



Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at the South and West Short-Term Holding Facilities

**For reporting year
1 February 2025 to 31 January 2026**

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Introductory sections 1–3

1. Statutory role of the IMB

The South and West Short-Term Holding Facilities 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, 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 person 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 people, 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 detained people and to make recommendations for the prevention of ill-treatment. The IMBs are part of the United Kingdom's National Preventive Mechanism.

The South and West STHF Board is committed to treating everyone with whom it interacts with fairness and respect.

2. Description of the holding rooms¹

The detention facilities at each site vary. All the detention facilities in the south and west area are managed by Border Force (BF). Under the STHF Rules, passengers should not be detained for longer than 24 hours other than in exceptional circumstances, when a longer period of detention is authorised by the Secretary of State (a responsibility delegated to a Home Office official).

Bristol Airport STHF

Bristol Airport has one terminal through which all passengers pass when entering the United Kingdom (UK). In 2025, over 10.75 million passengers came through the airport. A considerable amount of building work is currently underway across the whole site to increase capacity to 12 million passengers per annum in the first phase of the airport's long-term development plan.

Border Force (BF) operates within the arrivals hall, managing the electronic entry gates, manual desks, controlled waiting area (CWA) and the STHF.

Should an arriving passenger be subject to further enquiries by BF at Bristol Airport, they are initially taken to the CWA. This is a small open plan area comprising 12 fixed seats situated in view of the immigration desks and other arriving passengers. When there is a passenger present it is monitored by a designated officer who completes necessary paperwork and attends to the welfare needs of passengers.

There is one short-term holding room that can accommodate six or seven passengers who have been detained by BF for the purposes of further enquiries, follow-up interviews and making decisions about whether they should be allowed entry to the UK.

The facility is also used for those denied entry awaiting return flights, and for those awaiting transport to alternative immigration/asylum/airport facilities. When in use, a minimum of two BF staff can be designated to monitor those being held in the short-term holding facility. The room has its own toilet, shower, sink, hand dryer, baby changing facilities, water fountain, TV, fixed table and seating, mattresses and a prayer/quiet room.

The STHF provides privacy for passengers, allowing them to rest quietly and shower while awaiting immigration outcomes and future travel arrangements. The observation/office area contains a variety of items that detained people can use including:

- disposable bedding, blankets and pillowcases, and pillows
- a selection of toiletries and disposable wipes, nappies and towels
- religious books and a prayer mat
- bottled water, baby food, snacks and ambient/microwaveable food

¹ Figures included in this report are local management information. They reflect the prison's position at the time of reporting, but may be subject to change following further validation and therefore may not always tally with Official Statistics later published by the Ministry of Justice/ Home Office.

A double sink and a microwave, which both meet food hygiene standards, are available in the BF observation area.

Cardiff Airport STHF

The CWA comprises 10 seats set along a side wall in the immigration hall. The seats are visible to staff at the immigration desks and other passengers moving through the hall. There are no dedicated facilities available within this waiting area. Any passengers being held in the CWA would be accompanied to the public toilets and any food/drink needed would be brought to them. Temporary screening can be brought across to provide privacy for those held in the CWA, if necessary.

The STHF is housed within a secure area only accessible by BF staff. Within the dedicated facility are two toilet cubicles, one of which provides access for persons with disabilities. The main area of the STHF comprises a table with four metal seats fixed to the floor. There are four thick mattresses and pillows. A bookcase in the STHF contains a variety of reading material, including some suitable for children. There is a remote-control television at high level. Helpful information posters, in several languages, including those referencing the IMB, are displayed as are posters detailing how to access legal advice.

Detained people also have access to a variety of items including, but not limited to:

- disposable bedsheets, pillowcases, and blankets
- clothing packs and disposable slippers
- a selection of toiletries, disposable aprons, nappies, and towels
- religious books and prayer mats
- simple electronic games for younger detained people.

A short distance from the STHF is a small food preparation room with a microwave and stored packs of hot and cold food, snacks and drinks. It has a five-star health and safety rating from the local authority. A variety of hot and cold foods, snacks and drinks catering for a range of cultural and religious diets, are available. Details of all food preparation are recorded and available to the IMB for review.

