



Report on an unannounced inspection of the UK short-term holding facilities at

France-UK Borders

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

accompanied by the Contrôleur Général des Lieux de Privation de Liberté

4–6 November 2024



Contents

Introduction..... 3

Summary of key findings 5

About UK short-term holding facilities at France-UK Borders..... 7

Section 1 Leadership 9

Section 2 Safety 10

Section 3 Respect..... 16

Section 4 Preparation for removal and release..... 23

Section 5 Progress on recommendations from the last report 25

Appendix I About our inspections and reports 30

Appendix II Glossary 32

Introduction

The United Kingdom-run short-term holding facilities (STHFs) in France form part of the UK's 'juxtaposed controls', under which the Border Force identifies people who are to be refused entry to the UK before they leave French territory. There are five STHFs in total, all managed for the Home Office by Care and Custody, an arm of the Mitie group. By far the busiest is Calais Tourist, which held nearly half of all those detained in the six months from April to September 2024.

At Calais and Dunkirk, new holding areas had been built since our last inspection which provided a decent environment for detainees held for short periods. We were pleased to find that the entirely new Calais Freight facility had ended the unacceptable practice of confining clandestine travellers in rundown vans without clear legal authority. By contrast, the facilities at Coquelles were at times barely fit for purpose. There was very little natural light in any of the holding rooms and detainees could not go into the open air or easily sleep.

In general, Border Force teams were processing cases reasonably efficiently to minimise the length of detention, but there remained too many exceptions. Some people, including children, had been held for over 10 hours, which was far too long for such conditions. In Coquelles Freight, we met exhausted detainees in a stuffy and smelly holding room without access to showers, who had already been held for over seven hours. While staff at different sites had theories about why detainees were sometimes held for longer than they thought necessary, there had not been any systematic analysis of the reasons for prolonged detentions to help drive improvement.

There were few incidents of concern in any of the STHFs, but while Border Force staff completed accountability paperwork diligently, leadership oversight was poor. Video footage was kept for no longer than a month and there was no evidence that either footage or paperwork for some serious incidents had been reviewed.

Critical safeguarding work varied in quality and efficiency and specialist Border Force officers were not always available or sufficiently knowledgeable. It was particularly worrying that Border Force could not locate safeguarding referrals of vulnerable detainees, including two children who were subsequently re-trafficked.

A notable positive development was the provision of 24-hour health care support for all facilities. Staff told us that paramedics were easy to call and quick to respond, and we saw them arriving promptly to assess or treat detainees during the inspection. Detainees also reported positively on the way that both Care and Custody and Border Force staff had treated them.

Overall, we found some improvements, notably in health care support and conditions in the newer facilities, but the Coquelles sites had deteriorated, and there were too many shortcomings in safeguarding and some aspects of governance.

Charlie Taylor

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

November 2024

Summary of key findings

What needs to improve at these short-term holding facilities

During this inspection we identified nine key concerns, of which five should be treated as priorities. Priority concerns are those that are most important to improving outcomes for detainees. They require immediate attention by leaders and managers.

Leaders should make sure that all concerns identified here are addressed and that progress is tracked through a plan which sets out how and when the concerns will be resolved. The plan should be provided to the Home Office.

Priority concerns

1. **Safeguarding referrals were not always made when necessary to the Police aux Frontières (PAF) and there was no record of referrals for vulnerable detainees who were re-trafficked.**
2. **Data were not systematically collated or used to help improve outcomes.** For example, there were no data on the number or outcomes of PAF safeguarding referrals or on the outcome of age assessments, and there was no analysis of the reasons for longer detentions.
3. **There was weak governance of use of force by Border Force staff.**
4. **The holding rooms in Coquelles Freight and Coquelles Tourist were in poor physical condition.**
5. **The longstanding problem of poor phone and radio signals undermined communication and use of professional interpretation and had, in one case, delayed a Border Force officer's attempt to call a medical emergency.**

Key concerns

6. **Border Force staff were not sufficiently familiar with Home Office guidance on age assessment: in every case we looked at, officers had failed to apply the correct age assessment test.**
7. **Responses to complaints were sometimes very slow, with one taking 10 months. Responses were generally helpful but did not always cover key issues that had been raised, including in one case a concern about discrimination.**
8. **Detainees were not routinely offered the use of mobile phones or a phone call to family or friends after their induction.**

Progress on recommendations

We last inspected the short-term holding facilities (STHFs) at France-UK Borders between 25 and 27 November 2019 when we wrote separate reports for each STHF and made a total of 50 recommendations, many of them similar ones made at different sites. At this inspection we found that 10 of our recommendations had been achieved, six had been partially achieved, 33 had not been achieved and one was no longer relevant. For a full summary of the progress against the recommendations, please see Section 5.

Notable positive practice

We define notable positive practice as:

Evidence of our expectations being met to deliver particularly good outcomes for detainees, and/or particularly original or creative approaches to problem solving.

