

REPORT
of the
INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD
on the
SHORT TERM HOLDING FACILITIES
at HEATHROW AIRPORT
for the calendar year
FEBRUARY 2008/JANUARY 2009

SECTION ONE: THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD

1.1 The duties of Independent Monitoring Boards appointed to monitor in non-residential short term holding facilities are not yet laid down in statute. However, the general principles of independent monitoring in both immigration removal centres and prisons apply.

1.2 The Board's role is to monitor

(a) the welfare of people in immigration custody within the perimeter of the airport by observing their treatment and the environment in which they are detained and

(b) the movement (pedestrian and vehicular) of people to and from immigration facilities within the airport during the removal process.

1.3 To carry out this role the Board needs unrestricted access to every detainee and all the detention facilities within the airport. The Board has this.

1.4 The Board is required to submit an annual report to the Home Secretary. This is our second.

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SECTION THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE FACILITIES

3.1 The UK Border Agency (UKBA) has six short term holding facilities at Heathrow airport, one in each of the five terminals and the sixth in Queen's Building (QB). The facilities in the terminals (the holding rooms) cater mainly for incoming passengers who are being questioned or have been refused entry. The facility in QB caters mainly for people who have been living in the country and are being removed on flights from the airport.

3.2 Group 4 Securicor (G4S) is currently contracted to manage the holding rooms and the removals facility in QB and to deliver escorting services (the Contract).

3.3 The capacity of each holding room and of QB is determined by the number of seats in it.

3.4 In our report for the period April 2007/January 2008 (our first report) we addressed the features and fitments of the holding rooms and QB in detail. There have been some improvements, which we note elsewhere in this report, but in most material respects there has been no change. Degrading features still include:

- No natural light
- Lighting which cannot be turned off or dimmed (except in the holding rooms in Terminals 2 and 4) and so blazes day and night
- Poor ventilation – these communal spaces often smell
- Air temperatures which move from the very hot to the very cold and seemingly cannot be regulated
- Seating, bolted or chained to the floor
- Metal lavatories without seats

3.5 Cockroaches take up periodic residence in the staff office in T4, close to the fridge and microwave used to store or heat food for the detainees.

3.6 QB was scheduled to close by the end of 2008. It has not. The move to the new removals facility is now likely to be mid-March 2009. QB, already shabby, has continued to deteriorate.

SECTION FOUR: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4.1 Our first report recorded our observations over the first eight months of our monitoring at Heathrow. The Immigration Minister acknowledged that report as did UKBA's Chief Executive. We had a more detailed response in the form of an action plan (the Action Plan) to which each of UKBA and G4S contributed. We refer to the Action Plan in this report.

4.2 We have seen change and some improvements. However, we perceive a deep-seated negative attitude which demonstrates itself in a variety of ways.

- No proper facilities for sleep are provided anywhere and no proper facilities for washing in the holding rooms. This is a matter of policy, which is not our business. Its impact upon detainees is.
- UKBA express concern about the length of time people are detained at the airport but, in our perception, have yet to take significant steps to reduce it.
- They tolerate escorting patterns which result in quite unacceptable journeys, followed by long hours of detention at the airport, with the detainees treated as if they were commodities.
- There are repeated failures by G4S' managers to supervise their staff in a number of key areas, all impacting on detainees' welfare.

Therefore:

4.2.1 We urge the Home Secretary and the Immigration Minister to require UKBA to achieve provision of a residential short term holding facility at the airport. The need is patent; the need is urgent. We give our reasons in Section Seven.

4.2.2 We urge UKBA to take the necessary steps, whether in terms of their own processes or the performance of G4S as escort contractor, to drive down the length of time many are detained. We record our concerns in Section Six. We acknowledge this topic has been under review during our reporting period. Action is overdue.

4.2.3 We urge UKBA to change the current intra-agency arrangements whereby one arm of the agency manages detention services, and another the relationship with the airport authority on accommodation and repairs. This split militates against detainees' welfare. We record our concerns in Sections Eight and Nine.

4.2.4 We urge G4S, as custodian, to address the concerns we record in Sections Eleven to Fifteen as a matter of urgency. Detainees have not consistently experienced the benefit of improvements made in this reporting period with their welfare in mind.

4.3 Additionally we invite

4.3.1 UKBA to note our points in paragraphs 5.2, 10.3, 10.6, 11.2, 11.4, 11.22, 11.25, 11.37, 11.41, 11.46, 13.3, 13.8, 14.4, 15.5, 15.7, 16.2, 16.3 and 17.1 and

4.5.2 G4S to note our points in paragraphs 5.2, 9.8, 9.10. to 9.12 and 10.6.

SECTION FIVE: A SALUTARY TALE

5.1 The term “detainee” is generic. It casts no light upon the humanity of the men, women and children to whom it is applied. So we have decided to tell one particular tale. It is a catalogue of failures and inattention of the sorts we record later in this report. Sadly all were experienced by the same family, and in this sense the tale is exceptional rather than typical but indicative.

5.2 A lady, seeking asylum, was travelling with her nine year old son and an older sibling. She was in a wheelchair. The full extent of her disability had not been discovered by Border Force who detained her or by the Detainee Custody Officers (DCOs) working in the holding room.

5.3 Her son had been given a colouring book. It was clear to us when we arrived that he had finished with it. He was sitting on the edge of his seat looking anxiously at his mother, slumped in her wheelchair, trying to sleep. His patent anxiety had seemingly not been noticed. We took him to the bookcase. He jumped at the chance of some children’s books.

5.4 Talking to her we found out that she would be more comfortable lying down (and could not do this unaided) and that she had a catheter. The DCOs were not willing to help us lift her, because they had not been trained to do this. A Chief Immigration Officer was instantly willing when we told him the problem. Between us we lifted her out of her wheelchair and helped her lie down, across seats.

5.5 Her son took off her socks and started to rub her swollen feet. We put a couple of pillows under her head. There were no pillowcases and no clean ones in stock. At this juncture the DCOs leapt into action and handed out crisps.

5.6 The lady and her family were given temporary admission. They were to go to designated asylum accommodation, driven there by the approved transport provider. They left the holding room at 2120, to start this journey. They returned to it at 2310. Border Force had omitted to tell the transport provider of the lady’s special needs: the vehicle was unsuitable. We have since been told attempts were made to find another vehicle and/or overnight bed and breakfast accommodation.

5.7 The family was detained in the holding room until 12.45 the next day when a suitable vehicle arrived. Did the lady spend all those further long hours in her wheelchair? What about the catheter and her needs in that department? And her small, anxious, son? We do not know.

