

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

Manchester Airport

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

3 January 2019

Glossary of terms

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Fact page

Task of the establishment

To hold immigration detainees for up to seven days

Location

Building 302, World Freight Terminal, Manchester Airport

Name of contractor

Mitie Care and Custody

Last inspection

Not previously inspected

Escort provider

Mitie Care and Custody

Introduction

This was our first inspection of the new residential short-term holding facility (STHF) at Manchester Airport. The previous facility, Pennine House, closed in April 2017 and the new STHF facility opened on 4 June 2018. The new facility was an improvement. There had been some attempt to address the key recommendations we had made for Pennine House. For example, detainees had better access to the open air and there were more separate facilities for women. The detainees we interviewed were very positive about the respectful and helpful approach of facility staff. Nevertheless, some concerns remained.

The facility is one of only three residential STHFs in the immigration estate.¹ It is located landside just outside the airport perimeter, near the World Freight Terminal and is run by the private contractor Mitie Care and Custody on behalf of the Home Office. The facility holds adults subject to immigration control against whom the Home Office is taking enforcement action. Thirty-two detainees can be held in 12 rooms. However, during our inspection its capacity was limited to 12 because of faulty electronic doors, which gave rise to some security concerns. Detainees often arrived from police stations after being picked up in the community. Some were moved between immigration removal centres (IRCs), while others had been refused entry to the UK at the airport and were waiting for return flights.

Logs showed that in the previous three months, the number of detainees held at the facility had totalled 396, of whom 78% were male, and the average age was 32, with ages ranging from 18 to 58. All detainees had been travelling individually. Detainees originated from 56 countries, with the highest numbers from China (13%), Pakistan (11%), Albania (8%), Romania (7%) and Eritrea (7%).

The average (mean) length of detention was 39 hours and six minutes, with the longest single period of detention at 137 hours and five minutes. Sixty-two per cent were held for over 24 hours, during a single period of detention, and 4% of detainees had been held at the facility more than once. No accompanied or unaccompanied children had been held. It was the Home Office's policy to not detain unaccompanied children at the centre.

On the day of inspection, there were six detainees at the facility, all male; they included two who arrived and four who left during our inspection. The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) visited the facility regularly.

¹ The others are at Larne House in Northern Ireland and Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre in Bedfordshire.

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

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

- S1 This was our first inspection of the new residential short-term holding facility (STHF) at Manchester Airport. The facility was staffed by both male and female officers. The booking-in process was conducted at an open desk with little confidentiality. There was nurse cover at the facility 24 hours a day, and the nurse saw all new arrivals. While the health care interview took place in a separate room, the door was left open and private conversations could be overheard.
- S2 There were six male detainees held during the inspection - two arrived during our inspection and four departed. They were positive about their treatment during transfers and at the facility.
- S3 The facility held both men and women. There was separate accommodation for women, now including a communal area that could not be accessed by men. We were told these areas were continuously supervised by staff. However, staff told us that the women's accommodation could also be used as an overflow for men, and that women could be held with unrelated men in other parts of the facility. Male detainee custody officers (DCOs) also sometimes conducted checks on women during the night. These practices undermined attempts to provide women with a greater sense of security and privacy.
- S4 All staff were trained in assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT) case management for detainees at risk of suicide or self-harm. There had been very few self-harm incidents, and none that were serious. Local managers could not immediately retrieve and review closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage, which was time-consuming and could potentially delay the gathering of any required evidence.
- S5 We were told that all DCOs had been trained to use the restraint techniques set out in the Home Office manual for escorting safely (HOMES). According to the available documentation, force had been used twice in the previous six months. There was an austere separation cell, but it was not in use.
- S6 Detainees could maintain contact with their legal representatives. The longest period of detention was five days, 17 hours and five minutes.
- S7 The facility was clean, rooms were in good condition and, despite sealed windows that limited detainees' ability to control airflow, it was reasonably well-ventilated. However, very little had been done to soften the environment. Rooms were bright but windows were frosted and had no view to the outside.
- S8 Detainees, including those in single rooms, could not lock their doors from the inside. All detainees had access to a small safe in which they could store valuables. Couples could share rooms. Detainees could practise their religion, and a chaplain visited the facility two or three times a week and on request. Detainees could make formal complaints in writing. Catering arrangements were satisfactory.
- S9 There were enough activities for detainees held for short periods. The outside space had improved and it was positive that detainees had free access to it 24 hours a day. However, despite commendable efforts to decorate the area, the fully enclosed yard and overhead netting resembled the design of a high-security prison yard.
- S10 DCOs told us that they would help to prepare detainees for their release by explaining the conditions of release and provide travel details to their destination, using professional

