



# **Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at Kent Coast Short-Term Holding Facilities**

**For reporting year  
1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**

**Published June 2026**



# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introductory sections 1 – 3</b>	
1. Statutory role of the IMB	3
2. Description of the holding rooms	4
3. Key points	9
<b>Evidence sections 4 – 7</b>	
4. Safety	19
5. Fair and humane treatment	21
6. Health and wellbeing	23
7. Preparation for removal, transfer or release	25
<b>The work of the IMB</b>	28
Board statistics	28
<b>Annex A</b>	
Abbreviations of key terms	29

All IMB annual reports are published on [www.imb.org.uk](http://www.imb.org.uk)

## **Introductory sections 1 – 3**

### **1. Statutory role of the IMB**

The Kent Coast STHF Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) 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 IMB (referred to in the rules as the 'visiting committee'). The Board has unrestricted access to every detained person, all immigration detention facilities and most records, at all times. IMB members can speak to detained people outside of the hearing of officers. They must consider any complaint or request that 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 that they consider requires their attention, and report to the Secretary of State 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 and 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.

## 2. Description of the holding rooms

*As many of the main operational processes in the holding centres have not changed since last year, the account provided here closely mirrors previous reporting.*

Kent Coast STHF IMB was renamed (from IMB Dover) in 2022, as it took over the monitoring of the Kent Intake Unit (KIU), Western Jet Foil (WJF), both situated in Dover, Manston (previously a Ministry of Defence training base), and Frontier House in Folkestone. Western Jet Foil is not part of the STHF, but we are granted equal access. WJF is a Solas (safety of life at sea) landside reception area. Frontier House, a holding room facility in Folkestone, is used for mainly 'lorry drops' or for people brought in by Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) or other Border Force teams. The short-term holding facility in Frontier House is managed by Mitie Care & Custody Services (a private Ministry of Justice provider). Consequently, throughout this report, there will be subsections pertaining to the four establishments, individually. Overall responsibility for the operation of Manston and WJF moved from Border Force into the Border Security Command in November 2025.

### **Western Jet Foil (WJF)**

Western Jet Foil is the point of entry after people are rescued at sea. It has its own pontoon landing, which makes the facility more compact. There are two sets of toilet blocks, in the form of portable toilet units. The odour of these improved during the reporting year. There is a 'red' tent for induction (see below). In addition, there are three isolation units, used when there is a need to isolate detained people due to potential infectious diseases. These are smaller 'containers'. The units have one window at the side, plus a table, chair and mat. Both windows can be opened.

After the 'red' tent, rescued individuals move on to the 'processing hall'. This is where they are informed of their illegal status (see below). There are a couple of showers here, which are used, in the main, for individuals who have suffered acute chemical burns that urgently need irrigation. (Chemical burns in newly arrived boat migrants are almost always caused by petrol mixing with seawater inside overcrowded, unsafe dinghies, leading to corrosive skin injuries.)

There is an additional portacabin, which is the emergency clinician's assessment area for arrivals needing emergency or urgent care in a clinical environment. This facility is stocked with appropriate medication, a 'point of care' blood testing machine, an ultrasound scanner and a fully equipped resuscitation bay. At WJF, Medevent, a private healthcare provider, has a team of one bronze (the on-scene commander for the medical team) and two senior paramedics, three additional pre-hospital staff and either one or two senior emergency specialist doctors, depending on predicted numbers for the day. Overnight, Medevent has four pre-hospital staff residents at WJF to triage and treat arrivals, with an on-call physician for support.

Sandwiches, crisps and fruit are given to those who have been detained. Halal meat is served, which detained individuals are made aware of. Drinking water is always available. There are two other 'office' cabins: 'bronze control', an IT facility linked to the Manston operational room, which provides live online information; and 'quartermasters', who look after on-site facilities management. Interforce provides the security resourcing. From here, unaccompanied children are taken by minibus to the Kent Intake Unit (KIU) in Dover, while other detained individuals are transported by coach to Manston.

When picked up at sea by Border Force (BF) or the RNLI, individuals are issued with blankets and, depending on the weather, with hats, gloves and hand warmers, plus bottled water. A barcoded band is attached to their wrist (which they keep on for their stay in Kent). It has a unique number and information about the boat they were on, which is helpful if a group of people need to be isolated due to infection or other reasons. The barcode is also used for identifying their personal belongings, which are put into blue plastic bags at a later stage. If the detained people have fuel stains on their clothes, these are placed in yellow bags. On landing, they are ushered to the 'red' tent, where they are medically triaged, including being questioned about their age, any medical problems, brief past medical history and if they take medication, etc. They are provided with pictorial aids to help Medevent understand if they have suffered chemical burns or have signs of an infectious disease. At this stage, their vital signs are taken, and BF is made aware if the Medevent team suspects a safeguarding issue. If, during triage, any significant medical issues are identified, the individuals are separated from the rest of their boat group and assessed in more depth by the medical team.

At this point, children are identified and processed more quickly. Everyone is given a change of dry clothes, while their original clothes are placed in blue plastic bags, which they keep with them until the next stage. Clothing for babies, children, men and women is available, usually in the form of tracksuits and plimsoles with Velcro fastenings, instead of laces. In the summer, flipflops are sometimes issued.

At all times, children, families and single women are separated from men. Children and families are processed first.

