

Detainees under escort at
Manchester Airport short-term
holding facilities

Report on an unannounced escort inspection

2-3 March 2010

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

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Contents

Overview	4
1 Background and methodology	5
2 Findings	6
3 Recommendations	9

Overview

This report is based on the experiences of detainees arriving at Pennine House, the residential short-term holding facility at Manchester Airport. Manchester Airport is the busiest airport in the UK outside the London area, handling 22 million passengers each year. Most of those arriving at Pennine House had been brought from other immigration removal centres (IRCs), frequently as a stopping point for one or two nights, en route to centres further south, or to other airports in England for removal. Several had been brought from police stations. Detainees were generally positive about escort staff, vehicles and journeys, but many experienced stressful night-time transfers. Comfort breaks were infrequent and escort records were not always filled in accurately.

Section 1: Background and methodology

- 1.1 Under section 46 of the Immigration, Nationality and Asylum Act 2006, HM Inspectorate of Prisons has the power to inspect detainee escorts, which are under the control of the UK Border Agency (UKBA).
- 1.2 In total, 14 detainees were interviewed at Pennine House and two declined an interview. Of those interviewed, two had come from police stations: Stainbeck Police Station and Bradford Central Police Station. Five had come from Dungavel IRC, one from Campsfield House IRC and five from a reporting centre (Dallas Court, Reliance House, Sandford House and Loughborough). One detainee had come from HMP Doncaster, and one had come straight from Manchester Airport Terminal 2, where he was detained soon after landing.
- 1.3 Escort staff were interviewed and escort vans were inspected. Examined documentation included detainee transferable documents, movement notifications and information recorded on the IS91 (authority to detain) form.
- 1.4 All 14 detainees were asked the same set of questions about:
 - journey lengths
 - cleanliness and comfort of vehicles
 - comfort breaks
 - escort staff–detainee relationships
 - information provided about the escort van and journey
 - property
 - complaints
 - medication
 - use of force
 - consequences of movement
- 1.5 All of the detainees we interviewed were male and all but four understood some spoken English; a professional telephone interpreting service was used to interview three detainees who did not speak English. A fourth detainee preferred to use another detainee to interpret. The demographic details of those interviewed were as follows:
 - (M1) Iraqi, 23 years
 - (M2) Pakistani, 34 years
 - (M3 interpreted by M2) Indian, 49 years
 - (M4) Pakistani, 47 years
 - (M5) Pakistani, 33 years
 - (M6) Pakistani, 41 years
 - (M7) Afghani, 19 years
 - (M8) Pakistani
 - (M9) Nigerian, 36 years
 - (M10) Afghani, 24 years
 - (M11) Pakistani, 45 years
 - (M12) Pakistani, 58 years
 - (M13) Vietnamese, 34 years
 - (M14) Chinese, 42 years

Section 2: Findings

- 2.1 Detainees generally said that escort staff were respectful, but reported little positive interaction. Not enough effort was made to communicate with detainees who spoke little English. Night-time transfers were common. All detainees interviewed said that escort vehicles were clean and safe. However, the vehicles were ageing and in need of renewal. Comfort breaks were infrequent, although most detainees said that they had not felt the need for one. Escort records were not always filled in accurately. Not enough effort was made to communicate with those who spoke little English. Escort staff had access to a telephone medical advice service. None of the interviewed detainees had force used against them. However, detainees taken from Pennine House to the non-residential facility at the airport were handcuffed without individual risk assessment.

Journey lengths

- 2.2 Journey lengths ranged from five minutes to five hours and 15 minutes. Escort staff frequently telephoned ahead to inform facility staff of the estimated time of arrival, and to keep them updated if there were any delays.
- 2.3 The five detainees who had travelled from Dungavel immigration removal centre (IRC) on the same van had experienced the longest journey, but all had varying times noted on their IS91 (authority to detain) form; one detainee's form detailed a journey of five hours 15 minutes, another read four hours and 20 minutes and another read three hours and 30 minutes. The reason for these discrepancies was unclear. M2 had travelled a very short distance, from the main airport to Pennine House; on the IS91, the escort was recorded as starting at 3.30pm, and he was noted as arriving at Pennine House at 3.30pm, although he had clearly spent some time in a vehicle. Most detainees underestimated their journey time. For example, M10 described a journey of an hour and a half, although his IS91 stated that he had been travelling for three hours and 40 minutes from Sandford House. It was evident that detainees were rarely told how long they would be travelling before their journey started.
- 2.4 Male and female detainees were always transported separately, unless related to each other. Detainee records showed that night-time transfers between centres were common. There was also some evidence of frequent moves between centres – one detainee had been in seven places of detention in five months.

Cleanliness and comfort of vehicles

- 2.5 All detainees we interviewed thought that the escort vehicles were clean and safe (13 travelled in a van, one travelled in a police car). There were, however, three negative comments in relation to comfort. Two detainees complained that conditions on the van were cramped and 'cage-like', and one had complained to escort staff about the lack of heating. He had subsequently been told that the heating was on, despite feeling very cold. There were no reported issues with smoking or ventilation.
- 2.6 The vans were ageing, and staff told us that they frequently broke down. If this was the case, it would add to the strain on detainees, many of whom would already be tired, experiencing stress and confused about what was happening. Staff told us that the replacement of vans was

being delayed pending the outcome of re-tendering the contract. We observed escort staff cleaning vans between uses, and keeping them well stocked with sandwiches, snack packs and hygiene packs. However, the interior of the vehicle used to transfer detainees between Pennine House and the non-residential facility was dirty. A separate, suitable vehicle was used to transport families.

