



# **Annual Report of the Kent Coast Short-Term Holding Facilities**

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

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## Introductory sections 1–3

### 1. Statutory role of the IMB

The Kent Coast STHF Independent Monitoring Board is appointed by the Home Secretary to monitor and report on the welfare of people in a short-term holding facility (STHF) 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 people 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 individual whose mental or physical health is likely to be injuriously affected by any conditions of detention. The IMB must inform the STHF 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 individuals, 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.

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 those detained, 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 holding rooms**

Kent Coast STHF IMB (formerly IMB Dover) monitors the facilities at Kent Intake Unit (KIU), Western Jet Foil (WJF) and Manston. Both Kent Intake Unit and Western Jet Foil are situated in Dover and Manston is the base of a former Defence and Fire Training and Development Centre.

### *Western Jet Foil*

At the beginning of the year, people who had arrived via small-boat channel crossing were taken and processed at the original Tug Haven site. The new Western Jet Foil site was completed and had opened by February. Initially, individuals were still arriving at Tug Haven and being bussed to Western Jet Foil but by April/May, the whole area was transferred to the new Western Jet Foil site. This is a much improved system, offering more privacy from public view than was previously the case.

During the reporting year, welfare at WJF was managed by the Home Office supported by Interforce, the Army helped with registering arrivals, and Border Force were there to complete security checks and arrests. Staff numbers are usually adequate but when large numbers of arrivals are expected, additional staff are very quickly deployed as back-up. For some of the year, army personnel were stationed on site. They also kept a record of the number of arrivals.

Further improvements were made to the reception system with a new arrival point/pontoon and a ramp and walkway area to allow small-boat channel crossing arrivals to disembark from the boats, therefore landing them more safely and privately. This was further improved in September with additional railings around the perimeter. Border Force Crews have a porta cabin at Western Jet Foil but this is for storage purposes only used to replenish vessel stocks.

Over the year, as the number of channel-crossing arrivals increased, the marquee at WJF was enlarged. The first processing area was extended, with more male and female changing cubicles to speed up the process of allowing individuals to get out of wet clothing. A new larger, warmer processing room was built where the main processing takes place. Detained individuals are moved through this to the end point where they await transport to KIU or Manston.

### *Kent Intake Unit*

During the reporting year, KIU was managed by the Home Office, with C&C contractors overseeing the detained area. Home Office staff were present on site to complete interviews.

Kent Intake Unit, originally based at the Eastern Docks of Dover, is now situated in the Channel View area, nearer to the Western Docks. When KIU was still located at the Eastern Docks at the beginning of 2022, the site consisted of an induction room,

holding room (which had a small family room), and toilets and a shower. The family room was also used if there was a woman on her own, or a small group of women, to separate them from the men. At the former site, KIU also had an atrium – a large room where non-detained individuals and unaccompanied minors were held while awaiting to be transported to their next stage. Any unaccompanied children in the Atrium were overseen by the charity, Refugee Council. IMB members did not have access to monitor this area.

The new premises of Kent Intake Unit came into use by the end of the year. The entrance, for signing in, is where those non-detained are waiting to be transported to their next stage are held. There are 30 seats here, making it much smaller than the previous atrium which could be a problem, when there are larger numbers. The induction room can hold up to 30 people and has individual booths and translation phone facility. The holding room is bigger, with capacity for 119 people. The holding room is L-shaped, and the current cameras have a fisheye view, though a change to normal screens is being considered. There is a separate holding area at the new facility that can hold 25 people, enabling the Home Office to separate cohorts of arrivals such as younger children or vulnerable people for example.

During the reporting period, the Refugee Council area was staffed 24/7. They had three 'bedrooms' and a quiet room and a facility to provide food and drink. They could accommodate up to 10 minors.

### *Manston*

During the reporting year, overall facilities at Manston were managed by the Home Office (Immigration Enforcement) with support from Border Force to carry out interviews. The management of some of the marquees was also provided by C&C. During the development of Manston, the IMB were informed that its maximum capacity was approximately 2,000 people.

The IMB reported concerns on the conditions at the Tug Haven site and the original Kent Intake Unit in November 2021. These included detained individuals being held in tents in very cold conditions, children (including babies and toddlers) and people who appear vulnerable being held at Tug Haven overnight, and injuries not being adequately identified. The Tug Haven site was closed down from mid-January 2022.