Once the rescued people are in dry clothes, they move to the processing area, where there are television screens showing information, in various languages, on subjects such as modern slavery. (This should help arrivals recognise potential exploitation and understand their rights under Home Office safeguarding requirements.) While in this area, the screens show information about how detained individuals have the option of returning to their home countries. However, some people may not be literate, so won't be able to understand what the screens are showing.

Detained individuals are asked their age again (a grid showing numbers is used at this point) and their photo is taken. They are given a pat-down body search, and their belongings are searched, too. A hand-held metal-detector 'wand' is sometimes used. Mobile phones and other possessions are placed in the blue bag. If their clothes have been soiled by fuel, their yellow bags are checked outside the hall, to keep the hall free from the fumes. At this point, the blue bag is securely sealed and a copy of their wrist band information is attached. The blue bags are kept separately, but they are given back to the detained individuals when they leave Manston and KIU.

Some IS91s are generated here. These are written forms that allow someone to be kept in immigration detention under the powers of the Immigration Act 1971. They are only generated at WJF for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who are being transferred to the KIU. IS91s for everyone transferring to Manston will be completed in the arrivals area at Manston. IS91s are not generated for those cases that do not enter detention. For direct dispersals, such as medical and isolation cases, they may be served with an IS81 (examination form).

The Big Word translation facility is available for the officers to use, or they sometimes use online translation services.

## ***Kent Intake Unit (KIU)***

Unaccompanied children are taken to the KIU, where the short-term holding facility is managed by Mitie Care & Custody (C&C). The Illegal Migration Intake Unit (IMIU) has offices upstairs. IMIU Officers carry out welfare interviews with the children who have been detained. The entrance is where non-detained children remain while they are waiting to be transported to their next stage. There are 33 seats here and a further 10 available in the Refugee Council area, which could be a problem when there are larger numbers. The induction room has individual booths and can hold up to 30 people. These continue to have the translation phone facility and also access to The Big Word and other translation services, which might include a translator at the end of a phone. The main holding room can accommodate up to 85 people. The holding room can accommodate 34 people. Both holding rooms operate a 'fish eye' CCTV system. There is a small, secluded area, which provides an outside space, and is covered by cameras. Mats and blankets are available if detained children need to sleep. Snacks are available at all times, as is the machine with a variety of hot drinks. There is a comprehensive array of photos of the food. Also, a folder with ingredients and information of allergens. There are three showering facilities in the facility. One is situated in the family holding room and two are situated in the main holding room. There is a limited range of toys for young children, plus some reading material in English and other varying languages, which tend to include lots of pictures, newspapers are available. The Board is of the opinion that a saving can be made with the provision of newspapers. They are all in English, and not all the detainees can read English. (This applies to Frontier House too.) Games such as Jenga and dominoes are available and well used by children, and DVDs are available from staff. There is one medic on the site, who is managed by Aeromed (Mitie C&C uses Aeromed facilities). The Refugee Council staffs an area for bailed unaccompanied children 24/7. The area has three 'rest rooms', a quiet room and a facility for providing food and drink.

## ***Manston***

The operations room (ops room) has a number of screens that monitor activity. As mentioned before, when people are picked up at sea, they have a wristband, with a unique number, attached to their wrist. This number is recorded at Manston. All the marquees and areas at WJF with doorways feature 'arches' that record the wristband information. Manual scanners are in place and are usually used to scan wristbands. The arches are augmented by hand-held scanners to ensure the capture of accurate data. Consequently, a detained person can be easily located when in WJF or Manston. Adjacent to the ops room is a site management room, which coordinates the activities of contractors and monitors detention.

During the reporting year, there have been additional improvements on the Manston site. All 12 marquees now have rigid walls. The medical centre had their refurbishment completed. There are isolation rooms upstairs and consultation rooms downstairs. Mitie C&C continues to manage the marquees. During the year, Mitie C&C took over the management of the residential holding rooms (RHR) from MTC (Management and Training Corporation). The hand-held radios, used by Mitie C&C, have been updated and made more efficient, so that the whole site cannot hear all airway conversations. Also note the RHR facilities referenced below.

The medical centre is in the 'Tempest' building, and the medical team is managed by Medevent. (There are two medical providers on site: Medevent and Aeromed.) The

Medevent team consists of a senior emergency department clinician, a duty bronze paramedic, two paramedics and three support staff.

Emergency and urgent care is provided at the medical centre, which is within the 'scope of practice' of the Medevent team and facilities available. As with WJF, the team's remit is to reduce any unnecessary NHS secondary care burden. The facility has appropriately stocked medication cabinets, treatment rooms and a resuscitation suite. Medical-note keeping uses the EMIS digital system. Any straightforward medical needs can be overseen by Aeromed. Having the isolation rooms in the same building enables the medical team to better manage care for detained people.

'Barrack' buildings were converted into residential holding rooms (RHR): each floor has six rooms, with two beds and a washbasin in each. There are some rooms with single beds. At the end of the corridor, there are showers, toilets and a recreational room, where there is a drinks machine, three or four seats and a TV. Each building has a secure outside area, which is accessible by detained individuals. The facility has residential space for up to 288 people. Meals are served in their rooms. During the reporting year, another set of residential buildings were refurbished to accommodate families.