5.8 We were angry at the disgraceful way in which this family had been treated. We immediately reported our concerns to UKBA’s Detention Services, who immediately pursued them with Border Force and G4S. There were investigations within Border Force, explanations and apologies: all too late for the lady and her young.

SECTION SIX: LENGTH OF DETENTION

People are detained for too long.

Figures

6.1 G4S present monthly statistics to UKBA tracking length of stay (the statistics). We also receive them. Using this data over our twelve-month reporting period, we calculate:

- that 33,100 individuals were detained at the airport, of whom 22,000 were detained in holding rooms and 11,100 in QB
- that approximately 66% of holding room detainees and 90% of QB detainees left during the first eight hours
- that of the remaining 34% in holding rooms, 23.5% left at some point between eight and eighteen hours and the others thereafter. It is clear from the statistics that some were detained for substantially more than twenty-four hours.
- that of the remaining 10% in QB 7.5% left at some point between eight and twelve hours.

Cumulative detention time

6.2 The statistics do not record cumulative detention time (a comment we made in our first report.) The clock stops when a detainee moves from a holding room either to another, or to board a flight. This approach achieves an accurate measurement of length of stay in the majority of cases but, as we have sometimes found, not invariably so. For example:

- A lady, refused entry, detained in a holding room for 35.5 hours, taken from it late to board her flight, which she missed, returned to the same holding room and detained again for a further 22 hours 50 minutes.

Her period of her detention in a holding room was actually 58+ hours. The statistics recorded each tranche separately, with the second as if it was a fresh start. This approach does not capture the reality.

Our view

6.3 The figures we cite in paragraph 6.1 on length of detention are meaningless of themselves. They give no clue about the contributing factors. Is delay, when it occurs, attributable to Border Force case-working, or to Detention Services in the time taken to allocate an in-coming passenger a bed in an immigration removal centre (IRC) or to G4S moving that person from the airport to the IRC? We do not know.

6.4 However, it is clear to us, as it was in our first reporting period, that improvements can and should be made. We give our reasons in the remainder of this section. Our concerns are driven by welfare considerations.

Access to interpreters

6.5 Border Force use interpreters. We do not know in what proportion of their cases this is typically necessary or whether the standing arrangements are adequate. We raised this topic in our first report and have pursued it. We were encouraged to hear that a conference call facility was piloted in T4 last summer enabling the case-working immigration officer and the detainee to talk to an interpreter off-site. We were told it was to be rolled out across the airport, hopefully in the autumn. This has not been achieved yet for a variety of reasons such as lines to be installed, and agreement on liability for payment. We regret the delay. We suggest the lack of the conference call facility in four of the five holding rooms impedes case-working and has a knock-on effect on detention time.

Transport Plus

6.6 Some asylum seekers are granted temporary admission on condition that they live in designated asylum accommodation to which they are driven by the contracted transport provider, Transport Plus. T+ calls at the airport at 1400 and 2100. If a collection slot is “missed”, for whatever reason, the individual remains in holding room detention until the next slot. What consideration has been given to increasing the slots or to an otherwise more flexible arrangement? Is this not desirable in order to reduce detention time?

The wait for transport to detention

6.7 Holding room detainees moved from the airport to an IRC are taken there by G4S, as escort contractor. Detainees in QB whose removal is aborted on the day, or cancelled by last-minute legal process, are returned to detention in an IRC, and again G4S is responsible for their transport. We have sometimes been able to track the interval between UKBA’s instruction to G4S to move someone and the time at which that individual is collected from the airport. We have the information only because G4S give it to us, but at the risk of sounding ungrateful we must record our concerns about some long waits for transport. Our examples include the following:

- The repeat asylum applicant who was detained overnight in a holding room. The order to move him to an IRC was made at 0930: he was collected at 1830.
- The order to move a detainee from a holding room to Colnbrook IRC (just down the road from the airport) was made at 1212; he was collected at 2300.

- The family (mother and three children) who arrived in QB at 0420 for a flight at 0705 which they refused to board. The order to take them back to the IRC was made at 0817. G4S collected them from QB at 1830.

6.8 These long waits for transport increase the time people spend in unsuitable conditions. We hope the contract gives UKBA the means of demanding something better from its escort contractor and, if it does, that UKBA presses this lever.

Inhumane escorting patterns

6.9 G4S is also responsible for bringing people to QB for their removal flights. We understand UKBA and G4S have agreed that detainees should arrive at QB not less than 3 hours or more than 7 hours pre-flight, although this agreement has no contractual bite. In this reporting period we have observed sustained improvements and a reduction in the length of time many detainees now spend in QB pre-flight, as measured against the informal parameters. We have also noticed repeated exceptions in the case of detainees arriving from Oakington or Campsfield House IRCs, or from the Port of Dover. We see that the time spent in QB by women coming from Yarlswood IRC is usually within the informal parameters, but not invariably so. We have noted cases of pregnant women arriving in QB eight and nine hours pre-flight.

6.10 We acknowledge

- that a number of administrative processes are required prior to boarding which can only be completed once the detainee has arrived in QB
- that some detainees want to discuss their cases with immigration officers from the Removals Facilitation Unit on arrival in QB

and that for these reasons the lower benchmark of arrival a minimum of three hours pre-flight is probably prudent.

6.11 We do not understand why the upper limit is set at as much as seven hours pre-flight. Was this decision driven by escorting considerations and/or the fact that G4S operates a bus service, not a taxi service, so that a number of detainees who are to be removed on different flights leaving at different times will travel together? When setting the upper limit, what importance was attached to the welfare of the detainees?

6.12 The length of time some detainees spend in QB pre-flight prompted us to look at when their journeys to QB started and the convoluted route of some journeys. We rely here, mostly, on G4S' detainee escorting records.

6.13 Early starts from IRCs. We have garnered many examples over our reporting period; here are a couple from the last month.

- The detainee was collected from Yarlswood at 0035, and arrived in QB at 0300 for her removal flight leaving at 1050
- The detainee was collected from Tinsley House at 0009, and arrived in QB at 0130 for flight leaving at 1150.

6.14 Early starts from Police stations. Our examples include the detainee who left Bethnal Green Police station at 2330 and arrived in QB at 0140 for the removal flight at 0930, and the man to whom we refer in paragraph 6.15

6.15 Convoluted routes. We know that a stop at G4S' Feltham base is standard on most journeys between an IRC, or Police station, and the airport. However, some detainees are driven all over the place before they even reach Feltham. One of our examples is the journey of a man whom G4S collected from Holborn Police Station at 2230. He travelled from there to QB via Fulham Police Station, then Tinsley House IRC (near Gatwick), then back to Feltham. He arrived in QB at 0240 which, to make matters worse, was 9+ hours pre-flight.

