

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

# **Eaton House**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

**26 January 2017**

## **Glossary of terms**

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# Contents

Fact page	4
Introduction	5
About this inspection and report	6
Summary	7
Section 1. Safety	9
Respect	12
Preparation for removal and release	15
Section 2. Summary of recommendations	16
Section 3. Appendices	18
Appendix I: Inspection team	18
Appendix II: Progress on recommendations from the last report	19
Appendix III: Photographs	21

# Fact page

**Task of the establishment**

To hold immigration detainees who are to be removed from the United Kingdom

**Location**

Hounslow, Middlesex

**Name of contractor**

Tascor

**Last inspection**

8 August 2011

**Escort provider**

Tascor

# Introduction

Eaton House is a hub for Home Office immigration functions in West London. The building houses a reporting centre attended by foreign nationals as part of the conditions of their temporary admission to the UK. The reporting centre was open from 9am until 4pm, Monday to Friday. About 500 people reported each day. Two immigration compliance and enforcement (ICE) teams also operated from the building. The building housed a short-term holding facility run by private contractor Tascor, open from 9am until 6pm. The Home Office held people detained after attending the reporting centre or those that ICE teams had apprehended in the community.

Thirteen detainees were held on the day of our inspection. The facility comprised a single holding room and a staff office. It was too small for the number held and the booking-in processes were slow. Parts of the facility were in a poor state of repair. Several rough sleepers were held but there were no washing facilities and they were not routinely given the available hygiene packs. Detainees were routinely handcuffed the short distance from the facility to escort vehicles. Members of an Independent Monitoring Board did not visit the facility.

# About this inspection and report

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, young offender institutions, immigration detention facilities and police custody.

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 four tests of a healthy prison that were first introduced in this inspectorate's thematic review *Suicide is everyone's concern*, published in 1999. The tests have been modified to fit the inspection of short-term holding facilities, both residential and non-residential. The tests for short-term holding facilities are:

**Safety** – that detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position

**Respect** – that detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention<sup>1</sup>

**Preparation for removal and release** – that 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.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Non-residential STHFs are unsuitable for long stays and detainees should not be held in them for more than a few hours. This limits what activities can or need to be provided. We will therefore report any notable issues concerning activities in the accommodation and facilities section.

# Summary

- S1 At our inspection in 2011, we made 19 recommendations, six of which we found at this inspection had been achieved and 13 not achieved.
- S2 Tascor escort vehicles were appropriately equipped but the immigration enforcement vehicle we inspected did not have drinking water or a first aid kit. A detainee spent 25 minutes in an unheated vehicle in very cold conditions. Booking-in processes were too slow, the holding room was small and detainees were held for long periods in ill-equipped interview rooms while waiting to be admitted to the holding room. Some detainees were subjected to excessive searching.
- S3 Men and women were held together in a single holding room. Detainee custody officers (DCOs) had good oversight of the holding room. They filled in a suicide and self-harm warning form after a detainee threatened to kill herself but did not use a professional interpreter to communicate with her. Actual self-harm incidents were very rare. Immigration enforcement officers communicated safeguarding risks to the national removals command gatekeeper, who decided if detention was appropriate. Restraint techniques were rarely used; force was last used in October 2014 and paperwork suggested it was proportionate. Tascor escorts routinely handcuffed detainees the short distance from the facility to escort vehicles regardless of their individual risk.
- S4 Detainees did not have free access to email or fax machines to contact their lawyers. They had reasonably good access to phones but a detainee without money received no help with contacting with a lawyer. The risk section of the authority to detain paperwork was not always completed in full.
- S5 The numbers held in the previous three months were slightly higher than at our last inspection, 343 compared with 325. Tascor was unable to provide accurate data that would have allowed a calculation of average length of detention. The available data showed that most detainees were held for under eight hours, and eight detainees were held for between eight and 12 hours. These figures did not include the time detainees were held in interview rooms or detainees who were transferred directly from an interview room to an immigration removal centre.
- S6 With only eight seats, the holding room was not large enough. The accommodation remained largely unchanged from our previous inspection, but DCOs could now control the temperature in the holding room. It was shabby but had natural light. The toilets did not have seats or lids and toilet doors had gaps at the top and bottom. Even though it was not unusual for rough sleepers to be held, the washing facilities were not adequate. DCOs had access to a medical triage helpline. Detainees could help themselves to snacks, and hot meals were offered. There were sufficient activities to keep detainees occupied for a short time. After entering the holding room detainees could not go outside for fresh air or to smoke.
- S7 DCOs were reasonably polite and welcoming when detainees arrived but were too busy with paperwork to build a rapport. Complaint forms were available in the holding room but pens were not. The complaints box was not emptied every day. There were no adapted toilets for disabled detainees. Records confirmed that DCOs rarely used telephone interpretation.
- S8 Family and friends could deliver property to the facility but could not meet detainees. DCOs gave detainees an information card with details of the immigration removal centre they were

being transferred to. Most detainees generally had good access to telephones but could not use the internet, email or video-calling facilities.