All marquees and RHR areas are serviced by the catering firm OCS. Frozen food is delivered here, then defrosted and supplied to the rest of the campus. Mitie C&C staff are trained in the management of food in their area. Fresh fruit is available at all times. Each marquee has a drinks machine, which provides hot drinks throughout the day. The menu is decided by a Home Office team. All marquees have a comprehensive folder on food ingredients and allergens, which can be shared with detained people.

On arrival at Manston, detained people are held in the seating area/marquee before being taken to the 'arrivals area' for biometric and further assessments. A separate area has been created for single women and families. From here, they are taken to the marquees. Their blue bags, which contain their personal belongings, are now kept in a secure property store.

There are separate marquees for single adult men and family groups with children at Manston. Single women are housed in the family marquees. All the marquees have their own toilets and showers, plus a small 'prayer' room and a quiet area. The prayer room is equipped with religious books pertaining to the main religions. Prayer mats are also available. All staff have received training about Ramadan, and the Board has observed them being empathetic to the needs of detained people during this time. Mats and blankets are available for those who need to sleep. Used linen is sent away to be laundered. Mats are easily washed down. There are TVs, board games, playing cards and toys for the children.

Snacks, fruit, water and hot drinks are available in all the marquees. Family marquees have additional access to milk, baby food and baby clothes. There are child-feeding rooms, which offer more privacy. Single-use feeding bottles with teats are available. Female sanitary products are available in the toilets and are also included in their 'wash bags'. Each marquee also has a kitchen, with fridges and hot ovens for use by Mitie C&C staff only. A selection of hot food is sent to each marquee. Mobile phones are available for detained people to use. These are provided by Mitie C&C staff. Three of the marquees have phone booths with phones attached. The other marquees have IP phones, which connect digitally rather than over a traditional network. All phones can make international calls, with the international dialling codes displayed nearby. Calls are made without any cost to the detained individual.

## ***Frontier House***

The facility has a holding room, with a capacity of 38, plus toilets, an observation room, which has camera screens covering the holding room; an induction office; and a medical room (where a medic can work when necessary). Daily newspapers are available in the holding room. Detained people also have phone access at all times. There is a phone on the wall available for local calls. If they need to make an international call, they are taken into the interview room.

The holding room is one big area that has seats, with space at the end where detained people can lie on mats if they so wish. There are blankets available. Snacks are available at all times, set out on a table. A machine provides a basic choice of hot drinks, and microwaved meals are also served. All arrivals to Frontier House receive an induction by Mitie C&C. There is an area in the main entrance, which is pre-induction, where non-inducted arrivals wait prior to their induction. Those who have been bailed have a separate area, near the entrance. Mitie C&C staff from the KIU, in Dover, are brought in when needed. This is a supervised area.

### **3. Key points**

#### **3.1 Main findings**

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

In the course of the reporting period, the number of individuals crossing the Channel was dictated by the weather. During a weekend in July, there were Immigration protests at Dover Port, which impeded the safety of landings, processing and transportation from WJF. With co-operation with local police, rescue boats were diverted to Port of Ramsgate. SBO at the time were concerned about confidentiality and safety, so the Board was only informed after the event. Because of safety, and transport issues, KIU was not used. There were reports of a possible beach landing on the weekend of the Ramsgate re-route. Investigations were inconclusive and it may have been a boat heading out rather than arriving.

In the first week of September, the Board was informed of several critical incidents at sea, including one death and a number of deflations - three of which occurred in French waters, with one vessel continuing into UK waters.

The Board, along with the IMB National Board, was also asked to contribute to the ongoing Manston 2022 Inquiry. (This is the independent public inquiry established to investigate the conditions and decision-making at the Manston STHF between June and November 2022.)

##### **Safety**

Western Jet Foil (WJF): in the Board's view, this continues to be the least safe of the four establishments, because it is visible to the public from the cliffs and is also in the working area of Dover Western Docks. That said, WJF is not a short-term holding facility (STHF), so is not subject to the same requirements as Manston, KIU and Frontier House. WJF is a Solas landside reception area. CCTV is in operation, which has greatly improved security, in the Board's view.

Kent Intake Unit (KIU): this building is behind a high fence and has security gates. The Board continues to be concerned that induction interviews are not held privately. The added curtains don't really give that much more confidentiality. However, welfare interviews, which take place slightly later and are used to identify vulnerabilities or safeguarding issues, are held in private rooms.

Manston: this is a large former Ministry of Defence site so is adequately fenced around the perimeter. The security here is monitored by Mitie C&C, which used guard dogs until April 2025. The interviewing process has continued to improve since our last report

Frontier House: the holding room has no access to the outside, so can be classified, in the Board's view, as safe. The main entrance to the building has Mitie security staff on duty.

All sites have CCTV, which is monitored by staff in the various offices/observation rooms. When we spoke to some detained people, they said they felt safe. During the reporting period, there were no reported assaults or self-harming incidents on any of the premises.

Board members took part in a day's Spear (spontaneous protection enabling accelerated response) training (which teaches people how to use their natural flinch

reaction to protect themselves and respond quickly if someone suddenly threatens or attacks them), delivered by a Mitie team.

### **Fair and humane treatment**

Whenever the Board has visited the various holding rooms, staff have been observed to be courteous, empathetic and, often, attentive to the needs of those who have been detained. WJF has improved the system of making sure that those who are detained are given dry clothes first, then triaged. They are given water at the pick-up point. In the main, they get a food bag after they have been processed. But if someone indicates that they are hungry, they are given something to eat immediately.