Newhaven Ferry Port STHF

There are three distinct areas of the port - the foot passenger terminal, vehicle booths and freight interception point (FIP). There is a CWA in both the passenger terminal and FIP, with the FIP a short walk from the passenger terminal. To the side of the immigration desk in the passenger terminal is a bank of four seats that make up the CWA. Immediately adjacent to the CWA is a baggage search room.

The STHF suite is adjacent to the immigration hall. It is a purpose-built facility, provided by the Port Authority in early 2022, and comprises a STHF with monitoring area, storeroom, interview room and kitchenette.

The STHF itself is spacious, with the main area being L-shaped. One leg of the room has a round table with four chairs secured around it, the other leg has four beanbags for detained individuals to relax on. The rest of the space is taken up by a separate toilet cubicle (with toilet, sink, soap dispenser, hand dryer, metal mirror and sanitary products/disposal unit), plus a large separate walk-in shower room.

Adjacent to the STHF is a storage area and separate kitchenette containing a sink, microwave, and a kettle. Beyond this area is the interview room, comprising a desk with seats on each side, with a separating transparent screen.

In the FIP, there is no STHF, but a larger CWA containing two immigration desks and 18 seats, where drivers wait while their vehicles are being inspected. There is also a toilet and kitchenette in this area, along with a fingerprint room. Detained people in the passenger terminal are escorted over to the FIP if they need to have their fingerprints taken.

There is a separate storage room containing a selection of supplies, including:

- toys for children
- religious books and prayer mats
- toiletries, nappies, disposable clothing
- disposable bedding and towels
- first aid kit/spill kits/biohazard packs.

Poole Ferry Port STHF

The Port of Poole and Poole Harbour is a cross-channel ferry port in Dorset and is Europe's largest natural harbour. The cross-channel ferry service is limited in number during the winter months but increases considerably from April to October. Alongside passenger ferries, a year-round international shipping trade operates for imports and exports of cargo.

There is a CWA at the location where foot passengers are processed and a separate room where families and individuals can wait in privacy, if required. These are spacious and well appointed, with a variety of posters around the wall and information available for those using the room. It has a table with a bank of three seats against the wall and a further seat on the opposite side of the table (all fixed to the floor), a heater and portable screens to provide privacy during searches.

The STHF is situated in the main terminal building. There are also two toilet cubicles at the far end of the room, both with metal toilets, sinks fitted with a liquid soap dispenser and electric hand driers.

The main area comprises a table with four metal seats fixed to the floor plus another three seats against the wall. Two mattresses are on the floor and disposable bedding is issued to any detainees as required. The room does not have a TV or any other form of entertainment, although a few magazines are on the table.

A new kitchen area was opened in 2025. There is a selection of supplies, including:

- a selection of food and drinks
- toys for children
- religious books and a prayer mat.

Portsmouth Ferry Port STHF

There are three distinct areas of port: the passenger terminal, car hall and freight secondary examination area, each with its own CWA. A BF van is ready to transport anyone being detained across to the STHF, which is located in the passenger terminal.

The passenger terminal is quite similar to an airport, with a line of immigration desks forming the border between 'land-side' and 'sea-side'. To the side, just in front of and in sight of the immigration desk, there is a bank of nine seats that make up the CWA.

There are two holding rooms located within the STHF, which are overseen by a monitoring area. Each holding room contains a separate toilet facility comprising a toilet and multi operation wash basin (soap, water, hand dryer). The holding room area has a table and chairs, which are fixed to the floor. The walls have posters relating to the detention process and detained person's rights.

The staff monitoring area is fitted with CCTV screens and food cupboards containing ready meals, biscuits, crisps and baby food. There are facilities for making hot drinks.

There are storage cupboards in the viewing area, containing a selection of supplies, including:

- food and drinks (all of which can be served without being heated)
- toys for children
- religious items books and prayer mats
- toiletries and nappies
- clothing (ponchos tracksuit slippers hats gloves, etc)
- disposable bedding and towels and
- first-aid kit/spill kit/biohazard bags.