When Manston was opened and became operational in January 2022, it comprised three marquees. At the end of the year, these original marquees were replaced with more substantial structures. This includes use of the old 'huts' fitted out as isolation areas. A 'medical centre' was also established in one of the buildings.

During the reporting year, there were separate marquees for both single adults and for children and family groups at Manston. In addition, the management of the different marquees changed with Mitie Care & Custody managing additional single adult male marquees.

All marquees have their own toilets, showers, a small 'prayer room' and a quiet area. There are TVs, board games, cards and, toys for the children.

In October, eight additional marquees were erected at Manston in response to the increased number of arrivals. These marquees supported the response to the petrol bomb incident at Western Jet Foil in October [see 4.3], requiring 750 individuals detained at WJF to be evacuated from there to Manston.

At all three sites, thin 'gym' type mats were available for those detained to sleep on. The Board did not consider this desirable, especially with such a great proportion of people detained beyond the 24-hour statutory time limit. Halfway through the year, these mats were deemed a 'fire hazard' by the Home Office and were removed. The replacements, which were not provided for a period of some of weeks, were thicker but still similar to 'gym' mats. The new mats were easier to clean, although not all sites had an adequate number of mats throughout the reporting year [see 5.1].

### **3. Executive summary**

#### **3.1 Background to the report**

During the reporting period, the number of individuals crossing the channel in small boats, and subsequently detained in the facilities monitored by Kent Coast IMB, was higher than any other year. The numbers of arrivals that would require processing had been accurately predicted at the start of the year using a number of assumptions including weather variables. Nonetheless, the facilities monitored at times during the reporting year struggled to cope with increasing numbers of arrivals. This led to serious concerns about conditions in which people were being held, particularly at Manston.

On 16 November 2022, the then IMB National Chair, Dame Anne Owers, wrote to the Chairs of four Parliamentary committees to inform them of the IMB's concerns about conditions at Manston STHF. The letter is provided as an annex to this report.

Several tragic incidents which occurred during the reporting year form relevant background to the report. On 30 October, Western Jet Foil was the target of a petrol bomb attack, although fortunately no serious injuries were sustained [see 4.4]. On 19 November, the IMB were informed of a death at Manston. That has since been subject to a Prison and Probation Ombudsman independent investigation, and a coroner's inquest [see 4.2]. On 14 December 2022, four people died in the English Channel after the small boat they were travelling in got into difficulties. A further 39 people were rescued and processed at the Kent Coast STHF facilities [see 4.5].

The increased number of small-boat Channel crossings, concerns for the conditions at Manston and the tragic incidents noted above all led to significant press coverage and public interest in the settings monitored by the Kent Coast STHF IMB during the reporting year. During November, entering Manston involved driving past a group of reporters who had set-up opposite the entrance to the site, with more reporters near the perimeter fence near the Care and Custody marquees. This meant that reporters were able to take photographs of occupants there. The IMB noted that staff were continually monitoring the situation and, when necessary, requested the army to ask reporters to move back.

During the autumn period, when there were significant numbers of arrivals, the IMB were on occasion unable to speak to senior Care and Custody officers who were extremely busy on site or meeting with senior Home Office officials.

#### **3.2 Main judgements**

##### **How safe is the STHF?**

WJF – This can be considered the least safe, of the the three establishments. As reported, there was a petrol bomb thrown in the compound. The Board felt that arrivals were often confused during their time spent at WJF because they did not have a clear understanding of the processes involved.

KIU – The Board were concerned that interviews were not held privately which would make it more difficult for detained people to reveal personal information which might be relevant to vulnerabilities, potentially causing a risk to their welfare. The induction interviews were carried out by Care and Custody.

Manston – this is a large former MOD site, so is adequately fenced around the perimeter. The Board had some concerns around the privacy of healthcare screenings.

### **How fairly and humanely are detained people treated?**

Whenever the Board have visited, all staff have been observed to be courteous, emphatic, and often attentive to the needs of the people detained. However, the Board were concerned about the inadequate conditions for those at WJF to change out of wet clothes and about the excessive length of stay for those detained at Manston, in unacceptable conditions, during the latter part of 2022.