*WJF:* A new digital system of photographing detained people was established in March 2024. This meant that digital photos of those on IS91s could be printed straight after their arrival, which resulted in a faster flow-through of initial scribe processes at WJF. At the same time, the scribe/arrest desks were changed and increased to four workstations to improve flow. At Manston, all IS91s forms and paperwork are electronically generated and printed.

*Manston:* the 'officers' mess' is a refurbished building for conducting in-person screening interviews, with some additional capability for remote interviews. There are separate waiting areas for single adult males (SAMs), single adult females (SAFs) and families. There is a facility for children to be looked after by a member of staff, in the case of lone parents, so that the child cannot hear what could be distressing accounts being conveyed; children are given headphones, and toys/books to occupy them.

The movement of detained individuals to interviews or the medical centre has been shifted to one supplier, ensuring the flow of residents through the system is more efficient and provides better care.

In a broader sense, there was a breach of safety during the year. A national newspaper reported that a racist, derogatory term had been heard over the internal hand-held radio system used by Mitie C&C staff. An investigation found that one handset was missing, but it did not identify the individual or individuals responsible. Mitie introduced a more robust radio system, with improved accountability. Posters reminding staff to be mindful of how they communicate and who may be listening were observed across all establishments.

### **Health and wellbeing**

All four sites have trained medical staff available. If there is a medical issue at Frontier House, the medic from KIU is sent to Folkestone. At WJF, arrivals receive a medical triage and are immediately treated if significantly unwell. If they have a condition, such as scabies, for example, they are isolated and treated with permethrin cream (a second dose of cream is supplied by the Medevent clinician to use in a week's time, which reduces future NHS burden). Cases of diphtheria have continued to fall during the reporting year, but this condition would be quickly picked up on induction at the 'red tent' check-up and treated by the Medevent team. Those who are suspected of having diphtheria are, most commonly, dispersed to a hotel that has a dedicated medical team, to which the Medevent team hands care over. The Board considers the medical provision to be appropriate and seeks further advice on individual cases when required.

In cases of significant hypothermia, the Medevent team is able to treat 3-4 patients at one time. If the number of affected individuals is beyond the capacity of the Medevent team, additional support would be requested from SECamb (south east coast

ambulance service). Initial treatment includes removing wet clothes, putting on dry clothes and, potentially, resuscitation with warm intravenous fluids and external warming.

### **Preparation for removal, transfer or release**

The vast majority of people who completed the process at Manston are considered 'dispersals' (a term used in Government policy to house those seeking asylum in various local authorities across the country). In the main, detained individuals are not in Manston for more than 24 hours. When Mitie C&C staff are informed that people are being moved out of Manston, detained individuals are collected and their belongings made available. When observed by the Board, this was carried out in an orderly and empathetic manner.

As a result of the UK-France Agreement, in August, Operation Hillmore (the 'one-in, one-out' agreement that lets the UK return small-boat arrivals to France in exchange for taking in an equal number of eligible individuals from France) came into force. Some individuals would be sent to immigration removal centres (IRCs) whilst their cases were considered for re-admission to France. It was planned that this would commence with around 50 eligible small-boat arrivals per week being dispersed to these IRCs. Total actual figures for the year have not been provided to the Board. Mitie C&C weekly figures sent to the Board indicate how many have been transferred to the IRCs as part of Operation Hillmore. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are not eligible for the scheme. The Board was informed by the Home Office that officers were issued with criteria to follow. We are informed that screening interview questions are the same for those being bailed to hotels for further assessments and those going to the IRCs. Some single men and single women would be sent on to immigration removal centres (IRCs).

Detained individuals continue to appear unsure about the exact procedures, and the Board still finds it difficult to understand why they can't be given at least basic information about where they will be taken next. We appreciate that giving precise timeframes may not always be possible.

From our observations, using marquees 8 and 9 for those being transferred to hotels, etc, has led to better organisation and reduced overcrowding. These changes contributed to a calmer and more structured environment for detained people and also reduced stress for staff, in the Board's view.

## **3.2 Recommendations**

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

The Board seeks a response from the Minister on issues outlined in this report. Several of the recommendations have been repeated from our previous report, as there has been slow or no progress to date.

- The Board has again observed - echoing our comments in last year's report - that detained people are still in need of clearer information about their 'process journey'. We continue to note that the welfare of detained individuals has at times been adversely affected by their lack of understanding about where they are being taken.
- There appears to be confusion about what information is given to those detained under Operation Hillmore. Is it different to those moving on to hotels for further assessments?

- Again, as recommended in our previous report, we encourage the Home Office to work with Mitie Care & Custody teams to get repairs done promptly and quickly.
- The Board recommends that Manson staff continue to work towards detaining people for no longer than 24 hours. At the RHR facility, staff should likewise maintain their commitment to keeping detention within the 96-hour limit.

