was a concern, given the possibility of a detainee becoming aggressive and intimidating towards other occupants in the holding room. In addition, there were often only two custody officers on duty and a minimum of three were needed for control and restraint (C&R) situations. In such circumstances, staff said they would call on immigration arrest team officers for assistance. However, the availability of immigration staff was uncertain, particularly late in the evening when custody officers were waiting for the escort vehicle to arrive.

Health and safety

- 3.24 Staff were clear about the procedures to follow in the event of a fire. We were shown a daily checklist which showed that staff had checked such things as the first aid kit and the location of fire exits. However, there was no health and safety policy document and no risk assessment in place.

Recommendation

- 3.25 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible.

Childcare and child protection

Expected outcomes:

Children are detained only in exceptional circumstances. Children's rights and needs for care and protection are respected and met in full

- 3.26 No children were in the holding centre during the visit, but we were told that families with children were held there. There was no child protection policy or protocols agreed with the Area Child Action Committee (ACPC) and there was no designated child protection co-ordinator. Staff were not screened to enhanced level by the CRB and none of the custody staff

had been given child protection training. There was no child protection staff policy document in the facility but we were told that a national policy was being formulated by GSL.

- 3.27 Under an arrangement which had recently been agreed between the Croydon social services unaccompanied minors team and Lunar House, the principal Home Office site in Croydon, a social worker was stationed at the Asylum Screening Unit in Lunar House, to assess and assist unaccompanied children with a connection to Croydon. If necessary, unaccompanied children and those suspected of non-biological relationship to accompanying adults could be referred by immigration staff at Electric House to the social worker at Lunar House. Any instances of the apparent abuse of accompanied children could also be referred. There were no recreational facilities for children in the room.

Recommendation

- 3.28 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children.

Positive relationships

Expected outcomes:

Those detained are treated respectfully by staff, throughout the duration of their stay

- 3.29 The relationships observed between custody staff and detainees were good. Staff demonstrated awareness of the impact of detention and tried to minimise the effects. They were attentive to the needs of detainees on arrival and made efforts to engage with them during their stay in the holding room. They helped with immediate issues and referred matters relating to detention and casework to immigration staff. Staff were courteous when addressing detainees.

Diversity

Expected outcomes:

There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural norms.

Detainees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, nationality, gender or religion and there is positive promotion and understanding of diversity

- 3.30 A Koran, a Bible, a prayer mat and a kiblah (compass) were available for detainees, but this had not been advertised to them. There were no signs or leaflets to inform detainees that holy books were available, and no literature or notices in different languages.
- 3.31 There was no racial incidents complaints book. No one was able to name a designated disabilities officer. GSL staff said they received initial and refresher training on asylum and diversity issues.

Recommendations

- 3.32 Detainees should be informed of the availability of religious texts and other religious provision.
- 3.33 Detainees should be aware of how to make racial complaints, and assisted to do so.
- 3.34 There should be a designated disabilities officer in post and a disability policy.

Facility rules

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to feel secure in a predictable and ordered environment

- 3.35 There were no visible signs or other written information on rules or complaints procedures and there was no complaints log.

Services

Expected outcomes:

Services available to detainees allow them to live in a decent non-punitive environment in which their everyday needs are met freely and without discrimination

- 3.36 Custody staff maintained a limited range of sandwiches, including vegetarian, in a fridge. These were available free of charge on request. Hot and cold drinks and biscuits and crisps were also given out on request. No hot meals were provided.

Recommendation

- 3.37 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times.

Activities

Expected outcomes:

The facility encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well being of detainees.

- 3.38 The holding room had a television but no magazines or other literature to help detainees pass the time. Although detainees were commonly held for several hours in the room there was no exercise area.

Recommendation

3.39 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air.

Preparation for release

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, and are given notice of their release, transfer or removal.

3.40 Many detainees collected either from the reporting centre or during external enforcement operations had not had the opportunity to collect any of their possessions when detained. Families were more likely to be collected from home by the enforcement team and allowed to take a limited number of belongings. For all detainees, transfer to a removal centre far from London was likely to make it very difficult for their property to be delivered. Detainees could not receive visitors and were not given a free phone call if they had no funds. Consequently, unless they had their property with them, they were likely to be ill prepared for transfer as they were unable to collect their belongings. Immigration staff told us that belongings could sometimes be delivered to Electric House if suitable arrangements could be made, but custody staff seemed unaware of this.