Inspectors found one example of notable positive practice during this inspection, which other facilities may be able to learn from or replicate. Unless otherwise specified, these examples are not formally evaluated, are a snapshot in time and may not be suitable for other establishments. They show some of the ways our expectations might be met, but are by no means the only way.

Example of notable positive practice	
a)	A useful leaflet was handed to all detainees departing the holding facilities with phone numbers for UK support agencies, including financial and housing contact details and relevant charities. See paragraph 4.7

About UK short-term holding facilities at France-UK Borders

Role of the facility

To detain travellers in French territory pending a decision to admit, grant leave to enter or refuse entry to the UK. The details of juxtaposed controls are set out in the bilateral Sangatte and Le Touquet agreements.

Two of the five STHFs are located within the secure perimeter of the Eurotunnel site at Coquelles; two at Calais seaport; and a fifth at Dunkirk. Calais and Coquelles have separate facilities for passenger/tourist traffic and freight/commercial traffic. All facilities are located within the secure perimeter of the port/site. All facilities had separate rooms for families.

HMI Prisons was accompanied on this inspection by monitors from the French National Preventive Mechanism, the Contrôleur Général des Lieux de Privation de Liberté (CGLPL).

Locations and total number of detentions, April to September 2024

Calais Tourist – 1,836 detainees
Coquelles Tourist – 897 detainees
Calais Freight – 632 detainees
Coquelles Freight – 221 detainees
Dunkirk – 192 detainees

Total – 3,778 detainees

Most common nationalities of detainees

Romania
Sudan
Poland
Eritrea

Locations

Calais Tourist and Freight: Calais, France
Coquelles Tourist and Freight: Coquelles Eurotunnel approach, France
Dunkirk: Terminal Routier du Port Ouest, F-59279 Loon-Plage, Dunkerque, France

Lead agencies and contractors

Home Office
Mitie Care and Custody
IPRS Aeromed

Date of last inspection

25–27 November 2019

Section 1 Leadership

- 1.1 The complications associated with juxtaposed immigration controls required sensitivity and a commitment to joint working. Border Force and Care and Custody leaders met regularly and worked together well to resolve issues. Border Force also reported constructive relationships with the port authorities, although it took too long to negotiate responses to problems such as the serious water damage at Coquelles Freight.
- 1.2 Leaders had opened new facilities at Calais Tourist, Calais Freight and Dunkirk, all of which provided much better conditions than at the last inspection. However, there was no plan to replace the deteriorating Coquelles facilities, which were unsuitable for anything more than very short stays.
- 1.3 There was active senior leadership oversight of Care and Custody staff, who reported positively on support from the service delivery manager. They also reported generally high motivation and satisfaction with working conditions, despite the requirement to spend extended periods away from home.
- 1.4 There were a few practice anomalies that had not been identified or addressed by leaders. For example, unrelated men and women were not kept in separate holding rooms, even when one was empty, creating potential safeguarding risks (see paragraph 2.15). Care and Custody staff also told us they were not allowed to use empty Home Office interview rooms to have confidential discussions with detainees, although Border Force staff told us there was no bar on use.
- 1.5 Leaders had not done enough to promote the importance of safeguarding practices. Safeguarding and modern slavery (SAMS) trained staff were not always available and when they were, they did not always understand Border Force's own safeguarding policies.
- 1.6 There was little use of force and accountability paperwork was completed diligently. However, there was no evidence that paperwork, or CCTV recordings were reviewed by leaders.
- 1.7 More management information was now gathered to support leadership oversight, but it was still limited and not used well enough to promote improvements. For example, there was no collation of information on safeguarding referrals to PAF and data on length of detention were not used to help understand and drive down the time that people spent in the holding rooms.
- 1.8 Leaders were making ongoing efforts to resolve the problem of poor radio, phone and internet signals, including through the purchase of new equipment. However, results were mixed at best, and communication with the many detainees requiring interpretation was still regularly hindered.

Section 2 Safety

Detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position.

Arrival and early days in detention

Expected outcomes: Detainees travelling to and arriving at the facility are treated with respect and care. Risks are identified and acted on. Induction is comprehensive.