**TO ASYLUM GROUP/BORDER SECURITY COMMAND/HOME OFFICE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT**

- With the WJF, refurbish the Board again recommends that there should be more visual information on the screens instead of it just being in a written format. In addition, detained people should have access to better visual aids to help them when they are being interviewed.
- Maintain the revised approach that ensures age-assessment interviews for children are carried out as quickly as possible. Hopefully, benches will not be used if children need somewhere to sleep.
- We continue to recommend that the Home Office liaises with cleaning suppliers to ensure that the cleaning contract for KIU, Manston marquees and Frontier House has consistent high levels of service.
- Again, that SBO's and IMIU's positive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel maintain their attendance at the monthly Board meetings.

**TO THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR (Mitie C&C)**

- In a repeat from our previous report, we recommend that Mitie C&C continues to work with the Home Office/IMIU to get repairs done promptly and faster.
- We recommend that the contractor keeps up the positive attentiveness and mindfulness with detained people in marquees and RHR.
- As previously noted, constructive engagement with the Board continues, with senior personnel maintaining regular attendance at the monthly Board meetings.

**3.3 Progress since the previous report: Home Office Action Plan response from the 2024 annual report**

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
<b>TO THE MINISTER</b>				
1.	The Board has observed that detained people are still in need of information about their 'process journey'. We continue to note that the welfare of detained individuals has been sometimes adversely affected by their lack of	Accepted.	Border Force remains committed to ensuring all persons detained are aware of their 'process journey'. However, there are limitations to the volume of information that can be presented on digital display screens, particularly where there are literacy concerns of arrivals.  Information screens at Western Jet Foil (WJF) and	Ongoing.

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
	<p>understanding about where they are being taken. The Board understands that work has begun to address this issue, but we are disappointed about the length of time it is taking to solve this problem.</p>		<p>Manston are, and will continue to be, regularly reviewed to ensure that all information is displayed is accurate, relevant and in the most common languages of arrivals. Pictorial aids are already used in WJF to obtain basic information at first point of contact; however, Border Force will explore whether their use can be developed.</p> <p>Screening interviews take place at Manston and KIU with in-person or phone interpreters present. Mitie C&amp;C officer interview scripts have recently been developed to improve process journey information provided, offering detained people an opportunity to query the process journey while an interpreter is available. Post-interview, officers have access to interpretation devices should detained individuals approach officers with questions.</p> <p>Border Force continues to explore how messages on the digital message boards can be better tailored regarding bail and next steps.</p>	
2.	<p>The Board has been informed that unaccompanied children should not go through an initial age decision interview during night hours, unless in exceptional circumstances. This results in some individuals resting on wooden benches overnight. The Board has requested, for several months, that</p>	Partially accepted.	<p>Border Force aims to process individuals as quickly as possible through Western Jet Foil (WJF) and, as such, all children are processed during night hours. This now includes the interviewing of those where there are concerns about age and an initial age decision interview is required. Previously, age decisions were delayed until the morning to allow a period of rest. However, since the IMB shared this recommendation,</p>	<p>Ongoing. Process adapted (2025). Hopefully, benches will not be used, should children need some where to sleep.</p>

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
	<p>mats should be provided for them to sleep on.</p> <p>The Board has also requested that the advice given to allow for resting before interview, if arrivals after 10pm, is revisited, as arrivals in the morning have often been many hours overnight on a small boat, with no sleep, and are interviewed straightaway.</p>		<p>Border Force has reviewed the position and has decided that, subject to appropriate monitoring, with due regard to an individual's welfare needs, age-decision interviews will be conducted during night hours. This should ensure children who require initial age-decision interviews are processed at WJF as soon as possible. The Board has been informed of this decision. However, should an individual feel too tired, a period of rest will be given prior to interview.</p> <p>Consideration has already been given to the provision of sleeping mats at WJF. However, due to limited space, the mats would be a trip hazard and, as such, Border Force is unable to fully accept this recommendation. Border Force will, however, continue to explore ways of making extended stays at WJF more comfortable within the constraints of the available accommodation.</p>	

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
3.	The Board recommends that detained people should continue not to be held at Manston for longer than 24 hours. And at the RHR facility, they should continue not be there for more than 96 hours.	Not accepted.	Under the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, detained persons in holding rooms can be held for up to 24 hours, and 96 hours in residential holding rooms, unless an extension is agreed in exceptional circumstances. Border Force always ensures that the length of detention is kept to a minimum and for the shortest time possible, prioritising children and the vulnerable. However, there may always be exceptional circumstances where detention may need to be extended and, for this reason, we are unable to accept this recommendation.	Not applicable
4.	Work with Mitie Care & Custody teams to get repairs done promptly and quicker.	Accepted.	<p>Border Force is responsible for all facility repairs (Mitie Care &amp; Custody is the custodial provider only) and is committed to resolving facility issues as swiftly as possible. A well-established process is in place between Border Force and a number of contractors to complete remedial work in line with set service level agreements.</p> <p>The one maintenance issue highlighted in the report concerns a shower in the non-detained area of KIU, which has since been rectified. Throughout this time, showers were available for use in the detained area of KIU, if required.</p>	Issue still persists.
5.	The Board recommends that there should be visual information on the screens instead of it	Partially accepted.	Border Force is committed to ensuring all persons detained are aware of their 'process journey'; however, this recommendation has been	Ongoing.

