



Detainees under escort:  
Inspection of escort and removals to

**France**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

10–12 November 2025

# Contents

Introduction..... 3

Summary of key findings ..... 4

Section 1 Safety ..... 5

Section 2 Respect..... 8

Section 3 Preparation for reintegration ..... 10

Section 4 Progress on concerns from the last inspection ..... 11

Appendix I About our inspections and reports ..... 12

Appendix II Glossary ..... 14

# Introduction

This was the first time we have inspected one of the 'one-in, one-out' flights to France. Almost all of those removed had arrived relatively recently at the Kent coast. Many aspects of the operation, and detainee treatment, were similar to those of other charter flight removals, and showed some of the improvements which have taken place over recent years.

There were two significant differences. Firstly, while charter removals have generally involved detainees of a single nationality, so that interpretation can be provided for most of those needing it, this removal included men of many different nationalities, few of them able to understand English. There was inadequate provision of interpretation, including telephone interpretation or electronic devices where appropriate, meaning that many of those being removed could not ask questions or understand the process.

Secondly, while brief descriptions of options and services in the destination country are commonly given to those being removed, almost no information was available to detainees on this occasion about what would happen upon and after arrival in France. The impact of this uncertainty on their morale was clear.

**Charlie Taylor**

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

December 2025

# Summary of key findings

## What needs to improve

During this inspection we identified one key concern. 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 HMI Prisons.

## Key concerns

1. **Detainees did not have access to sufficient interpretation throughout key points of the removal process.** There was not enough use of interpreters, whether in person or on the telephone, or of electronic devices, according to what would have been appropriate in each situation.

## Progress on concerns

At our last inspection, we raised some areas of concern. At this inspection, we found that one of these concerns had been addressed and two were not applicable.

## Notable positive practice

Inspectors found no examples of notable positive practice during this inspection.

## The removal in brief

Twenty male detainees boarded the aircraft at Stansted Airport, together with 58 escorts and two paramedics. They had travelled from Brook House and Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs). One was returning voluntarily, and the destination was Paris, France.

The longest journey time, from boarding the coach at Brook House IRC to arriving in Paris, was just under eight hours.

## Leadership

Leaders had taken on board the concerns which we had raised when inspecting previous charter flight removals, and those applicable had been addressed. Staff briefings continued to emphasise the professional standards and conduct expected of staff, and we mostly observed decent and caring interactions between detainees and escort staff.

However, leaders failed to ensure that sufficient interpretation was available, using the appropriate method in each situation, and this led to anxiety among some detainees owing to significant gaps in understanding.

## Section 1 Safety

### Preparation and departure from removal centres

Expected outcomes: Detainees are escorted in safety and due regard is given to individual needs and risks. Removals are conducted in accordance with law. Security and good order are maintained through proportional operational arrangements and force is only used as a last resort.

- 1.1 Most detainees were aware that they were being removed to France, and knew the date that this would take place. However, they were not aware of the time of removal or what would happen when they arrived in France, which increased anxiety for some.
- 1.2 The staff briefing at the muster was good. Staff were reminded about professional standards and what was expected of them, including the need to focus on the welfare of the detainee they were escorting. Staff were told that there was one interpreter available, but there were no further details about the languages that she spoke.
- 1.3 At the IRCs, the coach commanders introduced themselves, but did not always use interpretation, by the various means that were available, when it was needed. We observed one commander continuing to speak in English, even though the detainee had expressed that he did not understand what was being said. The IRC's interpretation tablets were eventually used at Brook House, when prompted by the Home Office compliance team, and worked well. At another centre, the coach commander had to wait 35 minutes to be connected to an interpreter on the phone.
- 1.4 Escort staff were allocated to specific detainees and made aware of their backgrounds via a movement order, before being introduced to them. However, some of these movement orders contained little information and staff expressed a desire for more. For example, although they stated the country that an individual was from, they did not always mention the language they spoke or whether they understood English. Escort staff were friendly and helpful but did not always introduce themselves by name when they collected detainees from the centre.
- 1.5 Centre health care staff were present at the IRCs and completed a verbal handover to the escort paramedics about detainees' health needs and medications. Sealed personal medical letters were given to escort staff in case of an emergency.

## Safeguarding adults and personal safety

Expected outcomes: Detainees are escorted in safety with due regard for their vulnerability. Security and good order are maintained through proportionate operational arrangements and force is only used as a last resort.

- 1.6 One detainee on collection was subject to assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT; see Glossary) case management for risk of self-harm and suicide. Escort staff were made aware of this before they met him and given his ACDT to read and record conversations on. The detainee was under constant supervision throughout the removal process, without incident.
- 1.7 Force was used on one detainee at Brook House IRC who was in the care and separation unit (see Glossary) because he had said he would not comply with the removal. On collection, this detainee protested and refused to walk to the search area, so staff used guiding holds (see Glossary). We observed some good de-escalation from an officer, who addressed detainees calmly and steadily, and only one staff member spoke at a time, which helped to reduce tension. However, the detainee refused to stay still during the search, so the waist restraint belt (WRB; see Glossary) was used. The belt was removed quickly after take-off, after a period of compliance, when it was safe to do so.
- 1.8 The records from the three previous removals to France under the 'one-in, one-out' scheme showed that force had been used on eight occasions, five of them on one of the earliest flights under the scheme. Records indicated that the WRB had sometimes been used as a precautionary measure if detainees had previously indicated that they would refuse removal, even if their current behaviour was compliant. In addition, it had not always been removed at the earliest opportunity.

## Legal rights

Expected outcomes: Detainees can exercise their legal rights. Removals are conducted in accordance with law.