- 2.1 Detainees could be held for over three hours before being formally detained in the holding room. In one case, an 84-year-old man arriving at border control at 12.50am was held in a detained waiting area for two hours 40 minutes before being handed over to Care and Custody in Calais Tourist (see paragraph 2.6). During the inspection, a detainee was held for three and a half hours before being transferred to the Calais Tourist holding room. Care and Custody detainee custody officers (DCOs) told us that detainees were transferred to them much more quickly in Coquelles Tourist than Calais Tourist, but the reasons for this were unclear.
- 2.2 Children were not always prioritised for a quick handover to Care and Custody. In one case in Calais Freight, two boys aged 14 and 15 were found at 3.05am concealed in a lorry with five adult men. Three of the men were handed over to Care and Custody first; the 15-year-old boy only arrived in the holding room at 4.50am and the 14-year-old at 5.05am.
- 2.3 The STHFs were open seven days a week, 24 hours a day and it was positive that at Calais Freight detainees were no longer routinely held in vans. They were rarely handcuffed when being taken to holding rooms and only after a robust risk assessment in the cases we examined.
- 2.4 The Care and Custody induction interview included questions designed to identify vulnerabilities, but it did not take place in a confidential setting in any of the facilities (see paragraphs 1.4 and 3.11). These questions were particularly important for detainees held in French facilities given that most were refused leave to enter and some might have been vulnerable to being re-trafficked. Detention staff were not sufficiently confident to explore such risks and the relevant questions were skirted over or might not be asked at all.
- 2.5 In most facilities, detainees were not searched in private despite staff having the ability to do so. For example, in Calais Freight, staff did not draw over a privacy screen and a detainee was searched in sight of several Border Force officers and use of a privacy curtain in Calais

Tourist was ineffective because the area behind it was covered by CCTV visible to others in the office.

Safeguarding adults and personal safety

Expected outcomes: The facility promotes the welfare of all detainees and protects them from all kinds of harm and neglect. The facility provides a safe environment which reduces the risk of self-harm and suicide. Detainees are protected from bullying and victimisation, and force is only used as a last resort and for legitimate reasons.

- 2.6 The Border Force team included safeguarding and modern slavery (SAMS) trained officers, but they were not rostered on every shift. Although staff could telephone other sites to seek specialist guidance, this still meant that officers without specialist training interviewed some vulnerable detainees. Moreover, while SAMS officers we spoke to were sensitive to the needs of vulnerable detainees, they had little recent experience and did not have sufficient confidence or knowledge about Border Force's own safeguarding processes. For example, no PAF safeguarding referral (see paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9) was made for an 84-year-old man held overnight because he was not considered to be vulnerable, even though Home Office policy on adults at risk in detention requires that anyone over 70 is automatically regarded as vulnerable.
- 2.7 In general, the policy on adults at risk was rarely engaged: in the previous year, 24 detainees held in Calais Tourist and Coquelles Tourist had been assessed to be at risk in detention, with none being identified at the other facilities.
- 2.8 Border Force now collated data on adult safeguarding referrals to UK social services and 14 had been made in the previous year.
- 2.9 There was a process for Border Force staff to report safeguarding concerns to PAF, including where it was considered that a detainee had been trafficked. However, no data were collated on the number of such referrals, and no approach had been made to PAF by Border Force to analyse or discuss outcomes and possible improvements. In some cases in our sample, we could find no evidence of a PAF safeguarding referral despite the detainee having considerable safeguarding need. In others, records suggested a referral had been made, but Border Force could not find a copy of it as they were not routinely kept, which was poor practice (see paragraph 2.23).
- 2.10 Border Force could not access the UK national referral mechanism (NRM, see Glossary) because of issues of jurisdiction, and France had not yet created such a mechanism.
- 2.11 Care and Custody DCOs had only a basic awareness of modern slavery and safeguarding, although these issues were part of their annual training programme. Care and Custody had only made one safeguarding referral to Border Force in the previous 12 months.

- 2.12 DCOs had opened 212 warning forms for detainees considered to be more vulnerable in the previous year and told us they would also relay concerns when handing detainees over to PAF. The forms were largely in tick-box format and did not sufficiently demonstrate individualised support.

Personal safety

- 2.13 Documented holding room welfare checks were better than we usually see, although from the records it was not clear if staff used interpretation even when detainees did not speak English.
- 2.14 There was little evidence of any bullying or tensions between detainees and self-harm was very rare, with only one minor incident recorded in the previous year. Three suicide and self-harm warning forms had been opened in the same period.
- 2.15 There were sufficient female staff on duty to ensure female detainees were always searched by a woman. However, women were still held with unrelated men. During the inspection, a woman was held with unrelated men in the Calais Tourist facility despite the family room being unoccupied. We were told this was common practice.
- 2.16 Staff did not have a good view into the holding rooms in Coquelles Freight because of light reflecting from the observation windows and poor-quality CCTV images for these holding rooms.
- 2.17 DCOs had not used force in the last year, but there had been 48 incidents involving Border Force. Paperwork was completed diligently and suggested that most uses of force were minimal. About a quarter of cases involved more extensive force. The incidents we reviewed showed reasonable attempts to de-escalate incidents at the outset, but ongoing attempts at de-escalation were not always good enough.
- 2.18 In three cases we reviewed from the previous six months, several staff had used pain compliance, but not always with sufficient documented justification or detail on the techniques used. No detainee was warned before pain was induced. In one case, five officers used pain inducing techniques on a detainee periodically during a 15-minute incident and it was unclear from the paperwork if officers knew that others had already applied pain compliance. The detainee had claimed to be a child (see paragraph 2.24). The incident de-brief noted that there was a lack of communication among the team.
- 2.19 In an incident in May 2024, three officers used pain-inducing techniques on a detainee refusing to be fingerprinted in Calais Freight, but did not note how long he was held in the prone position. At some point in the incident the detainee lost consciousness. An officer attempted to call a medical emergency over her radio and on her phone, but neither had any signal. She had to leave the room to call out to Care and Custody staff to request emergency assistance. Phone signal problems had still not been resolved when we inspected the facility five months later (see paragraph 4.3).