6.16 These journeys starting in the night, bringing detainees to QB many hours before their removal flights, and/or the convoluted route of some journeys, indicate to us disregard for the well-being of people on the cusp of removal. They are moved as if they are commodities. Why do UKBA continue to tolerate it?

Miscellaneous muddles

6.17 From time to time we have observed miscellaneous muddles as a consequence of which someone is detained at the airport unnecessarily, or detained there longer than necessary. Our examples include the following:

Unnecessary detention:

- The lady brought to QB for removal although her Removal Directions had been cancelled the previous evening. G4S, as escort contractor, had not been told of the cancellation.
- The lady brought from Yarlswood IRC for an interview which the interviewing Immigration Officer told us had been cancelled the previous day. She was detained in a holding room for 9.5 hours (for no purpose) before starting her return journey to Yarlswood.
- Lack of essential papers discovered after someone has been brought to QB for removal and so the removal is aborted – an unnecessary journey to the airport, detention in QB pending transport back to detention and then that journey.

Detention longer than necessary:

- The five young people, travelling together, who were refused entry. Border Force booked them on a return flight leaving at 2025. QB managers directed the boarding team to the wrong holding room and so the passengers missed their flight. Border Force had to book another return flight which left the next day. The five spent some 25 hours in detention rather than the 9.5 hours they would have experienced had G4S local personnel got it right.

Work in progress

6.18 We know UKBA is reviewing length of detention at the airport with the object of identifying ways in which it can properly be reduced. The Length of Stay Working Group is one of the arenas for these discussions. It met four times between February and September 2008. The Board's chair was invited to these meetings. The working group has been parked since its September meeting. We are not sure why, but are concerned lest the hiatus indicates lack of sustained attention to these important issues.

6.19 We also know G4S is developing an IT system to record length of detention at the time. This is good news; the current system is manual. We believe this initiative was taken at Detention Services' request. We think the first phase of the system will be introduced at the airport in a few months time. We also think phase one will capture the events during detention which are under G4S' control but not the other components of length of stay, such as Border Force case-working. We hope there will be intra-agency co-operation within UKBA so that this information gap can be closed quickly.

SECTION SEVEN: DETENTION IN UNSUITABLE CONDITIONS

7.1 People are detained for too long in unsuitable conditions. We comment on length of detention in the preceding section.

7.2 The need for a residential facility at the airport is patent. We are pleased UKBA is considering this. BAA will have to provide the space. We believe UKBA met the airport authority in January 2009 to discuss the proposal for the first time.

7.3 In Section 3 we record some of the features of the holding rooms and QB. Additionally:

- There is nowhere to sleep, other than upright on a seat, or stretched across seats, or on the floor. When we visit, we try to track the number of people detained for all or part of “our” night. As we do not visit daily our records can only be indicative snapshots. The statistics paint the bigger picture. We think it reasonable to assume that someone detained for twelve hours and upwards will have spent all or part of “our” night without access to proper facilities for sleep. Applying this threshold we calculate, from the statistics, that by the end of our twelve-month reporting period some 4800 people had been detained in holding rooms and some 230 detained in QB during “our” night. (Our attention to detention at night in holding rooms or in QB does not imply we think these detention conditions are acceptable during “our” daytime.)
- Whilst there is a shower in QB there are no proper facilities for washing in the holding rooms: there is a small hand basin in each of the male and female toilets. No plug (for reasons we understand), a trickle of water automatically released by putting one’s hand under the outlet and a dab of soap from a dispenser.

7.4 The need for a residential facility at the airport is patent. It is also urgent. It could, and should, be accessible to

- detainees brought to QB for removal who currently start their journeys from IRCs or Police Stations at night, arrive in QB in the small hours and then sit for hours waiting for their flights out;
- people refused entry and held in holding rooms for long hours waiting for their return flights;
- holding room detainees whose cases Border Force cannot resolve quickly, often for valid reasons.

7.5 We urge the Home Secretary and the Immigration Minister to make provision of a residential facility a priority.

SECTION EIGHT: ACCOMMODATION – developments

8.1 We perceive a disconnection in UKBA which militates against detainee welfare at the airport. We give our reasons in this section. One arm of the agency manages detention services and another, Border Force locally, manages the relationship with BAA on accommodation and repairs. We think Detention Services should own all aspects. This is under consideration. We understand there are resource implications and/or financial considerations. We believe the handover to Detention Services was first mooted in August 2008. We urge UKBA to move quickly from considering the change to making it.

T5

8.2 The new purpose-built holding room in T5 opened for business at the end of March 2008. It is an improvement on the other holding rooms in a number of respects. Detention Services were consulted on the design some years in advance, and, as we understand it, the project was then led by a Border Force team.

8.3 However the holding room has several design defects which impact adversely on detainee welfare.

- The lighting cannot be dimmed or switched off – a feature which hit us between the eyes on a visit we made during the night.
- The air temperature cannot be regulated from within the holding room. It is integral with the system for the whole terminal and controlled from some central point. It is cold there at night.
- The lavatories cannot have been designed with decency in mind. In all the other holding rooms they are entered via a small lobby. There is no lobby in T5 so the doors to the lavatories are in the holding room. We first visited T5 two weeks before it opened and were shocked to see that the lavatory doors had large gaps at the top and bottom. Whatever went on within would be detectable outside in the holding room.

8.4 We protested about the lavatory doors, and Detention Services shared our view. We were told BAA would replace the doors but not before October 2008. October has come and gone. Towards the end of July G4S had modesty panels fitted as a temporary measure. Unfortunately the door locks and/or the hinges dropped out of alignment as a result. We understand BAA required the temporary panels to be removed before they would contemplate repairing the locks/hinges. The panels were taken down at the end of December and they have not been replaced, nor have the locks/ hinges been repaired. We understand responsibility for driving the repairs and provision of new doors rests with Border Force locally.

8.5 There is no shower, although we reckon there is space. We asked Detention Services to re-consider. At that point we were not clear where the demarcation lines were drawn between Detention Services and Border Force locally. We had questioned the omission of a shower in our first report. The Action Plan response was:

“The design for Terminal 5 was finalised in accordance with the national standards, too far in advance to allow for the installation of showers. However, we are looking to install these as a modification. We accept that, where space allows, showers are desirable and will amend the national standards to reflect this.”

8.6 We have just heard that installation of a shower is considered not “feasible” – see The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, Hansard, House of Lords, 12 January 2009, Column WA 83. We ask UKBA: which arm of the agency made the decision, and why is provision not feasible?

8.7 All the holding rooms have coin/card-operated telephones. They are essential but the telephone in T5 was not installed until mid-May, two months after the holding room opened.

