

Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Yarl's Wood IRC and RSTHF

**For reporting year
1 January – 31 December 2022**

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Introductory sections 1 - 3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

1.1 Statutory role in the IRC

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

Under the Detention Centre Rules, the Board is required to:

- monitor the state of the premises, its administration, the food and the treatment of detained persons
- inform the Secretary of State of any abuse that comes to their knowledge.
- report on any aspect of the consideration of the immigration status of any detained person that causes them concern as it affects that person's continued detention
- visit detained persons who are removed from association, in temporary confinement or subject to special control or restraint
- report on any aspect of a detained person's mental or physical health that is likely to be injuriously affected by any condition of detention
- inform promptly the Secretary of State, or any official to whom authority has been delegated, as it judges appropriate, any concern it has
- report annually to the Secretary of State on how well the IRC has met the standards and requirements placed on it and what impact these have on those in its custody.

To enable the Board to carry out these duties effectively, its members have right of access to every detained person and every part of the IRC and all its records.

1.2 Statutory role in the RSTHF

The Yarl's Wood Independent Monitoring Board is appointed by the Home Secretary to monitor and report on the welfare of people in a residential short-term holding facility (RSTHF) through observation of their treatment and of the premises in which they are held.

The Board conducts its work in line with the Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF) Rules 2018, which place the day-to-day operations of STHFs on a statutory footing. Part 7 of the Rules sets out the responsibilities of the Independent Monitoring Board (referred to in the Rules as the Visiting Committee). The Board has unrestricted access to every detained person and all immigration detention facilities and to most records. IMB members have access, at all times, to all parts of the facility and can speak to detained persons outside of the hearing of officers. They must consider any complaint or request which a detained person wishes to make to them and make enquiries into the case of any detained person whose mental or physical health is likely to be injuriously affected by any conditions of detention. The IMB must inform the RSTHF manager about any matter which they consider requires their attention. and report to the Secretary of State about any matter about which they consider the Home Office needs to be aware.

The Board's duties also include the production of an annual report covering the treatment of detained persons, the state and administration of the facility, as well as providing any advice or suggestions it considers appropriate. This report has been produced to fulfil that obligation.

1.3 OPCAT

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

2. Description of the establishment

Yarl's Wood IRC ('the centre') is a purpose-built establishment for the detention of single men and women under immigration legislation. The centre is managed on behalf of the Home Office immigration and enforcement unit (HOIE) by Serco.

During 2022 the establishment has been used as an IRC and an RSTHF for men.

The maximum capacity of the centre is 410 housed in five units: Avocet, Bunting, Crane, Dove and Nightingale. Bunting is used as an RSTHF for men. Nightingale was transitioned into a separate standalone facility for women with capacity for 58 but has not yet been used to house women. During 2022 the rooms were used for a short period of high occupancy to house men. Avocet, Dove, and Crane are used for IRC men. At times of high numbers of south coast arrivals (SCAs), one of these units may be used as an RSTHF.

Most of the accommodation is in ensuite twin rooms, although single rooms are provided when necessary. All units provide access to a garden area.

The care and separation unit (CSU) is used for IRC rules 40 and 42 and RSTHF 35 and 37 and comprises 10 single rooms. Since 2018, it has sometimes provided more relaxed and temporary accommodation for detained persons requiring a greater level of support and those who struggle to cope on a main unit. In addition, the CSU is used at times as a pre-departure area. In these cases, IRC rule 15 and RSTHF rule 13 (which set out minimum standards for accommodation) are invoked.

The number of men leaving the centre in 2022 was 5,080, and there was an average monthly occupancy of 423. There were no women at the centre in 2022. The total number of people passing through the centre decreased by 21% compared with 2021.

Onsite healthcare is provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT), commissioned for the centre by NHS England. Additional services are provided by the Kaleidoscope Group which supports the wellbeing of those detained.

The Home Office detention engagement team (DET) communicates with detained persons and helps them understand their cases and detention. During 2022, detained persons have been contacted by phone as well as having face-to-face meetings in the legal corridor and on units. The Home Office detention and escorting services (DES) compliance team is responsible for all onsite commercial and contract monitoring.

The welfare office also runs daily surgeries to support detained persons and further services are supplied by external organisations: Hibiscus, who advise on resettlement, the Red Cross, who help trace families, and Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID), which advises on bail applications. Beyond Detention (previously Yarl's Wood Befrienders) provide emotional and practical support both to people detained in the centre and post-detention in the community. Finally, the UK Lesbian

and Gay Immigration Group support detained persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. Spiritual support and counselling for pastoral purposes are provided by the religious affairs team, with representatives from all the main faiths.

Educational opportunities are provided by the contractor.

3. Executive summary

3.1 Background to the report

Change in population and increase in violence

The population has changed with the shift to a male IRC and male RSTHF.

The centre has adapted for this population. Units have had secure doors fitted and security gates at each unit.

There has been an increase in violence this year. There have been physical and verbal altercations between residents. There have also been physical and verbal assaults on staff, with at least one resulting in serious injury. There has also been damage to the centre, for example, security barriers damaged.

The Board observes the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges faced by Serco and the Home Office which make managing this population (especially when at full capacity) difficult.

As a result, using trend data is difficult as the centre has changed its function and population over the past three years.

Foreign National Offenders

There are increasing numbers of foreign national offenders (FNOs) in the population with 513 arriving from prison during this reporting year after completing their sentence, rising to 62% of the population in December. These are men who have completed a prison sentence, and have been identified as subject to removal or deportation.