- 2.20 There was poor oversight of use of force. Border Force could provide no evidence that it had reviewed use of force paperwork for any incident in the last year and staff had kept no records of any review of CCTV footage. We were told that footage had not even been reviewed for concerning incidents such as the two described above. As footage was automatically deleted after 31 days, we were unable to examine it ourselves. Border Force staff completing use of force paperwork often used impersonal, dehumanising language, variously describing people as ‘the subject’, ‘pax’ and ‘the clandestine’.
- 2.21 There was still no independent monitoring board, but we were pleased to find that there were advanced discussions about enabling independent monitoring.

Safeguarding children

Expected outcomes: The facility promotes the welfare of children and protects them from all kinds of harm and neglect.

- 2.22 During the previous six months, 386 children had been detained, of whom 218 were unaccompanied. Unaccompanied children found in freight lanes were not always prioritised for a quick handover to Care and Custody (paragraph 2.2), but unaccompanied children were generally held by Care and Custody for less time than adults. The average length of child detention ranged from three hours 11 minutes in Calais Freight to three hours 57 minutes in Coquelles Freight, but some children had been detained for more than 11 hours, which was too long. These average times were in addition to the time children were held under an IS81 (see Glossary).
- 2.23 Border Force staff had conducted 177 age assessments in the last year, but no centralised and accessible data were kept on outcomes, making oversight difficult. Border Force procedures for child safeguarding practices were unclear to some SAMS-trained Border Force staff.
- 2.24 Age assessments were conducted without a responsible adult and sometimes took place in freight sheds with no use of interpretation. They could be based solely on the detainee's visual appearance. We looked at four cases where detainees saying they were children were assessed as being adult. The assessment was not in line with the legal threshold and therefore unsafe in all four cases. Officers noted that detainees' appearance and demeanour suggested they were ‘over 18’, while the correct legal test is for the individual's physical appearance and demeanour to suggest very strongly that they are significantly over 18, in recognition of the margin of error inherent in age assessment. In one of the four cases, the detainee was assessed to be 20 years old and seven officers later used force on him, with five using pain-inducing techniques (see paragraph 2.18).

- 2.25 SAMS officers were the only Border Force staff who were DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked. However, they were not always available to interview unaccompanied children, who were instead interviewed by two other officers. Unaccompanied children were still interviewed without a responsible adult. All facilities now had a family room, but not all DCOs were clear on the need to hold unaccompanied children separate from unrelated adults.
- 2.26 Border Force was now able to produce data on the number of child safeguarding referrals to UK social services: 38 such referrals had been made in the 12 months to October 2024. There were no data on the number of child safeguarding referrals made to PAF, nor was information requested on outcomes. Not all Border Force staff were clear on the need to make a PAF safeguarding referral for all unaccompanied children. We had serious concerns about some cases of particularly vulnerable children for whom no PAF referral could be found.
- 2.27 In two cases in our sample, a boy aged 16 and a girl aged 14 were re-trafficked to the UK shortly after being handed over to PAF. Border Force had significant safeguarding concerns about the girl, who was found zipped into a holdall in the boot of a car. About a month after being handed over to PAF, she was taken clandestinely to the UK and held in a warehouse with five other women before she managed to escape, fearing she would be forced into prostitution. The 16-year-old boy disclosed a history of abuse and trafficking. About two weeks later, he was encountered in the UK and interviewed by the police. He was referred to the NRM and it was found that there were reasonable grounds that he had been trafficked. Records suggested Border Force had made a safeguarding referral to PAF in both cases, but it could not find a copy of the referrals.
- 2.28 Care and Custody and Border Force staff had still not been given specialist training on the use of force on children. However, we were told that a new training programme had been devised and was soon to be delivered to relevant staff.
- 2.29 DCOs described inconsistent practice in regard to the searching of children; one member of staff told us that they would give older children a rub-down search even when there was no indication from a hand-held wand.

Legal rights

Expected outcomes: Detainees are fully aware of and understand their detention, following their arrival at the facility and on release. Detainees are supported by the facility staff to freely exercise their legal rights.

- 2.30 During the previous six months, 3,586 people had been detained. The average length of detention ranged from three hours 52 minutes in Calais Freight to four hours 47 minutes in Calais Tourist, but some

detainees had been held for over 12 hours, which was too long. Staffing problems and delays in PAF collecting detainees contributed to some lengthy detentions.