# Section 1. Safety

## Arrival

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees under escort are treated safely, decently and efficiently. Detainees taken into detention are treated with respect, have the correct documentation, and are held in safe and decent conditions. Family accommodation is suitable.**

- 1.1 The immigration enforcement escort van we inspected was spacious and clean, but did not have a first aid kit or drinking water. However, Tascor escort vehicles, used to move detainees from the facility to immigration removal centres, were fully equipped with first aid kits, water and snacks. Some detainees spent too long in unheated vehicles. We saw one detainee being held for 25 minutes in very cold conditions.
- 1.2 Detainees arrived at the facility after attending the reporting centre or being apprehended by immigration compliance and enforcement (ICE) teams in the community. ICE operations were based on intelligence. Six of the 13 detainees held on the day of our inspection were rough sleepers. A team of immigration enforcement officers had been involved in a joint operation with the police and the homelessness charity St Mungo's. The operation targeted rough sleepers, many of whom were European Economic Area nationals.
- 1.3 The facility was open Monday to Friday from 9am until 6pm and was staffed by two detainee custody officers (DCOs), one male and one female. The booking-in process was slow, the room was not large enough for all those detained, and detainees waited a long time in adjacent interview rooms without adequate facilities. For example, rough sleepers were brought to Eaton House at 8.10am, but the last in the group did not enter the facility until 11.45am.
- 1.4 DCOs searched detainees behind a portable screen on entry to the facility. Escorts also searched detainees when they left. We saw a detainee being searched twice in the space of 10 minutes, which was excessive and unnecessary.

## Recommendation

- 1.5 **DCOs should swiftly book detainees into an adequately sized facility. Detainees should not be held in poorly equipped interview rooms for lengthy periods.**

## Keeping detainees safe

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees feel and are safe from bullying and victimisation. The facility provides a safe and secure environment which reduces the risk of self-harm and suicide. The centre promotes the welfare of all detainees, particularly adults at risk, and protects them from all kinds of harm and neglect.<sup>2</sup> Force is only used as a last resort and for legitimate reasons.**

- 1.6** Men and women could not be held separately. Staff had good oversight of the holding room. A large Perspex window between the DCOs' office and the holding room allowed most of the room to be viewed. Blind spots could be viewed through a mirror on the wall of the holding room and CCTV cameras. DCOs said they had not witnessed tension between detainees but would defuse any by talking to detainees.
- 1.7** We observed an immigration enforcement officer serve removal papers on a female detainee using a telephone interpreter. The detainee became distressed and said she would rather kill herself than return to her country of origin. When she entered the holding room, DCOs promptly recorded her risks on a suicide and self-harm warning form, which accompanied her to the immigration removal centre. The detainee struggled to communicate in English but, unlike the immigration enforcement officer, DCOs did not use a professional telephone interpreter to identify or clarify her risks (see recommendation 1.34). One of the two DCOs did not carry an anti-ligature knife, which may have led to unnecessary delays in an emergency. An anti-ligature knife was attached to the first aid kit, which was mounted on a wall in the DCOs' office.
- 1.8** The last recorded incident of actual self-harm was in October 2014. After entering the facility, a detainee started banging her head against the wall and door, stating: 'I want to die.' Paperwork showed staff intervened swiftly and used minimal force to move her to an interview room where they talked to her until she was calm enough to go to the holding room. She received support through the assessment, care in detention and teamwork system when she arrived at the immigration removal centre.
- 1.9** There were no formal links with the local adult social services department. If immigration enforcement officers identified any safeguarding risks during the arrest and enforcement interview, they informed the national removals command gatekeeper. The gatekeeper would assess the risks and decide if detention was appropriate in line with the Home Office's adults at risk in immigration detention policy. Immigration enforcement officers complained that the gatekeeper sometimes took too long to make decisions. Children were not detained in the facility.
- 1.10** DCOs received training at least once every six months in areas covered by the Home Office's *Manual for Escorting Safely*. Tascor escorts still routinely handcuffed all detainees when they left the facility, which was disproportionate and inconsistent. We saw immigration enforcement officers take a detainee outside for a cigarette. The officers stood with the unrestrained detainee while he smoked in the insecure car park at the back of the building, having assessed the risks as minimal. Later, Tascor escort officers handcuffed the same detainee in the holding room and walked him out of the rear entrance to the waiting escort van, past the spot where he had earlier smoked a cigarette.