The Board observes that there is no evidence of starting the removal process in prison. This results in another detention with increasingly long lengths of stay.

Language barriers

The Board has observed several multidisciplinary team (MDT) reviews and other occasions when staff have struggled to get an interpreter in a timely way.

Materials are produced in 25 languages e.g., induction leaflets. Big Word and VASCO translate devices are available for Serco and Home Office (HO) staff. Healthcare have Big Word and Language Line. Staff have used Google Translate, although recognise this is not reliable.

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3.2 Main judgements

How safe is the IRC?

Yarl's Wood is generally a safe environment for those detained. Those who are vulnerable and those who threaten to self-harm or indicate suicidal intent are checked on regularly by the detention custody officers (DCOs) and are given extra attention.

There has been an increase in violence this year. There have been physical and verbal altercations between residents. There have also been physical and verbal assaults on staff, with at least one resulting in serious injury. There has also been damage to the centre, for example, security barriers damaged.

How fairly and humanely are detained persons treated?

The Board has observed that detained persons are treated fairly and humanely in the centre. The Board considers that time-served foreign national offenders are not treated fairly as they are detained beyond the expiry of their sentences, sometimes for long periods

Some men who were granted bail were then not released for a considerable time, either due to a lack of suitable accommodation, or considerable delays in their accommodation being checked (see section 7.2).

Detained persons report that they are generally well treated in the centre. There are focus groups and lead members of staff for protected characteristics.

There have been 18 DCF9 complaints about centre staff recorded by the Board.

How well are detained persons' health and wellbeing needs met?

The improvements witnessed since NHFT assumed responsibility for healthcare continue to be maintained. The Board welcomes the work of NHFT in deploying and operating the Tracka (medical distribution locker) to support independent collection of in possession (IP) medication. The Tracka was requested by Serco and purchased by the Home Office. Staffing in mental healthcare has been maintained and a good quality of primary and mental healthcare is provided to all detained persons in a timely manner (see sections 6.1 and 6.2).

How well are detained persons prepared for return or release?

IRC-detained persons who are to be removed are treated justly and humanely by DET and centre staff.

The centre continues to witness some difficulty with RSTHF detained persons feeling anxious and sometimes angry at the length of time they have been detained. They have expectations that they will be quickly released and managing these expectations could be improved by explaining to them the process in the centre in a language that they can clearly understand (see section 4.1).

3.3 Recommendations

TO THE MINISTER

- Introduce a time limit for immigration detention.

TO HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

- Start the removal process for FNOs in prison before they are transferred from HMIP to the IRC estate.
- Reduce length of stay by improving processes relating to asylum status and/or removal to reduce length of stay.
- Review and streamline the arrangements for the provision of suitable accommodation for detained persons granted bail to reduce waiting times (see section 7.2).

TO THE DIRECTOR/CENTRE MANAGER

- The Board acknowledges that with the change to a male population and a high proportion of FNOs, the officers have had to handle many challenging situations and for the most part these have been dealt with fairly and humanely.
- The Board recognises there have been many new staff and acknowledges that training focusses on de-escalation techniques, cultural differences, body language and five-minute intervention training.
- However, there have been three complaints about officers' conduct which have been substantiated in 2022. IMB members have also observed unprofessional conduct at times, whilst recognising most staff are professional and skilled in their conduct.
- The Board recommends that the culture of professional conduct and behaviour is maintained through the officers' training, inductions and ongoing review and monitoring.
- Keep staff recruitment and retention as a priority.
- The Board recognises the progress in the induction video introduced in 2022, available in three languages. The Board looks forward to the increase to multiple languages to reflect the changing population's needs.

TO NHS ENGLAND

The Board recommends that NHFT continues to maintain the excellent staffing levels and services of the last year.

3.4 Progress since the last report

- In last year's report, the Board repeated its comments and recommendations about the detention of vulnerable persons. The Minister rejected the Board's recommendations and vulnerable adults continue to be detained. The pilot scheme Community Action Pilot, Action Access which explored enhanced pre-detention screening has been closed despite producing positive results. The Board has not witnessed any change in the vulnerabilities of detained persons resulting from the pilot, nor from the Enhanced Screening Tool (EST) concept which was cited in the Minister's reply to last year's report.
- There have continued to be improvements in the information provided upon arrival and the induction process itself has been adjusted. An induction video is now available, with translation into three languages. There are plans to increase the number of languages.
- Last year, the Board recommended that all complaint resolutions be returned to the centre management for their review. The Board has seen no evidence that the Home Office has investigated how complaint responses could be shared to ensure best practice. The Board has seen an improvement in communication to them regarding replies to complaint investigations.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

A safer detention and violence reduction multidisciplinary team meets every month. Attendees include representatives from healthcare, health and safety, security, the Home Office and the mental health lead. A representative from the IMB often attends. This meeting covers: an in-depth look at assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT) statistics, supported living plans, tackling anti-social behaviour, trafficking and modern slavery referrals, policy development and quality assurance. There is also ongoing work to gain residents' feedback through focus groups and exit interviews. The Board consider this meeting an important element towards understanding patterns of need and vulnerability and areas of safer detention that need strengthening.

4.1 Reception and induction

4.1.1

The Board continues where possible to monitor the reception area.