### **How well are detained people's health and wellbeing needs met?**

All three sites have trained medical staff available. On arrival at WJF there is a basic medical check. COVID checks were completed and isolation carried out when necessary. When scabies is detected, in the main, the relevant action was taken, and creams made available. Whilst not available for the full period covered in this report, Manston now has its own medical facility with doctors referring patients to local NHS for advice and specialist services. Manston also offered vaccination provided by medical professionals.

### **How well are detained people treated on transfer or removal?**

When C&C are informed of removals, detained people are gathered, ready for transportation, and their belongings made available. There have been some instances, when their 'blue bags' were not with them, but these were forwarded.

## **3.3 Recommendations**

### ***TO THE MINISTER***

The Board seeks a response from the Minister with respect to the following issues raised in this report.

- The Board recommends that detained people should not be held at Manston for longer than 24hrs in the marquee holding rooms.
- Detained people should be given information of their 'process journey' The Board continues to note that the welfare of detained individuals has been adversely affected by a lack of understanding of where they are moving to and why. This occurs particularly in holding rooms. The Board understands that work has begun to address this issue but is disappointed as to the length of time that it has taken to solve this problem.

### ***TO UK BORDER FORCE/HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT***

- Request that their constructive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel continue to attend the monthly Board meetings. The Board should receive weekly figures from Manston, with length of stay included from all contractors on the site.

### ***TO THE DETENTION CONTRACTORS***

- Request that their constructive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel continue to attend the monthly Board meetings. Ensure that the cleaning contract for KIU & Manston marquees have consistent high levels of service.



## Evidence sections 4–7

### 4. Safety

#### 4.1 Reception

##### *Western Jet Foil*

Initially, Covid-19 tests were mandatory but when procedures changed, instructions from the Home Office stated that only arrivals displaying possible symptoms were to be tested. Arrivals still have their temperature and blood oxygen levels taken, and are asked about their age, on arrival. This has also helped to speed-up the process of going through basic information, issuing wristbands with boat numbers on, attaching polaroid photos to IS91 paperwork (which are only completed at WJF for unaccompanied children who are moving onwards to KIU) and entering information into the Home Office records.

Multiple TV screens were fitted in the holding areas in Western Jet Foil and were used as digital messaging display units in 2022. These display information about the processing procedure in several languages, so that those who can read, know what to expect when they are called forward to officers. Despite this, the Board noted that many arrivals, whilst cooperative with all staff, seemed to be confused during this process, possibly because they were unable to read or because information was not displayed in their language.

##### *Kent Intake Unit*

As well as small-boat Channel crossing arrivals, some individuals processed through Kent Intake Unit were also picked up from the port having arrived in distribution lorries and freight lanes.

During a monitoring visit in November, staff raised concerns regarding the lack of privacy when Mitie Care & Custody were conducting induction interviews with new arrivals at Kent Intake Unit. Staff were concerned that they were having to ask sensitive questions, that they told the IMB they didn't feel qualified to ask, or to deal with the consequences of the potential answers. Staff reported to the IMB that all other arrivals in the queue could hear any answer provided during these interviews. This not only breached the confidentiality of those held at KIU, but also had the potential to inhibit people from answering fully. The IMB noted at the time that the questions that caused particular issues were those covering substance misuse, any physical or mental wellbeing issues, and asking individuals whether they had been a victim of torture, sexual violence or modern slavery. Reception interviews at STHFs are vital for the identification of all risk factors including human trafficking. Confidentiality is especially important because of the sensitive and personal nature of questions asked during reception interviews. The IMB is concerned that conducting reception interviews in an environment where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, may reduce the likelihood of identifying risk factors.

## *Manston*

On arrival at Manston, detained individuals were fingerprinted and further questioning was carried out by Home Office and Border Force staff. Following interviews, those detained were held in marquees managed by Care & Custody, where they were questioned about health issues. C&C ask general health questions, but there was not sufficient privacy, as mentioned before. Property is also checked by C&C staff and secured in safe rooms, returned to detained individuals when they leave Manston.

### **4.2 Suicide, self-harm, deaths in custody**

#### *Manston*

On 19 November, the IMB was informed of a death at Manston. That has now been subject to a Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) independent investigation, and a Coroner's inquest.