There are 10 soft mattresses and a number of pillows, along with disposable covers, which can be used by people who have been detained.

3. Key points

3.1 Background to the report

The South and West STHF Board was newly formed in January 2023. Members made a total of 139 monitoring visits (often in pairs) between 1 February 2025 and 31 January 2026. After each visit, the IMB prepares a report and, if there are concerns, asks BF to answer these and provide an explanation.

It was difficult to organise visits to coincide with people being in detention due to the relatively low number of detentions. We asked BF to let us know when someone was detained so we could visit. This happened on a few occasions and so IMB members interviewed a small number of detained people. In the absence of face-to-face interviews with detained people, we have to rely on the accuracy and completeness of records. This means we cannot be as confident in our opinions about the safety, fairness and humane treatment aspects of our monitoring, however we did not identify any major cause for concern.

BF provided a monthly data sheet listing all people detained in the STHF. These people are issued with an IS91R, the Home Office document that explains the reasons behind the authorisation of detention. The Board found some inconsistencies in the information provided, so the data should be regarded as indicative rather than completely accurate. In addition, it is difficult to compare with past years as the composition of the data changed. These data are reported in the evidence sections below. Bristol was the busiest site, with 129 detentions for longer than two hours, and Poole the quietest, with only seven detained individuals. Portsmouth had 17 detentions, Newhaven 10 and Cardiff nine.

Across the region, six children were detained during the reporting year.

Overall, there was a significant reduction in the number of people being detained. This can partly be explained because last year's data included people who were detained in the CWA and not the STHF.

3.2 Main findings

Safety

- We were concerned that some people at Bristol and Cardiff were held for long periods in the CWA, without being transferred to the more comfortable and private STHF.
- For a second year we were concerned that detained people could not have access to prescribed medication whilst in the STHF. Also, BF officers had inadequate access to health-related support and advice. This was an unacceptable level of risk that should be addressed.
- There was a significant reduction in the number of children being detained and we noted that the new suite of documents improved the recording framework for children.
- We were again concerned about BF failing to inform us of the use of force either within the agreed timescales or in one case not at all.
- We questioned definitions of vulnerability because of the release of one detained person, a lone woman with no money, no accommodation and limited English.

Fair and humane treatment

- As far as we could determine, detained people at all sites were generally well treated. There were some examples of BF staff taking particular care to ensure welfare needs were met.
- Despite repeated requests to BF to contact us as per local agreements in Bristol, Cardiff and Poole, the IMB was allowed few opportunities to interview people face to face. This compromised our ability to be confident in our findings.

Health and wellbeing

- We remain concerned that decisions about access to medication and nicotine replacement have taken over 12 months.
- There were many examples of health and wellbeing being prioritised by BF staff.
- There were some examples of poor, incomplete or inconsistent recording of health issues.

Preparation for removal, transfer or release

- There were improvements in record keeping, especially with introduction of a new suite of documents. However, there were examples of inaccurate or incomplete recording.
- Although few in number, we were concerned about the additional time in detention, waiting for MITIE Care and Custody to arrive to transfer a detained person.

3.3 Recommendations

TO THE MINISTER

- Review and amend Home Office policy to allow detained individuals with pre-existing medical conditions access to their prescription medication with the appropriate level of medical support and advice.

TO THE UK BORDER FORCE / HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

- Inform the IMB when someone is being detained in order to facilitate face-to-face contact and enhance the monitoring process.
- Share the standards for STHFs with IMBs.
- Include use of force in the monthly data tables.

TO THE FACILITY MANAGER / DETENTION CONTRACTOR

- Ensure that the IMB is informed about any instances of the use of force without delay.

3.4 Progress since the last report

Capacity of detention facilities at Bristol Airport.

We were concerned that the airport expansion programme had not taken into account the need to ensure adequate capacity in the STHF. We have not been

informed of any further developments, although there have also been no capacity issues raised during the year. The IMB will continue to monitor this. In order to facilitate our engagement with any future STHF design plans, it would be helpful for the Home Office to share the technical standards for new STHFs.