The accuracy of information received on the IS91 forms has continued to improve. There has also been an improvement regarding the initial assessments of those arriving across the Channel. Consequently, there are far fewer men arriving at Yarl's Wood with untreated injuries. The initial assessments have also resulted in a decrease during the year in the number of men claiming to be under 18 on arrival at Yarl's Wood (10 throughout 2022). This must have eased some of the pressures on officers working in reception.

4.1.2

There have been periods when officers in reception have had to deal with high numbers of arrivals. However, systems have been put in place and appear to be working efficiently. All the men arriving are seen by a member of the health team and are provided with clean towels, bedding, new clothes, shoes and toiletries. The IMB has spoken to many of the men about their arrival into Yarl's Wood and their responses have been largely positive. Members of the IMB have observed how men are dealt with on arrival. It has been noted in IMB rota reports that time is taken by officers to explain the reception process. Searches of property are very thorough and observations by the IMB have stated that men arriving are treated respectfully. One consequence of dealing with the large numbers is that the induction has been condensed. It takes place once the men have been placed on the units. Induction pamphlets, which are available in 25 different languages, are also distributed.

4.1.3

There is at times a high level of stress and anger amongst men held in the centre, generally regarding the length of time they have been kept at Yarl's Wood. There is much evidence that the length of time and uncertainty takes its toll on the men's mental health and has resulted in violence, depression and self-harm. Deep frustration is evident regarding the length of time that their case is processed

between HOIE and their solicitor with delays all the way through. Until this situation improves there needs to be greater and more realistic explanation during the induction process by HOIE as to how long men arriving may be held in detention at Yarl's Wood.

4.1.4

By way of example, during an IMB rota visit in May a member of the IMB observed the arrival of four men. The men were offered food and drink while they were waiting to be received into the centre. Officers took time to double check details such as the location of their next of kin. They also ensured that any monies were properly accounted for and agreed. Officers were described in the rota report as calm and efficient.

4.1.5

When there were large numbers of arrivals from the south coast and in November, after the temporary closure of Harmondsworth IRC, inbound reception was extremely busy. The centre was put on standby for the arrival of coaches from Harmondsworth and on one occasion a minimum notification of 30 minutes was received. Over a two-day period, 132 men were brought to Yarl's Wood on four coaches. Inevitably admission took time, but they were processed as speedily as circumstances allowed. Toilet and shower facilities were available in reception and the men were given food from reception, although some were later able to eat meals from the servery, subject to time of arrival (see also section 4.1).

4.2 Suicide and self-harm, deaths in custody

4.2.1

There were no deaths in custody in 2022. There were 18 incidences of self-harm compared to 16 in 2021 (0.3% of the population). Several of the incidences of self-harm have been a response to individuals being told they are not being bailed when expected or about fear of being deported. Members of the IMB have observed that in cases of self-harm officers have responded in a proportionate manner and have used the ACDT System. Healthcare and various mental health support services are available in Yarl's Wood to monitor and meet with the individual concerned. Men with little English who are withdrawn and isolated are particularly vulnerable.

4.2.2

The number of ACDTs opened during 2022 was 143 compared to 92 in 2021. Ten men arrived at the centre with an open ACDT. There have been 3,588 men arriving in Yarl's Wood this year via the small boats Channel crossing. Little is known about their mental health or past experiences so the increase in numbers on ACDT may reflect the needs of this group of men. For those held within the RSTHF, their stay in Yarl's Wood is often not long enough for officers or health professionals to identify vulnerabilities. There were no ACDTs opened within the RSTHF during 2022. This is

of concern to IMB members who are aware there is no guarantee that men released into the community with an unidentified mental health issue will receive the necessary support.

4.2.3

The IMB also understands that any ACDT paperwork only goes with men being moved from Yarl's Wood IRC to another IRC, not with men going into accommodation in the community. This also raises concerns about men with vulnerable mental health being unsupported. The IMB regularly monitors the ACDT paperwork and this appears to be generally of a good standard and kept up to date. The exception to this was two occasions when the IMB commented that the writing had been difficult to read. The paperwork is also quality assured monthly by managers within Yarl's Wood. New documentation was being introduced in 2022 and training for this is being rolled out to all officers. The feedback from officers about the new paperwork to Board members has been mixed.

4.2.4

The safer detention and violence reduction group has identified that information coming from prisons about the mental health and vulnerability of men being transferred to Yarl's Wood could be improved. Communication with the prison estate regarding this area is ongoing.

There is access to support within the centre: trained psychiatric nurses, a wellbeing centre, external support offered by Hibiscus, Beyond Detention and Kaleidoscope. Finally, pastoral support is provided by the pastors/clerics representing the main religions.

4.2.5

There were 27 incidents of constant supervision compared to 14 in 2021. It is evident that the officers respond confidently both to self-harming incidences and detained persons talking of self-harm. Appropriate support and supervision are put in place in a timely manner. However, higher numbers coming to the centre make it more challenging to identify people who are vulnerable and at risk, particularly those residents who are quiet, isolated and cannot speak English. The higher numbers may also result in more limited one-to-one communication between officers and the individual detained persons regarding their situation and the support they can get.

4.2.6

Language barriers can also isolate individuals making it difficult for detained persons to express low mood. Big Word and hand-held translation devices are being used as much as possible, but these also have their limitations.

