

Kent Coast STHF IMB - Annual Report 2024 – Action Plan

Ref	Recommendation / Issue / Concern	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Not Accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
TO THE MINISTER				
1.	The Board has observed that detained people are still in need of information about their 'process journey'. We continue to note that the welfare of detained individuals has been sometimes adversely affected by their lack of understanding about where they are being taken. The Board understands that work has begun to address this issue, but we are disappointed about the length of time it is taking to solve this problem.	Accepted	<p>Border Force remains committed to ensuring all persons detained are aware of their 'process journey' however there are limitations to the volume of information which can be presented on digital display screens, particularly where there are literacy concerns of arrivals.</p> <p>Information screens at Western Jet Foil (WJF) and Manston are, and will continue to be, regularly reviewed to ensure all information is displayed is accurate, relevant and in the most common languages of arrivals. Pictorial aids are already used in WJF to obtain basic information at first point of contact however Border Force will explore whether their use can be developed.</p> <p>Screening interviews take place at Manston and KIU with in-person or telephone interpreters present. Mitie C&C officer interview scripts have recently been developed to improve process journey information provided, offering detainees an opportunity to query the process journey while an interpreter is available. Post-interview, officers have access to interpretation devices should detainees approach officers with questions.</p> <p>Border Force continue to explore how messages on the digital message boards can be better tailored regarding bail and next steps.</p>	Ongoing

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2.	<p>The Board has been informed that unaccompanied children should not go through an initial age decision interview during night hours, unless in exceptional circumstances. This results in some individuals resting on wooden benches overnight. The Board has requested, for several months, that mats should be provided for them to sleep on.</p> <p>The Board has also requested that the advice given to allow for resting before interview if arrivals after 10pm is revisited, as arrivals in the morning have often been many hours overnight on a small boat with no sleep and are interviewed straight away.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>Border Force aim to process individuals as quickly as possible through Western Jet Foil (WJF) and as such all children are processed during night hours. This now includes the interviewing of those where there are concerns about age and an initial age decision interview is required. Previously age decisions were delayed until the morning to allow a period of rest. However, since the IMB shared this recommendation, Border Force has reviewed the position and has decided that subject to appropriate monitoring, with due regard to an individual's welfare needs, age decision interviews will be conducted during night hours. This should ensure those children who require initial age decision interview are processed at WJF as soon as possible. The Board has been informed of this decision. However, should an individual feel too tired a period of rest will be given prior to interview.</p> <p>Consideration has already been given to the provision of sleeping mats at WJF, however due to limited space the mats would be a trip hazard and as such Border Force are unable to fully accept this recommendation. Border Force will however continue to explore ways of making extended stays at WJF more comfortable within the constraints of the available accommodation.</p>	Ongoing
3.	The Board recommends that detained people should continue not to be held at Manston for longer than 24 hours. And at the RHR facility, they should continue not be there for more than 96 hours.	Not Accepted	Under the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, detained persons in holding rooms can be held for up to 24 hours, and 96 hours in residential holding rooms, unless an extension is agreed in exceptional circumstances. Border Force always ensure that the length of detention is kept to a minimum and for the shortest time possible prioritising children and the vulnerable however there may always be exceptional circumstances where detention may need to be extended and for this reason we are unable to accept this recommendation.	N/A

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4.	Work with Mitie Care & Custody teams to get repairs done promptly and quicker.	Accepted	<p>Border Force is responsible for all facility repairs (Mitie Care & Custody is the custodial provider only) and is committed to resolving facility issues as swiftly as possible. A well-established process is in place between Border Force and a number of contractors to complete remedial work in line with set service level agreements.</p> <p>The one maintenance issue highlighted in the report concerns a shower in the non-detained area of KIU, which has since been rectified. Throughout this time, showers were available for use in the detained area of KIU if required.</p>	Completed
TO THE UK BORDER FORCE/HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT				
5.	The Board recommends that there should be visual information on the screens instead of it just being in a written format. In addition, detained people should have access to visual aids to help them when they are being interviewed.	Partially accepted	<p>Border Force is committed to ensuring all persons detained are aware of their 'process journey' however this recommendation has been partially accepted as there are limitations to the volume of information that can be provided via digital display screens. At Western Jet Foil pictorial aids are used to obtain the basic information required of all arrivals supplemented by the digital screens which use pictorial images to help aid the process. In person translators are provided at Manston in order to assist with initial examination and subsequent interview of detained persons.</p> <p>Work will continue to ensure that small boat arrivals are kept informed about the process. This includes keeping information provided via digital display screens under regular review to ensure any enhancements can be made when required.</p>	Ongoing
6.	We recommend that minors should be rested before being interviewed and that BF/HOIE does not carry out welfare interviews with minors at KIU in the middle of the night. In addition, sleep mats should be provided for	Partially Accepted	Border Force prioritises children and the vulnerable to ensure that length of detention is kept to a minimum. At Kent Intake Unit (KIU) welfare interviews are conducted throughout the night, unless the child feels too tired, to ensure children are moved out of detention as quickly as possible and into appropriate	Ongoing

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	those who have to spend the night at WJF.		<p>local authority care. As such, Border Force is unable to accept this element of the recommendation.</p> <p>Ensuring adequate facilities for individuals is important, however sleeping mats are not provided due to health and safety concerns given the limited space and potential trip hazard that they pose. Border Force will continue to explore ways of making WJF more comfortable for those experiencing extended stays, within the constraints of the available accommodation.</p>	
7.	That SBOC's positive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel maintain their attendance at the monthly Board meetings.	Accepted	Border Force and contracted partners remain committed to ongoing engagement with the Board and maintaining attendance at the monthly Board meetings. The commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of people in our care through an open and honest relationship with the Board, and SBOC will continue to strive to resolve any matters promptly and effectively as they arise.	Completed
TO THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR				
8.	We recommend that the contractor liaises with Border Force to ensure that the cleaning contract for KIU, Manston marquees and Frontier House have consistent high levels of service.	Accepted	<p>Border Force are responsible for ensuring cleaning contractors provide a particular level of service or rectify issues promptly with cleaning standards when identified.</p> <p>Since the last IMB reporting year commenced, Border Force has had a contract monitoring team in place who carefully monitor cleaning standards daily. This ensures that issues requiring escalation can be escalated quickly and resolved with cleaning contractors. Monthly governance meetings have been established to discuss any concerns, and clear processes are in place to ensure that the frequency of cleaning is adapted in line with the numbers of arrivals. This ensures standards are maintained.</p>	Completed

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9.	In addition, we recommend that the contractors work with Home Office/Border Force to get repairs done promptly and quicker.	Accepted	<p>Border Force is responsible for all facility repairs (Mitie Care & Custody is the custodial provider only) and is committed to resolving facility issues as swiftly as possible. A well-established process is in place between Border Force and a number of contractors to complete remedial work in line with set service level agreements.</p> <p>The one maintenance issue highlighted in the report concerns a shower in the non-detained area of KIU, which has since been rectified. Throughout this time, showers were available for use in the detained area of KIU if required.</p>	Completed
10.	That your constructive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel maintain attendance at the monthly Board meetings.	Accepted	Border Force teams (and contracted custodial partners) will continue to be represented at monthly Board meetings and are committed to working collaboratively to resolve any matter relating to the provision of safe and secure services and facilities for small boat arrivals. Border Force is keen to ensure that the partnership engagement remains positive, open, and honest in order that individuals in its care are protected and safeguarded and suitable services are delivered.	Completed