Section 4

Dallas Court South Langworthy Road Salford Manchester

Inspected: 19 October 2004
Inspectors: Jim Gomersall
Eileen Bye

Overview

- 4.1 The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) contract Global Solutions Ltd (GSL) to manage the non-residential holding room. The secure unit is located within the reporting centre at Dallas Court.
- 4.2 The facility is a short-term non-residential holding room and can hold up to eight detainees during the day and evening until they are transferred to a residential facility or released. It is regularly used to hold many more detainees than there is seating available and had recently held 15 people for a short period.
- 4.3 A senior member of the immigration team had been given responsibility for oversight of the holding room area. There was no statutorily appointed independent group of visitors.
- 4.4 The facility was used to temporarily hold those people subject to detention by immigration officers at the reporting centre in the same building. It also functioned as a transit holding area for those detainees being transferred from one centre to another in England, Wales and Scotland and for those detained by the in-house immigration arrest team conducting operations in the community.
- 4.5 The facility was very small, cramped and shabby in some areas. However, it was generally clean and appeared well managed. There was no external exercise area. The staff in attendance were caring and treated those in detention with respect. The holding room was divided in two by a partition. One side contained fixed tables and chairs designed to seat eight people, the other had no seating and was used as a smoking area.
- 4.6 The room was used to hold male and female detainees and family groups. It was wholly inadequate for the intended purpose.

Arrival and accommodation

Expected outcomes:

Detainees taken into custody are treated politely and courteously, given reasons for this course of action in a language they understand and kept in safe and decent conditions

- 4.7 During the inspection, two male detainees occupied the single, small holding room. Had all eight seats been occupied the facility would have been crowded. A few days previously 15 occupants had been held during the day. There were two toilets at the back of the room, with sinks and soap. The area was clean but needed decoration. In two places, repairs were visible where damage had been caused by self-harming detainees. A thin partition divided the room into a smoking area, with no furniture, and a non-smoking area, which was nearly filled by the two wooden form tables each with four chairs. The only other thing in the room was a small television with two working channels. There was no window, no reading material and no telephone. A glass screen separated it from the reception area. Because the area was small, detainees and staff inevitably observed each other closely.
- 4.8 Men, women and families with children were held in the one holding room. Some were detained at the reporting centre in the same building; some were brought in by enforcement officers based at Dallas Court; most of the occupants were lodged in transit, awaiting change of vehicle between north and south. Some of the last group, may have been travelling for some hours from a holding centre in the south, with the prospect of further travel to Dungavel in Scotland after a period waiting at Dallas Court. Nonetheless they were offered only drinks and sandwiches rather than hot meals.
- 4.9 The holding room was used seven days a week. Arriving detainees were pat-down searched in the reception area. As there was no separate storeroom, property was also stored in the reception area. GSL generally tried to have male and female staff on duty, although we were told that the delay in confirming contract renewal was impeding necessary recruitment to maintain appropriate staffing levels. If necessary, they called a female immigration officer to assist.
- 4.10 As detainees had no access to a telephone in the holding room, staff said they were prepared to dial a number given by a new detainee arriving from within the building, although transit detainees were not necessarily allowed a telephone call.
- 4.11 The working relationship between custody and IND staff appeared good, and a senior IND officer visited the holding centre regularly. However, immigration officers expressed some concern that they often knew nothing about the transit detainees lodged in the holding room pending vehicle changeover. A weekend shift recently complained when they discovered a young woman in the holding room who had miscarried a few days previously. She had been collected from a hospital following psychiatric referral, had not eaten for three days and had to be helped to and from the van. She was subject to a live F2052SH self-harm monitoring form because she kept asking for her baby and said she wanted to die. Having been delivered to the holding room in the morning, she was not due to be collected by another vehicle until more than six hours later. Apart from staff who had received first aid training, there was no on-site healthcare.