There was a man with an unusual dialect from Algeria who was frequently detained in the CSU under R40. There was difficulty in finding an interpreter who could translate well enough to communicate properly. When a member of staff arrived who spoke the same dialect, communications improved and the man's behaviour immediately changed for the better

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

4.3.1

The centre operates a system of opening anti-social behaviour booklets (TABs). The aim of the TAB is to monitor and reduce tensions and maintain a safe and peaceful atmosphere within the centre. In 2022 a total of 107 TABs were opened. In 2022 there were 14 incidents of violence against staff as well as 15 incidents of violence against other detained persons.

4.3.2

There has been a marked increase in violence this year. There have been many altercations between residents. There has also been an increase in damage to property, as well as physical and verbal assaults on both female and male officers. There appear to be several reasons for this. The centre has been taking an increasing number of FNOs, 12% of the population in February rising to 62% in December 2022. With the rising numbers there are more men with mental health issues amongst all the residents as well those transferred from the prison estate. The board observes there appears to be no preparation for dealing with immigration issues in prison so when told they are being removed the men deal with their situation in a variety of ways, with some becoming violent. IMB members have all reported in their rota visits (particularly during the latter three months of the year) tension and increasing anger in the IRC units where men have been held for several months without any idea of when their immigration status will be resolved. It has been a challenging period for officers managing these units.

4.3.3

Exit surveys were carried out between January and December. Numbers completed were lower than expected. Eight concerns were raised by detained persons about bullying between January 2022 and November 2022 compared to two in the previous year. There have been complaints from the different ethnic groups especially where there are high numbers representing one ethnicity. Focus groups for certain ethnic groups have been arranged by officers to listen to their specific concerns and promote understanding and tolerance. This situation will continue to need careful monitoring.

4.4 Detained persons with specific vulnerabilities, safeguarding

4.4.1

There were on average eight vulnerable adult care plans (VACPs) in operation each month, a reduction from last year largely due to fewer concerns about the spread of Covid to those with vulnerable health (there were an average of 15 VACPs in place each month in 2021).

4.4.2

There was a total of 10 age disputes during 2022. If there is any suggestion that a detained person is a minor and they have not already been age assessed, then they

are released to social services for an age assessment. Whilst this is being arranged the detained person is placed on an age dispute care plan.

4.4.3

The number of adults at risk by level in 2022 were:

| Adults at Risk by Level | Number |
|-------------------------|--------|
| AAR 1 | 142 |
| AAR 2 | 354 |
| AAR 3 | 12 |

4.5 Use of force

4.5.1

Force was used 53 times in 2022. This is an increase from the 23 occasions when force was used in 2021. Of these cases 46 were spontaneous and seven were planned to assist with removal. In line with the increase in other measured parameters in the centre, the increase reflects the change in population with the significant increase of detained persons transferring from the prison estate. The Board considers that the use of force has been justified and proportionate.

4.5.2

The reasons for the unplanned uses of force were to prevent harm and to maintain safety. Fifteen (28%) were for the detained person's own safety including to prevent acts of self-harm and 15 (28%) were to protect staff. Other reasons for use of force were damage to property, threatening behaviour, and non-compliance with the regime. Use of force incidents are reviewed in the security committee. The Board can also independently review body-worn camera and hand-held video footage of incidents. Handcuffs were used on 12 occasions with control and restraint methods used on the remainder. The centre does not use body belts.

4.5.3

There has been a significant increase in injuries sustained to both staff and detained persons during use of force incidents. The incidence in previous years has either been none or so small that it has not been considered necessary to comment upon it in the Board's annual report. During 2022, there were 29 incidents involving violence against staff and/or detained persons. This resulted in 15 injuries to staff and six injuries to detained persons. In one incident four staff were injured with two staff attending hospital for further investigation and one staff member incurring extended sickness leave.

4.6 Substance misuse

4.6.1

In 2022 there were eight cases of detained persons suffering from substance misuse which required support from healthcare. This is a decrease from the 13 cases in 2021. Healthcare can conduct routine urine drug screening on new arrivals, but it is not currently mandatory.

4.6.2

The Board is aware that there was an increase in substance misuse in the centre as the transfer of detained persons from the prison estate increased. It is noticeable that at times there is a smell of cannabis having been smoked. There have also been a small number of cases where detained persons have attempted to make hooch in their rooms.

4.6.3

Healthcare runs a detoxification programme and medicines are available from the medicines administration point.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Escort, transfer and transport

5.1.1

Since the decline of the pandemic, the programme of charter flight removals has recommenced. In 2022 the IMB monitored one collection for a charter flight removal. It was conducted smoothly and empathetically.

5.1.2

Reasonable notice of removal has been given. At times, the prospect of removal upset some men who did not wish to leave, causing them to make threats of damage to the centre or to cause self-harm.

5.2 Accommodation, clothing, food

5.2.1

During late summer and early autumn, rota reports commented on a decline in standards of cleanliness and tidiness around the centre. The Board was told that when there were regular large numbers of arrivals, the priority of housekeeping staff had to be to the preparation of rooms. It was also noted that this did improve once the pressure eased.

5.2.2

In 2022 there was an increase in complaints about the food, with ten complaints. Sometimes these reflected cultural preferences and although catering staff did try to prepare meals to accommodate this, some of the men were still dissatisfied. The Board felt that food complaints were just one way in which the men could assert their

general feelings of frustration about being detained. The Board samples the food during rota visits and has found it to be acceptable. Written comments in each of the canteens are generally favourable as opposed to negative, contrary to the verbal complaints and DCF9 complaint submissions.