<sup>2</sup> We define an adult at risk as a person aged 18 years or over, 'who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'. 'No secrets' definition (Department of Health 2000).

## Recommendation

- I.11 Detainees should be handcuffed only on the basis of assessment of risk in each case.** (Repeated recommendation I.58)

## Legal rights and casework

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are fully aware of and understand their detention. Detainees are supported by the facility staff to exercise their legal rights freely. Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated. Detention is for the minimum period necessary.**

- I.12** Most, but not all, detainees who already had a lawyer could contact them via telephone (see paragraph I.36). However, they could not communicate with them by email or fax (see recommendation I.37). The fax machine in the DCOs' office was not working. Reporting centre staff faxed copies of detention and removal paperwork to detainees' lawyers. With the detainee's permission, a DCO contacted a detainee's lawyer to inform them their client had been detained and that immigration enforcement officers were faxing the paperwork to their offices. However, a second detainee was advised he would have to wait until he had reached an immigration removal centre before he could phone his lawyer (see paragraph I.36). Detainees seeking asylum who did not have a lawyer could seek legal advice through specialist service Civil Legal Advice (CLA). A notice promoting the CLA's work and a contact number in different languages were displayed in the holding room.
- I.13** Detainees could retain the paperwork authorising their detention and removal. All the paperwork was issued in English only but professional telephone interpreters were used to explain the contents when detainees could not speak English. We found two examples in which the risk section of the paperwork authorising detention (form IS91) had not been fully completed.
- I.14** Holding room logs indicated that during the three months before our inspection 343 detainees were held, slightly more than at our previous inspection when 325 detainees were held over a similar period. Neither Tascor nor the Home Office were able to provide exact data on how long these detainees were held and a calculation of average length of detention was not possible. Most detainees were held for under eight hours but eight had been held for between eight and 12 hours. These figures only captured the time detainees spent in the holding room (see recommendation I.5). Furthermore, some detainees were taken straight from interview rooms to immigration removal centres without passing through the holding room.

## Recommendations

- I.15 The risk assessment on the authority to detain form IS91 should always be completed. If there are no risk factors, the section should be marked to confirm that the assessment has been completed.** (Repeated recommendation I.34)
- I.16 Accurate data should be collected on each individual detention. A detailed analysis of this data should be readily available.**

# Respect

## Accommodation and facilities

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are held in a safe, clean and decent environment. Detainees are offered varied meals to meet their individual requirements. Food is prepared and served according to religious, cultural and prevailing food safety and hygiene regulations. The facility encourages activities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well-being of detainees.**

- I.17** The single holding room could hold eight detainees. Staff confirmed that occasionally more than eight people needed to be detained, in which case, they were also held in interview rooms (see paragraph I.3 and recommendation I.5). Men and women were held together. Available data showed that three-quarters of detainees held during the previous three months were male, a quarter female.
- I.18** The accommodation had generally not changed since our 2011 inspection, although DCOs could now control the temperature of the holding room. The room had a bean bag, as well as two tables and eight chairs, which were fixed to the floor. The holding room was shabby; there was rubbish on the floor, a dirty bin and dead insects on the window sill. Two opaque windows allowed in sufficient natural light.
- I.19** The separate toilets for men and women had bare stainless steel bowls with no seats or lids. The toilet doors opened straight on to the holding room and had a large gap above and below them, allowing minimal privacy. A hand-washing facility was set into the wall of each toilet but there was no access to a shower or decent washbasin. This was particularly inadequate for rough sleepers who needed to wash. Hygiene packs were available but DCOs did not offer them to detainees, or even to rough sleepers who needed them. A small stock of additional clothing was available, as were sanitary supplies for women. Water had leaked in the women's toilet 18 months previously, but the damaged flooring had yet to be repaired (see photograph, Appendix III).
- I.20** There was no healthcare provision on site. DCOs could access a medical triage telephone helpline for advice but it was rarely used. In the event of an emergency, staff would call for an ambulance. Detainees being transferred to further detention received a health screening from a nurse at an immigration removal centre. However, this screening could take place many hours after they were initially held at the facility.
- I.21** Property could not be stored securely. Instead DCOs stored it in their small, cramped office. Detainees could help themselves to crisps, croissants and water in the holding room. A vending machine in the DCOs' office dispensed hot drinks. DCOs routinely offered detainees microwave meals, for which pictures were displayed. Sandwiches were no longer provided.
- I.22** There were enough activities to occupy detainees for short periods. The small selection of books and magazines was in English only. Newspapers were out of date by several months. There was a small television in one corner of the holding room. Smoking was not permitted but no nicotine replacement aids such as patches were available. Once detainees were in Tascor's custody, they could not go outside for fresh air.

