



Debriefing paper by HM Inspectorate of Prisons

Full inspection of:

Book House IRC

31 October to 11 November

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Healthy establishment assessments

Outcomes for detainees are good against this healthy establishment test.
There is no evidence that outcomes for detainees are being adversely affected in any significant areas.

Outcomes for detainees are reasonably good against this healthy establishment test.
There is evidence of adverse outcomes for detainees in only a small number of areas. For the majority there are no significant concerns. Procedures to safeguard outcomes are in place.

Outcomes for detainees are not sufficiently good against this healthy establishment test.
There is evidence that outcomes for detainees are being adversely affected in many areas or particularly in those areas of greatest importance to the well-being of detainees.
Problems/concerns, if left unattended, are likely to become areas of serious concern.

Outcomes for detainees are poor against this healthy establishment test.
There is evidence that the outcomes for detainees are seriously affected by current practice.
There is a failure to ensure even adequate treatment of and/or conditions for detainees.
Immediate remedial action is required.

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1. Safety

Summary

- Early days arrangements have improved but not all detainees are receiving a consistent level of care.
- Most detainees say they feel safe and levels of violence are reasonably low.
- Those at risk of self harm are supported well, but the cells used for constant watches are in a poor state.
- Safeguarding procedures are developing but do not yet reflect new at risk procedures.
- Dynamic security is good but some security procedures remain disproportionate for a detainee population.
- Governance of use of force and separation is very good. Use of force has increased. Separation has reduced in quantity and many detainees move out quickly, but the regime in the unit can be poor.
- A third of detainees have no legal representation.
- The average length of cumulative detention is high. Rule 35 reports are helpful for some and a third lead to release, but protections for those with PTSD are insufficient.

Outcomes for detainees against this healthy establishment test are reasonably good.

Arrival and early days

- Most detainees say they are well treated by escorts. We've seen little evidence of multiple transfers around the estate, but a number of detainees are still arriving during the early hours of the morning.
- In some cases restraints have been applied for external appointments without adequate justification.
- First night and induction packs are helpful and ensure that identified risk information is quickly transferred from reception to the wing on arrival.
- Reception screening is reasonably thorough but detainees are still asked sensitive questions at the open desk.
- Risk assessment, first night processes and induction arrangements appear to work well for detainees going to B wing, but not always for the large number located in other parts of the centre. Some new arrivals have been placed into dirty and unprepared cells during the inspection.
- The induction is helpful, but some information is delivered in a noisy environment and contains more detail than detainees are able to digest.

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Bullying and violence reduction

- In our survey, a third of detainees report feeling unsafe, similar to the last inspection.
- Levels of violence are fairly low and there have been very few serious assaults or incidents of violence.
- Consultation with detainees on safety issues is good. Collection and analysis of data is excellent and work has been done to address identified trends and hotspots.
- Investigations into violent incidents are good. Victims receive good support.
- The system for managing perpetrators does not adequately address violent behaviour and a revised system is being considered for future use.

Suicide and self harm

- 43% of detainees in our survey said they had problems with feeling depressed or suicidal on arrival.
- Levels of self harm are lower than at the last inspection and than at similar centres.
- Detainees on open ACDTs are mostly positive about the care they receive.
- A large number of people have been on constant watch, but they are not confined to cells and supported flexibly. However, constant supervision cells are in a poor state and provide an unsuitable environment for someone in crisis.
- ACDT reviews are informative and multi-disciplinary and consider detainees' needs carefully. Written records sometimes lack evidence of interactions with detainees.
- The centre is inappropriately required to use ACDTs for people who are not eating centre food but are eating other food and not at an assessed risk of self harm.

Safeguarding (protecting adults at risk)

- There are some good structures in place to manage detainees at risk in detention, but they are not yet sufficiently adapted to the new guidance on this group.
- There is no central log of adults at risk and routine oversight and support for this group is therefore lacking. Effective arrangements to monitor the vulnerability of detainees over time are not yet in place.

Safeguarding children

- There is an appropriate local policy on safeguarding children and staff are trained in safeguarding.
- There have been 15 age disputes in the last year. Social Services were called and attended promptly.
- Two detainees were found to be children on a Social Services' assessment. Both detainees had previously been assessed as adult by a CIO but there has been no inter-agency review to learn safeguarding lessons.

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Security

- Some security arrangements remain disproportionate to the actual risks posed by the population.
- The quality of SIRs is good and they are processed efficiently.
- Dynamic security is good, with many SIRs based on information volunteered by detainees.
- The number of strip searches is high and paperwork does not always sufficiently justify all uses.

Force

- The number of incidents involving force has increased since our last inspection.
- Paperwork justifying force is completed to a high standard, and all incidents are reviewed by a manager.
- Video footage has shown mixed practice. Briefings prior to planned uses of force are very good, verbal reasoning is used well but some incidents have taken too long to resolve once force has been initiated.
- We are not assured that Tascor overseas escorts use waist restraint belts only as a last resort or apply them safely.