5.2.3

A mass complaint was received about mould on the bread served on one unit. This was upheld. Another complaint was that the bread sold in the shop was past its use-by date. The men did not seem to accept that this had previously been frozen and so was still good to eat. The Board feels it is advisable only to sell bread that has a clear and valid use-by date to avoid misunderstanding.

5.2.4

Occasionally there were problems with men not getting the meals they expected and being given the default option. The cause of this seems to have been incorrect use of the kiosks for ordering meals. It is important that the correct procedure is clearly and fully explained to all newcomers if this is to be avoided. However, it was pleasing to note that the provision of meals to an illiterate man was handled with sensitivity, and he was allowed to have free choice in the dining rooms.

5.2.5

At the start of Ramadan, one man complained to the IMB that the food offered was not entirely suitable and not adequately nutritious. In fact, this matter was already being considered when the Board raised it and the issue was soon resolved.

5.2.6

There were occasions when detained persons were removed to the CSU because they were not compliant with centre rules. For example, during the summer, some men were relocated to the CSU under R40 as they refused to share rooms. Some of these situations arose because the men were non-smokers and did not like sharing with men who disobeyed rules and smoked in their rooms. Serco made the sensible decision to ensure that, wherever possible, non-smokers did not share with smokers.

5.3 Separation

5.3.1

There was a notable increase in the use of IRC rules 40 and 42. In 2022 there were 100 removals under rule 40 (20 in 2021) and 14 under rule 42 (two in 2021).

Although the population of the centre decreased in 2022, the increase in the use of rules 40 and 42 seems to be due to the change in the category of persons detained. Some of the men were frustrated at the lack of progress in their cases. This was particularly true of those who had already served a prison sentence, only to be further detained in an IRC. The IMB considers that the lack of preparation of immigration cases prior to leaving prison contributes significantly to an inhumane extension of detention and the inevitable sense of despair felt by people who are, in effect, serving a subsequent sentence.

5.3.2

When the safety of other residents, officers or the individual looks compromised and cannot be dealt with on the units the decision has been taken, together with HOIE's agreement, to remove the resident from association (R40).

MDT meetings are held in adherence to the rules and attended by healthcare, HOIE and chaired by a Serco manager. A member of the IMB is in attendance whenever possible. In most situations this year the aim has been to reintroduce the resident back to his unit as soon as possible. A translator is used when needed and in the IMB's experience, time is taken by the Serco manager to explain expectations to the man concerned and to try and understand the triggers for the detained person's behaviour. Mediation is used when necessary.

5.3.3

There were numerous incidents of men being placed under rule 40 for non-compliant or aggressive behaviour. The IMB expressed concern that the use of rule 40 was becoming a default option. However, men were often returned to normal association within a few hours once they were calmer: 72 men were placed under R40 for less than 24 hours and 15 for less than four hours. This would seem to indicate that the strategy successfully defused the situation. Eighteen men were placed in the CSU prior to removal or transfer. The Board was told that this was to pre-empt potential issues if they remained in normal association on the units.

5.3.4

Once in the CSU, three detained persons further vented their frustration by causing substantial criminal damage to rooms, leading to removal under rule 42. In so doing, they sometimes also caused injury to themselves, requiring hospital treatment.

5.3.5

In 2022 there were two cases of men being held under rule 40 beyond 14 days. One man arrived at the CSU and refused to return to his unit. It was thought that he had a problem on the unit, and he was initially reluctant to discuss it.

Another man was kept in the CSU pending a mental health assessment, as he struggled to cope when he was with other detained people. A different man was frequently placed under R40 or R42, but for less than 14 days each time.

The IMB attended most MDT reviews in the CSU and found them well conducted, although it was not easy when the subject of the review would not engage with the reviewers. However, there were times when the start of the meeting had to be delayed due to the lack of suitable interpreters when using telephonic interpretation services.

5.3.8

The Board checked records kept in the CSU. Staff seemed conscientious in their duties and began to build rapport with some of the men, including those who could be inconsistent in their response and actions.

5.4 Staff/detained person relationships

5.4.1

Staff recruitment and retention has not been easy, but efforts continue. The IMB saw supportive and caring behaviour from both Serco and Home Office staff, including those who were newer to the role. Feedback from detained persons to the Board was mostly positive, although some men seemed to resent anyone in authority and were accordingly critical.

5.4.2

There were times however when lack of experience or the pressure of the moment caused staff to use inappropriate vocabulary or make inappropriate comments when talking to the men. This also contributed to the aggravation of an issue rather than de-escalation. The IMB commented on this in a rota report and there were three formal separate complaints about such incidents, one from many detained persons who saw it.

5.4.3

All staff are trained in de-escalation techniques. The IMB saw these used effectively, although sometimes, when a detained individual was very agitated, they did not work and more robust measures had to be employed.

5.4.4

Recruitment problems also had an impact on the DET team's capacity to support detained persons with their cases. When possible, the team was active around the centre, but their work has been affected by low numbers.

5.5 Equality and diversity

5.5.1

The centre has an equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team and a Serco-produced EDI action plan. One of its aims is to promote an environment where both staff and those detained understand matters relating to EDI and strive to promote behaviours free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

There is a designated officer for each of the protected characteristics and their names are clearly displayed so that people know who to contact. Throughout the

year the resident information advice committee (RIAC) held meetings to focus on protected characteristics, including LGBT and disability.