## Recommendations

- I.23 Women should be held separately from men.** (Repeated recommendation I.12).
- I.24 The holding room should be kept clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.**
- I.25 Toilets should provide reasonable privacy and should have normal toilet bowls with seats and lids.** (Repeated recommendation I.13)
- I.26 Adequate washing facilities should be available and hygiene packs should be provided to those needing them.**
- I.27 Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to fresh air, and nicotine replacement therapy should be available for those who require it.**

## Respectful treatment

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are treated with respect by all staff, with proper regard for the uncertainty of their situation and their cultural backgrounds. Effective complaints procedures are in place for detainees which are easy to access and use, in a language they can understand. Responses are timely and can be understood by detainees. There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural backgrounds. The distinct needs of each protected characteristic, including race equality, nationality, religion, disability, gender, transgender, sexual orientation, age and pregnancy, are recognised and addressed.**

- I.28** DCOs were reasonably welcoming and courteous to detainees on their arrival but relationships were functional thereafter. DCOs offered detainees food and drinks, but were too busy booking in new detainees and completing paperwork to build a rapport with them. An immigration enforcement officer inappropriately referred to detainees as prisoners.
- I.29** Complaint forms were freely available in the holding room but there were no pens. The complaints box was emptied by immigration enforcement staff as part of their checks on the holding room, which should have been conducted daily. Records indicated that until recently the box had not been emptied for some months. A dummy complaint that we submitted received a response the next day. Tascor had not received a complaint from a detainee since 9 May 2015. The investigation into that complaint was fair and the response polite but not timely. The reply was not written until 4 June 2015.
- I.30** DCOs undertook equalities training as part of an initial course and completed annual refresher worksheets. They were familiar with disability care plans but none had been established in the 12 months before the inspection. There were no accessible toilets for those with disabilities. Bibles, Qur'ans and prayer mats were readily available in the holding room, where the Tascor diversity policy was displayed.
- I.31** Available records indicated that in the previous three months, detainees from at least 32 nations were held; the most common were India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Nepal. Immigration enforcement officers used telephone interpretation to communicate with detainees. We observed DCOs use telephone interpretation services when detainees first arrived but not for subsequent conversations (see paragraph I.7). Indeed, records showed that in 2016, DCOs had only used telephone interpretation on three occasions.

## Recommendations

- I.32 Holding room staff should seek to establish a rapport with and offer support to all detainees.** (Repeated recommendation I.18).
- I.33 The complaints box should be emptied daily, complaints dealt with swiftly and results communicated to detainees wherever possible.** (Repeated recommendation I.63)
- I.34 DCOs should use professional interpretation to communicate with detainees who speak little or no English when accuracy and confidentiality are required.**

# Preparation for removal and release

## Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are able to maintain contact with the outside world and be prepared for their release, transfer or removal. Detainees are able to retain or recover their property. Families with children and others with specific needs are not detained without items essential to their welfare.**

- I.35** Visitors were not permitted into the facility but could deliver property for detainees. Many detainees were held after attending the reporting centre and were not expecting to be held. Detainees being transferred to immigration removal centres were provided with an information card containing the centre address and telephone number.
- I.36** Detainees did not have access to the internet, email or video-calling facilities. The telephone number of the payphone in the holding room was displayed. We saw a DCO help a detainee contact his family, who were waiting outside the reporting centre. Staff had a small stock of basic mobile phones, which detainees could use with their own SIM card, but they were not compatible with one network. We met a detainee without a compatible SIM card and no money who wanted to call his lawyer. Rather than letting the detainee use the office phone, DCOs told him he would have to wait until he was transferred to an immigration removal centre.