8.8 All the holding rooms have television, something which may help pass the long hours of waiting and anxiety. The TV in the main holding room at T5 was only installed towards the end of July, four months after the holding room opened. There is a second TV in the Family Room -an imaginative idea- although sadly it does not yet work.

8.9 There is CCTV in all the holding rooms, except T5 where it still has not been installed even though it is an important safeguard for both detainees and staff.

T1

8.10 There has been some re-development in T1: a new toilet area was created in September. We reckon there is space for a shower. We ask UKBA: who decided against it and why?

8.11 In reporting absence of a shower here and in T5 we have not overlooked the fact that there is a shower in QB. We comment on its accessibility to holding room detainees in paragraphs 11.20 and 11.21

T3

8.12 In our first report we drew attention to the need in T3 for separate accommodation for women (sometimes with children) from unrelated males. In the Action Plan UKBA told us

“We are currently looking at the feasibility of creating separate short-term holding facilities at Terminal 3 for women in the future.”

8.13 A separate area was created in August 2008. We believe Border Force took the lead and that Detention Services were not involved in the planning. The space is called a family room - we consider it to be a cupboard. It measures approximately 5 m x 3m and was created by partitioning off part of the main holding room. It is claustrophobic and the four chairs bolted to the floor are filthy. Yes, this family “room” achieves potential for separation, but is otherwise dire.

8.14 We relayed our concerns to Detention Services on the day we first saw the cupboard. We would have preferred a separate room with decent facilities, but, given silk purses and sow’s ears, suggested that a “window” in the partition between the cupboard and the main holding area would be an improvement making the space less claustrophobic. We were subsequently contacted by Corporate Services and we reiterated our suggestion of a window. In mid-December we heard that BAA might not carry out the work if they had to bear the cost. We blasted back to Detention Services. They decided to pay for the piece of work. At much the same time a small window of sorts appeared, badly executed and held in place by the masking tape. We assume this was commissioned by Corporate Services. At the end of January, Detention Services put their revised specification to the airport authority. A thorough clean is also intended and, we think, a TV. We are pleased Detention Services discussed these improvements with us in advance.

8.15 The CCTV in T3 needs to be adjusted, but has not been. Creation of the family “room” has resulted in a blind spot.

Lima 23

8.16 A significant development is imminent. The new removals building (Lima 23) to replace QB, is to open towards the end of March 2009. The Board’s chair was invited to view the unconverted building. We have seen the plans and are pleased that the facilities include not only showers but also two quiet rooms in which UKBA intend more comfortable lounge-style seating. We hope strenuous efforts are being made to ensure that Lima 23 is fit for purpose before it opens, unlike T5.

SECTION NINE: REPAIRS and MAINTENANCE

9.1 The intra-agency disconnection to which we refer in paragraph 8.1 is also apparent in relation to repairs and maintenance.

9.2 In our first report we commented on the time taken to carry out repairs. The Action Plan told us that “*responsibility*” (for repairs) “*lies with Corporate Services.*” We wonder who chases them. We still observe a negative approach and delay and the question we asked in our first report remains valid – is no connection made between the time repairs take and the impact of delay on detainees’ welfare?

Lighting

9.3 The detainee reception area/staff office in T3 is gloomy and a bad working environment for the staff. The problem is the lighting. In June we discovered that only three of the lights were working. Repair/replacement was carried out in July, but staff then opted to turn off the light over their desk as it was too bright and hot. We suggested a lower wattage bulb but have to assume this was all too difficult as the change has not been made. The area remains gloomy for other reasons. Staff told us in November that the new lights need diffusers. They have still not been fitted.

9.4 Some detainees have to spend the night in a holding room – see paragraph 7.3. The lighting in Ts 1, 3 and 5 cannot be switched off or dimmed. As this is possible in Ts 2 and 4, why not in all holding rooms? We raised this issue in October. Nothing has happened.

Air temperature

9.5 In our observation the holding rooms (other than in T2) are often either cold or too hot, and we report this whenever we find it. G4S fitted temperature gauges in early December. That was helpful but we do not believe the readings give a reliable indication of the temperature in a holding room which is influenced by, for example, the position of air conditioning units.

The shower in QB

9.6 It is the only shower in the detention facilities. The hot water supply failed in August. This was rectified some four weeks later.

Miscellaneous small repairs

9.7 Small things inevitably go wrong. Putting them right takes ages. Our examples include the following:

- The leaking tap for which a new washer was required. Seven days after the fault was reported we noticed it had not yet been repaired and that the toilet area had been put out of bounds.
- The toilet paper dispenser which we discovered was broken, and was not replaced for fifteen days.

Deep cleaning

9.8 The holding rooms and QB are in continuous communal use and need regular deep-cleaning. We think it is arranged by Corporate Services at the request of either Border Force locally or G4S. It does not happen regularly. For example when in November we complained yet again about the filthy seats in T4 we discovered they had not been cleaned for six months.

9.9 Deep-clean is impossible if the holding room is full of people, but surely a schedule could be agreed in advance and arrangements made to move detainees in the holding room which is to be cleaned to other holding rooms.

Regular Cleaning

9.10 We have observed an improvement in standards in the holding rooms but the lapses suggest that neither Border Force nor the DCOs regularly monitor the contractor's performance. To whom is the contractor accountable? For example, why is it that we notice the cleaner has arrived to mop the floor with a dry mop and no cleaning agent, or has not picked up all the rubbish?

Public health issues

9.11 Another contractor is responsible for emptying the sanitary bins, but in our observation does not do so regularly. To whom is this contractor accountable? We observe overflowing bins in the holding room toilets. We also reported unemptied sanitary bins in QB (in both the staff and the detainee toilets) over months before action was taken.

9.12 The DCOs are responsible for collecting blankets and pillowcases after the detainees who have used them have left, and then bagging them for the laundry collection. Some DCOs simply do not bother. Others rush round as we appear. We have also seen dirty blankets and pillowcases dumped in a heap unbagged and/or dumped by the clean stock.

9.13 Cockroaches take up periodic residence in the detainee reception area/staff office in T4 near the fridge and microwave in which detainees' food is stored or heated. We noticed this in November and again in January and on each occasion Border Force locally called pest control specialists.

SECTION TEN: DETENTION AUTHORITY - the IS91 form

10.1 The IS91 is the custodian's authority to detain, issued by Border Force to G4S as custodian. G4S may not legally hold someone without it.