5.5.2

The centre has continued to run forums to allow different nationalities to raise issues relevant to their needs. The transitory nature of those in detention means that the forums were not always well attended, but they were offered to different groups. The needs of the Albanian nationals have been catered for at RIAC meetings. At times the centre has housed over 50% Albanians which has been challenging for both staff and other residents. Some residents of other nationalities have felt overwhelmed and intimidated and the Albanian residents themselves have felt stereotyped as troublemakers. This perception was demonstrated when an IMB member on rota duty was asked what they thought of Albanians. The Albanians have held peaceful protests about the length of their detention and the food, which they say does not cater for their tastes.

5.5.3

Seventy focus groups have been held during the year for different groups identified as having protected characteristics. There is a lead member of staff for each protected characteristic whose photo is highlighted on a board in the corridor. In September a focus group was held for those residents from Vietnam. Some of the residents attending stated that they didn't feel safe because they felt the centre was overwhelmed by another dominant ethnic group. They were advised what to do if they felt unsafe and what other support was available to them within in the centre.

5.5.4

The centre has organised a series of events including health awareness weeks (to coincide with national public health England events such as mental awareness week), LGBT+, Pride and Black Lives Matter awareness. The centre has also promoted different cultural events and celebrations throughout the year.

5.5.5

The opportunities for paid employment were taken mostly by the younger persons in detention, although this may reflect the ages of those arriving. The gender and ethnicity of those employed also correlate to those of the persons detained at the centre.

| Age of those in paid employment | Total | Nationality of those in paid employment (Top 3) | |
|---------------------------------|-------|---|----|
| 18-29 | 76 | Vietnam | 52 |
| 30-39 | 79 | Albania | 42 |
| 40-49 | 50 | Poland | 14 |
| 50-59 | 11 | | |

| | | | |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 60+ | 1 | | |
|-----|---|--|--|

5.5.6

The Board has witnessed that, at times, language issues continue to cause problems. During rota visits, the Board continued to speak to people, particularly the RSTHF-detained men arriving from the south coast, who did not really understand where they were, why or what would happen to them next. At times this was because of the large number of men arriving at the same time, and the need to process them has overridden the time for induction.

5.5.7

Staff have used Google Translate for quick conversations and make use of telephonic translation services. These have been mostly satisfactory but there was one man who spoke an unusual dialect that could not be catered for by the translation service. The Board has also seen times where the demand for the service is such that a translator is not available when required.

5.5.8

Towards the end of the year the Board received ice-breaker cards which explain in several languages the purpose of the IMB. The Board has already found these useful when they were shown to Albanian protesters, who then talked to us more openly about their complaints.

5.5.9

The Board received no applications about EDI issues and is not aware of any discrimination incident reporting forms (DIRFs) submitted in 2022.

5.6 Faith and religious affairs

5.6.1

Spiritual support and counselling are provided by the religious affairs team with representatives from all the main faiths. Individual prayer rooms are provided for all the main faiths. The religious affairs teams were actively seeing those on ACDT plans and supporting those in the CSU.

5.6.2

A new multifaith room was opened that could be used by any person of any faith as a place of sanctuary and it has also been used for ACDT reviews.

5.6.3

There was a concern raised about the food provision during Ramadan. This was helped by the detained persons being allowed to cook their own meals with which to break their fast as well as being given food packs overnight.

5.6.4

There was also a complaint about the prayer mats in the mosque, which the religious affairs team rectified by cleaning the old mats and ordering new ones.

5.7 Complaints

5.7.1

Detained persons can make formal complaints about their dissatisfaction with the service provided or about the professional conduct of Home Office staff and contractors. Complaints are made using a DCF9 form. These are available in all the major languages without recourse to staff. All complaints are sent to detention services complaints (DETSC) where the complaints are categorised as serious or minor. Minor complaints are sent to the appropriate agency for investigation and serious complaints are sent to the professional services unit (PSU), which is a separate unit within the Home Office. Minor complaints can be sent to the following agencies: Serco, DES, central correspondence team (CCT), Border Force, HMIP and Mitie. Healthcare has its own complaints system and for reasons of patient confidentiality, the Board does not see and monitor this complaints system.

5.7.2

There was a total of 124 complaints submitted on DCF9 forms and two by email. Most were handwritten in English and some required translation to English and were then received type written. Three complaints were referred outside the centre to the PSU. Fifty-six complaints were unsubstantiated, 22 substantiated, 26 partially substantiated and 10 were withdrawn. Two complaints which contained more than one issue, were found to be partially unsubstantiated and partially substantiated. Two complaint responses had been carried over from 2021 and eight complaint responses have been carried forward to 2023. Fifteen complaint responses missed their target response date of 20 days.

5.7.3

The Board observed complaints against officers' conduct during the year with two made by a group of residents against officers. Most of the complaints were found to be unsubstantiated but there were 10 instances when complaints were upheld with regards to officers' conduct.

The Board recognises there have been many new staff and acknowledges training focusses on de-escalation techniques, cultural differences, body language and five-minute intervention training.

The Board recommends that the culture of professional conduct and behaviour is maintained through the officers' training, inductions and ongoing review and monitoring.

5.7.4

There were also two instances of complaints about food that were substantiated.

5.8 Property

5.8.1

Upon arrival, the property of the detained person is searched thoroughly and it is explained to them what items they are allowed and how they will be kept safe. This process has been witnessed by the IMB on occasions and found to be done professionally.

