



Annual Report

of the

Independent Monitoring Board

for

Brook House
Immigration Removal Centre

1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

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Introduction

This report is presented by the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) for Brook House and covers the period from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

The IMB for Brook House acts as a 'watchdog' on behalf of the Home Secretary specifically and the general public by providing independent oversight of the Immigration Removal Centre. The role of the Board is to ensure that all detainees within the Centre are cared for decently, humanely and with respect. It is also the duty of the IMB to ensure that the contractors, G4S, comply fully with the requirements of the Detention Centre Rules 2001.

Brook House was opened on 25 March 2009 by the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith. It is a new, purpose-built Immigration Removal Centre designed to hold 426 single men in double rooms. The facilities include a library, computers with internet access and fitness rooms and good religious provision for all faiths.

The G4S management team is also responsible for the running of Tinsley House IRC which is situated about three quarters of a mile away. There is a separate IMB for Tinsley House.

The Board was initially appointed with only five members. One member resigned in June and one new member was appointed at the end of March 2010. This has meant that the Board has had difficulty setting up all necessary procedures. The Board also considers that it has not been able to cover some aspects of its remit in sufficient detail.

The IMB works closely with the staff of Brook House whilst maintaining independence and impartiality. Members normally raise concerns with the Management before taking them further.

Sometimes staff discuss their own personal professional problems with the IMB and they are assured of the utmost discretion.

Brook House, after an initial period of settling down, is now working towards offering detainees a stable regime within the Immigration Removal Estate.

Pauline Allen

Chairman

Brook House Independent Monitoring Board

July 2010

Statutory Role of the IMB

The prison's Act 1952 and the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 require every Prison and Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) to be monitored by an Independent Monitoring Board averaging 8 -12 members. The Home Secretary appoints members from the community in which the Prison or IRC is situated.

The Board is specifically charged to:

- 1) Satisfy itself as to the humane and just treatment of those held in IRCs
- 2) Inform, promptly, the Secretary of State or any officials to whom he has delegated authority as it judges appropriate, any concerns it has.
- 3) Report annually to the Secretary of State on how far the IRC has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have had on the Centre

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively its members have the right of access to every detainee and every part of the Centre and also the Centre's records.

IMB Diversity Statement

Brook House IMB is committed to an inclusive approach to diversity which encompasses and promotes greater interaction and understanding between people of different backgrounds including; race, religion, gender, nationality, sexuality, marital status, disability, age etc.

We also recognise that this fully inclusive approach to diversity must respond to differences that cut across social and cultural categories such as mental health, literacy and drug addiction.

The Board values this approach to diversity within its recruitment and Board development practices. The Board aims to increase its members' knowledge of the diverse needs and perspectives of the population within Brook House IRC.

All members of Brook House IMB will endeavour to undertake their duties in a manner that is acceptable to everyone in the Centre regardless of their background or situation.

The Board will monitor to establish that the experience and interaction between staff, detainees and visitors is fair and without prejudice. Where this is not the case, the Board will alert appropriate authorities and individuals including the Centre Manager, Director of Detention Services and the IMB secretariat.

Brook House Removal Centre

Brook House opened in March 2009 and is managed by G4S on behalf of the UK Border Agency. The Centre provides secure accommodation for 426 adult males in shared rooms. The majority of detainees held at Brook House are awaiting removal from the United Kingdom.

The accommodation is split between four Wings. There is also a small Wing where detainees can be removed from association or put into temporary confinement.

In March 2010 the Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMIP) carried out an inspection of Brook House but the report has not yet been published.

Brook House is generally clean and well maintained and the living conditions for detainees are adequate but rather noisy and spartan.

The activities provided are insufficient for the number of detainees held in the Centre and, although some detainees have paid work, the IMB feels that there could be more opportunities to occupy them. However the design of the Centre is not adequate for detainees to be held for any protracted length of time.

Facilities for detainees include English classes, IT, Arts and Crafts, Fitness Rooms, several different faith rooms. There is a provisions shop which is operated within the cash-free society of the Centre.

Pre-selected meals are served on each Wing from a hotplate and men have the choice of eating in a communal area or in their rooms. Televisions are provided in all main residential rooms but not in all rooms of the Wing set aside for Removal from Association or Temporary Confinement.