10.2 In our first report we drew attention to incomplete IS91s. In the Action Plan UKBA told us "*staff have been reminded of the need to produce a fully-completed IS91 from the UKBA case-working system as soon as possible.*"

10.3 We continued to see IS91s incomplete in one of two respects. First, the authority itself, which is given on page one. We have very occasionally seen an unsigned and undated IS91. We also sometimes see detainees held under an authority which does not include their photograph, which is a requirement. Border Force Detention Inspectors have told us why, in certain circumstances, a photograph cannot be attached to the authority before the detainee is taken into the holding room. We assume detention under an unsigned authority is unlawful. We think we are being told that the lack of a photograph is less significant and does not invalidate the authority. We would welcome a definitive statement from Border Force.

10.4 Secondly, page two was often wholly or partially incomplete. On this page, the Immigration officer must identify the reason for detention: there is a choice of six tick boxes. There are other sections on this page to record special needs or risk factors as a consequence of which the detainee may need special monitoring or supervision. We routinely observed IS91s in which no attempt had been made to complete page two. We were concerned. If the Immigration officer had not bothered even to tick the relevant box giving reason for detention, could we (and more importantly the DCOs) be confident that special needs and risk factors had been considered? We had good reason for doubting this. For example:

- The unaccompanied nine year old whose solo status was not recorded
- The pregnant lady whose pregnancy was not recorded
- The HIV positive detainee whose medical condition was not recorded
- The needs of the lady in a wheelchair of whom we have written in Section Five

10.5 The Detention Inspectors responded positively. A new pan-Heathrow approach was in force by the end of October. Consideration of the Risk Factors section must be patent: if there are no known risks this must be recorded. Secondly, the IS91 must be checked by a CIO and countersigned before a detainee is taken into the holding room.

10.6 We have seen significant improvements during the last three months, although we still sometimes see an incomplete IS91 which has been signed off by a CIO. We acknowledge counter-signature is not a legal requirement, but in our observation it mostly achieves higher standards and we hope gives the DCOs greater confidence that matters relevant to their care and supervision of a detainee have been disclosed at the start of detention.

SECTION ELEVEN: OTHER ASPECTS of DETAINEES' WELFARE

11.1 The subjects on which we report in this section impact, variously, on considerations of decency and/or diversity in its widest sense.

Staffing numbers and gender mix

11.2 We note staffing levels when we visit. DCOs in the holding rooms work twelve-hour shifts. The Contract requires G4S to detail two DCOs on each shift in a holding room. Our first report recorded our observations on under-staffing. We continue to observe it in T2 and sometimes T1. We have recorded a solo DCO on shift 33 times in our reporting period. Snapshots, but illustrating a problem.

11.3 It is reasonable to assume that working a solo shift is hard for the staff and may impact adversely on detainees' welfare. We have seen negative impact and passed on our observations to G4S' local managers.

11.4 There are not enough female DCOs. We still often observe male DCOs with women in their charge. This is inappropriate. Local managers are aware of our concerns. For example at the end of July 2008 they told us:

"We acknowledge we need more females and through recruitment this is slowly coming. We will be instructing the DCMs to be more pro-active in distributing the females to the relevant areas using the boarding teams etc"

11.5 We acknowledge the recruitment issue. We do not believe we have seen the pro-active approach implemented as a matter of course.

Induction to detention

11.6 In our first report we commented on the approach to induction. G4S has since issued a new Holding Room Detainee Induction procedure, which sets out the requirements clearly on one sheet of paper. They include instructions to:

- Point out the facilities in the holding room and how to get food and drink
- Draw attention to the information displayed in the holding room
- Have particular regard to a single female detainee if there are male detainees in the holding room
- Give full consideration to care needs when a disabled detainee arrives

11.7 In our observation there is a significant gap between the requirements and their delivery by some staff. We have rarely seen any attempt by QB staff to implement the procedure beyond greeting and reassuring. We observe inductions properly carried out by some holding room staff but not all, and omissions generally fall into one of the following categories:

- Failure to tell detainees of the range of food available: some detainees we have spoken to simply did not know there was anything beyond the sandwich.
- Failure to point out the facilities of a holding room or draw attention to the information displayed in it.
- Failure to pay particular regard to the needs of a single female detainee.

11.8 Our comments on Induction do not detract from our later observations on improved staff interaction with detainees (paragraphs 12.2 and 12.3.) Our point here is different: there is a procedure, and it is not consistently implemented by some staff.

The hourly welfare check

11.9 This is another good G4S innovation, a new approach requiring hourly welfare checks and not simply a head count. We quote from the instruction:

“Every hour, go into the holding room and check the detainees are comfortable. If someone looks cold, offer them a blanket. Offer food and a drink during breakfast/lunch/dinner periods or at any other time if you suspect a detainee is hungry/thirsty. Make an effort to communicate and engage with the detainees, using sign language if necessary. Update a detainee with any information you have about their situation and the next step.”

11.10 We have difficulty in assessing whether these hourly welfare checks are made. If they are, then why do we discover someone is cold, or hungry, or trying to sleep and has not been offered a pillow or blanket and indeed did not know either was available, or wants to use a mobile telephone and does not know on what terms this is permissible? G4S’ local managers appear to acknowledge the problem. They have told us they are looking at methods of recording the checks. They do not appear to have alighted upon one, yet.

Pillows and blankets

11.11 G4S provides pillows and blankets. In our first report we asked whether the foil blankets, designed to retain warmth but not give it, might be replaced. Cellular blankets were introduced in May 2008. Cotton pillowcases replaced the disposable variety. Both are welcome improvements.

11.12 However, for months stock levels were not managed in two respects. First, the managers did not know how many blankets and pillowcases were in daily use. Secondly, until November the laundering arrangements were for collection/delivery once a week. So we noticed that a blanket or a pillowcase was not offered because there was no clean stock in the holding room.

11.13 Beyond that, we continued to observe the erratic distribution of blankets and pillowcases from the central store in QB to the holding rooms. We had drawn attention to this problem in our first report.

11.14 In August the managers introduced yet another new system for holding room staff to order supplies from the central stores once a week. We still observe shortages. We do not understand why this basic housekeeping issue cannot be resolved.

Something to eat

11.15 In our first report we drew attention to the limited range G4S offered, that it failed to accommodate diverse needs, whether dietary or religious, and that the hot meal option was only a Pot Noodle. There have been significant improvements this year. Microwaveable ambient meals are now offered; we have been told there are eleven varieties. Kosher meals are now available, kept in a dedicated freezer.

11.16 Sandwiches are also available, offered, in our observation, as the staple even though some detainees will be unused to eating bread of this sort, or in this form, and might prefer a hot meal on admission to the holding room was it to be offered. In the last three months we have noticed deterioration in the quality of the sandwiches. At the end of January we learned that G4S is addressing the problem with its supplier.