IMB access to detentions records

We were concerned that at some ports our access to relevant records had been difficult at times. This has improved during the reporting year.

Response to monitoring reports

We were concerned because it often took a long time for BF to respond to questions raised in our monitoring reports. They told us they struggled because of the volume of questions raised by IMBs.

In response, we changed our approach in order to reduce the number of formal questions by ensuring that we tried to resolve issues before leaving a monitoring visit, differentiating between issues raised and issues that needed a response, and by introducing a formal sign-off at the Board meeting for unresolved issues.

BF also introduced a more effective process. Now it is rare for a question to be left unanswered, except where issues are beyond the scope of BF themselves.

Recording of children's detention fully

We had been concerned about the recording of the detention of children so that they were seen as individuals. Due to the reduction in child detentions, it was difficult to judge progress, except that we came across one example at Cardiff where only a mother's detention had a record and not her two children. The new suite of documents has much improved the focus on children, for which BF should be commended.

Provision of use of force statistics as part of the monthly data return

Border Force rejected this recommendation and use of force statistics are still not provided.

Provision of hot food/drinks at Portsmouth

Although BF are not required to provide hot food, the IMB was concerned that for people arriving at the ferry ports who have undertaken an arduous and lengthy journey, that they should have the option of being provided with hot food. This is still not available at Portsmouth due to the lack of suitable facilities to meet Food Standards Agency requirements to serve hot food.

Evidence sections 4 – 7

4. Safety

4.1 Reception

On arrival at a port, a detained person will be held in a CWA or in the arrivals hall pending a decision about their status. If it seems the wait will be lengthy, they are transferred to the STHF, which is more comfortable, private and has more facilities.

All passengers taken to the STHF receive an induction. They are shown the facilities available to them and taken through a set of questions that capture any special or significant needs individual detainees may have. BF officers also have the opportunity to record any concerns they may have noted around such things as vulnerability, safeguarding or modern slavery.

There were some examples at Cardiff and Bristol where passengers spent long periods in the CWAs rather being transferred to the STHF. The IMB was concerned because the CWAs lacked privacy and comfort. Insufficient staffing to supervise the STHF was given by BF as the reason for this.

4.2 Suicide, self-harm, deaths in custody

No instances of self-harm or deaths in detention were observed or noted during the year.

4.3 Violence and violence reduction

There were few reported instances of violence during 2025/26. At Bristol, there were three instances of difficult behaviour some of which included violence:

One male passenger displayed difficult behaviour. In this case, the IMB was present to witness how BF officers managed this demanding situation. The person had learning difficulties and staff were very calm and kind in the way they interacted with the person. The IMB observed for two hours, and during that time, the passenger became calmer and we considered this well managed.

A male passenger displayed disruptive and provocative behaviour (shouting, kicking the door and mattresses, banging on the room). The passenger was handcuffed at the front and the IMB was informed of this by telephone. The IMB was satisfied that appropriate safety procedures were followed during this passenger's detention, when we later reviewed the detention records.

A female passenger displayed prolonged disruptive and aggressive behaviour while being detained. This included violently banging on the glass window between the STHF and the BF observation room, throwing information posters around the STHF, shouting at and attacking BF officers, resulting in one officer sustaining a minor injury. This aggressive and confrontational behaviour continued for a number of hours. BF officers had to resort to the use of force and handcuff the passenger for the safety of both the passenger and the BF officers. Detailed observation notes were taken throughout the

whole detention period by BF before the passenger was eventually taken to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). The IMB was not informed of the use of force but, according to the records, all appropriate procedures were followed.

4.4 Vulnerable adults, safeguarding

There was only one referral in relation to modern slavery, at Portsmouth. This was handled well by BF who we commended for the level of care shown.

We raised one case with BF - a solo female traveller at Cardiff airport. BF did not identify any vulnerability during their interviews, and a decision had been made not to provide her with accommodation. However, the IMB was concerned that a lone female had been released at 6pm with no accommodation, no money or contacts and not speaking English. The Board were, however, reassured by BF that they had sought charitable support and assistance for this person.