- 2.31 A notice in all holding rooms included contact numbers for some UK advice agencies, but only one was regulated to offer free substantive UK immigration law advice. There were no contact details for French legal advice agencies. No information was available on how to claim asylum in France.
- 2.32 Legal documentation given to detainees was completed accurately but was not translated. We were told that decision documentation was sometimes explained to detainees using an interpretation device instead of more reliable professional telephone interpretation, and we saw documentation being served on one detainee who did not speak English without any interpretation. Some detainees we spoke to were unclear about why they had been detained, or what was happening in their case.

Section 3 Respect

Detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention.

Accommodation and facilities

Expected outcomes: Detainees are held in a safe, clean and decent environment. They are offered varied meals according to their individual requirements. The facility encourages activities to promote mental well-being.

- 3.1 New and well-maintained holding rooms had been built at Calais and Dunkirk since the last inspection. They were spacious enough for the numbers usually held and provided reasonably decent accommodation for short stays (but see paragraph 3.6). The new building for Calais Freight meant that detainees were no longer held for long periods in vans, which had been a significant concern at the last inspection.

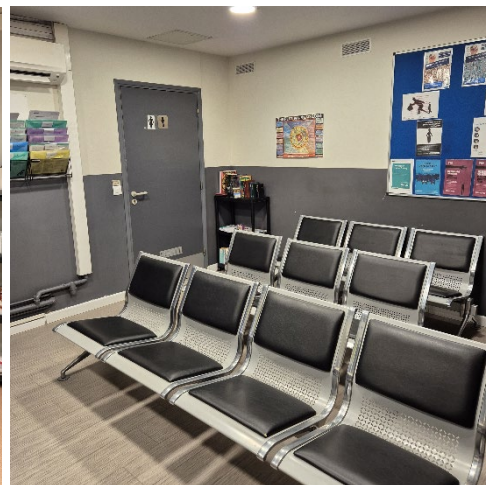


Calais freight family room (holding room 2) (left) and tourist family room (right)



Dunkirk main holding room

- 3.2 However, the Coquelles holding rooms were run down and the Freight facility was particularly cramped, quickly becoming smelly and stuffy when occupied during the inspection. The Coquelles Freight facility was in generally poor condition and had been closed for a brief period to carry out essential building maintenance. Staff told us that there were constant problems with the sewage in this building, which could result in a pungent smell from the drains. The drains in Coquelles Tourist were similarly problematic, particularly during heavy rain. Border Force staff diligently checked the holding rooms and reported concerns raised by Care and Custody.



Coquelles freight main holding room (left) and tourist main holding room (right)

- 3.3 All sites provided thin mattresses, pillows and blankets for detainees to rest, but there was very little space to lie down and some detainees lay

across rows of seats. All facilities had a travel cot available for babies in the family rooms. There were a few posters with translated information at each site and some had unused blank notice boards.

- 3.4 The temperature in all holding rooms was comfortable whenever we visited but with little fresh air; there was no opening window in any of the facilities apart from Coquelles Freight, which had a small window in each room. There was little or no natural light in any facility, which could affect the wellbeing of any detainees held for more than a few hours (see paragraph 2.30).
- 3.5 Property was removed from detainees when they arrived at the holding room. Bags were tagged and stored safely before being returned to detainees on their departure. We observed some detainees becoming agitated because they did not understand why their belongings were being removed and interpretation was not used to explain the situation.
- 3.6 There were no showers in the Calais Tourist family room, Coquelles Freight or Coquelles Tourist. This was particularly problematic at Coquelles Freight, where detainees had sometimes spent lengthy periods concealed in vehicles. It was unclear why the newly refurbished holding rooms in Calais and Dunkirk had steel toilets with no seats. All family holding rooms had good baby-changing facilities available.



Dunkirk steel toilet and shower

- 3.7 A range of food and drink was available in the holding rooms, including baby food and formula and basic microwave meals suitable for specific dietary requirements. Snacks and cold drinks were freely available in all the holding rooms and included instant noodles, croissants and fruit pots. Hot drinks were provided by staff to detainees at all sites other than Coquelles Tourist, where there was an accessible drinks machine.



Calais freight snacks, games and religious materials

- 3.8 There were plenty of children's toys available for all ages and they were in good condition. Holding rooms also had varying quantities of games to distract adults, as well as books and magazines, although all were in English. DVDs were advertised but were not available in all holding rooms.



Dunkirk children's toys and activities

Respectful treatment

Expected outcomes: Detainees are treated with respect by all staff. Effective complaints procedures are in place for detainees. There is understanding of detainees' diverse cultural backgrounds. Detainees' health care needs are met.