11.17 The distribution issues we have reported in the context of blankets and pillow cases crop up again in the context of sandwiches and ambient meals. We routinely observe either that there are no sandwiches in a holding room, or not enough to meet probable demand. There are distribution issues of a different sort in relation to ambient meals. The full range is not routinely supplied to each holding room. We do not know why this is. The result in our observation is that the unpopular meals are available in abundance and that dietary preferences have not been catered for. Our most bizarre find was of sixteen Shepherd's pies and one vegetarian meal for the T3 holding room whose detainees typically opt for a vegetarian meal.

Something to drink

11.18 There is a Klix machine in all locations dispensing hot and cold drinks. In our observation the machines have been irregularly cleaned and maintained and supplies run out between the contractor's visits. For example,

- No chilled water
- No water cups
- No orange juice
- No hot drinks with sugar
- In one location one beverage had run out and in another more than one.

11.19 In July G4S' local managers told us the contractor should visit three times a week. We continued to observe shortfalls. At the end of November they told us they had

reached an agreement committing their contractor to visit all the holding rooms regularly and on specified days of the week. In December they told us they wanted a meeting with the contractor to review its performance. We still see shortfalls.

Access to proper washing facilities

11.20 In paragraph 7.3 we record the lack of proper facilities in the holding rooms. In paragraphs 8.5 and 8.10 we refer to the decision against a shower in each of T5 and T1.

11.21 We have often been told detainees can be taken from the holding room to QB to shower. We know it does happen. Border Force offer their detainee a shower and DCOs not required immediately for other work facilitate it by escorting the detainee to QB and back.

11.22 We are confident this does not happen as a matter of course. It should, whatever the logistical problems. It is a pity holding room detainees have to be moved from pillar to post in order to shower. It is indecent to deny all but the few the opportunity of a proper wash.

Activities for and care of children

11.23 There are family rooms in each of QB and T5 and there is the family cupboard in T3 on which we have already commented. The Family room in T5 is in, but separate from, the main holding room. It is small but otherwise good. It has chairs, bolted to the floor, and a table at which children can sit and play, and do. We are particularly impressed by the range of toys, and that they are actually in the room and not tucked away in a filing cabinet. We understand most of the toys were donated by Border Force.

11.24 There are two holding rooms in T4 and so scope for women and children to be apart from unrelated men, but neither room has this dedicated purpose and there has been no attempt to make one of them child-friendly.

11.25 In our observation the Family Rooms in QB and T5 are well used. The other separate spaces in Ts 1, 2 and 3 are small and poorly equipped. They achieve the potential for women to be apart from unrelated men, but offer nothing at all for children. A separate, well-equipped Family Room with space for children to run around, accessible to all families detained in the terminals, would be a solution.

11.26 G4S has introduced travelling cots this year, one in each of the holding rooms. This is good although babies' blankets are not supplied. G4S has continued to supply Activity Packs for children containing pictures to be coloured, puzzles. G4S also now provides Tetris games. We have rarely seen one used. We know the DCOs give a child an Activity Pack straightaway. We do not know how, or when, other diversions find their way out of the filing cabinet and into a child's hands. There is now a small selection of children's books in most, but not all, of the holding rooms.

Telephone calls

11.27 Detainees need to contact the outside world. They can, on certain conditions. They are entitled to one free telephone call. There are coin/card-operated telephones in each holding room and in QB. Most detainees have mobiles. They are not allowed to take them into the holding room or QB, but they may use them if they ask the staff. If the mobile has a camera facility, the call must be supervised.

11.28 We observe DCOs who do know the rules and readily facilitate use of a mobile, and supervise the call, when necessary. Others appear either not to know the rules, whether about the free call or use of mobiles, or to be reluctant to implement them. The permissible telephone call should not need to be triggered by our intervention.

11.29 We recorded the identical problem in our first report. The Action Plan response was:

“There is an agreed policy that should apply across all terminals (and in the very near future, this will include supplying “dummy” mobile phones for detainees with mobiles that have a camera facility). LHR staff will be reminded of the policy to ensure consistency”

The reminders appear not to have registered with some staff. If the dummy phones have arrived, we have not seen them.

11.30 The other recurrent issue, which we also raised in our first report, is that detainees in holding rooms often do not have the right change for the pay phone. We suggested a float in each holding room. In November we learned that local managers were trying to make an arrangement with Travelex in each terminal. If that happens it will be progress, but why so long to resolve a long-standing, familiar and recurrent problem?

11.31 The public telephones in Ts 1, 2, 3 and 5 can take incoming calls, the phones in Ts 1 and 3 having been adapted for this purpose during our reporting period. This is good.

Facilities for religious observance

11.32 In our first report we complimented G4S on the guidance it had given its staff in respect of the fasting month of Ramadan. We suggested it could be improved by including a timetable, as dawn and dusk are not detectable in holding rooms. This year the guidance was issued before the start of Ramadan and included a detailed timetable. This year dates were supplied throughout the fasting month to be offered to detainees as they break the fast. A good innovation which we hope will be repeated.

11.33 Prayer mats and religious texts are available to detainees but the inconsistent approach we reported last year persists. In Ts 1 and 2 mats and texts are kept in the holding room but in all other locations they are stored in the staff office so detainees

wanting them have to ask. This approach assumes they have had a proper Induction and know that these things are available on request.

Reading materials

11.34 There is now a limited range of foreign language books in each holding room, but not in QB. G4S provide daily newspapers in English and a few other languages. DCOs distribute the papers around the holding rooms. We observe problems such as: the papers have arrived centrally but not been distributed to the holding rooms; the papers have arrived in the staff office but have not moved from it into the holding room; some staff read the papers themselves first: some keep the crossword sections for their own amusement.

The smoking ban

11.35 Detainees are not allowed to smoke in either the holding rooms or in QB. We think this unreasonable given their length of detention. In our first report we asked G4S and BIA (now UKBA) to consider offering detainees nicotine gum or patches which for some might help relieve the stress of detention. Our request was rejected in the Action Plan on medical grounds.

11.36 We asked UKBA to re-consider. They took further medical advice. The answer is the same, but now with more detail. Patches should not be provided to detainees unless under some form of medical supervision; patches are not effective in relieving stress as a substitute for a cigarette.

11.37 We note that UKBA has not offered to procure a secure smoking area for detainees nor the medical supervision apparently needed to give someone a patch.

Complaints

11.38 In 2008 Detention Services reviewed their procedures for handling complaints, consulting external stakeholders during the review.

11.39 The draft procedures on which we were invited to comment were intended to apply equally to IRCs, residential short term holding facilities and non-residential holding rooms - the one-size-fits-all approach.