The IMB understand that staff at Manston showed compassion to the person who had travelled with the casualty, separated him from others and looked after him. The IMB understand that C&C put in place procedures for staff and those detained at Manston to be supported following the death.

### **4.3 Violence and violence reduction**

#### *Western Jet Foil*

During the increasing number of arrivals in the summer months and delays in moving people on, there was greater tension. The Board noted that areas were significantly crowded, it was hot and those who arrived were mostly very tired from the journey. At this time, many people spent over the 24-hour statutory time limit in the arrival areas. These spaces were not equipped or designed for detaining individuals for periods of this length. On August 15<sup>th</sup> for example, there were 400 people given breakfast that morning. The staff kept the tension to a minimum and did their best to provide all the necessary food and water.

#### *Kent Intake Unit*

During one monitoring visit in November, the IMB were made aware of an incident the previous day in which occupants were fighting over food. Staff quickly intervened and following this, moved to handing out food individually in picnic bags.

#### *Manston*

There have been several instances, when single men have expressed their frustrations whilst detained at Manston. There was one instance where the Board were informed of that a fight had taken place between detained men but that it was soon stopped by C&C staff. This is all the information the Board were given at the time and there was no mention of injuries.

In October, there was a disturbance at Manston, with some young men objecting to the length of time they had been there. The police were called, but they declined to attend as they were short staffed and no serious assault had taken place, meaning the incident was not deemed to be serious enough. Most of the Home Office staff were deployed to monitor the disturbance. This meant that, for this period of time, no

assessments could be carried out. The IMB were informed that one individual had absconded and was subsequently returned to site.

#### **4.4 Security**

Security on all three sites is robust. Security was carried out by C&C and Interforce. When there were arrivals at WJF, KIU and Manston, there was a large number of Border Force, Asylum & Protection and C&C personnel present. All Border Force, Asylum & Protection, and army staff wore stab-proof vests, while at the WJF where they operated in areas pre-search.

##### *Western Jet Foil*

On Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October, a member of the public threw a petrol bomb outside and into the premises at Western Jet Foil. An Interforce officer put the fire out and two individuals reportedly sustained minor injuries, but fortunately the incident was not more serious. Approximately 1000 individuals were detained at WJF at the time and, following the attack, were evacuated to Manston where six additional marquees were erected to accommodate them. The IMB were not present during the incident but visited the facility that week and noted that the front door security staff were still shaken up from the attack.

Full body and clothing searches were completed. This is initially done inside the arrival area, when all wet clothing is removed and changed as part of the SOLAS process. All property is searched – then put into a blue transparent plastic bag. This blue bag has a unique number pertaining to each individual detained, and also information on which boat they arrived on. The wrist band put on them, as soon as they are picked up by Border Force, also includes information about which boat they travelled on. The blue bag moves with those detained throughout their progress through the process across the sites, but after the individual searches, it is stored in a central area, not with the property owner. In order to speed up the process in the winter months – so all arrivals get changed out of their wet clothes more quickly, into warm ones – once changed the person is moved on to another reception area where the searches are conducted. This includes a search of person and full search of all the belongings in the individual's blue property bag. At this point any objects such as lighters, razors and knives are removed. The Board observed this done in a very considerate and sensitive manner with each procedure explained verbally and with visual hand signals.

##### *Kent Intake Unit, Manston*

When people are moved to KIU and Manston, C&C do their own searches. Once again, the blue bags are stored centrally.

#### **4.5 Vulnerable adults, safeguarding**

The Board monitored the safeguarding of individuals held at Manston. During one monitoring visit, a single woman had arrived with a family unit including an individual described as her husband. The Board observed the concerns of staff, who identified possible safeguarding issues and the woman's vulnerability, resulting in the couple being separated.

On 14 December 2022, four people died in the English Channel after the small boat they were travelling in got into difficulties. A further 43 people were rescued during this incident and were taken directly to Manston. Marquee 7 was used as a new set up to accommodate those rescued during this incident. They were kept together in a separate marquee and were supported by extra social workers, as well as the police, who were trying to ascertain whether there were any traffickers or potential witnesses amongst them. This group had access to electric showers with continuous hot water. During a monitoring visit the Board observed that one of these showers was out of order; an engineer on site had been to check it and was collecting a part for it to be fixed.

