

A	Concern Addressed By	HMIP Concern	Home Office Response to HMIP Concern Including Action Already Taken / Proposed to Address Concern
1	Home Office	<p>Priority concern</p> <p>People were held for far too long in facilities that were not designed or equipped for long stays. In the previous six months, nearly 600 people, including six children, were held for over 24 hours.</p>	<p>Action taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Under the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018, detained persons in holding rooms can be held for up to 24 hours, and possibly beyond, with appropriate authority. However, Border Force will always ensure that the length of detention is kept to a minimum and for the shortest time possible prioritising children and the vulnerable.• Where appropriate, consideration will be given to transferring individuals to an Immigration Removal Centre or Residential Short-Term Holding Facility which affords better rest, relaxation, and recreation.• Border Force adheres to its statutory obligations under the STHF rules but will continue to review and improve detention facilities in order to provide additional (non-statutory) requirements such as hot meals (not just snacks) and access to showers (where current operational infrastructure arrangements are available). <p>Planned:</p> <p>Border Force will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with multi-agency partners (including Safeguarding Advice and Children’s Champion and Social Services) to continuously improve processes for children in its care.• Review Holding Room standards for non-residential STHFs as appropriate to take account of evolving demands.• Engage with wider Home Office as appropriate when assessing any new commercial arrangements on detention and escorting.

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2	Home Office	<p>Priority concern</p> <p>The small holding rooms at Luton and Stansted airports were grubby and crowded. Luton was unable to provide decent conditions for the number of detainees it held.</p>	<p>Luton</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>Border Force accepts that the Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF) at Luton needs improvement and has been pressing for redevelopment and expansion since 2021.</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>Progress has been made recently and there are on-going contractual discussions with the port operator and other parties; once agreed, work will commence. The planned works will give Luton an additional third holding room and increase capacity from 22 to 40.</p> <p>Stansted</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>Border Force accept that the STHF at Stansted needs improving. Stansted does have a separate area for families and / or vulnerable people to use. It has undergone some ergonomic upgrades and has better seating and a table within it. The STHF is located adjacent to the Arrivals Hall and at present this constrains the possibility of extending. It has space for 14 people and is rarely now at that, or close to capacity.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with Manchester Airport Group (MAG) with regards to making changes to the STHF that would see the food preparation area upgraded.</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>Whilst discussions continue with MAG to agree interim upgrades to the STHF, Stansted Airport are starting work on their airport expansion which will deliver brand new Border Force accommodation by March 2027. A brand new STHF is part of designs, and will be based on Manchester's new STHF footprint, design and size.</p>

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3	Home Office	<p>Priority concern</p> <p>There were weaknesses in some aspects of child safeguarding, including a lack of enhanced DBS checks for all Border Force staff who had contact with children and some questionable decisions regarding vulnerable children.</p>	<p>Action Taken:</p> <p>All specialist Safeguarding and Modern Slavery (SAMS) officers are required to have enhanced DBS checks. For staff in England, Wales and NI that is an enhanced DBS check. For staff in Scotland that is an enhanced Disclosure Scotland check.</p> <p>Whilst other officers are not routinely enhanced DBS checked, they are subject to CTC checks which include a criminal record check for both spent and unspent convictions as part of national security vetting. All Border Force officers hold Security Clearance (SC level), which is more stringent than CTC.</p> <p>Additionally, all staff undertake mandatory Keeping Children Safe e-learning which focuses on the statutory duties imposed by section 55 of the Borders Citizenship & Immigration Act 2009, types of abuse, how to identify them and how to refer concerns. The intention is that all children in respect of whom there is any inference of welfare concern should be interviewed by personnel trained in Protecting the Vulnerable (to specialism standard) or a Safeguarding and Modern Slavery officer. However, if operational coverage prevents this at any given location, then advice is sought from the network of Safeguarding and Modern Slavery officers available before interviewing.</p> <p>Action Planned</p> <p>Border Force will continue to assure, through first and second line assurance, activity and decisions in relation to children and vulnerable people. Any issues identified will be subject to improvement activity and progress tracked.</p>
4	Home Office	<p>Priority concern</p> <p>Detainees were not allowed access to their prescribed medication and, at many sites, there was limited access to paramedics.</p>	<p>In 2023, the Home Office carried out a National Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for the non-residential Short-Term Holding Facility estate. This covered over 50 separate facilities across the UK, which included the Border Force directly managed sites.</p> <p>The HNA has formally established the health needs for the detained population and provided service delivery model options that could meet these requirements. Work is now underway with Home Office Commercial to further evaluate the preferred option and procurement for this new service is expected to commence later this year.</p> <p>The consolidation of foreign issued medication, that is often not clearly labelled or prescribed to an individual does present challenges and is something that we are looking to resolve in the future service iteration.</p>