There is 24 hour medical care for detainees provided at Brook House.

The Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group visit and befriend detainees and, on occasions, help them find a solicitor as well as providing them with toiletries, clothing and other requisites.

The Religious Affairs team at Brook House holds a variety of services held by ministers of different faiths. It also plays an important pastoral role where detainees are seen and helped in various ways. An IMB member attends the multi-faith meetings when possible.

The IMB is establishing positive links with the contractor, G4S and our members have a place on all committees as observers.

G4S and UK Border Agency provide information about the population of the Centre to the IMB each month. This is helpful to the Board.

Nearly four thousand detainees have been admitted to Brook House in the reporting year.

On average the three largest cultural groups have consisted of Jamaican, Nigerian and Chinese detainees.

Executive Summary

Overall judgement

After some initial difficulties Brook House has become more settled and the interaction between and G4S staff and detainees is generally good.

The detainees appear to suffer some frustration caused by the procedures used by UKBA. On-site UKBA staff do a reasonable job.

Issues to be raised with Minister of State for Immigration

1. Length of stay at Brook House.

It is of great concern to the IMB that at least five detainees have been held for nearly a year at Brook House. The design of the Centre does not allow for many activities to occupy the men held there. With the lack of such facilities we consider that men should not be held for an extended length of time in the Centre.

2. High use of Removal from Association (RFA)

Detention Centre Rule 40 states: *'Where it appears necessary in the interests of security or safety that a detained person should not associate with other detained persons, either generally or for particular purposes, the Secretary of State may arrange for the detained person's removal from association accordingly.'*

During the year 1442 detainees were held in RFA. On many occasions detainees are placed in RFA prior to their departure to maintain good order on the main Wings. The Board is concerned at the high use of this facility whilst accepting that a number will have been held for their own protection or because of health issues.

In a Centre such as Brook House it might be preferable to have the equivalent of a 'Departure Wing' where detainees who have been advised of their imminent departure can be held without posing a risk to the calm and good order of the general population.

We also have concerns about those who may be disturbed unnecessarily during the night for deportation or transfer to other Centres.

3 Caring for detainees with apparent mental health problems

It appears that far more detainees are arriving with mental health problems. This causes distress to those suffering and often to other detainees and to staff who do not have specific training in mental health care.

4. Living accommodation

Living accommodation is sparse, noisy and unfriendly. There are insufficient activities' spaces.

The televisions were located too high and the detainees had difficulty watching them. As a result many televisions have been moved by the detainees who then extended the aerial cable to allow them to be watched in a more satisfactory location.

The air-conditioning, whilst effective, is sometimes a problem for detainees as they cannot open any windows to access fresh air. This also makes the atmosphere very dry.

5. Induction of detainees

Currently there is a very limited process of induction for newly arrived detainees at Brook House. In the Board's opinion it would be to the benefit of all to have a specified area where all new arrivals are accommodated until they have been assessed and have received a full induction programme. Such a provision could benefit the Centre by impacting on several other areas of concern raised in this report.

Other issues

6. Complaints to UK Border Agency

During the first year of operation there has been a high number of complaints. The system for complaints is long-winded and detainees have little faith in the process. The Board is informed of all complaints and the responses.

7. Gang (and nationality) culture.

When there are large groups of detainees from several different countries or cultures there is a danger of tensions arising between these different cultures. The staff work hard to manage and dispel any potential conflicts.

8. Food

Board members regularly sample the food which is served to detainees. Some detainees are dissatisfied with the amount of food served. Variety is fairly limited.

9. Illicit drugs

The IMB has been concerned about the availability of illicit drugs within the Centre. G4S has taken action in the event of several drug 'finds.' The Security Department is working closely with Gatwick Police in order to prosecute any detainee or visitor caught in possession of drugs.

10. Safer custody

The Centre promotes a caring approach for those in danger of self-harming. The mental strains faced by detainees result in those at risk being cared for under Assessment, Care in Detention and Teamwork (ACDT.) During the year there were 264 men cared for under this scheme and 69 on the less intense Raised Awareness Support Plan (RASP.) Despite these measures, sadly, there have been 50 reported cases of self-harm.