5.8.2

There have been complaints by detained persons that their property, particularly phones, has been kept at police stations and not forwarded to them at the centre. This has caused distress and on one occasion a detained person was unable to let his relatives know that he had safely arrived. It appears that in some cases the detained persons have been unaware that if they make a request to welfare, the police station will be contacted for the property to be sent to the centre. This should be made clear to detained persons during their induction. The Board acknowledges that phones or other property may be part of criminal investigations and therefore may not be returned.

5.8.3

There was also an occasion of an officer wrongly disposing of an item and another of failing to give allowable items to a resident. Both issues were caused by officers not fully understanding the rules and requiring training.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Physical healthcare

6.1.1

All detained persons are offered a screening by healthcare in reception on arrival at the centre and before they leave the centre. All IRC-detained persons are offered a doctor's appointment within 24 hours of their arrival at the centre. All RSTHF detained persons are given an appointment to see a doctor if the screening nurse on arrival deems there is a reason for this.

GP appointments are available daily and the healthcare service is staffed by male and female GPs and 11 general nurses. This provides a primary care service and a range of preventative care services such as HIV testing, hepatitis B and C screening and drug misuse clinics. Appointments have been available on a same-day basis for most of this year and during 2022 there were 3,364 doctor's appointments and 9,747 nurse's appointments – 13,111 appointments in total (7,216 total appointments in 2021). Healthcare received 30 complaints during the year, all of which were rejected. Some complaints related to the overall waiting times in the health service as opposed to the direct care provided by NHFT. The Board welcomes the continued high level of service provided by NHFT.

6.1.2

IRC rule 35 and RSTHF rule 32 medicals relating to special conditions such as torture and other conditions that would be particularly aggravated by detention, normally have a two-day waiting time.

The data provided does not differentiate between rule 35 and rule 32 cases. The Board is also aware that some rule 32 assessments were identified and booked but were missed as the detained person left the centre before their assessment. These missed appointments could affect any future asylum claims. Following a recommendation by HMIP, healthcare has introduced raising an IS91 part C in these cases from September 2021, so that the Home Office is aware the detained person has requested a referral and it could not be completed at the centre. There were 167 IS91 part C forms sent to the Home Office between January and the end of November 2022. Feedback about the outcomes of assessments is not available to healthcare, making it impossible for them to monitor the quality and outcomes of the initial report. The Board has requested to view a sample of anonymised R35 assessments, however this was refused on the grounds each referral is individual.

6.1.3

A dentist attends once a week and there were 154 appointments in 2022 (154 appointments in 2021). There is also an optician when required.

6.1.4

All medication is dispensed by Boots Chemist. NHFT have introduced a medication Traka which allows residents to collect their IP medication from a locker and 1238 medications were collected in this way.

6.1.5

There have been 185 substance misuse appointments and 68 smoking cessation courses. Other preventative activities included testicular cancer awareness, cardiovascular disease and mental health and wellbeing.

6.1.6

Ninety-two detained persons were isolated due to suspected Covid. There were 84 positive cases and eight negative results.

6.1.7

There has been an increase in the number of sporting injuries with 26 transfers to hospital as a result. Data is not kept on the total number of sporting injuries, only the unplanned transfers to hospital.

6.2 Mental healthcare

6.2.1

There were 979 mental health (MH) appointments made last year and 178 initial mental health assessments were undertaken. There were no transfers to psychiatric hospital under the Mental Health Act (MHA).

There was a detained person who was transferred from prison to Yarl's Wood rather than to a psychiatric bed due to an error on the transfer forms. He was placed in the CSU for his own safety, assessed and then transferred to an appropriate bed.

6.3 Welfare and social care

The welfare team engage with all residents on arrival and prior to removal directions (RDs). Their focus is to ensure that on arrival residents are aware of the legal aid solicitors that they can contact.

6.4 Exercise, time out of room

IRC-detained men are locked in their rooms at night and at other times are allowed free access within the units, except at mealtimes. RSTHF-detained men are not locked in their rooms and are allowed free access within their unit.

All detained persons have access to an outside area, including if placed in the CSU. The activities team have offered team sports including football and basketball. There

was an increase in sporting injuries. This resulted in stopping onlookers for the team games and imposing a cap on numbers playing.

6.6 Soft skills

Facilities include a gym, a library, arts and crafts areas, an IT room, a classroom, a cultural kitchen and a communications hub.

Events have included: the Christmas fayre, Mince Pie making, New Year's Eve, NYE bingo, the World Cup, a cricket event, Karaoke, a Chess press challenge, Halloween movie night, a BBQ, a table tennis tournament, gym circuit events, bake off, Pancake Day and a 'come dine with me' event.

7. Preparation for return or release

7.1 Activities including education and training

Yarl's Wood IRC offers English lessons for speaking and writing skills, IT and maths. Teaching is conducted by a qualified teacher or experienced member of the custodial staff and 1890 lessons were delivered in the last calendar year. It is difficult to arrange integrated courses because of the unpredictable duration of stay. The average monthly occupancy in Yarl's Wood was 423 persons, whilst average monthly attendance was 31 persons and an average 150 lessons were delivered per month. Detainees receive no payment for attending, disappointing the up to 62% FNOs in the IRC who were used to payment for attending classes in prison.