- 3.9 All detainees we spoke to reported respectful behaviour and good treatment by staff. We observed some good interactions between detainees and Care and Custody staff, who all wore name badges with pictures to confirm their identity. In one case, an officer sat with a tearful and distressed woman, who had also had a lengthy conversation with an Aeromed paramedic. However, we noted that some Care and Custody staff referred to detainees using numbers rather than names; while they did not do this when speaking directly to detainees, it was in their earshot.
- 3.10 We also saw some good interactions from Border Force staff, but sometimes six or seven staff were unnecessarily standing around fully compliant single detainees, notably in the fingerprinting room, which was unnecessary and potentially intimidating.
- 3.11 Professional interpretation was not always used when needed by staff at any of the sites and records we viewed confirmed low usage of telephone interpretation, which was hindered by the poor phone signal on both the landline telephone and mobile phones. New iPads with a translation application had recently been introduced but had similar connection problems because of the weak internet signal. Care and

Custody staff said they were not allowed to use the Home Office interview rooms to access the conference telephones for interpretation (see paragraphs 1.4 and 2.4).

- 3.12 There was a good stock of complaint forms in different languages, which were well advertised, and each holding room had a confidential box to submit them. Border Force staff checked the boxes daily when the room was occupied. A test complaint we submitted during the inspection was answered very quickly, within one hour.
- 3.13 During the previous 12 months, 21 complaints had been submitted against Border Force and none against Care and Custody. Most of the responses we reviewed showed detailed investigations and some were empathetic. However, we found some examples where not all areas of the complaint were addressed, including a detainee who said that discriminatory remarks had been made to him by a staff member. We also found some inexplicably long delays in responding to complaints, despite their small number. The longest response time to complete a complaint was 10 months.
- 3.14 All holding rooms had religious texts and artefacts available. There was no separate prayer room. Detainees with mobility problems were rarely held but some holding rooms had signs on the toilet and shower doors to give the impression they were accessible, such as Calais Tourist, although they did not have any handrails or other adaptations. Vulnerable adult warning forms were mainly opened for detainees with health-related issues or pregnant women. In those we reviewed, entries were basic and indicated little interaction with detainees (see paragraph 2.13).
- 3.15 Clothing was available to those who needed it, including T-shirts and jogging bottoms, but no coats or jackets. Toiletries were not routinely offered to detainees, but sanitary products were readily available in the family holding rooms. There was no privacy for women who were breastfeeding.
- 3.16 Aeromed paramedics were now available at all sites 24 hours a day, seven days a week and we saw them responding quickly to calls. They screened all children and pregnant women and worked closely with detention staff to assess any other detainees in their care who needed support. Care and Custody staff told us that they received very prompt responses when they raised concerns about individual detainees. However, the lack of clinical rooms at all sites meant that detainees could be examined in the holding room without sufficient privacy.
- 3.17 In-possession medication was still removed from detainees on their arrival at the holding room. However, in the cases we looked at, paramedics were quick to assess detainees and administer necessary medication. Paramedics held a range of medicines to treat minor ailments and for anything more serious they were able to contact the French health care services.

- 3.18 Detention staff routinely offered nicotine replacement therapy, although they reported the uptake of this was small.

Section 4 Preparation for removal and release

Detainees are able to maintain contact with the outside world and be prepared for their release, transfer or removal.

Communications

Expected outcomes: Detainees are able to maintain contact with the outside world using a full range of communications media.

- 4.1 Detainees had their personal mobile phones removed while in the holding rooms. Although it was a part of the induction process to inform detainees they could make phone calls, not all were told of this, nor were they encouraged to write down numbers from their mobiles before they were removed.
- 4.2 Each site had a box of mobile phones for detainees to use with their own SIM card, but these were outdated, and most SIM cards were not compatible with them. SIM cards were made available for detainees to use, but they were not routinely offered and staff were unsure how much credit was available on them. Some staff we spoke to said they had not given out a mobile phone in months.
- 4.3 Phone and internet signals were poor at all sites, except for Coquelles Tourist (see paragraph 3.11). There remained no access to the internet or video-calling at any of the sites.

Leaving the facility

Expected outcomes: Detainees are prepared for their release, transfer or removal. They are able to retain or recover their property. Families with children and others with specific needs are not detained without items essential for their welfare.

- 4.4 Detainees who were refused entry to the UK were handed to PAF, who then became responsible for them. Detention staff told us they remained concerned about late night releases of women and children in particular.
- 4.5 Paperwork issued by the Home Office was only in English and we saw confused detainees unclear about what they had been given when served with documentation stating refusal to enter the UK (see paragraph 2.32).
- 4.6 For those who were allowed to continue their journey to the UK, we were told Border Force staff would take them back to their vehicle or help them to get to the next available coach. There were no records of this.

- 4.7 A useful list of UK support agencies was now provided to all detainees which included helpline phone numbers. There was still no information provided on contacts for charities in France or how to claim asylum.