11.40 We argued this approach was not appropriate to complaints from holding room detainees, given the timescale of their detention. We argued for speedy resolution, an emphasis on informal resolution and a framework, discrete to holding rooms, to facilitate this.

11.41 Detention Service Order 13/2008 (Handling of complaints in IRCs, Short Term Holding Facilities, Holding Rooms and on Escort) was issued on 1 December 2008. The complaints procedures set out in that DSO apply across the board; there is no recognition

of the need for a separate procedure for holding rooms. We conclude that Detention Services paid no heed to our submissions.

11.42 G4S has implemented the DSO: there is a locked complaints box in each holding room, and QB; and there are complaint forms and explanatory text in some 20 languages.

11.43 We know some detainees make formal written complaints about their treatment at Heathrow. G4S notify us of these periodically.

Police Custody issues

11.44 In our first report we drew attention to detainees we had met who arrived in QB for removal directly from police custody without money and/or possessions other than the clothes they were wearing. This was removal with too much dispatch, we thought. We wanted to know who had responsibility for attempting to re-unite an individual with his or her property whilst still in police custody. In June, Detention Services suggested two avenues in UKBA's Enforcement division, one if we wanted to pursue an individual case and the other if we had policy concerns.

11.45 This year we have not encountered the problem of no money and/or possessions, although we do not dismiss the possibility – we do not visit daily. However we have met men and women held in police cells for more than a day and brought from there to QB who told us they had not been able to wash. Staff in QB have told us this is not uncommon, and is particularly intolerable for women who are menstruating.

11.46 In our opinion, detainees who are brought directly from police custody to QB have been detained in the cells at UKBA's behest and Detention Services should not distance themselves from welfare issues simply because these individuals are held in police cells.

SECTION TWELVE: G4S' STAFF INTERACTION WITH DETAINEES

12.1 Our first report records our observations of both good staff work and negative attitudes on the part of some. The Action Plan response was that *"G4S has started a review of all staff/detainee interaction that will improve existing contacts and enhance overall contact."*

12.2 We do not know when this review was completed, but in our observation there has been real progress. We routinely see DCOs engage with their detainees, show initiative, demonstrate a can-do approach and, in the case of boarding teams, deploy their skills in trying to make the boarding an unthreatening experience for the escorted detainee.

12.3 We record our observations of staff's approach to detainees in our rota visit reports. The top five words we have used (sometimes our own, sometimes quoting detainees) are, in descending order, starting with the most frequently deployed:

- Kind
- Caring
- Thoughtful
- Reassuring/calming
- Cheerful/positive

12.4 There is room for improvement. We still occasionally hear inappropriate language: "pens" to describe the holding room: detainees described as "these people" in an entirely pejorative tone: angry swearing in front of detainees, although not about them.

12.5 From time to time we still observe negative attitudes expressed in a different way, most especially by inattention to possible need, despite the instruction to make hourly welfare checks. We have already commented on this.

12.6 We have also noticed some DCOs' general lack of empathy when speaking to detainees who have little or no English. We do not think managers are alert to this issue. Some staff use colloquial language and speak fast. For example, "grab a seat" when detainees with some English will more probably have learnt "please sit down". Staff need always to hold in mind that detainees who present themselves to Border Control and are then detained will not only have arrived in a foreign country but that the holding room will be doubly foreign. They are confused, tired and afraid and need to understand as best they may what they are being asked to do.

SECTION THIRTEEN: MONITORING REMOVALS FROM THE AIRPORT

13.1 People being removed are escorted by DCOs. The escorting process takes one of two forms.

Overseas escorting

13.2 Some are escorted from their IRC to the airport, onto the plane and onwards to their overseas destination by a cadre of DCOs known as overseas escorts. This enforced removal reflects an assessment that the detainee will not leave voluntarily. We understand the overseas escorts are generally G4S employees although UKBA draws on its approved list of other contractors if G4S cannot cover the job. The movement within the perimeter of the airport of those under overseas escort is carried out away from public gaze, and usually ours too.

13.3 We are rarely able to monitor a boarding by overseas escorts. This is unsatisfactory given our remit. We do not suggest that UKBA or G4S are keeping us out of the loop. Rather, we simply do not know when during a monitoring visit or at which departure gate we should pitch up. If we happen to be in the right place at the right time it is by coincidence, not prior knowledge.

In-country escorting

13.4 People already detained in a holding room or QB are escorted to the door of the plane by another cadre of DCOs known as in-country escorting teams. They are G4S' employees working at the airport. Holding room detainees are generally boarded on a flight leaving from the same terminal in which they have been detained. They walk with their escorts through the public departure areas. People who have been booked into QB for removal are driven from there to the departure gate in vans. The escorting DCOs sit in the front and the detainees travel in the rear caged section. Detainees are usually boarded before the other passengers and in this sense their boarding is sensitively carried out. There will be a long wait before the flight leaves.

13.5 Many accept their fate and co-operate in their removal. Some refuse to leave QB. Others physically resist at the door of the plane and cannot be boarded. Others resist in the interval between boarding and the plane pulling back from the stand. The carrier then refuses to take them, and they are disembarked. The in-country boarding team escort them back to QB.

13.6 We regularly monitor boardings by in-country teams. We are aware that some detainees allege mistreatment by in-country escorts at the airport. We do not dismiss this possibility, but we have not seen mistreatment. In our observation the in-country boarding teams carry out their work with care and respect. Walking with a boarding team and their passenger, or travelling in a van, we often hear the DCOs chatting to the passenger, giving reassurance, trying to allay understandable anxieties.

13.7 In-country boarding teams must wear hi-visibility jackets. In our first report we protested about the legend emblazoned on the back – “Detainee Custody Officer”. It served to publicise the status of the person being escorted and was demeaning. The words were removed and new jackets issued in the early months of this reporting period.

Removal by charter flights from Heathrow

13.8 We monitored the first charter flight removal from Heathrow, joining the party at the IRC at which all the passengers had been assembled, travelling with them and their overseas escorts to the airport, through security and onwards to the steps of the aircraft which was leaving from a remote stand. It was our first exposure to monitoring removal on this scale. UKBA has agreed to give us advance notice of future charters from the airport.

SECTION FOURTEEN: THE TREATMENT of DETAINEES who RESIST REMOVAL

14.1 We have indicated in paragraph 13.5 that some people do not co-operate in their removal. They are detained again in QB pending return to an IRC or, less frequently, pending enforced removal later that day with overseas escorts. We believe that most of those who resist removal are held in isolation, apart from the other detainees in QB either for a time or, in some cases, for the whole of time they spend in QB after resisting removal.