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
	just being in a written format. In addition, detained people should have access to visual aids to help them when they are being interviewed.		<p>partially accepted, as there are limitations to the volume of information that can be provided via digital display screens. At Western Jet Foil, pictorial aids are used to obtain the basic information required of all arrivals supplemented by the digital screens, which use pictorial images to help aid the process. In- person translators are provided at Manston in order to assist with initial examination and subsequent interview of detained persons.</p> <p>Work will continue to ensure that small boat arrivals are kept informed about the process. This includes keeping information provided via digital display screens under regular review to ensure any enhancements can be made when required.</p>	
6.	We recommend that minors should be rested before being interviewed and that BF/HOIE does not carry out welfare interviews with minors at KIU in the middle of the night. In addition, sleep mats should be provided for those who have to spend the night at WJF.	Partially accepted.	<p>Border Force prioritises children and the vulnerable to ensure that length of detention is kept to a minimum. At Kent Intake Unit (KIU), welfare interviews are conducted throughout the night, unless the child feels too tired, to ensure children are moved out of detention as quickly as possible and into appropriate local authority care. As such, Border Force is unable to accept this element of the recommendation.</p> <p>Ensuring adequate facilities for individuals is important; however, sleeping mats are not provided due to health and safety concerns, given the limited space and potential trip hazard that they pose. Border Force will continue to explore ways of making WJF more</p>	Ongoing - appears to be adapted

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
			comfortable for those experiencing extended stays, within the constraints of the available accommodation.	
7.	That SBOC's positive engagement with the Board continues and that senior personnel maintain their attendance at the monthly Board meetings.	Accepted	Border Force and contracted partners remain committed to ongoing engagement with the Board and maintaining attendance at the monthly Board meetings. The commitment to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of people in our care, through an open and honest relationship with the Board, and SBOC will continue to strive to resolve any matters promptly and effectively as they arise.	Completed- has been maintained
<b>TO THE DETENTION CONTRACTOR</b>				
8.	We recommend that the contractor liaises with Border Force to ensure that the cleaning contract for KIU, Manston marquees and Frontier House have consistently high levels of service.	Accepted.	<p>Border Force are responsible for ensuring cleaning contractors provide a particular level of service or rectify issues promptly with cleaning standards when identified.</p> <p>Since the last IMB reporting year commenced, Border Force has had a contract monitoring team in place who carefully monitor cleaning standards daily. This ensures that issues requiring escalation can be escalated quickly and resolved with cleaning contractors. Monthly governance meetings have been established to discuss any concerns, and clear processes are in place to ensure that the frequency of cleaning is adapted in line with the numbers of arrivals. This ensures standards are maintained.</p>	Some issues still persist. The cleaning contract for KIU and FH need to be more consistent.

Ref	Recommendation/ Issue/concern	Accepted/ partially accepted/ not accepted	Comments	Progress Ongoing or completed
9.	In addition, we recommend that the contractors work with Home Office/Border Force to get repairs done promptly and quicker.	Accepted	<p>Border Force is responsible for all facility repairs (Mitie Care &amp; Custody is the custodial provider only) and is committed to resolving facility issues as swiftly as possible. A well-established process is in place between Border Force and a number of contractors to complete remedial work in line with set service level agreements.</p> <p>The one maintenance issue highlighted in the report concerns a shower in the non-detained area of KIU, which has since been rectified. Throughout this time, showers were available for use in the detained area of KIU if required.</p>	Issue still persists.

## **Evidence sections 4 – 7**

### **4. Safety**

#### **4.1 Reception**

##### ***Western Jet Foil***

On arrival, anyone who is identified as a child, as well as families and single women, are processed quickly to help ensure their safety. The wristbands aid safety and security.

WJF has multiple screens displaying information about some of the processing procedures 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 cooperating 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. There was some information displayed on screens regarding trafficking, including some pictorial representations.

All staff and Board members need security passes to access these areas (and not just WJF, but all areas of the STHFs). All SBO and Interforce staff, as well as Board members, wear stab vests, as new arrivals won't have yet been searched until the processing hall. (In the red tent area, those who have been detained are given a rudimentary search.) (A stab vest, the type worn by police and the army, etc, is a type of body armor designed to protect the wearer from knife attacks and other sharp object threats.) Stab vests are provided on arrival at Bronze Control.

##### ***Kent Intake Unit***

KIU mainly serves small boat Channel crossing arrivals, but some children are also picked up from the port, having arrived in distribution lorries and freight lanes.

Board members continue to be concerned at the lack of privacy when detained children were being asked if they had been involved with modern day slavery. Even with the use of translators, how are these questions put across? Also, when detained individuals were asked about their general health and mental health, there was not much privacy, which the Board is concerned about, especially as these are children.

##### ***Manston***

On arrival at Manston, detained people have their fingerprints taken and further questioning is carried out by Home Office and Border Force staff. Following interviews, they are held in marquees managed by Mitie Care & Custody, where they are, once again, questioned about health issues. Mitie C&C asks general health questions and some steps seem to have been taken to promote privacy. Property is also checked by Mitie C&C staff and secured in safe rooms (the blue bag is returned to detained individuals when they leave Manston).

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

There were no reports of suicides, self-harm or deaths in custody in the reporting year.

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

The Board has not been made aware of, or observed, any violence during the reporting year. In the main, there is very little violence in any of the four establishments.