Great strides have been made in the formation of a Safer Custody strategy which enables staff to monitor those detainees who may be at risk of self-harm.

Brook House is continually recruiting detainees to hold the position of Safer Community Representatives as those men appointed often move on from the Centre. Meetings of staff and Safer Custody Representatives are held monthly with Tinsley House.

Men who are bullying others are identified where possible. Bullies are challenged and monitored and support is given to those who are bullied. There were 25 bullies identified during the year.

11. Religious Affairs

This department is doing a good job. There is an enthusiastic team of ministers who are readily accessible to the detainees.

12. Foreign National Former Prisoners (ex-FNPs)

Now that the population has settled it appears that approximately 80% of the detainees held at any one time are ex-FNPs.

13. Receptions and discharges

Arrivals and departures take place throughout the day and night and on every day of the year. The IMB often monitor the removal of men on Charter Flights of which there has been a considerable increase.

Of approximately three and a half thousand detainees who have passed through the Centre this year 57% left the country and 21% were released. Others have been transferred to other Immigration Removal Centres (16%), returned to prison or taken into police custody.

15. Staffing

After several recruitment campaigns the staffing at the Centre is stabilising. The staff find the shift system is exhausting. We are surprised at the high number of staff injuries which are inflicted by frustrated detainees. During this period 69 staff received reported injuries during Control and Restraint procedures. Some of these injuries have required hospital treatment and some have resulted in staff absences.

16. Disturbance

There was a period of indiscipline in June 2009 during which a Tornado Unit (team of prison officers and detention custody officers who are specially trained in anti-riot techniques) was called and serious disruption caused to the Centre. Fortunately there was an unoccupied Wing into which the men were moved. The Board recognises that the Centre was able to return rapidly to normal operation following this disturbance.

Other Reporting Areas

17. Separation and Care Units

Every Immigration Removal Centre has a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm and to provide safe accommodation and a safe physical environment

Brook House has procedures in place to monitor and care for detainees who are showing signs of stress, especially at high risk times when their appeals fail or removal is imminent. There is a small Wing in Brook House which is set aside under Rule 40 (removal from association in the interest of security or safety) and under Rule 42 (temporary confinement) for detainees who need to be removed on a temporary basis from the general population.

This Wing has 19 single rooms and is frequently used to facilitate the departure of detainees. The IMB has been concerned at the high use of this Wing during the year. The following figures show how many times men have been admitted to RFA or TC and on how many occasions force was necessary to place the men in their rooms (under Rule 40 or Rule 42.)

No of admissions to Removal from Association (RFA) Rule 40	1442
No of admissions to Temporary Confinement (TC) Rule 42	157
No of times when Force was Used Rule 41	173

20. Diversity

The post of Diversity Officer was held as a dual role with the Manager for Religious Affairs. We understand that these positions will be split in the near future.

21. Learning and skills

The limited facilities are well used.

22. Healthcare and Mental Health.

The service is provided by SaxonBrook Medical, a local healthcare provider. The aim is to provide care that equals the service received in the community.

The Board is of the opinion that there has been a big increase in numbers of detainees who arrive with apparent mental health problems. Two detainees with severe mental health problems were, after several months, transferred to psychiatric hospital care. However, the Board was very unhappy with the length of time this process took.

23. Use of Language Line

The IMB feels that staff should be encouraged to use Language Line more often especially in such areas as Health Care. It is important that detainees understand how and when to collect their medication or attend the Clinic.

The work of the IMB

Board Statistics	
Recommended complement of Board Members	12
Number of members at start of reporting period	5
Number of members at the end of reporting period	5
Number of new members joining	1
Number of members leaving	1
Total number of Board meetings	9
Average no of attendances at Board meeting	4
No of attendances at meetings other than Board meetings	30
Total number of visits to the IRC including all meetings	183
Total number of applications received	53

Summary of applications to IMB

Code	Subject	2009/2010
A	Accommodation	1
C	Diversity related	1
D	Education/employment	1
G	Health related	3
H	Property	15
I	Sentence related	8
J	Staff/detainee related	16
K	Transfers	1
L	Miscellaneous	7
	Total	53