Comfort breaks

- 2.7 Comfort breaks were infrequent, although most detainees said that they had not felt the need for a comfort break. M5 had travelled for three hours and said that the vehicle had only stopped to pick more people up, and that he had not been offered any food or water throughout the journey. In the case of the two detainees who said that they had been offered food and beverages, this had consisted of sandwiches, biscuits and a soft drink. M6 had had a two-hour journey, and said that he had not been offered any food or water. Comfort breaks, where they occurred, were usually noted on forms accompanying IS91s, although at times escorting staff had noted down a 'break' that had been offered *before* the journey began.

Escort staff–detainee relationships

- 2.8 Escort staff were considered to be respectful, even though detainees generally felt that there had been minimal interaction. M2 said that the escort staff were rude and made no attempt to explain what was happening, and M6 said that escort staff did not speak to him because he was physically behind bars in the van. M9 reported a positive experience and felt that escort staff were 'friendly and concerned' and addressed him by his first name. Most travelled with one male and one female escort.
- 2.9 For those who spoke little English, interaction with escort staff was minimal, and M12 commented that they had attempted to communicate with him through signs and gestures. In one case, a non-English speaker commented that neither he nor the five other detainees who had travelled with him had been offered a break during their journey. However, the IS91 noted that a break had been offered, and that no one had wished to stop; escort staff told us that they had been prepared to stop at Carlisle Police Station and had offered this. It appeared that a break had been offered in English, and that those who were unable to understand the offer were also unable to accept it.
- 2.10 All escort staff were cleared to the enhanced level of the Criminal Records Bureau. They had been briefed by sending establishments on any specific needs or risk factors. We saw a good handover of information and paperwork from centre staff to escort staff, and vice versa.

Information about the escort vehicle and journey

- 2.11 Most English-speaking detainees said that they had been told that they would be going to Manchester and that they had been given additional information on their arrival at Pennine House. They had also been able to contact family and friends using their mobile telephone or the telephones provided by the facility. For those who were not fluent in English, there were few reports of interpreting services being used, although it was clearly necessary in some cases.

Property

- 2.12 There were two reported problems with property: M2 felt that his valuables had not been treated with care, especially as one of his bags contained a laptop computer. M9 said that he had previously been unable to collect his property, while in detention in Liverpool, and was now unsure how to obtain it.

Use of force

- 2.13 None of the detainees had experienced staff using force against them, and only one mentioned being handcuffed on entering and leaving the escort vehicle. Managers said that, in general, handcuffs were applied on the basis of a risk assessment of the area through which escorted detainees were passing, rather than the risk factors associated with the individual detainee. All detainees being taken from Pennine House to the non-residential facility at the airport were handcuffed through the security checkpoint without a risk assessment. The reason for this was not clear and the (fully compliant) detainees we accompanied through the checkpoint felt degraded and humiliated by the practice.

Medication

- 2.14 Pennine House had 24-hour nurse cover and all detainees were screened on arrival. Escort staff said that when travelling from Pennine House, they would consult the nurse about any medication issues; if there was a medication issue during a journey, they would contact the telephone medical advice service, which was available under contract. Detainees reported no major issues about medication. M12 said that he had needed pain killers and had been unable to get any, while M9 felt that the pain killers he had been given for his back problems were inadequate.

Other issues

- 2.15 Most detainees had not been given any information about how to make a complaint, although most felt no need to make one. Information was available on arrival at Pennine House. M2 was unhappy that he had been made to sign documents without being given sufficient time to read them, and he had informed staff of this.

Section 3: Recommendations

Recommendation	To the Chief Executive, UK Border Agency (UKBA)
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- 3.1 Staff should ensure that a detainee has had time to read and understand any document before being expected to sign it.

Recommendations	To Group 4 Securicor and the UKBA
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- 3.2 Routine transfers between centres should not take place at night.
- 3.3 The number of transfers between centres should be kept to an operationally essential minimum, and the frequency of transfers for individual detainees monitored. Detainees should be informed in writing of the reasons for any transfers.

Recommendations	To Group 4 Securicor
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- 3.4 Times of escort departure and arrival should be recorded accurately on escort records.
- 3.5 Detainees should be given information before departure, in a language they can understand, about their destination and the expected journey length.
- 3.6 All escort vehicles should be kept clean and in good mechanical condition.
- 3.7 The temperature in escort vans should be kept at a level comfortable for the passengers.
- 3.8 Detainees under escort should be given a comfort break if journeys exceed two and a half hours, and these should be recorded.
- 3.9 Food and drink should be clearly offered to detainees during journeys of two and a half hours or more.
- 3.10 Following escort, a proportion of detainees should be asked about their treatment by staff, and any reports of uncivil behaviour should be followed up.
- 3.11 Managers should issue guidance to escorting staff on the use of translated material and telephone interpreting, to ensure that detainees under escort understand key information and requests.
- 3.12 Managers should ensure that all property is treated with care, and that all detainees understand the procedures for recovery of property.
- 3.13 All risk assessments informing decisions on the use of restraints should take account of the evidence of risk in relation to the individual detainee, as well as of the physical environment.