#### **4.6 Use of force**

During the Board's visits over the reporting year, no use of force was observed.

In 2022, the Board were not provided with 'Safer detentions Security reports' that included use of force; therefore the Board are unable to comment on use of force in this report.

## **5. Fair and humane treatment**

### **5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food**

Please see section 2 for description of the accommodation provided.

#### *Western Jet Foil*

Arrivals were given track-suit type clothes as soon as they landed at WJF, as well as flip flops and socks. This changed when the weather turned colder, and they were then given warm jackets and trainers. There were also hand warmers which were used to try and help individuals warm up when they first arrived. Baby nappies and other such items were stocked and available.

As soon as arrivals were picked up at sea, they were given water. On arrival at WJF, after they were medically checked and changed into dry clothes, they were given food. Food provision improved greatly with the move to WJF and changed throughout the year as the number of daily arrivals increased. Initially, there was a temporary food van, but then a more permanent catering outlet was organised that functioned until 6pm. This provided snacks, hot food and drinks. When more arrivals were expected during the night, sandwiches were provided. The catering facility was also used by the staff.

During periods with large numbers of arrivals, the catering facility was able to provide enough food but with some expected delays. Due to the unknown population numbers, it was sometimes difficult for the catering company to order correctly, resulting in some waste. By the end of the reporting year, it was easier to determine the numbers on boats before arrival, which helped with catering provision. The sandwiches offered were usually a bun with either a salad filling, or a chicken filling. All meat is Halal and notices provided this information to those detained.

Detained people tended to sleep on the floor on mats. When the facility was busy, there was often no floor space to be seen in the marquees with individuals sleeping in close proximity.

At WJF, there are toilet facilities and a couple of showers. However, the showers were mainly used to treat arrivals with petrol splashes (which could cause substantial burns) in order to wash wounds. The Board always found the toilets to be stocked with feminine sanitary products.

#### *Kent Intake Unit*

Once arrivals were at KIU, hot microwaved food was available. This was in the form of rice or pasta dishes. There was also baby food available at all times at all three sites. C&C staff offered hot drinks and those detained also asked for drinks when needed.

Those held at KIU were observed lying on blankets on the cold floor as the sleeping mats had been taken away following instructions from a member of the Home Office in November, because they were not fire retardant. At the time, the staff were distressed about this and had no information about when the mats would be replaced. IMB members also observed those detained at KIU sleeping with blankets on the benches.

The old KIU area where individuals were held lacked fresh air, and the Board noted the stale, unpleasant atmosphere which was not helped by the fact that occupants couldn't wash as the showers were often out of order.

There are showers at KIU and arrivals were each provided a wash bag to enable them to shower. The showers have a low-level tap to facilitate the washing of feet. However, the showers were not working and out of order for most of November. This meant that those detained at KIU, many of whom were held for between 18-24 hours during this period, had no means of washing. By the beginning of December, the showers had been working again, but flooded and was again out of action for a period. By mid-December KIU had moved to the new unit in Channel View Road. However, the showers there were again unusable, as the pull-cords had not been converted to avoid any ligature risk.

The toilets at KIU were always stocked with feminine sanitary products and baby nappies were stocked and available.

### *Manston*

At Manston, detained individuals were accommodated in marquees which we would describe as at best basic, at worst insanitary and unacceptable. The marquees were large tent-like structures, fitted with wooden floors, lighting and heating. Some have a rubber covering. The IMB observed efforts to upgrade marquees with more wooden flooring delivered and laid. However, during monitoring visits in November, the Board noticed that blankets had been stuffed into the gaps between the joints of the marquees and the sodden cloth to keep out the wind and the rain, and we regarded these temporary, tent-like marquee structures as being unsuitable for housing large numbers of individuals, especially for periods beyond 24 hours. As reported in paragraph 7.2 below, we observed many people, including families with young children, being held at Manston for weeks. The Board recognised the same detained people on successive visits during the busy period in October and November.