## Recommendation

- I.37 All detainees should have access to a phone, fax machine, the internet, email, social networking sites and video calling, unless an individual risk assessment indicates otherwise.**

## Section 2. Summary of recommendations

### Recommendation

To the Home Office

#### Legal rights and casework

- 2.1** The risk assessment on the authority to detain form IS91 should always be completed. If there are no risk factors, the section should be marked to confirm that the assessment has been completed. (1.15, repeated recommendation 1.34)

### Recommendation

To the Home Office and escort contractor

#### Keeping detainees safe

- 2.2** Detainees should be handcuffed only on the basis of assessment of risk in each case. (1.11, repeated recommendation 1.58)

### Recommendations

To the Home Office and facility contractor

#### Arrival

- 2.3** DCOs should swiftly book detainees into an adequately sized facility. Detainees should not be held in poorly equipped interview rooms for lengthy periods. (1.5)

#### Legal rights and casework

- 2.4** Accurate data should be collected on each individual detention. A detailed analysis of this data should be readily available. (1.16)

#### Accommodation and facilities

- 2.5** Women should be held separately from men. (1.23, repeated recommendation 1.12).
- 2.6** Detainees held for more than a few hours should have access to fresh air, and nicotine replacement therapy should be available for those who require it. (1.27)

#### Respectful treatment

- 2.7** The complaints box should be emptied daily, complaints dealt with swiftly and results communicated to detainees wherever possible. (1.33)

## Preparation for removal and release

- 2.8** All detainees should have access to a phone, fax machine, the internet, email, social networking sites and video calling, unless an individual risk assessment indicates otherwise. (1.37)

## Recommendations

### To the facility contractor

### Accommodation and facilities

- 2.9** The holding room should be kept clean, tidy and in a good state of repair. (1.24)
- 2.10** Toilets should provide reasonable privacy and should have normal toilet bowls with seats and lids. (1.25, repeated recommendation 1.13)
- 2.11** Adequate washing facilities should be available and hygiene packs should be provided to those needing them. (1.26)

### Respectful treatment

- 2.12** Holding room staff should seek to establish a rapport with and offer support to all detainees. (1.32, repeated recommendation 1.18).
- 2.13** DCOs should use professional interpretation to communicate with detainees who speak little or no English when accuracy and confidentiality are required. (1.34)

## Section 3. Appendices

### Appendix I: Inspection team

Colin Carroll  
Bev Alden  
Tamara Pattinson  
Laura Green

Inspector  
Inspector  
Inspector  
Research officer

## Appendix II: Progress on recommendations from the last report

The following is a list of all the recommendations made in the last report, organised under the four tests of a healthy establishment. The reference numbers at the end of each recommendation refer to the paragraph location in the previous report. If a recommendation has been repeated in the main report, its new paragraph number is also provided.

### Safety

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

##### **Recommendations**

Arrest team members should observe appropriate standards of courtesy and should permit detainees being arrested to put on outdoor clothes. (1.4)

**Achieved**

Written reasons for detention should be issued in the detainees' own languages. (1.23)

**Not achieved**

The UK Border Agency should consult the Legal Service Commission about allowing detainees access to the 'police station immigration telephone advice scheme' or a similar service. (1.25)

**Not achieved**

The risk assessment on the 'authority to detain' form IS91 should always be completed. If there are no risk factors, the section should be marked to confirm that the assessment has been completed. (1.34)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.15)

Detainees should be handcuffed only on the basis of assessment of risk in each case. (1.58)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.11)

Detainees should be able to contact their legal representatives by fax and email without impediment. (1.24)

**Not achieved**

No more than eight detainees should be held. Detainees should not be held in UKBA interview rooms. (1.33)

**Not achieved**

There should be a male and female member of staff on duty at all times. (1.39)

**Achieved**

DCOs should be able to see all areas of the holding room clearly. (1.40)

**Achieved**

Detainees at risk of self-harm should be placed on assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT) plans. Detainee custody officers should be trained in ACDT procedures. (1.42)

**Not achieved**

Staff should receive training in safeguarding children. (1.46)

**Not achieved**

CCTV coverage should be extended to include the whole of the holding room. (1.59)

**Achieved**

## Respect

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

### Recommendations

Women should be held separately from men. (1.12)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.23)

Toilets should provide reasonable privacy and should have normal toilet bowls with seats. (1.13)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.25)

Holding room staff should seek to establish a rapport with and offer support to all detainees. (1.18)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.32)

The complaints box should be emptied daily, complaints dealt with swiftly and results communicated to detainees wherever possible. (1.63)

**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated, 1.33)

There should always be a range of fresh sandwiches available to suit all diets. (1.67)

**Not achieved**

Hot food should be available to provide main meals at the appropriate times. (1.68)

**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.**

### Recommendation

Detainees should be given information as early as possible about what is likely to happen to them. (1.75)

**Achieved**

# Appendix III: Photographs

Holding room



Holding room



Women's toilet