- 1.9 Detainees were signposted to legal firms while detained at the IRCs and had access to a mobile phone so that they were able to contact them. However, many told us that solicitors did not want to take their case and that they were unable to get any representation.
- 1.10 All detainees were provided with access to a mobile phone on the coaches, to enable them to contact legal representatives and family and friends. However, while being discharged from the IRC, they had not always been prompted to write down the phone numbers of these key contacts before handing back their IRC issued phone in order to be able to call them from the coach if they so wished.

- 1.11 The chief immigration officer (CIO) spoke to some detainees on the plane, but, because of the short flight time, did not have time to speak to all detainees who had asked to speak to them. They provided some detainees with letters giving information, but these were in English, and some were expected to read them on a computer screen, so that many could not understand or retain the information given.

## Section 2 Respect

### Physical conditions and property

Expected outcomes: Detainees are escorted in decent physical conditions and individual needs are addressed. Detainees are treated with humanity and respect.

- 2.1 Escort staff searched detainees' property before boarding the coach and allowed them to change their clothes if they needed to. Private cash was also withdrawn from detainees' accounts and returned to them before they left the centre. However, interpretation was not always used during this process.
- 2.2 Brook House IRC staff routinely offered detainees additional clothing, which was good practice. However, two detainees collected from Harmondsworth IRC were removed wearing flip-flops and staff did not offer alternative footwear.
- 2.3 Food and drink were routinely offered to detainees on the coaches. However, Mitie Care and Custody staff removed food and drink from the coaches too early on arrival at Stansted, which left some detainees without access to water for around three hours.
- 2.4 On both the coaches and the flight, detainees were able to use the toilet in privacy.

### 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.

- 2.5 The treatment of detainees during the coach transfers and flight was mostly good, with most escort staff polite, friendly and respectful. However, we observed some unprofessional behaviour. This included prolonged conversations between escort staff over the heads of detainees, swearing in front of detainees, and both escort staff allocated to a detainee being asleep at the same time.
- 2.6 The detainees had arrived relatively recently in the UK from France. They spoke many different languages, and very few understood more than a little English. An interpreter was present at one of the IRCs, on one coach and on the flight. The interpreter spoke Arabic and French, but almost none of the detainees spoke one of those languages. Staff attempted to use some methods of interpretation (see paragraph 1.3),



but there was not a sufficiently coherent plan for ensuring that as far as possible, all detainees could understand what was happening.

- 2.7 Most detainees were given complaint forms in their own language, which staff encouraged them to complete. However, one detainee was given the form in the wrong language, so was unable to fill it out. One complaint was submitted during the flight, about phone credit not being refunded, but the response was not available at the time of writing.
- 2.8 Paramedics were available at each IRC and two travelled on the flight. Most detainees had their personal medical notes returned to them during the flight, although some did not take them, but staff did not always record whether they had offered them these notes.
- 2.9 We reviewed all detainee person escort records (see Glossary) once they had disembarked. These were mostly filled in well, setting out the detainee's mood and any interactions. However, the risk information from the IRC was often too limited and staff sometimes recorded that they had offered hot drinks and pillows to detainees, when we had not observed this at any point in the journey.

## Section 3 Preparation for reintegration

Expected outcomes: Detainees are prepared for their arrival and early days in the destination country. Any unacceptable behaviour in destination countries is appropriately challenged.

- 3.1 Information given to the detainees by the Home Office explained their right to a judicial review, and that they would be accommodated by the French authorities for their 'first days'. Some detainees told us that they were anxious about what would happen to them in France, most of them saying that they did not have a network or any connections in France.
- 3.2 The French authorities were present for the arrival of the aircraft and received a handover from the CIO. There were no issues during disembarkation.

## **Section 4 Progress on concerns from the last inspection**

### **Concerns raised at the last inspection**

The following is a list of all the concerns raised in the report of our last inspections of an overseas escort (India, March 2025 and Nigeria and Ghana, April 2025).

#### **Safety**

##### **Concerns**

Women detainees were not allowed to keep their mobile phones in their possession up to the point of collection, limiting their contact with family or legal representatives.

**Not applicable**

#### **Respect**

##### **Concerns**

Menstrual care products were not readily available to women detainees.

**Not applicable**

Detainees were not allowed to use the toilets with complete privacy. This practice was not always based on an individual risk assessment.

**Addressed**

## Appendix I About our inspections and reports

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 monitors the treatment of and conditions for detainees. Escorts are included in this remit. 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 establishment that were first introduced in this Inspectorate's thematic review *Suicide is everyone's concern*, published in 1999. For inspections of escorts and removals the tests are:

- Safety
- Respect
- Preparation for reintegration.

Our assessments might result in identification of **areas of concern**. 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. 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 providers 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 providers could learn from or replicate the practice.

### This report

This report outlines the priority and key concerns identified during the inspection. There then follow three sections each containing a detailed account of our findings against our *Expectations for immigration detention. 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-hm-inspectorate-of-prisons/)). 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:

Alice Oddy	Team leader
Fiona Shearlaw	Inspector
Kellie Reeve	Inspector
Martin Kettle	Inspector

## 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.

### **Assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT)**

ACDT is a case management system for detained individuals at risk of self-harm or suicide.

### **Care and separation unit (CSU)**

A unit for detainees removed from association with others on the main residential units, under rule 40 (removal from association) or rule 42 (temporary confinement) of the Detention Centre Rules 2001.

### **Guiding hold**

Where an officer takes hold of a detainee's arm to guide them when walking. This is recorded as a use of force.

### **Person escort record**

The key document for ensuring that information about detainees' risk and health issues is communicated to escort staff and that their mood, actions and interactions with escort staff are recorded during their removal.

### **Waist restraint belt (WRB)**

A restraint system that allows a detainee to sit and travel comfortably but still be restrained.

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