We highlight the fact that there were no proper sleeping facilities: there were no sleeping mats, and during monitoring visits in November we noted that some individuals were sleeping on flattened cardboard boxes, whilst others simply had a blanket. In these marquees, people slept in crowded conditions on the floor with no privacy between individuals who did not know each other. Some men were observed sleeping on a single blanket, using another blanket to cover themselves head-to-toe, in an effort to seek privacy whilst they slept. During one visit, the IMB visited the gym which had been emptied out leaving a pile of rubber of rubber mats and used blankets. The IMB enquired whether these could be put in the tents where detained individuals had to lie on the wooden floors, but were told that there was a risk of cross-contamination.

All marquees at Manston had showers and toilets. The toilets were always stocked with feminine sanitary products. Baby nappies were stocked and available. There were instances during the reporting year, when IMB members felt that the bathroom facilities should be cleaned more than twice a day, especially when it was very busy. This was addressed and C&C staff were observed trying to keep marquees tidy by doing the cleaning themselves. The marquees supervised by Interforce had outside, chemical portaloos and showers. During one monitoring visit, one set of these portaloos had overflowed and, due to torrential rain, the overflow had seeped under

the wooden flooring of one of the marquees. On other occasions, the toilet and shower areas were wet underfoot and smelt.

The IMB raised concerns during the reporting period regarding the provision of necessity items. Observations on the provision of clothing varied throughout the reporting year. Clothes provided included fit flops and tracksuits. During some periods of the year detained individuals were provided with coats to put on if they wanted to leave the marquee, but the IMB were told these had to be returned for others to use. This led to concerns for the Board on the spread of infections such as scabies. We also reported concerns about the adequacy of clothing provided for children, having observed a young child who had been given clothing that was far too big and as he played, his trousers continually fell down. We observed that there were not enough towels, wash kits and clean clothes [see 6.1].

Snacks, fruits, cereal, water and milk were laid out at each of the marquees and were readily available when needed. Baby food was available at all times. Board members reported a lack of a variety of food offered at Manston, which was largely bread-based. Breakfast and lunch were always the same and dinner rotated over three days. This would not be an issue if those held at Manston were only detained for 24 hours, as is the statutory limit for STHFs. However, with some individuals held for 30 days, the same menu was very limiting and not particularly healthy. In the family marquee, the IMB observed that water and snacks were available. Both the family marquee and the Care & Custody marquee had hot drinks machines at their disposal.

## **5.2 Staff/detained person relationships**

At all times when monitoring visits were carried out by the Board, staff appeared to have an empathetic, attentive, and caring relationship with those detained (subject to our observations about Mitie Security below). This was particularly evident with the families and the children, especially if they had been there some time. Staff interacted with them showing kindness and reassurance, making sure, as far as was possible, that they had the correct sized clothing and enough to eat and drink. Staff were observed taking an active part in what the children were doing. This was also the case in the marquees for single men at Manston, where they were observed promoting positive activities.

### *Manston*

At Manston, Mitie Security were on site during the period of increased occupancy in the autumn, but they were only allowed to stand in the middle of the quadrant of marquees, rather than have any interaction with the detained people. Their role was to provide additional security, reassurance and to protect the site. During some monitoring visits these staff had wrapped themselves in bin bags, having not been provided with appropriate clothing for the weather. They were wet and cold.

## **5.3 Children and families**

### *Western Jet Foil*

New arrivals were separated, with families, women and those identified as unaccompanied minors being seated separately within the marquee. After the induction process, they were held separately, and the unaccompanied minors then sent to KIU. Families were generally sent to Manston. They were moved as a matter

of priority; with some very young babies and children arriving over the busy summer months.

In September, a large number arrived on one day from 10 separate boats, and another 100 were expected who had landed further down the coast at Dungeness. Age assessment interviews took place with staff from KIU, the main interview being carried out by the Home Office staff in attendance with a social worker. The social workers have experience in this field and come from out of county, working in the Dover area for four-day periods at a time. When a detained individual is assessed as being an unaccompanied minor, they are transferred to KIU for further interviews, and moved on.

The Red Cross attended arrivals, usually twice a week, but especially on days with a high number of landings. The organisation was there to help with humanitarian issues. This was a pilot scheme, initiated by the Home Office, which ended in November.

#### *Kent Intake Unit*

As mentioned before, minors were placed in KIU, and the family room was used for lone single women if required. Very young unaccompanied minors were placed with the Refugee Council, or in the family room.