#### **4.4 Security**

From the Board's observations, security on all four sites seems robust. Interforce provides security at WJF. Mitie C&C continues to manage security at Manston. When there are arrivals at WJF, KIU and Manston, a large number of Border Force, IMIU and C&C personnel are usually present. Increasingly, there has also been a police presence. The Board has also observed the police in interviews and when talking to detained people in the processing hall at WJF. Police officers often sat beside detained individuals and carried out informal, low-key questioning using soft-skills approaches. On some occasions, more formal interviews were conducted in interview rooms. The Board has not observed any interviews of this nature.

##### ***Western Jet Foil***

As referenced earlier, the outer perimeter is more secure and there is CCTV on site. Pat down and clothing searches are completed as part of the induction process at WJF, inside the main processing hall. When the detained individual person changes into dry clothes, their belongings are put in a blue bag, which is more thoroughly searched in the main processing hall. During the reporting year, each station had a camera installed, as a means of recording the person's belongings. The bag is then sealed with their unique identity number.

This proved useful when a detained individual, who was transferred to Harmondsworth IRC, submitted a complaint that their mobile phone was missing. The issue was investigated, making reference to the recording at WJF. Also, during transfer from Manston to IRC, the blue bag was still secured and placed in the luggage area of the coach. There was no mobile phone shown on the recordings.

##### ***Kent Intake Unit and Manston***

Mitie C&C carries out its own searches, when detained people transfer to KIU and Manston. Once again, the blue bags are securely centrally stored. With Mitie C&C taking over the management of the RHR buildings, there is no need for extra searches to be done.

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

Implementing safeguarding issues, have been improved, for IMIU, and Mitie C&C teams. IMIU takes the lead in managing safeguarding monitoring, implementing and training. All teams at Manston, KIU and Frontier House have periodic training input to help implement safeguarding procedures. During their stay at KIU, Manston and Frontier House, Mitie C&C staff carry out wellbeing checks. The enhanced CCTV helps with safeguarding.

With our Board member back from a sabbatical, we have, again, been observing meetings by the safeguarding team, which not only includes the agencies on site but a wider circle, such as Kent County Council (KCC).

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

There were no reported incidents involving the use of force during the reporting year.

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

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

Please see section 2 for a description of the accommodation, clothing and food provided.

#### ***Western Jet Foil***

The waiting areas in the processing area now have softer chairs, replacing the wooded benches. The waiting areas for children, families and single women is now separated from the area used by single men.

#### ***Kent Intake Unit***

Although shower issues have persisted during the year, the facility has managed to function without too many problems as, on the whole, numbers have been low. Repairs were slow and inadequate. The Board understands that the issue with repairs continues to be due to the Home Office being slow in giving the go-ahead.

#### ***Manston***

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

The barracks has a recreational room to facilitate 12 detained men on each corridor. However, this room only had 3-4 chairs, which is inadequate for 12 people.

### **Relationships between staff and detained people**

During our monitoring visits, staff have continued to appear to have an empathetic, attentive and caring relationship with detained individuals. When we observed interactions between staff and families, we saw staff taking an active interest in what the children were doing.

### **Children and families**

#### ***Western Jet Foil***

New arrivals were separated, with families, women and those identified as unaccompanied children being kept at the front of the induction areas. After the induction process, they were held separately, with unaccompanied children then sent to the KIU. Families were generally sent to Manston. They were moved as a matter of priority.

The Board has observed a couple of age-assessment interviews with children. These were conducted in an empathetic and professional manner.

#### ***Kent Intake Unit***

As previously stated, children continue to be placed at KIU. Very young, unaccompanied children are placed with the Refugee Council, or in the family room.

#### ***Manston***

Families and single women were still housed separately from single men, in different marquees.

## **Property**

### ***Western Jet Foil***

During the year, cameras were installed at each station where property is searched. This means that both the search process and the items of property themselves are now recorded.

### ***Manston/KIU/Frontier House***

The blue bags containing the property of detained individuals are stored in a secure room.

## **6. Health and wellbeing**

### **6.1 Healthcare general**

During the reporting year, medical staff were provided by Aeromed and Medevent, as well as Complementary Medical Services (CMS), across all the four sites.

### ***Western Jet Foil***

There is usually a team of 4-5 Medevent officers, which includes 1-2 doctors and a paramedic, on site. There is a cabin, where consultations and examinations can be conducted in privacy.

The electronic management information system (EMIS) is used among the medical teams.

When a detained person needs medical attention, a green band is attached to their wrist. Treatment depends on their ailment. The Board has observed staff frequently checking those with green bands across the sites.

Family members are given a pink band for attaching to their wrists so that families can be kept and processed together. Once again, the Board has observed staff checking on this at various points.

### ***Kent Intake Unit***

Aeromed staff are available 24/7 to attend to medical issues at the KIU.

### ***Manston***

If a detained person in one of the marquees needs to see a healthcare professional, they are either escorted to the medical building or the medical team visits the marquee. When there are large numbers on site, the medical team visits the marquees to check that all is well.

The Board observed staff being vigilant in ensuring that those detained were as comfortable as they could be, despite the conditions on some occasions. If a detained person indicated that there were unwell, they were accompanied to the medical centre

### ***Frontier House***

If a detained person needs medical care, the medic from the KIU is sent to them.

### **6.2 Physical healthcare**

Please see the section, above.

### ***Kent Intake Unit***

There is a small area that has access to the outside/open walled space. There is no solid roof, but security netting.

