

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

# **Drumkeen House**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

**19 November 2013**

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# Fact page

**Task of the establishment**

To hold immigration detainees for up to 24 hours

**Location**

Drumkeen House reporting centre, Northern Ireland

**Name of contractor**

Tascor

**Last inspection**

2 November 2011

**Escort provider**

Tascor

# Overview

Drumkeen House is the main centre of Home Office operations in Northern Ireland. It acts as a reporting centre attended on Mondays and Wednesdays by those subject to reporting conditions, and a short-term holding facility (STHF). The private security firm Tascor manages the facility and provides escort services on behalf of the Home Office. The facility does not have dedicated staff and is opened only when a detainee is held after attending the reporting centre or following arrest in the community by Immigration Enforcement officers. Staff are called from the escort team at Drumkeen House to staff the facility. No detainees were held during our inspection.

The facility comprises a staff office and two holding rooms with tables and chairs, payphones, complaints boxes, water fountains, televisions and toilets. Thirty-three detainees were held during the three months before our inspection. Detention was for short periods only, for an average of just over an hour in the previous three months, and no one had been held for more than three hours. There was no Independent Monitoring Board to oversee Drumkeen House. A Home Office representative visited the facility when it was occupied which, given the low numbers of detainees held and the short length of detention, was proportionate.

## **Drumkeen House short-term holding facility, Northern Ireland**

# 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

**Activities** – that the centre encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well-being of detainees

**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.

# Summary

## Safety

- S1 At our inspection in 2011, we made 9 recommendations in relation to this healthy establishment test, four of which were achieved and five not achieved.
- S2 Escort vehicles were clean and well equipped and journeys were brief. We were told that all detainees were handcuffed to and from the holding room and the escort vehicle irrespective of individual risk. The facility was opened when required and did not have dedicated staff. Access to telephones was good. There was a small amount of spare clothing for detainees, and welfare packs were provided if needed.
- S3 Men and women were held separately and the potential for bullying or intimidation was minimal. The holding rooms were in full view of staff and were covered by CCTV. There had been no incidents of self-harm since our last inspection. Assessment care in detention and teamwork booklets were kept at the facility, although staff had not been trained in their use. Anti-ligature knives were carried by staff when detainees were in the facility.
- S4 Staff were not aware of any formal partnership arrangements for the management of vulnerable adults. The facility was equipped to hold families with children, but none had been held in the recent past. Force was rarely used, but the routine approach to handcuffing detainees into or out of the facility had unnecessarily escalated tensions in one case and had led to the need to use force.
- S5 Detainees could communicate with their legal representatives by telephone and fax, but were not permitted legal visits. Notices about organisations providing immigration support and advice were displayed. During the three months before our inspection 33 detainees had been held for an average of one hour seven minutes. The longest period of detention was two hours 55 minutes.

## Respect

- S6 Accommodation was clean and appropriate for the short-stay nature of the facility and the low number of detainees passing through. Toilets were not well enough screened so afforded little privacy, and did not have seats.
- S7 Staff told us that they routinely introduced themselves and addressed detainees by their preferred names. They wore name badges but they were not easily legible.
- S8 Detention custody officers had undertaken equality and diversity training. Copies of the Bible and the Qur'an, prayer mats and a compass were provided on request, but were not freely available in the holding rooms.
- S9 No complaints had been submitted during the previous year.
- S10 Hot drinks and snacks were not freely available in the holding rooms, although detainees could request them from a vending machine in the staff area.

## Activities

S11 Each holding room contained magazines and a television. Detainees could not exercise outside, but the facilities were adequate given the short periods of detention.

## Preparation for removal and release

S12 Visits were not facilitated, but detainees were not there long enough for this to be problematic. Most detainees left the facility for Larne House short-term holding facility for which contact details were provided, and property bags were given to detainees who needed them.



# Section 1. Safety

## Escort vehicles and transfers

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees under escort are treated safely, decently and efficiently.**

- I.1** The private security firm Tascor managed the facility and provided escort services on behalf of the Home Office. The distance from the Belfast airports to the facility were short and escort journeys were brief. No detainees were escorted to or from the centre during the inspection but we inspected an escort vehicle, which was clean and stocked with water, a first aid kit, a welfare box and an anti-ligature knife. Staff told us that all detainees were handcuffed moving to and from the holding room and the vehicle, irrespective of individual risk (see section on use of force).

### Recommendation

- I.2** **Detainees should not be handcuffed unless an individual risk assessment suggests otherwise.** (Repeated recommendation I.4)

## Arrival

### Expected outcomes:

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

- I.3** In the three months before our inspection, 17 out of 33 detainees had attended the reporting centre before entering the facility. The remainder were picked up by enforcement teams at airports, Belfast docks or in the community.
- I.4** The facility was opened when required and did not have dedicated staff. Tascor operations in Northern Ireland were based at Drumkeen House and staff were brought to the facility when needed.
- I.5** We were told that detainees were given a rub-down search on arrival and all property was bagged and tagged.
- I.6** Access to telephones was good; detainees retained their own mobile phone if it had no camera or internet access, or a phone was provided for them to use their SIM card. There was a payphone in each holding room which could receive incoming calls and the numbers were prominently displayed. 'Call4Five' cards were available for detainees to make a free five-minute call on arrival and staff said they allowed detainees to use the office telephone if necessary.
- I.7** There was a small amount of spare clothing for detainees, and welfare packs containing basic toiletries were provided if needed. If health care was needed, staff contacted a dedicated medical triage line or called the emergency services.