#### *Manston*

Families and single women were housed separately, in different marquees, from single males at Manston.

During monitoring visits in November, the family marquee was full and felt crowded. The IMB observed the atmosphere to be calm, and that even though all of the individuals held during one particular visit had been detained in the family marquee for longer than 24 hours, people seemed resigned to being held there. TV screens were used to provide entertainment for the children.

Staff were observed engaging with mothers at Manston, assisting by mixing baby milk in the small kitchen for example.

### **5.4 Property**

#### *Western Jet Foil*

On arrival at WJF, all property was put into blue plastic bags, with the unique reference number written in the detained person's wrist band. Until arrivals had had their search, they had their bag with them. Money and phones were sometimes taken and also put into the bags. Sometimes money was returned but it led to some bullying from others detained and staff felt it was safer for all to keep it bagged up. After these processes, the bags were stored centrally, and went with the detained persons to KIU or Manston and beyond.

#### *Manston*

At Manston the IMB observed blue plastic bags, filled with the detained individuals' property, lined up outside across the field. Whilst these were tightly sealed, during one monitoring visit the IMB observed that they were nonetheless drenched from the torrential rain.



Mobile phones were kept in the blue bags but in the marquees those detained were able to make calls. This is arranged by Mitie Care and Custody (C&C) staff.

## 6. Health and wellbeing

### 6.1 Healthcare: general

Across all sites during the reporting year, medical staff were provided by Aeromed and Medevent.

During the autumn when the number of arrivals increased, and there were concerns about overcrowding and conditions [see 7], there were significant concerns for the risk of airborne diseases such as diphtheria. This was expressed by some members of staff, to some IMB Board members during visits during this period.

#### *Western Jet Foil*

When arrivals came into the marquee off the boats, there were screens providing messages in several languages, asking people to inform staff if they had been splashed with fuel, if they needed medical attention, and if they were pregnant. The announcements moved quickly from one language to another. It was concerning to the IMB that the screens were positioned where it would be difficult for everybody waiting on the benches to see them.

There was also usually a team of four to five Medevent officers on site at WJF and by the end of the year there was also a doctor permanently on site.

Families were usually dealt with as a priority. There were arrivals in the advanced stages of pregnancy who were seen quickly. There was an instance during the reporting year of one heavily pregnant woman, who was complaining of stomach pains, being brought to the front of the queue, and immediately seen and helped.

Families with young children were also seen quickly. In May, one family was advised by Medevent to go to Buckland Hospital with suspected scabies. Transport was arranged for them. This was one of a number of scabies incidents, but the Board recognised that these were promptly dealt with. Since October 2022, Border Force have advised that Medevent have doctors on site that are able to treat the condition.

#### *Kent Intake Unit*

Paramedics were on duty at Kent Intake Unit as individuals arrived 24/7. During one monitoring visit in November, the IMB asked medical staff about the increased risk of diphtheria. The medical staff were confident about dealing with any such cases, following prepared protocols. At the beginning of November, UK Health had informed medical staff that they were considering offering a booster vaccination to those working in close contact with suspected cases.

The IMB were informed that when a detained person attends hospital, they are accompanied by three members of C&C, leaving the team at KIU three members of staff short.

#### *Manston*

At Manston, due to inadequate numbers of basic provisions such as towels, wash kits and clean clothes [5.1] occupants were at times sharing blankets. This further heightened the risk of cross-contamination and transmitting disease.

By mid-November, all detained individuals at Manston were being offered a vaccinated for diphtheria. Although this was not mandatory, the IMB were told that all

of those offered had accepted the vaccination, which was then carried out by the NHS. However, the Board noted concerns about managing the spread of diphtheria, a highly contagious bacterial infection.

## **6.2 Physical healthcare**

### *Western Jet Foil*

The area where the detained individuals were held often seemed to lack fresh air. There was often a stale, almost unpleasant atmosphere. Most arrivals seemed to be in good physical health; the Board only observed one person who needed to use a wheelchair during the reporting year.

In December the group who had been rescued from the tragic incident in the Channel arrived at WJF. All of these people were kept separately from other arrivals and then transferred immediately to Manston for processing and interviews there.