The Rules regulating isolation

14.2 There are two isolation rooms in QB known as “returns” rooms. They are sparse. There are Rules for use of a returns room, introduced by G4S in May 2008 and amended in mid-September after consultation with UKBA. In summary:

- A returns room must never be used as a means of punishing a detainee or if there are overriding welfare needs that cannot be met if the detainee is placed there
- Subject to these factors, a detainee may be placed in a returns room if one or more of seven grounds is met.
- Authority for a detainee to be placed in a returns room must be given by a QB DCM
- The DCM must visit the detainee once an hour and assess whether the original ground continues to apply
- A DCO must visit the detainee at half-hourly intervals, talk to the detainee, check whether he/she wants a drink or food or needs to use the toilet
- After a detainee has been isolated for four hours, his/her continued stay in a returns room must be reviewed and any continuation authorised by a CIO
- The decision to isolate, the grounds for it, the half-hourly DCO visit, the hourly DCM visit and the CIO’s review must all be recorded at the time. There is a timed log for each detainee’s period of isolation

Compliance with the Rules

14.3 If someone is in a returns room when we visit, we observe, read the log and ask questions. In all other cases we have to rely on G4S’ returns room records. It is clear to us that the Rules are not being consistently implemented.

- There is no record of CIO review and authorisation for continued isolation in approximately 70% of the cases when a detainee was isolated for four+ hours in the period mid-September to 31 January
- There is rarely any record of the hourly risk assessment. The individual logs show that some detainees are isolated for a short time and others return to the main holding room at or a few minutes before the four-hour trigger. However the risk assessments which presumably informed these judgements are rarely recorded. Lack of recorded hourly assessments is particularly concerning in the case of someone isolated for more than four hours when there is no record of CIO review, much less authorisation for continued isolation beyond four hours.

14.4 We have told G4S and UKBA of our concerns a number of times. No steps have been taken to address them. The failure to ensure consistent implementation of the Rules continues.

SECTION FIFTEEN: MANAGEMENT and CONTRACTUAL OVERSIGHT

G4S

15.1 G4S' local management structure has changed during our reporting period. The team now comprises:

- the General Manager (a dedicated post)
- two Service Delivery Managers, one with responsibility for QB and the other for the holding rooms. Previously there was one SDM.
- Detainee Custody Managers. New posts have been created in this first tier of management- there are two DCMs with specific responsibility for holding rooms.

15.2 The General Manager and the second SDM were in post by the time we received the Action Plan. It told us "*Detainee Welfare will be high on their agenda.*" We assume the later appointment of holding room DCMs had the same objective.

15.3 We welcomed these changes and hoped they would achieve the timely and consistent attention to detainees' care so patently lacking during our first reporting period. We do not think this potential has yet been realised. We see the same problems time and again. Our top seven recurring issues have been:

- Inconsistent and defective distribution of essential supplies from QB to the holding rooms in general, with blankets and pillow cases in particular, followed by ambient meals.
- Dirty blankets and used pillows left lying around after the detainee who had used them had left, or hastily cleared away as we swam into view.
- Inductions not delivered as they should be
- Inattention to detainees' needs in the context of the hourly welfare check
- Failure to arrange for the full and insanitary sanitary bins in QB (detainee and staff areas) to be removed
- Failure of some staff to implement G4S' policies on detainees' telephone calls
- Irregular maintenance and stocking of the Klix machines

15.4 Managers in the top two tiers respond to our weekly reports. That is generous of them: a response to the Board is not mandatory. They often acknowledge the need for action but the problems persist. Whilst we do not know why this is, our observations suggest poor levels of management supervision and poor housekeeping. What we are certain of is that detainees' care has been prejudiced.

15.5 The rules for use of a QB returns room, on which we comment in the preceding Section, set high standards. The lax approach to their implementation is worrying and indicates lack of rigour by managers.

UKBA's contract monitoring

15.6 In our first report we recorded our view that contractual monitoring at Heathrow by BIA (now UKBA) appeared remote. Visits were infrequent. We suggested regular personal observation to be an important component of monitoring contractual performance. Our views were accepted "*in principle*".

15.7 The agency has given thought to enhancing the contract monitoring team. We understand the current team is to be re-structured to provide more presence at the airport with attention to holding rooms and not just the escorting and removal process. We believe this is imminent, and are pleased.

SECTION SIXTEEN: RE-TENDERING the CONTRACT

16.1 The contract expires in April 2010. A re-tendering process is required. UKBA invited us, as external stakeholders, to contribute our views and we did.

16.2 We consider the contract places more emphasis on the escorting process, whether in-country or overseas, than on detainees' care and welfare. We hope this imbalance will be redressed in the Invitation to Tender and that the new contract will, for example:

- require the contractor to move from a passive approach to detainees to active engagement with them
- require the contractor to train DCOs in all aspects of detainee care to a standard which achieves measurable competences
- require the contractor to ensure that a female DCO is always present when women are detained
- prohibit the contractor from moving families in caged vehicles

16.3 We also hope that requirements of this sort will not be merely aspirational, but have a commercial cutting edge so that under-performance carries contractual penalties.

SECTION SEVENTEEN: THE WORK of the BOARD

17.1 Our Clerk was appointed in June (eighteen months after we were appointed), received training from the IMB Secretariat in July and then took on his clerking duties. His arrival has made a huge difference. We not only have administrative support but support to a high standard. We are grateful to Detention Services for taking the initiative and making his appointment possible.

17.2 We have a structured approach to our monitoring (rota) visits which we make at least once a week.

17.3 Our rota visit reports are records for the Board but we have continued to circulate them to external readers – the local Detention Inspectors in Border Force, the head of the contract monitoring team and G4S’ local managers. All respond, which is generous of them.

17.4 We are invited to attend the Pan-Heathrow Detention meetings and meetings of G4S’ Detainee Welfare Working Group. These fora are of value to us in our monitoring role and we attend whenever we can. Our chair attended the four meetings of the Length of Stay Working Group referred to in paragraph 6.18.

17.5 G4S now has an IMB slot in its Induction course for new DCOs which we deliver whenever we can, given our other commitments and the course venues. We appreciate this access to the recruits even though not all are due to work at Heathrow.

17.6 As already reported, we responded to UKBA’s consultation exercise on each of the proposed complaints procedures and work on the proposed Invitation to Tender. G4S carried out an operational review at Heathrow in October/November and invited us to contribute on welfare issues, which we did.

17.7 Statistics relevant to our work are set out below:

Number of Board members at the start of the reporting period:	8
Number of Board members at the end of the reporting period:	8
Number of Board meetings during the reporting period:	12
Average number of attendees at these Board meetings:	6.5
Total number of visits to the facilities (including meetings there):	88
Total numbers of attendances at meetings elsewhere:	30