### ***Manston***

The marquees and RHR buildings each have a fenced-off outdoor space that detained individuals can access.

### ***WJF/Frontier House***

There is no access to the outside at these establishments.

## **6.3 Mental healthcare**

As in our last report, no issues were observed or reported during our monitoring visits. In general, detained people do not remain at Manston, KIU or Frontier House for more than 24 hours. Where individuals are transferred to the RHR facility, their stay has likewise not typically exceeded the 96-hour limit.

## **6.4 Soft skills**

The Board continues to observe efforts made by staff to help keep detained people occupied in these settings. Most areas have access to outside space, even if it is limited. The barracks (RHR) has a fenced outside are, and the marquees have TVs.

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

### **7.1 General**

*This return was submitted on behalf of IMIU and SBO.*

### **7.2 Length of detention**

**For the 2025 reporting year:**

#### **Small Boats Operational (SBO) data**

- Total number of arrivals at WJF: 41472
- Gender: Male, 34201; Female, 6077; Unknwn, 2
- Not currently recorded 1192
- Number of families: more than 1,900 families arrived at WJF
- Those aged 17 years and under by gender: male, 3635; female, 1209

#### **Number of people detained at Manston**

- Around 38,500 individuals arrived at Manston

#### **RHR**

- Around 10% of Manston arrivals were admitted to RHR

**Family detention times: shortest/longest/average:** figures not provided.

#### **Top four nationalities**

Eritrea 7602, Afghanistan 4755 Iran 4489 Sudan 4432

#### **Illegal Migration Intake Unit (IMIU) data**

**Lorry drops KIU, Dover:** 100

**Lorry drops KIU, Folkestone:** 356

**Small Boats KIU, Dover only:** around 2491\*

**Small Boat KIU, Folkestone:** around 34\*

**Manston, small boats only:** included in the SBO data

#### **Numbers forwarded for safeguarding and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**

**KIU: arrivals referred to NRM:**

**KIU Dover:** 704 **KIU Folkstone:** 110

**Manston arrivals referred to NRM:** around 5191\*

**Manston safeguarding referred:** around 3666\*

**KIU Folkestone/Frontier House: individuals detained over 24 hour (adults): 2**

**KIU: individuals detained for over 24 hours (UASCs): 59**

**Manston: number of SAFs/SAMs' length of stay (more than 24 hours): around 7336\***

*Figures provided by Higher Officer – Briefings Manager | Secretariat*

*Illegal Migration Intake Unit (IMIU)*

*Asylum and Human Rights Operations | Asylum Group | Home Office*

*\*These are not published figures and can be subject to change.*

**Mitie Care & Custody figures:**

Location	Resident admitted into country: from holding area	Resident handed to escort/detention: from holding area	Moved to detention: from holding area	Border Force custody	Hospital/medical release	Immigration bail
Kent Intake Unit	2250	32	1	0	0	0
Frontier House	506	209	11	0	0	0
Manston	0	860	0	40	17	33953

Location	Police custody	Removed to RHR (Oct to Dec)
Kent Intake Unit	0	0
Frontier House	0	0
Manston	74	663

*Source: figures provided by Mitie Care & Custody Manston*

**7.3 Family contact**

The Board has, again, observed that there is access to phone calls and that officers make the phone available for detained people's use. If there are several requests for the phone, Mitie C&C staff appear to manage this well. Mobile phones are made

available and all marquees have phone booths with landlines. When being processed at WJF, it has been observed that detained people can make a note of phone numbers before putting their mobiles in the blue bags.

#### **7.4 Transfer or release**

The Board has observed that interviews are sometimes delayed if individuals are asleep. They are allowed to continue sleeping before being interviewed, although this has occasionally meant that the detained person exceeds the 24-hour limit. This reflects the same concern raised in last year's report, where similar delays were noted.

## 8. The work of the IMB

Every week, a Board member makes an unannounced visit to the holding rooms at all four establishments, to monitor the facilities and speak to those who have been detained. A report is produced after each visit and circulated to the Home Office, SBO, IMIU, Border Force and Mitie C&C. We have appreciated the prompt and regular responses from all the stakeholders to the issues raised. As with last year's report, we note that this monitoring process continues to play an essential role in identifying and addressing concerns.

### Board statistics

Recommended complement of Board members	10
Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period	7*
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period	7
Total number of visits to establishment(s)	52
Total number of Board Meetings	12

*\*Unfortunately, in January, a member passed away. Another member was on a sabbatical from May-November. A new member started in May.*

## Annex A

### Abbreviations of key terms

- BF: Border Force
- C&C: Care and Custody, part of Mitie
- CMS: Complementary Medical Services
- EMIS Health: electronic management information system: formerly Egton medical information systems (EMIS)
- ICE: In-country escort
- IMIU: Illegal (previously Irregular) migration intake unit
- IRC: Immigration removal centre
- KIU: Kent Intake Unit, Channel View, Dover
- MTC: Management and training corporation
- RHR: residential holding room
- SAF/SAM: single adult female/male
- SBO: Small Boats Operation, Manston; previously SBOC - Small Boats Operation Command
- SOLAS: Safety of life at sea
- STHF: short term holding facility
- WJF: Western Jet Foil, Western Docks, Dover
- UASC: unaccompanied asylum seeking children



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [imb@justice.gov.uk](mailto:imb@justice.gov.uk)