### *Kent Intake Unit*

In October, an individual arrived with a severe dog bite sustained over 30 days before, during an incident in Hungary. The bite was not healing, and the individual was taken to hospital and treated for suspected diphtheria.

### *Manston*

The Board observed staff to be vigilant in ensuring that those detained were as comfortable as they could be despite conditions.

## **6.3 Mental healthcare**

### *Manston*

During the busy period in the autumn, some of the individuals detained in one marquee ('Tent 16') went food refusal. The Board report that officers successfully worked with the leaders of the group to end the food refusal.

## **6.4 Soft skills**

The IMB observed the efforts made by staff to occupy individuals detained in these settings. Despite these efforts, the IMB felt that the lack of stimulation for those being detained in marquees for extended periods led to frustration and in-fighting.

Staff at Manston bought footballs for those detained to play on the small areas outside their tents.

Whilst the family marquees had TV screens to occupy the children, there were no TV screens in the new marquees erected in November.

## **7. Removal, transfer or release**

### **7.1 General**

The large number of people arriving at WJF over the summer resulted in many waiting at the facility for prolonged periods of time in unsuitable conditions, often unclear about what was happening to them.

The eventual transfer of those detained at WJF to other locations, such as KIU, Frontier House (a smaller facility in Folkestone) and Manston, was sometimes delayed as the receiving facilities were themselves too crowded. These issues were mostly resolved over the later part of the year with the increased capacity at Manston allowing for quicker removal, and more signage showing the procedures.

Unaccompanied minors were transferred to KIU, usually six at a time as this was the capacity of the transfer bus with accompanying officers.

#### *Manston*

During especially busy periods of high occupancy in the autumn, there was a lack of information provided to those detained at Manston, about the length of stay, how claims were being processed and when they would be transferred.

During a monitoring visit, the IMB heard one man asking an Interforce officer why his friends had been moved but he had not; he was visibly upset at having been separated from them.

### **7.2 Length of detention**

Throughout the reporting period, the Board observed the detention of individuals at Manston beyond the 24-hour period set down as the maximum length of detention in such holding rooms. As we have described elsewhere in this report, facilities at Manston were very clearly not equipped for stays beyond 24 hours. However, figures for the numbers of individuals held for more than 24 hours at Manston have not been made available, despite repeated requests from the Board.

In October and November the Board spoke to individuals and families at Manston who had been there for weeks at a time. Many reported that they had been there for weeks, with the longest period of detention at Manston that the Board were made aware of approaching four weeks. One individual detained with his family (his father and an adult sibling) had been at Manston for about two weeks. This was brought to the notice of the Clandestine Threat Command by the Board.

Clandestine Threat Command have not provided the IMB with figures for the numbers of detained individuals held for more than 24 hours during the May-December period. Similarly, no figures were provided by Asylum & Protection despite several requests by the IMB.

## Removal data January-December 2022

*Information supplied by SBOC at Manston:*

The Manston NAIU records show that there were 28,249 people held in Manston between the months of May 2022-December 2022. Prior to May, Tug Haven was used for detaining arrivals. The IMB therefore does not hold records for January to April.

*Figures supplied by Mitie Care and Custody*

	<i>Frontier House</i>	<i>KIU</i>	<i>Manston (C&amp;C marquees)</i>
Admitted into the country from holding area	5	4,071	19,650
Handed over to escort / detention from holding area	75	240	6,139
Moved to detention from holding area		1	427
Flown on removal flight from holding area		1	
Moved to Compass from holding area			1
Released			12

These figures are only from C&C. Asylum & Protection are not included in the above table as they were not made available to the Board.

### 7.3 Family contact

The IMB observed that there was access to phone calls and that officers made the phone available for detained persons to use. If there were several requests for the phone, C&C staff managed this.

### 7.4 Transfer or release

The IMB observed that interviews were usually delayed if individuals were asleep; they were left to sleep, then interviewed. This often took the detained person over the 24hrs limit.

## The work of the IMB

For majority of the year, visits were managed by a Board of three members (one member dual boarded from another Board). By mid-June the Board increased in size by another three members, and by October a further three had joined.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	3
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to establishment(s)	85
Total number of visits to Western Jet Foil	31
Total number of visits to KIU	31
Total number of visits to Manston	23



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