4.5 Children and families

There were only six children detained during the year, in comparison to 32 the previous reporting year (although these previous figures would have included people detained in the CWA as well). There were three at Portsmouth who were unaccompanied minors and three at Bristol who were travelling with parents.

There was an issue at Portsmouth where Social Services were called but did not attend as it was out of office hours. As a result, BF accompanied the child to the Social Services accommodation. In the other two cases at Portsmouth, the children had to wait three hours for Social Services to arrive and spent over seven hours in detention.

In Cardiff, there was a case of a solo female passenger who in fact had two children. IMB asked to see their detention records, but these were either not completed or not available.

4.6 Use of force

There were two use of force events at Bristol during the reporting year. At Portsmouth there had been a use of force late in our last reporting year, but it only came to the IMB's attention later and so we are reporting on it in this reporting year. The IMB was not informed, as it is agreed with the Home Office we should be, in one of the Bristol cases and the Portsmouth case. In the light of this, it would be helpful for use of force to be included in the monthly data supplied by BF, so that the IMB can ensure no incidents have been missed.

IMB members viewed the CCTV of the Portsmouth incident. The video footage did not include audio. The individual was lying on a mattress within a detention facility and was required to attend fingerprinting. After several requests to stand, assistance was required to raise the individual to their feet. An officer indicated that the individual was required to stand; however, no translation services were used. The individual initially refused to stand and appeared to turn onto their side while remaining on the mattress.

Two staff members then approached, one on each side, and assisted the individual by lifting them under the arms to a standing position. Following this, the individual became compliant and the fingerprinting process was completed without further incident.

The use of force appeared proportionate and minimal, limited to a single instance of assisting the individual to stand. No handcuffs were used and no restraint was applied. An internal review was subsequently conducted by the relevant authority, during which learning points were identified. The staff involved were not found to have acted improperly. A later concern was raised regarding the absence of translation services when issuing instructions to detained individuals.

5. Fair and humane treatment

5.1 Accommodation, clothing, food

At all ports the facilities for detention are adequate for short periods. The rigid seating, mattresses on the floor and lack of sunlight mean they may be uncomfortable for longer periods and for people with mobility issues.

The STHFs were cleaned regularly by the Port Authority cleaners and usually after every detention. There were some examples at Bristol where the STHF had not been cleaned adequately. For example, the toilet had not been flushed and cleaned and there were used blankets and pillows left. One of the mattresses was grubby although this was cleaned thoroughly when it was raised by the IMB.

There were issues with the toilet hygiene facilities at Portsmouth where there was no supply of soap and running water for periods. In addition, for several months, there was an unpleasant smell of drains in the toilet area in one of the holding rooms, this has been resolved for short periods but the smell has returned.

At Bristol the cleaning log and the Legionella Bacteria log in the BF observation area were not always completed when the cleaning and the checks had been made. This made it more difficult for the IMB to monitor.

BF routinely carried out assessments of the age, sex, relationships and related risk of passengers before using the STHF.

Given the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport with the possibility of more passengers being detained, consideration should perhaps be given to providing more space in the STHF along with additional toilets and washing facilities.

5.2 Staff/detained people relationships

It is difficult for the IMB to comment on the quality of relationships between staff and those detained because there have been so few opportunities to observe this. We interviewed two people at Bristol and observed a third person; at Cardiff one family was interviewed and at Poole three people. There were none at Portsmouth and Newhaven.

We repeatedly asked to be contacted when someone was in detention, as per local agreements, and were disappointed that this was rarely actioned by BF. We get a far better idea of how people are treated when we see them in person rather than from records alone. The detained passengers we did see were usually complimentary about their treatment by BF.

In Bristol, one passenger was positive about his experience but another, who was clearly anxious, said that he had not been allowed to make a phone call to his family. The IMB checked with BF and this was then facilitated. As mentioned on p.11 section 4.3, the IMB observed one passenger for over two hours. He was behaving aggressively and had learning difficulties. In this

case, we were impressed by the calm and kind way he was treated by a number of BF staff on duty.