Recommendations

- 4.12 The holding room should be made fit for purpose.
 - 4.13 Men, women and families with children should be detained separately.
 - 4.14 All detainees should be subject to a risk assessment and should not be detained in places which are unsuitable in the light of the risk assessment.
 - 4.15 Detainees should receive written information, in a language they understand, about where they are going and what will happen next.
-

Escort vans and transfers

Expected outcomes:

Detainees under escort are treated courteously, provided with refreshment and comfort breaks as required and transported safely

- 4.16 Private escort vans and unmarked escort vehicles of the immigration service enforcement teams brought people to the holding area, parking close to its entrance in a semi-secure yard. The inside of the vehicles we saw were clean.
- 4.17 The greatest use of the facility was as an escort vehicle staging post between places of detention in the north and the south. As noted above, IND staff on site knew little or nothing about this group of detainees lodged to await handover in their holding room. Locally based GSL staff said they did not always know who had been there as some vehicles arriving in the evening after they had gone home, simply collected the key and stayed with their detainees to await the next escort vehicle without properly recording their stay.

Recommendations

- 4.18 There should be an urgent review of the number and type of detainees lodged in transit at Dallas Court.
 - 4.19 Detainees must always be under the care of staff who are specifically responsible for their care and safety.
 - 4.20 Holding centre logs, as well as individual escort records, should record all arrivals and departures.
-

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to obtain expert legal advice and representation from within the facility. They can communicate with legal representatives without difficulty to progress their cases efficiently

- 4.21 Immigration staff had some interpreters available in the building and some detainees received an explanation of their detention in their own language. Those collected elsewhere by enforcement officers, and people being transferred from one place to another, did not necessarily receive an explanation in their own language. The two detainees in the holding room during the inspection were both unclear about where they were going next.
- 4.22 No telephone was available to detainees. There was no information about legal processes, how to make a bail application, or how to obtain qualified independent legal advice in evidence.

Casework

Expected outcomes:

Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated.

Detention is for the minimum period necessary

- 4.23 Limited casework was undertaken by immigration staff on site, which included administrative grades and immigration officers. There was extensive collaboration with other IND agencies but there was sometimes a lack of clarity about who had overall ownership of a case.
- 4.24 Cases were monitored by means of immigration service files and the IND casework information database (CID), although the latter was not always up-to-date. People could be detained when they attended their appointment in the reporting centre or in the course of an external enforcement operation, when they might be lodged in a local police station first. Efforts were made to minimise the detention of families.

Duty of care

Expected outcomes:

The centre exercises a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm

Bullying

- 4.25 There was no anti-bullying strategy and staff believed that there was no need for this due to the short length of time detainees were held in the room. They did, however, indicate that there had been the occasional minor fight between occupants. Given the size of the room and the number occasionally held, that was not surprising.

- 4.26 There was good observation into the room and staff were attentive to need, but we noted several documented occasions when staff shortages had occurred and not been resolved immediately.
- 4.27 When held, women detainees and family groups were held in the same room as single male detainees. This is unacceptable.

Suicide and self-harm

- 4.28 Those at risk of suicide and self-harm were managed through a F2052SH procedure. There were no F2052SH documents open during the time of inspection and we were told that these accompanied detainees on transfer so there were no back records available for scrutiny. All staff had received suicide and self-harm awareness training during their custody officer training with GSL but had not had refresher training since.

Use of force

- 4.29 All custody staff had been trained in the use of control and restraint (C&R). We were told that there had only been one instance of use during the preceding two years. There were no records of that usage on site. Staff told us that if C&R was used, the local ambulance service would be called out to attend.

Health and safety

- 4.30 The holding room was checked by staff every day and deficiencies were recorded. Fabric and general maintenance deficiencies were passed on to the immigration team who were responsible for maintaining repairs.
- 4.31 There was no health and safety policy document in the facility and though risk assessments had been completed by GSL centrally, the results of those assessments had not been given to staff or managers on site.
- 4.32 There were written instructions for staff on fire safety and fire fighting on display, but there were no notices for detainees. The available fire fighting equipment had been regularly checked.

Recommendations

- 4.33 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible.
- 4.34 Male and female detainees should not be held in the same room.
- 4.35 A central log of all use of force should be maintained.

Childcare and child protection

Expected outcomes:

Children are detained only in exceptional circumstances. Children's rights and needs for care and protection are respected and met in full

- 4.36 The holding room housed families, or sole parents and children for periods of up to several hours. There were no recreational facilities for children. There was no child protection policy and staff working in the facility had not been vetted to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced levels. Staff had not undergone specific childcare training. There were no protocols agreed with the Area Child Action Committee (ACPC) and there was no designated child protection co-ordinator.
- 4.37 Some baby milk was kept in the fridge and we were shown a few nappies in a drawer, although there were no notices advising detainees of what was available.