Section 5 Progress on recommendations from the last report

The following is a list of all the recommendations raised in the last report, organised under the four tests of a healthy establishment.

Safety

Detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position.

Recommendations - Coquelles tourist

The French authorities should create a national referral mechanism to identify victims of trafficking.

Not achieved

There should always be a comprehensive handover between Border Force staff and detainee custody officers, which includes all areas of identified risk and vulnerability.

Achieved

The Border Force should collate safeguarding data and review overall safeguarding practice in light of the low number of safeguarding referrals. It should develop and implement a safeguarding strategy in response to the outcome of this review.

Not achieved

Legal documentation should be explained to detainees in a language they understand, using professional interpreting where necessary.

Not achieved

Safeguarding and modern slavery (SAMS)-trained officers should interview all unaccompanied children so that safeguarding concerns can be identified and acted on promptly, and appropriate referrals made to the Police aux Frontières.

Not achieved

All detainees should be able to receive independent legal advice on both French and UK law, and information on how to access such advice should be displayed in holding rooms.

Not achieved

Recommendations - Coquelles freight

The French authorities should create a national referral mechanism to identify victims of trafficking.

Not achieved

All detainees should be interviewed to establish any safeguarding concerns and facilitate appropriate referrals.

Achieved

The Border Force should collate safeguarding data and review overall safeguarding practice in light of the low number of safeguarding referrals. It should develop and implement a safeguarding strategy in response to the outcome of this review.

Not achieved

Detainees should be kept informed about what is happening to them.

Not achieved

Documentation authorising detention (IS91s) should be completed in full.

Achieved

Border Force staff should engage with detainees with professionalism and sensitivity.

Achieved

All children should be interviewed by safeguarding and modern slavery (SAMS)-trained officers, so that safeguarding concerns can be identified and acted on promptly, with referrals made to PAF where necessary.

Not achieved

Detainees awaiting the arrival of the Police aux Frontières (PAF) should be admitted into the holding facility after a short and specified period of time.

Achieved

All detainees should be able to receive independent legal advice on both French and UK law.

Not achieved

Recommendations – Calais

The French authorities should create a national referral mechanism to identify victims of trafficking.

Not achieved

The Border Force should collate safeguarding data and review overall safeguarding practice in light of the low number of safeguarding referrals. It should develop and implement a safeguarding strategy in response to the outcome of this review.

Not achieved

Border Force staff should interview detainees promptly to minimise time in detention.

Not achieved

Children should be interviewed in a child-friendly environment.

Achieved

All detainees should be able to receive independent legal advice on both French and UK law.

Not achieved

Recommendations – Calais freight

People detained in the freight lanes should be interviewed to establish any safeguarding concerns, and the appropriate referrals made.

Partially achieved

Recommendations - Dunkerque

The French authorities should create a national referral mechanism to identify victims of trafficking.

Not achieved

The Border Force should collate safeguarding data and review overall safeguarding practice in light of the low number of safeguarding referrals. It should develop and implement a safeguarding strategy in response to the outcome of this review.

Not achieved

SAMS-trained officers should interview all unaccompanied children so that safeguarding concerns can be identified and acted on promptly, and appropriate referrals can be made to Police aux Frontières (PAF).

Not achieved

All ECS detainee custody officers (DCOs) should receive regular training in recognising and responding to potential safeguarding issues, for both adults and children.

No longer relevant

All detainees should be able to receive independent legal advice on French and UK law.

Not achieved

Respect

Detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention.

Recommendations - Coquelles tourist

Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to the fresh air.

Not achieved

Professional interpreting services should be used to communicate with detainees who are not fluent in English.

Not achieved

Home Office complaint forms and Mitie Care and Custody feedback forms should be prominently located in the holding rooms.

Achieved

Detainees should be able to retain their own medication to manage pre-existing health conditions and access a medical professional for non-urgent medical issues.

Partially achieved

Recommendations - Coquelles freight

Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to the fresh air.

Not achieved

Professional interpreting services should be used to communicate with detainees who are not fluent in English.

Not achieved

Home Office complaint forms and Mitie Care and Custody feedback forms should be prominently located in the holding rooms.

Achieved

Detainees should be able to retain their own medication to manage pre-existing health conditions and access a medical professional for non-urgent medical issues.

Partially achieved

Recommendations – Calais

Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to the fresh air.

Not achieved

Detainees should be able to retain their own medication to manage pre-existing health conditions and access a medical professional for non-urgent medical issues.

Partially achieved

Recommendations – Calais freight

Women and children should be held separately and, unless PAF arrives promptly, people detained in vehicles in the freight lanes should be held in suitably equipped and decent conditions.

Achieved

Recommendations - Dunkerque

Detainees should have free access to a reasonable range of diversionary activities.

Partially achieved

Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to the fresh air.

Not achieved

Professional interpreting services should be used to communicate with detainees who are not fluent in English.

Not achieved

Detainees should be able to submit complaints confidentially.