In Cardiff, an IMB member interviewed a woman, with her two children, early in her detention. She had been given food and drink and her situation explained to her so she understood what was happening.

In Poole, an IMB member interviewed three men who had been detained. All had been given food and drink. They had been given clean clothes, toiletries and blankets. They all said that they were content with their treatment.

5.3 Equality and diversity

From the written evidence seen, the IMB notes that BF staff did their best to treat all passengers fairly; for example, a person with learning difficulties was treated with additional care.

Sanitary products are made available for women and special care was taken for detained women who were pregnant.

The facilities at sites are mostly suitable for those who are disabled, although mattresses at floor level would be difficult for more elderly or disabled detained people.

For detained people needing help with translation, BF routinely used a service that provides translators in multiple languages. It could sometimes take longer for a less common language to be arranged. BF also supplement this for simple items, such as whether someone wants food or drink, with phone-based translation applications.

We were sometimes concerned that detained people may not fully understand what was being said. We asked BF about how they could be sure people have understood what they have said. They told us that everything is explained during induction with the use of translation services.

5.4 Faith and religious affairs

At all ports there is provision for religious observance and religious literature is provided for a range of religions. At Portsmouth, a compass is provided to enable detained persons of Muslim faith to orientate themselves towards Mecca. At Bristol, the STHF includes a separate space for passengers of all faiths for quiet contemplation and prayer. In this room there is a symbol on the wall showing the direction of Mecca (Qibla) for Muslim passengers.

5.5 Complaints

A complaints box is provided in the STHFs. There was one example at Poole of complaints forms not being readily available. Complaints forms are sent to the BF Correspondence Team for processing and are not dealt with locally. There were no complaints recorded in this reporting year.

5.6 Property

There were no issues in relation to property. When passengers were detained for short periods, their property was securely stored and they were allowed access to items when requested. Property records that were scrutinised were completed correctly, showing the detained person's signature when the property was returned.

6. Health and wellbeing

6.1 Healthcare general

None of the STHFs have on-site medical facilities. This is perhaps not surprising, as the need is infrequent. BF has always trained first aiders on duty and so minor issues can be addressed. In the event of a medical emergency, the staff would dial 999 or 111, depending on the seriousness of the condition.

At Cardiff, we noted that cards were available describing in simple picture and word form, various conditions such as headaches, thirst/hunger, pregnancy. At Portsmouth there are cards so that those detained can communicate their wellbeing.

The main issues encountered were about medication carried and needed by the detained person. In the STHF, BF were responsible for the person's welfare and were not medically trained to oversee the taking of medication. They were instructed to contact the on-site medical staff, for instance, Gatwick custody medical team for advice. However, there were limits to the assistance that could be offered without seeing the patient face to face.

We have repeatedly raised this as an area of risk and have been told that it is still under consideration by Ministers. We remain concerned that this is a potential risk to detained people and that BF staff are left holding the responsibility with limited and sometimes inadequate support.

Until this year, nicotine replacement items were available for detained people. Nicotine replacement was later defined correctly as a medical procedure and therefore BF was unable to support it. For most people this has not been a problem, but for a few people, not being allowed nicotine has been difficult and may have led to challenging behaviour. Consequently, BF staff sometimes felt that it may help a passenger's well-being or improve their behaviour while being detained if they were escorted to an area where they could smoke. Arrangements for smoking are difficult at some sites, for instance, at Bristol it requires a walk, possibly in handcuffs, across the departures hall which is often full of passengers. We have asked repeatedly whether this situation was going to change and have been told that it is still awaiting a decision. Overall, after very careful judgements have been made, situations have been successfully de-escalated by BF officers.

It is difficult to understand why the nicotine and access to medication issues have taken such a long time to resolve.

The IMB notes that the new suite of documents covers medication issues in a more thorough way.

6.2 Physical healthcare

There were very few medical emergencies during this reporting year. There was one case at Portsmouth where a woman had been trafficked and was discovered in the footwell of a car. She was four months pregnant and was taken quickly to hospital where she received care. Our monitoring report recorded that the officers demonstrated a commendable duty of care towards

her, prioritising her health and welfare over the procedural aspects of detention.