Recommendation

- 4.38 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children.
-

Positive relationships

Expected outcomes:

Those detained are treated respectfully by staff, throughout the duration of their stay

- 4.39 Detainees were treated very respectfully by the custody staff. All were addressed by their first name or as 'Mr/Mrs' and family name. Staff wore name badges and were attentive to the needs of detainees on arrival, throughout their residency and on discharge. We noted positive interaction by staff to calm and defuse a potentially difficult situation with a detainee who was refusing to be transferred to Dungavel removal centre. Relevant information on the well being of individual detainees was handed over during staff shift changes.

Diversity

Expected outcomes:

There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural norms. Detainees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, nationality, gender or religion and there is positive promotion and understanding of diversity

- 4.40 Custody officers and escort staff received some relevant training but there was no policy or system for reporting racial incidents. A chief immigration officer with some responsibility for health and safety included the holding area within her remit, but there appeared to be no designated disabilities officer. We were shown a bible, a Koran, a prayer mat and a compass in the reception area, but no notices advising their availability. Sandwiches delivered were intended to meet diverse needs.

Recommendations

- 4.41 There should be a racial incident reporting system.
- 4.42 There should be a designated disabilities officer.
-

4.43 Detainees should be advised that they can access religious texts and practise their religion.

Facility rules

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to feel secure in a predictable and ordered environment

- 4.44 There were no notices to detainees about the rules of the facility. Staff took care to inform English speaking detainees of the purpose of the facility.

Services

Expected outcomes:

Services available to detainees allow them to live in a decent non-punitive environment in which their everyday needs are met freely and without discrimination

- 4.45 Detainees regularly spent some hours travelling before reaching Dallas Court, and were likely to continue their journey for some hours after leaving. However, only pre-packed sandwiches and drinks were available. Even if detainees had cash, it was not possible to purchase cigarettes or other goods. Staff had baby milk, food and some nappies, but this was not advertised. Those detained by Dallas Court staff, unlike transit detainees, might be allowed one free call, but there was no pay telephone available for the use of any detainees.

Recommendation

- 4.46 Suitable meals should be available at appropriate times for detainees.

Activities

Expected outcomes:

The facility encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well being of detainees.

- 4.47 Detainees could be held from morning to evening, but there was no access to fresh air or exercise. Apart from the small television, which we were told showed two channels; there were no signs of constructive activity. There were no dictionaries or foreign language reading materials, apart from the Koran.

Recommendation

- 4.48 Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to exercise in fresh air.

Preparation for release

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, and are given notice of their release, transfer or removal.

- 4.49 For those detained when they came to report at the reporting centre there was very limited opportunity to prepare for release, transfer or removal. The holding room had no facility for visitors and there was no access to a pay telephone. Many detainees had been detained unexpectedly at the reporting centre or elsewhere and had had no opportunity to let people know or arrange their affairs. They were unlikely to have more than the clothes they were wearing and they were not generally allowed to return home to collect anything.

Section 5: Recommendations and good practice

Main recommendation

To the Minister for Immigration

- 5.1 The National Council of the Independent Monitoring Board should be invited to consider a mechanism for regular, independent monitoring of short-term holding centres. (HE14)

Main recommendations

To the Immigration and Nationality Directorate

- 5.2 There should be regular, documented supervision of each holding room by on-site immigration managers, reporting to senior managers at the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). (HE15)
- 5.3 All centres should have documented and approved fire and health and safety policies and procedures. (HE16)
- 5.4 All centres should have a comprehensive child protection policy agreed with the local Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC). Staff in contact with children should receive appropriate training and all staff should undergo enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. (HE17)
- 5.5 Custody records of those held under the authority of IND should record all time spent in successive places of detention, including police cells. (HE18)
- 5.6 Written reasons for detention should be provided in a language the detainee can understand. (HE19)

Main recommendations

To centre contractors

- 5.7 All centre staff should be aware of the procedures for detaining children and should report to IND if those procedures appear not to have been carried out; all those claiming to be children should be treated as such until independent medical examination confirms otherwise. (HE20)