## Bullying and personal safety

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees feel and are safe from bullying and victimisation.**

- 1.8** Only a few detainees were held and men and women were held separately so there was little potential for bullying or intimidation. Staff told us that they defused tensions by talking to detainees or moving them. Staff had excellent views of both holding rooms through large windows and there were CCTV cameras in both rooms. The contractor's anti-bullying and harassment strategy was displayed on the wall of the detention custody officers' (DCOs') office.

## Self-harm and suicide prevention

### Expected outcomes:

**The facility provides a safe and secure environment which reduces the risk of self-harm and suicide.**

- 1.9** There had been no incidents of self-harm since our last inspection. Assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT) booklets were held at the facility but staff had not been trained in their use and instead opened a suicide and self-harm warning form. This accompanied the detainee to Larne House where an ACDT could be opened by a trained case manager. No detainees were held during our inspection but staff told us that they carried an anti-ligature knife when holding detainees. Three knives in pouches were available in the staff office and a fourth was attached to the first aid kit.

## Safeguarding (protection of adults at risk)

### Expected outcomes:

**The centre promotes the welfare of all detainees, particularly adults at risk, and protects them from all kinds of harm and neglect.<sup>1</sup>**

- 1.10** Staff were not aware of any formal arrangements to refer at-risk adults to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety or the Local Safeguarding Adult Partnership. Staff opened care plans for detainees with disabilities, but could not recall when this was last done.

### Recommendation

- 1.11 Tascor should develop local safeguarding processes with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Local Safeguarding Adult Partnership.**

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<sup>1</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).

## Safeguarding children

### Expected outcomes:

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

- I.12** Records we looked at for the previous 3 months showed that children had not been held at the facility during that period, and staff could not recall the last time any had been detained there. The facility was equipped with children's toys, a travel cot, activity packs, children's books, DVD player, nappies, baby food, baby clothes, potties and wipes. One of the two holding rooms had been made more child friendly. If necessary, staff would complete a care plan for any child and would call social services if they had concerns about the age of a child.

## Use of force

### Expected outcomes:

**Force is only used as a last resort and for legitimate reasons.**

- I.13** All detainees were routinely handcuffed when they left the facility, which was unnecessary and disproportionate in some cases (see section on escorts and transfers). Otherwise use of force was rare, with only one recorded incidence in the previous year. In one case, on departure for Larne House a detainee was advised that handcuffs would be applied for the transfer to the escort van. He refused to comply, saying: 'I am not a criminal'. Staff spent two and a half hours trying to persuade him and at midnight, after consultation with managers, the detainee was forced into handcuffs and taken to Larne House where he refused a medical examination. It was not clear if an individual risk assessment would have concluded that handcuffing was necessary (see recommendation I.2).

## Legal rights

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are fully aware of and understand their detention. Detainees are supported by the facility staff to exercise their legal rights freely.**

- I.14** Detainees could communicate with their legal representatives by telephone and fax but not by email or in person (see section on preparation for removal and release). Notices promoted the services of the Northern Ireland Law Centre, the Law and Migrant Rights Centre and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities. A notice in English and other languages encouraged detainees who had been trafficked or exploited to telephone the Northern Ireland Law Centre.

## Casework

### Expected outcomes:

**Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated. Detention is for the minimum period necessary.**

- I.15** During the three months before our inspection, 33 detainees had been held for an average of one hour seven minutes. The longest period of detention was two hours 55 minutes. Eighty-two per cent of detainees were single male adults and the rest were single female adults.

- I.16** Staff told us that they would not hold detainees without a document authorising detention (IS91) and a notice on the facility door said that detainees would not be admitted without an IS91. Reasons for detention (IS91R) were issued in English only.

### **Recommendation**

- I.17** **Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand.** (Repeated recommendation I.18)

# Respect

## Accommodation

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are held in a safe, clean and decent environment.**

- I.18** Accommodation was clean and appropriate for the short-stay nature of the facility and the low number of detainees passing through. There were two holding rooms, where men and women could be held separately, and a staff office. The holding rooms had a television and a fixed table and four chairs and one had a baby changing unit attached to the wall. The office was separated from the holding rooms by large windows. Staff could adjust the temperature of each room. Toilet cubicles in each holding room were not well screened: the doors had a gap at the top and bottom and provided little privacy. The toilets had no seats.