Despite the commended example mentioned in the paragraph above, we have had some issues with the inadequacy of how health issues are recorded. For example, in one record, the person was said to have a blood clot on the brain and, whilst no specific additional requirements were identified, there was no further mention or review to make sure there was no change in their specific circumstances.

6.3 Mental healthcare

The risk assessment completed during induction includes identification of any detained persons' mental health needs. The records rarely indicated a mental health need, except where people were taking medication for conditions such as depression. Mental health conditions were self-declared or assumed based on indicative behaviour. For instance, there was one woman at Bristol who behaved in a way that indicated an underlying mental health issue. The STHFs were not set up to assess and manage people with mental health issues. In an extreme case a referral would have to be made to local hospital.

7. Removal, transfer or release

7.1 Case management

At each visit, IMB members checked the records for any person who had been detained since their last visit. During the year, a new suite of documents was piloted at Bristol and was being introduced nationwide at BF managed STHFs. The IMB was well briefed about these new documents. The documents improved the focus on those under 18 years, those with vulnerabilities and the management of medications. They also introduced a more comprehensive record of the welfare of detained persons. There was some feedback from staff that the new records were more time-consuming to complete. At Bristol, we found that the new records led to an improvement in the quality of recording.

The processing of detained persons was generally good; however, there were deficiencies in the standard of some record keeping. At Portsmouth we observed numerous occasions where the time interval between the issue of the IS81 and IS91 (the documents essential for the legal authority to detain) exceeded two hours. Induction logs were frequently missing key information including, on several occasions, the details of the officer leading the process, details of the detained person's welfare and legal requirements. Induction records have changed and can now, optionally, be prepared electronically, with the IMB receiving printed copies at each visit.

7.2 Family contact

Detained people are allowed access to a telephone to contact family if they want to. There was one example of a detained man who was interviewed by the IMB who was clearly anxious about not being given access to a phone to contact his family. The IMB fed this back to BF, who then facilitated a call.

7.3 Removal, transfer or release

We scrutinised the data tables provided monthly by BF to look for trends.

We looked at how long people were detained for:

- 20% for two to three hours
- 24% for four to five hours
- 40% from six to 11 hours
- 13% per cent for 12 hours and over
- No one was held for more than 24 hours.

Of those who were detained for 12 hours or longer:

- There were 23 cases ranging from 12 hours to 23 hours 41 minutes.
- 11 were waiting for a return flight/ferry from their entry point; four were waiting to be transferred to another airport for a return flight; five were waiting for a taxi to take them to accommodation; three were waiting for a transfer to an Immigration Removal Centre. The two longest

detention times were awaiting transfer by MITIE Care and Custody to an IRC.

- There were no cases where the IMB considered BF at fault for any delays.

For those released to MITIE Care and Custody transport, there were carbon copies of the handover information in the detention record. These are especially important for those with vulnerabilities and/or health concerns. The carbon copies were often very faint and difficult to decipher.

8. The work of the IMB

The South and West STHF Board has had eight out of a full complement of 10 members for the year, after unsuccessful recruitment campaigns.

We continued to be mindful of the Brook House Inquiry findings and also used the National Preventative Mechanism's guidance for monitors as a framework for the Board's development activities.

We were disappointed that we were unable to speak with detained people face to face, partially due to the limited numbers detained at each port. In addition, BF did not contact us very often about people when they were held in detention, despite repeated requests. This compromises our ability to report fully and confidently on the areas we monitor.

We have been grateful for the positive way most Border Force and Home Office staff have engaged with the IMB. There have been some difficult moments when we have had to push quite hard to encourage improvements to be made or to get access to information. Conversely, there have been some occasions when our concerns have been addressed promptly and effectively.

Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	8
Total number of visits to STHFs	139
Total number of visits to Bristol Airport	52
Total number of visits to Cardiff Airport	17
Total number of visits to Newhaven Ferry Port	8
Total number of visits to Poole Ferry Port	31
Total number of visits to Portsmouth Ferry Port	31



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