Separation

- Fewer detainees are separated than at our last inspection.
- Good efforts are made to move challenging and complex detainees from separation quickly.
- However, the regime for separated detainees remains poor: detainees held this week did not have TVs, radios, books or anything to distract them. The unit is austere with dirty toilets and cells that require painting.
- Management reviews of separation paper work are thorough.
- A complex population is managed reasonably well on E wing, where the staff to detainee ratio is high.

Legal rights

- One third of detainees have no lawyer and only one third of those with a lawyer have received a legal visit.
- Although access to legal surgeries has improved since the last inspection, most detainees still have to wait 9 days to attend, which is too long.
- Detainees have some good support from BID, but access to BID's website has been blocked, as was access to some other important sites.

Casework

- The average length of cumulative detention is 3 months which is too long. No work is currently undertaken to understand why length of detention in the centre has increased and some detainees have been held for excessive periods.

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- Our casework analysis shows some cases where detention has been prolonged considerably by unreasonable delays in the immigration decision-making process.
- Only 19% of detainees in our survey said it was easy to see the centre's immigration staff, but a new pilot to improve their contact and work with detainees is to be introduced shortly.
- Not all bail summaries are served in sufficient time.
- Although very brief, Rule 35 reports in our sample provided clear, helpful findings on scarring, but did not provide an adequate safeguard for detainees with PTSD.
- Some Rule 35 responses are poor, but a third of reports have led to the releases of the detainee, higher than we normally see.

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2. Respect

Summary

- Poor ventilation and the general prison-like environment of the centre remain prominent detainee concerns. Cleanliness varies and some deep cleaning is needed.
- Staff-detainee relationships are good and a particular strength of the establishment.
- Equality and diversity structures are robust and outcomes are reasonably good for most detainees.
- Faith provision is excellent.
- Complaints are well managed.
- The standard of food is reasonable and the cultural kitchen is used more.
- Healthcare provision is adequate. There are shortcomings in some areas, including pharmacy provision.

Outcomes for detainees against this healthy establishment test are reasonably good.

Residential units

- The residential units remain stark and impersonal in their design. Apart from paintings by detainees, measures have not been taken to soften the environment.
- Many cells lack curtains and many in-room toilets are not curtained off. A large number of cells have ingrained dirt, especially in toilets, and those on C Wing are in the worst condition.
- The lack of ventilation is the commonest detainee complaint, and many rooms are too stuffy overnight. In 60 two-person cells, a third bed has been fitted. Living conditions will be markedly worse if these are brought into use.
- Arrangements for clothing, bedding, laundry and personal property are satisfactory.
- Regular consultation meetings are held, with Home Office and healthcare presence, but they are not consistently attended by a sufficient number of detainees, so that their usefulness is limited.

Staff-detainee relationships

- About three-quarters of detainees have a positive view of the attitudes and behaviour of staff in our survey, and the proportion is even higher for those who did not speak English.

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- We have seen staff showing resilience and even-handedness in dealing with issues. Many staff mix well with detainees, although recorded contacts with care officers are infrequent.

Equality and diversity

- There is an effective strategic framework for equality and diversity issues, and the full-time diversity manager works effectively with management colleagues, staff liaison officers and detainee diversity orderlies.
- Equality and diversity data are collected, analysed and presented very comprehensively, with attention to trends over time.
- Those who do not speak English are relatively positive about their experience, and reasonable use is made of interpretation. Some written material is available in multiple languages, but not yet enough
- Support for those with disabilities, chiefly through detainee orderlies working as carers, is well organised. 'Supported Living Plans' provide a good basis for sharing of care between healthcare and unit staff. They are sometimes too focused on healthcare and not enough on practical living needs. Our survey shows that more men identify as having a disability than are known to the Centre.
- Gay men often do not wish to disclose their sexuality but are given confidential support by the equalities officer. More could be done to promote tolerance of alternative lifestyles and engage outside support organisations.
- Considerable attention has been given to those in the youngest and oldest age groups, with consultation meetings resulting in some actions

Faith and religious activity

- In our survey, 80% feel that their religious beliefs are respected. A large chaplaincy team is delivering an excellent service, catering for a wider range of faiths than usual.
- The worship spaces are open at all times, and there is a full programme of classes and groups. There is now ample space for Muslim prayers in the visits hall.
- Chaplains give significant help in supporting those not speaking English.

Complaints

- The number of complaints has reduced since our last inspection from about 15 a month to 12 a month. Nine complaints were substantiated or partially substantiated in the last six months.
- Investigations and replies are very good and efforts are made to contact detainees who have left the centre.

Healthcare

- Fewer detainees are satisfied with the quality of healthcare than in 2013.
- There is no recent health needs assessment to guide service development.