- 5.8 Custodial staff should receive training in suicide and self-harm prevention and adequate policies and procedures should be in place. (HE21)
- 5.9 Detainees should either be provided with adequate telephone facilities, including a free phone call on arrival, or be able to use mobile phones to contact families and advisers and sort out practical problems. (HE22)
- 5.10 Holding rooms should contain newspapers, books, notices and other reading material in different languages, including basic information on the facility, legal assistance and process, fire/health and safety procedures, anti-bullying and anti-racism policies. (HE23)
- 5.11 Arrangements should be in place to allow detainees to recover or arrange for the disposal of their property and detainees should be informed of this. (HE24)
- 5.12 There should be a complaints procedure. (HE25)
- 5.13 Health and safety risk assessments should be produced for the facility. (HE26)

Other recommendations

Section 1: Communications House

- 5.14 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible. (1.17)
- 5.15 There should be a disability policy in place. (1.21)
- 5.16 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times. (1.24)
- 5.17 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air. (1.26)
- 5.18 There should be a working television in the holding room. (1.27)

Section 2: Lunar House

- 5.19 Telephones in holding rooms should have some form of privacy screening. (2.12)
- 5.20 A baby changing facility should be provided. (2.13)
- 5.21 Escort vehicles should be clean. (2.16)
- 5.22 Detention of children should be considered and authorised at a senior level and this should be documented. Signatory, grade and date should be indicated legibly. (2.22)
- 5.23 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible. (2.27)

- 5.24 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children. (2.33)
- 5.25 Sufficient religious texts should be freely available to detainees, who should be informed of their existence. (2.37)
- 5.26 Detainees should be aware of how to make racial or other complaints, and assisted to do so. (2.38)
- 5.27 There should be a designated disabilities officer in post and a disability policy. (2.39)
- 5.28 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times. (2.43)
- 5.29 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air. (2.45)

Section 3: Electric House

- 5.30 Men, women and families with children should be detained separately. (3.11)
- 5.31 A baby changing facility should be provided. (3.12)
- 5.32 Detainees should be given prior written notice of where and when they will be going, and allowed to pass this information to legal representatives and family or friends. (3.14)
- 5.33 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible. (3.25)
- 5.34 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children. (3.28)
- 5.35 Detainees should be informed of the availability of religious texts and other religious provision. (3.32)
- 5.36 Detainees should be aware of how to make racial complaints, and assisted to do so. (3.33)
- 5.37 There should be a designated disabilities officer in post and a disability policy. (3.34)
- 5.38 Hot meals should be provided at appropriate times. (3.37)
- 5.39 Detainees held for several hours should have access to an exercise area in the open air. (3.39)

Section 4: Dallas Court

- 5.40 The holding room should be made fit for purpose. (4.12)
- 5.41 Men, women and families with children should be detained separately. (4.13)
- 5.42 All detainees should be subject to a risk assessment and should not be detained in places which are unsuitable in the light of the risk assessment. (4.14)

- 5.43 Detainees should receive written information, in a language they understand, about where they are going and what will happen next. (4.15)
- 5.44 There should be an urgent review of the number and type of detainees lodged in transit at Dallas Court. (4.18)
- 5.45 Detainees must always be under the care of staff who are specifically responsible for their care and safety. (4.19)
- 5.46 Holding centre logs, as well as individual escort records, should record all arrivals and departures. (4.20)
- 5.47 An anti-bullying or harassment policy should be developed as soon as possible. (4.33)
- 5.48 Male and female detainees should not be held in the same room. (4.34)
- 5.49 A central log of all use of force should be maintained. (4.35)
- 5.50 Recreational facilities should be provided for detained children. (4.38)
- 5.51 There should be a racial incident reporting system. (4.41)
- 5.52 There should be a designated disabilities officer. (4.42)
- 5.53 Detainees should be advised that they can access religious texts and practise their religion. (4.43)
- 5.54 Suitable meals should be available at appropriate times for detainees. (4.46)
- 5.55 Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to exercise in fresh air. (4.48)

Good practice: Lunar House

- 5.56 *The Global Solutions Ltd (GSL) video shown on the coach to people who had just been detained explained what would happen to them during and following reception at Oakington. It was available in a range of languages. (2.17)*