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5	Mitie Care and Custody & Home Office	<p>Priority concern</p> <p>Detainees’ access to telephone contact was limited and few were offered use of the mobile phones held in every Care and Custody office.</p>	<p>Response to HMIP:</p> <p>Mitie Care & Custody will complete a full review of mobile phone provision across our holding rooms, this will inform our actions regarding a consistent approach to the provision of telephone access.</p> <p>Mitie Care & Custody are introducing further guidance on the provision of telephone access for the staff as a part of the new post ITC Operational Readiness training. This will also be reinforced to all staff as part of the annual DCO Refresher training. We will also roll out guidance on staff briefings with quality assurance provided through management checks to ensure compliance with this concern.</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>Following a review alternative resident handsets are being trialled across 5 locations. (Larne House RSTHF, Pennine House RSTHF, Swinderby RSTHF, Luton, Stansted and Heathrow airport holding rooms).</p> <p>We have increased the guidance on the issuing of mobile phones on the Initial Training Course and operational readiness for new DCOs. We have also substantially increased the guidance and awareness of the telephone access for residents on annual DCO refresher training which all DCO graded staff received annually.</p> <p>We have updated our resident induction form that has increased the information available regarding the use of a mobile phone and the office telephone.</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>The existing Nokia handsets currently in use are to be replaced with a suitable replacement following the trial.</p>

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6	Mitie Care and Custody & Home Office	Key concern Searches and induction interviews were often not conducted with sufficient privacy.	<p>We acknowledge that some facilities don't have the capability to allow this function. We have made amendments to the Holding Rooms standards document to allow any new build or refurbishment to include a dedicated space for searches, medical interviews and inductions.</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>As an interim, for areas where a private space is not immediately available, Care & Custody staff have been advised to utilise unused holding rooms and mobile technology to conduct inductions for detained individuals in private.</p> <p>The searching standard operating policy has been updated and published with guidance in line with searching DSO. This specifically highlights the provision for privacy regarding searching.</p> <p>Local operating procedures have been amended to enable the use of unused holding rooms to conduct private interviews/inductions. This is also in conjunction and supported with the instillation of Wi-Fi within the holding rooms for the use of the translation tablets/devices.</p> <p>Building works are complete at Stansted airport, this holding room has been adapted and can provide a private space for inductions, interviews and searching</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>There is an ongoing programme of works to improve the facilities in holding rooms including the provision of a private space.</p> <p>In the south a review of Luton and Gatwick airport are due by the end of the year and Heathrow airport terminal 5 is scheduled for work to commence end of Q1 2025.</p>