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- The healthcare complaints system does not preserve medical confidentiality and leads to unnecessary delays. Responses are good.
- Primary care services are limited but easily accessible, and care planning is good
- Waiting lists are commendably short but did-not attend rates are too high.
- There is no professional pharmacy oversight at the centre and the effectiveness of outcomes for detainees cannot be assured.
- Supervision of medicine queues is inadequate.
- Mental health services are now integrated and respond to detainees with emotional needs as well as serious mental disorders.
- Substance misuse services were recently introduced and are developing at a reasonable pace.
- Preparation for transfer or release is good, and there is good practice in healthcare transfer between G4S and Tascor medics.

Services

- About 30% of detainees report that the food is good or very good, an improvement on when we last inspected. Portion sizes are good and the quality of food is reasonable.
- The cultural kitchen is now open more often whilst Tinsley house residents remain at Brook House, which should be sustained.
- More than half of detainees say that the shop sells a wide enough range of goods and access is good.

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3. Activities

Summary

- Detainees have reasonable access to activities and report improved access to the gym and library. However, facilities are limited and will be further challenged by a larger population.
- There is a limited range of education provision but teaching and learning are good and all detainees in our survey found education helpful.
- There is enough work for most detainees.
- The library provides a good service.
- The gym is well used.

Outcomes for detainees against this healthy establishment test are reasonably good.

Access to activities

- Detainees continue to be locked up too early in the evenings.
- There is a reasonably good range of purposeful activities which meet the needs of most detainees.
- A similar number of detainees (50%) to the previous inspection say that there is enough to fill their time.
- Recreational amenities are good and the number of learning, skills and work places has increased.
- Education classes are offered during the day and sometimes in the evening, and arrangements are made for those detainees on E wing and in the care and separation unit.

Learning and skills

- The range of education continues to be narrow offering internally accredited English and ESOL courses. There is no information and communications technology (ICT) provision although plans are in place to offer ICT programmes and additional English and ESOL courses.
- Attendance and punctuality are generally good but learning sessions are interrupted far too often by detainees walking in and out of the classroom.
- The arts and craft programme continues to provide a variety of activities and some detainees have gained Koestler awards. A small number of short courses are offered.
- Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and learning support assistants provide good support and translation for detainees on ESOL courses.
- In our survey, 100% of detainees attending education said that it was helpful.

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- Quality assurance processes are reasonable but the observation of teaching, learning and assessment is under-developed and does not assure managers of the quality of short courses.

Paid work

- There is a reasonable choice of paid work, most of which is full-time. Detainees are usually able to get a job fairly quickly and waiting lists are short.
- The qualifications offered are still restricted to basic food hygiene and a level 2 award in food safety.
- All access to paid work is subject to Home Office approval, which is inappropriate.

Library

- Library facilities are good, providing a range of foreign national newspapers, periodicals and other reading material.
- Detainees have good access to the library during weekdays, evenings and weekends. Arrangements are made for detainees on E wing to use the library at appropriate times.

Sport and physical activity

- Fitness facilities continue to be reasonably good. The small well-equipped cardiovascular fitness room is used well by detainees and the equipment is in good order.
- Residential units have adjacent outside courtyards which are well used by detainees for general exercise and a range of sports. There is no separate sports hall or indoor area for team sports and access to some courtyards is currently restricted.

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4. Preparation for release

Summary

- Welfare services have improved and detainees report positively on the support they receive.
- Visits arrangements are reasonable but the experience of people in the visitors centre was poor.
- There is reasonable access to means of communication but some important websites have been blocked and there is still no access to Skype.
- There are some shortcomings in discharge arrangements, but the observed overseas charter removal was well managed.

Outcomes for detainees against this healthy establishment test are reasonably good.

Welfare

- Most detainees are positive about the very well used welfare service, which provides helpful assistance with a range of basic issues.
- The number of welfare officers has been increased, and the service is now available at weekends.
- There are well developed plans to implement an appointment system and work more closely with immigration staff.
- Currently, there are constant long queues, queue jumping is common and detainees regularly interrupt appointments being conducted in the office.

Visits

- Our experience of the visitors centre was poor and we observed new visitors being treated in an offhand manner both there and on entry to the centre.
- Once in the visits hall, visitors are made welcome.
- The visits area is reasonable but there is an inconsistent approach to physical contact between detainees and visitors, and restrictions are not based on individual risk assessment.
- The Gatwick detainees' welfare group provides excellent support to detainees and their visitors.

Communications

- Telephone arrangements and mail facilities are reasonably good.
- Detainees can access emails but there is still no access to social networking or Skype to help maintain contact with families and friends. Too many important websites have been inappropriately blocked.
- Access to fax communication is adequate.

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Removal or release

- The charter removal we observed was generally well managed; waiting times were minimal, escorts were polite, and there was no use of restraints or light touch compulsion as we have previously seen.
- However, the system of reserves is still in place, although detainees are told they are on the reserve list.
- Waiting rooms in the discharge area remain poorly ventilated and are grubby, although helpful country information reports are now available there.
- There remains no clear and consistent system of support to ensure detainees can safely reach their final destination after removal.
- We are not reassured that arrangements for explaining licence conditions to detainees, or contacting the police and probation in public protection cases, are sufficiently robust.

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