### Recommendation

- I.19** Detainees should have access to toilets with seats and floor to ceiling screening, which provide suitable privacy. (Repeated recommendation I.11)

## Positive relationships

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are treated with respect by all staff, with proper regard for the uncertainty of their situation and their cultural backgrounds.**

- I.20** Staff told us that they routinely introduced themselves and addressed detainees by their preferred names. They wore name badges but they were not easily legible.

### Housekeeping point

- I.21** Staff name badges should be easily legible.

## Equality and diversity

### Expected outcomes:

**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.22** DCOs had undertaken equality and diversity training during their initial induction and refresher training a year before the inspection. Staff could not recall any detainee with a disability being held in the facility, and they were aware that care plans were required for such detainees. Copies of the Bible and the Qur'an, prayer mats and a compass were available on request, but were not freely available in the holding rooms. Staff were familiar with the requirements of Ramadan and information about a number of other key dates on the religious calendar were posted on the staff notice board.

- I.23** Records indicated that telephone translation services had not been used in the previous 3 months which was surprising given 33 detainees had been held there during this period

### Housekeeping point

- I.24** Copies of religious texts should be kept in the holding rooms.

## Complaints

### Expected outcomes:

**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.**

- I.25** There was a complaints box in each room with complaints forms in 16 languages, and we were told that boxes were emptied by the Home Office. We submitted a test complaint form asking the Home Office to telephone us but no response had been received three weeks later. We were told that no complaints had been submitted in the previous year.

### Recommendation

- I.26** Complaints should be responded to promptly.

## Catering

### Expected outcomes:

**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.**

- I.27** Both holding rooms had a water fountain. Detainees could request hot drinks, crisps and biscuits from a vending machine outside the holding rooms. Staff used petty cash to buy sandwiches for detainees.

### Housekeeping point

- I.28** Hot drinks and snacks should be readily accessible to detainees in the holding rooms.

# Activities

**Expected outcomes:**

**The facility encourages activities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well-being of detainees.**

- 1.29** English magazines and puzzle books were available and there was a television in both holding rooms. Detainees could not exercise outside. The facilities were adequate given the short periods of detention.

# 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.30** Visits were not facilitated given the short periods of detention at the facility. Detainees were given a rub-down search when leaving and were asked to confirm that they had received their property. All detainees in the three months before our inspection left the facility for Larne House. Small information cards with a map and contact details for Larne House were routinely given to detainees and property bags were available if needed. Good telephone access facilitated contact with family and legal representatives; there was no internet or email facility.

## **Recommendation**

- I.31** Detainees should have access to the email and internet.



## Section 2. Recommendations and housekeeping points

### Recommendation

To the escort contractor

#### Escort vehicles and transfers

- 2.1 Detainees should not be handcuffed unless an individual risk assessment suggests otherwise. (1.2, Repeated recommendation 1.4)

### Recommendation

To the Home Office and facility contractor

- 2.2 Complaints should be responded to promptly. (1.26)

### Recommendations

To the facility contractor

#### Safeguarding (protection of adults at risk)

- 2.3 Tascor should develop local safeguarding processes with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Local Safeguarding Adult Partnership. (1.11)

#### Casework

- 2.4 Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand. (1.17, repeated recommendation 1.18)

#### Accommodation

- 2.5 Detainees should have access to toilets with seats and floor to ceiling screening, which provide suitable privacy. (1.19, repeated recommendation 1.11)

#### Preparation for removal and release

- 2.6 Detainees should have access to the email and internet. (1.31)

## Housekeeping points

### Positive relationships

- 2.7 Staff name badges should be easily legible. (1.21)

## **Equality and diversity**

**2.8** Copies of religious texts should be kept in the holding rooms. (1.24)

## **Catering**

**2.9** Hot drinks and snacks should be readily accessible to detainees in the holding rooms. (1.28)

## Section 3. Appendices

### Appendix I: Inspection team

Colin Carroll  
Beverley Alden

Inspector  
Inspector

## 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.**

Detainees should not be handcuffed unless an individual risk assessment suggests otherwise. (1.4)  
**Not achieved** (Recommendation repeated, 1.2)

Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand. (1.18)  
**Not achieved** (Recommendation repeated, 1.17)

Detainees should be able to fax documents to legal representatives without seeking the authorisation of UKBA. (1.19)  
**Achieved**

The universally recognised ACDT booklets should be used for detainees in crisis rather than the Reliance suicide and self-harm warning forms. (1.25)  
**Not achieved**

Staff should routinely carry anti-ligature knives. (1.26)  
**Achieved**

### Respect

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

#### **Recommendations**

Detainees should have access to toilets with seats and floor to ceiling screening, which provide suitable privacy. (1.11)  
**Not achieved** (recommendation repeated 1.19)

Professional telephone interpretation services should be used for detainees who do not speak English. (1.13)  
**Not achieved**

Staff should receive ongoing equality training. (1.29)  
**Achieved**

## Activities

**The centre encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical well-being of detainees.**

## Recommendations

None

## 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 about what will happen to them on leaving the facility. (I.38)

**Achieved**