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7		<p>Key concern</p> <p>Telephone interpretation was not used enough after induction and, despite being available, hand-held translation devices were rarely used.</p>	<p>Mitie Care & Custody will complete a full review of the use of translation services across our holding rooms, this will inform our actions regarding a consistent approach to the provision of appropriate translation.</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>Wi-Fi has been installed in several Care and Custody sites allowing the increased usability of the translation device/tablets throughout the holding rooms.</p> <p>We have increased the guidance on the need for translation on the Initial Training Course and operational readiness for new DCOs. We have also substantially increased the guidance and awareness of the need to hold translated conversations with residents on annual DCO refresher training which all DCO graded staff received annually.</p> <p>All staff have been reminded to utilise the tablets for interactions within the holding rooms as required. This guidance also directs staff to the use of an office telephone for telephone translation where there is a poor mobile reception.</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>Guidance to staff will be included on staff briefings with quality assurance provided through management checks.</p> <p>Mitie Care and Custody are implementing WIFI in all holding rooms throughout the country to allow provision for wireless access for translation devices.</p>

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8		<p>Key concern</p> <p>Border Force did not systematically collect, verify and analyse data on adult and child safeguarding, or on the length of detention.</p>	<p>Action taken:</p> <p>Length of detention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border Force has an established data collation process in place on a range of detention data which is shared to stakeholders (including IMB) on request. Border Force continues to work with relevant government departments to improve its digital strategy, procedures, processes, and practices. <p>Safeguarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border Force is developing a technical solution to capture all vulnerabilities identified at the border which will enable data analysis and provide Border Force with a national picture on safeguarding. <p>Planned:</p> <p>Length of detention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border Force will take steps to improve the QA of detention related data to improve the identification of trends, issues and risks to inform future stakeholder engagement. Border Force will continue to consider the development of a number of digital solutions relating to detention information to improve and enhance accurate data collection and analysis. <p>Safeguarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The technical solution to capture vulnerability data is planned to go live in early 2024.
9		<p>Key concern</p> <p>Detainees did not have sufficient access to legal advice.</p>	<p>The legal aid agency funded detained duty advise scheme does not apply to these settings.</p> <p>STHF Rules only require detained persons to be made aware of their right to seek legal access and we are assisting people further on this through signposting to the contact details of local regulated advisers as obtained from the OISC and Law Society websites.</p>

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – HMIP INSPECTION OF AIRPORT SHORT-TERM HOLDING FACILITIES MANAGED BY MITIE CARE AND CUSTODY

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10		<p>Key concern</p> <p>Complaints submitted in a foreign language were not systematically processed, translated and answered, and there were extremely long delays in Border Force responses.</p>	<p>Action taken:</p> <p>Border Force work alongside HO colleagues to ensure all complaints are translated by the approved translation service within a 48-hour agreement.</p> <p>Border Force recognises there has been deficiencies in the way the complaints process has been managed previously which has led to unacceptable delays for some customers.</p> <p>Border Force has transformed the way complaints are managed to make improvements. These changes are resulting in more customer service focussed responses and improved performance within the SLA.</p> <p>Action Planned</p> <p>The First Word training roll out has already begun to change correspondence to provide a clearer more empathetic response to customers, underpinning this roll out is the CARE principle. Our correspondence will provide clarity, accountability, reasoning and empathy in the responses we provide to the public. This programme of training will be complete by December 24. improving our communication, the information available, driving service standards within passenger communication, and holding ourselves to account where our service has fallen short and learning lessons across the organisation.</p>
11		<p>Key concern</p> <p>Escorting of detainees to flights through public areas was not always sufficiently discreet.</p>	<p>Mitie Care & Custody will undertake a review of the port side requirements for staff Uniform, safety attire, and escorting routes in conjunction with the airport providers. The aim of which will be to use discreet routes through the airport wearing less obvious clothing to increase discretion. As airside safety requirements usually require airport staff to be identifiable, ordinarily wearing hi visibility tabards, we will work with individual authorities to make effective change.</p> <p>Action Taken:</p> <p>The introduction of non-branded hi-visibility vests has been introduced and in effect across all Care and Custody sites.</p> <p>Care and Custody staff have been instructed to ensure they only enter public areas whilst escorting when alternative routes are not available.</p> <p>Action Planned:</p> <p>To Continue communication with airport authorities to reduce public visibility of Care and Custody staff when escorting residents.</p>