Achieved

Detainees should be able to retain their own medication to manage pre-existing health conditions and access a medical professional for non-urgent medical issues.

Partially achieved

Preparation for removal and release

Detainees are able to maintain contact with the outside world and be prepared for their release, transfer or removal.

Recommendations - Coquelles tourist

Detainees should be given accurate information on support agencies and on how to claim asylum in France.

Not achieved

All detainees should have access to email, fax and internet facilities for communication and information purposes.

Not achieved

Recommendations - Coquelles freight

Detainees should be given accurate information on French support agencies and on how to claim asylum in France.

Not achieved

Detainees should be given access to telephone, email, fax and internet facilities.

Not achieved

Recommendations – Calais

Detainees should be given accurate information on support agencies and on how to claim asylum in France.

Not achieved

Detainees should be given access to telephone, email, fax and internet facilities.

Not achieved

Recommendations - Dunkerque

Detainees should be given access to telephone, email, fax and internet facilities.

Not achieved

Detainees should be given accurate information on French support agencies and on how to claim asylum in France.

Not achieved

Appendix I About our inspections and reports

HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, young offender institutions, secure training centres, immigration detention facilities, court custody and military detention.

All inspections carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitor the treatment of and conditions for detainees. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.

All Inspectorate of Prisons reports carry a summary of the conditions and treatment of detainees, based on the tests of a healthy prison that were first introduced in this Inspectorate's thematic review *Suicide is everyone's concern*, published in 1999. For short-term holding facilities the tests are:

Safety

Detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position.

Respect

Detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention.

Preparation for removal and release

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, access information about their country of origin and be prepared for their release, transfer or removal. Detainees are able to retain or recover their property.

(Note: One of our standard tests is 'purposeful activity'. Since they provide for short stays, there is a limit to what activities can or need to be provided. We will therefore report any notable issues concerning activities in the accommodation and facilities section.)

Inspectors keep fully in mind that although these are custodial facilities, detainees are not held because they have been charged with a criminal offence and have not been detained through normal judicial processes.

Our assessments might result in identification of **areas of concern**. Key concerns identify the areas where there are significant weaknesses in the treatment of and conditions for detainees. To be addressed they will require a change in practice and/or new or redirected resources. Priority concerns are those that inspectors believe are the most urgent and important and which should be attended to immediately. Key concerns and priority concerns are

summarised at the beginning of inspection reports and the body of the report sets out the issues in more detail.

We also provide examples of **notable positive practice** in our reports. These list innovative work or practice that leads to particularly good outcomes from which other establishments may be able to learn. Inspectors look for evidence of good outcomes for detainees; original, creative or particularly effective approaches to problem-solving or achieving the desired goal; and how other establishments could learn from or replicate the practice.

Inspectors use key sources of evidence: observation; discussions with detainees; discussions with staff and relevant third parties; documentation; and, where appropriate, surveys. During inspections we use a mixed-method approach to data gathering and analysis, applying both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Evidence from different sources is triangulated to strengthen the validity of our assessments.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, all our inspections are unannounced and include a follow up of concerns from the previous inspection.

This report

This report outlines the priority and key concerns and notable positive practice identified during the inspection. There then follow sections each containing a detailed account of our findings against our *Expectations. Criteria for assessing the conditions for and treatment of immigration detainees* (Version 4, 2018) (available on our website at [Expectations – HM Inspectorate of Prisons \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/expectations/)). Section 5 lists the concerns raised at the previous inspection and our assessment of whether they have been addressed.

Inspection team

This inspection was carried out by:

Hindpal Singh Bhui	Team leader
Deri Hughes-Roberts	Inspector
Chelsey Pattison	Inspector
Anne-Sophie Bonnet	Contrôleur Général des Lieux de Privation de Liberté
Yanne Pouliquen	Contrôleur Général des Lieux de Privation de Liberté

Appendix II Glossary

We try to make our reports as clear as possible, and this short glossary should help to explain some of the specialist terms you may find.

Adults at risk policy

This Home Office policy sets out what is to be taken into account when determining whether a person would be particularly vulnerable to harm if they remained in detention.

Controlled waiting areas (CWAs)

Small demarcated zones within the airside arrivals hall supervised by Home Office staff. CWAs do not have access to any of the facilities of a holding room and people are not permitted to leave them unaccompanied.

IS81

Allows immigration officers to hold a person for short periods while they carry out further enquiries.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

A framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery who have entered the UK and making sure they receive the appropriate support.

The Police aux Frontières (PAF)

French border police

Crown copyright 2025

This publication, excluding logos, 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 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

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

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at the address below or: hmiprisons.enquiries@hmiprisons.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available for download at: [Our reports – HM Inspectorate of Prisons \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

Printed and published by:
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
3rd floor
10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London
E14 4PU
England

All images copyright of HM Inspectorate of Prisons unless otherwise stated.