The cultural kitchen offers food preparation and consumption of traditional food to small groups in a quiet companionable environment. Informal instruction about food preparation is also provided by the Serco staff. It provides about five or six sessions per week by dedicated staff for six to eight detainees at a session. It is very popular because the informal teamwork of traditional food preparation provides cultural connection with countries of origin.

7.2 Case management

In conversations with detained persons on the Board's monitoring visits and in applications made to the IMB, there has been a consistent theme around lack of feedback and progress on individual casework. This is despite the DET team providing surgeries in the units and being the conduit between the detained persons and the case working teams. This suggests general frustration with the length of the detained person's detention.

The Board noted that delays in removal and bail release have led to self-harm attempts, violent behaviours and written and verbal complaints to the IMB. The Board reported that release to accommodation is regularly delayed because addresses have not been checked and because of the lack of suitable bail or release accommodation.

7.3 Length of stay

The table below shows the number of people leaving detention by month and length of stay. Length of detention figures relate to the entire detention period, not just the length of detention in Yarl's Wood IRC. The Board has noticed an increase in the length of stay, with 29% having a stay of more than one month or 28 days. Four detained persons have had a length of detention of over a year, and one more than two years. No outcome data was provided this year.

Table showing length of detention for 2022

| Length of detention | Total |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 3 days or less | 701 |
| 4 to 7 days | 524 |
| 8 to 14 days | 107 |
| 15 to 28 days | 211 |
| 29 days to less than 2 months | 321 |
| 2 months to less than 3 months | 155 |
| 3 months to less than 4 months | 70 |
| 4 months to less than 6 months | 40 |
| 6 months to less than 12 months | 44 |
| 12 months to less than 18 months | 3 |
| 18 months to less than 24 months | 0 |
| 24 months to less than 36 months | 1 |
| 36 months to less than 48 months | 0 |
| 48 months or more | 0 |
| Total leaving detention | 2177 |

7.4 Family contact

Yarl's Wood IRC can be difficult for relatives to access , due to its rural location and 1,192 visitors attended the centre last year. This is facilitated by a free shuttle service to and from Bedford railway station provided by Serco without which relatives would incur substantial taxi costs. The facilitation of family contact is of great importance during a period of enforced separation.

The facilities for online meetings via Skype are very popular as this provides family contact both in the UK and abroad. The centre provided a total of 252 weekly slots.

There were 3,024 contacts from two terminals. There were no missed Skype appointments. Detained persons share the 30-minute slots because of the shortage. The services are now being extended to run on six more computers seven days a week.

7.5 Planning for return or release

Prior to leaving the centre on removal directions, all IRC-detained persons are given an appointment with the welfare team. This allows them an opportunity to discuss

any concerns they may have regarding their return so support may be given to help them plan their return. During this time referrals may also be made to Hibiscus for resettlement advice and potential funding.

7.5.2

Upon removal, IRC-detained persons are seen by healthcare and given a copy of their medical notes, and their medication is handed over. Anyone on medication or with health concerns will also be given a letter to help them register with a local GP. Detained persons are also given a copy of their release paperwork from HOIE.

The process of a claim for right to reside can be very drawn out indeed with some leading to more than 12 months in detention. A return to a detainee's state of origin in our experience is not prepared for and may occur at the short notice of a few days. This may be for overriding security issues. However, beyond some funds for transport from the airport it is our experience that no other planning for the welfare of detainees returning home is undertaken. For individuals released into the UK there are careful checks about the suitability of addresses and sponsors by H.M. Prison and Probation Service. This service is known to be under considerable pressure which can lead to delays in release into the UK often with deleterious effects on the mental health of detainees.

7.5.3

In December a detained person was removed to Switzerland. Both his arms had been broken and were in plaster. The Board acknowledges that the person wanted to leave the country but is concerned and considers it inhumane that given his obvious physical difficulties, no assistance was provided to him either at the airport or on the plane.

8. The work of the IMB

The Board made weekly rota visits where it monitored the centre and dealt with applications. Issues have been raised immediately with Serco, HOIE or healthcare, or during monthly Board meetings, as appropriate. Members have attended committee meetings within the centre when possible or participated remotely by video or telephone conference. Members have also been present at multidisciplinary reviews to ascertain the best care plans for detained persons.

Board statistics

| | |
|--|----|
| Recommended complement of Board members | 12 |
| Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period | 8 |
| Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period | 7 |
| Total number of visits to the establishment | 99 |

Applications to the IMB

| Code | Subject | Current reporting year | Previous reporting year |
|------|---|------------------------|-------------------------|
| A | Accommodation including laundry, showers | 0 | |
| B | Use of force, removal from association | 1 | |
| C | Equality | 0 | |
| D | Purposeful activity including education, paid work, training, library, other activities | 0 | |
| E 1 | Letters, faxes, visits, phones, internet access | 0 | |
| E 2 | Finance including detained person's centre accounts | 0 | |
| F | Food and kitchens | 1 | 1 |
| G | Health including physical, mental, social care | 5 | |
| H 1 | Property within centre | 1 | |
| H 2 | Property during transfer or in another establishment or location | 0 | |
| I | Issues relating to detained person's immigration case, including access to legal advice | 17 | 2 |
| J | Staff/detained persons conduct, including bullying | 2 | 1 |
| K | Escorts | 0 | |
| L | Other | 4 | 1 |
| | Total number of applications | 31 | 5 |

0800 number and email applications line

The Board received one call to the 0800 number.

The Board received one email application.



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