interpreting services when necessary. Detainees could receive visitors. The entrance to the facility was not clearly signposted, which made it difficult to find. Detainees had good access to telephones and could freely access the internet and email, but could not use video conferencing or social media.

Section 1. Safety

Arrival and reception

Expected outcomes:

Detainees travelling to and arriving at the facility are treated with respect and care.

Risks are identified and acted on. Induction is comprehensive.

- 1.1 Two detainees arrived at the facility during the inspection from immigration removal centres (IRCs). They told us that they had been treated well during their journeys. The detainees had been transferred in a suitable vehicle and were not handcuffed. They were taken off the vehicle quickly and went to reception, where the process was also speedy.
- 1.2 The facility was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It was staffed by five detainee custody officers (DCOs) and a manager during the day, and four DCOs and a manager at night. We were told that there was always a female officer on duty.
- 1.3 DCOs were notified of new arrivals well in advance, allowing sufficient time to prepare for their arrival. We were told that detainees would not be admitted without the necessary form authorising their detention (IS91). New arrivals were welcomed by facility staff, and given a rub-down and wand search in private. If required, they were given a toothbrush, toothpaste and a replacement clothing pack. Detainees could retain cash and the facility lent mobile phones (see paragraph 1.32).
- 1.4 Professional telephone interpreting services were used reasonably regularly. Staff completed a room-sharing risk assessment and provided a thorough induction, which included a tour of the facility. However, the initial interview was carried out at the reception desk in front of the waiting room, which could have prevented detainees sharing confidential information with DCOs.
- 1.5 A nurse was based at the facility 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and saw all new arrivals for a health assessment. Consultations were conducted in a dedicated health care room. We observed health interviews taking place in this room with the door left open and discussions could easily be overheard, breaching confidentiality.

Recommendation

- 1.6 **Reception and health care interviews should take place in private.**

Safeguarding adults and personal safety

Expected outcomes:

The facility promotes the welfare of all detainees and protects them from all kinds of harm and neglect. The facility provides a safe environment which reduces the risk of self-harm and suicide. Detainees are protected from bullying and victimisation, and force is only used as a last resort and for legitimate reasons.

- 1.7 DCOs were aware of the Mitie safeguarding adults policy but did not know about the national referral mechanism (NRM) to identify and support victims of trafficking. DCOs said if they identified detainees who were at risk of harm due to specific vulnerabilities, they would report this to their manager.

- I.8** All DCOs had been trained in assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT) case management for detainees at risk of suicide or self-harm. In the previous six months, eight detainees had been monitored through the ACDT process. We were unable to sample the relevant documents as they had been transferred with the detainee. Staff could recall only one self-harm incident, where a detainee had cut himself using a broken DVD. Incident reports indicated that this was not a serious incident and that the detainee had been treated quickly.
- I.9** Not all rules to prevent self-harm were proportionate to the risks posed or sufficiently tailored to the individual. Detainees were not allowed to keep phone chargers and were prevented from retaining their own razor blades, which was intrusive and unnecessary for those detainees not at risk of self-harm.
- I.10** Men and women could be held together in the facility. Six rooms off the main corridor had been designated for use by women and this corridor could be locked off. There were two double rooms, a single room, a shower, two toilets and a small association room. However, we were told that men could also be held in this area if a high number came into the facility. This would have compromised privacy and women's sense of security. Similarly, if the facility held a higher number of women, they could be located outside the designated area alongside men. Couples and families with adult children could also be held in the designated women's area, and male DCOs sometimes did checks of female rooms during the night. Men and women shared communal spaces such as the outdoor area, internet area and dining hall. However, we were told these were always supervised by staff.
- I.11** Staff were visible around the facility, and it was monitored by CCTV cameras. Although the footage was stored on a hard drive, local managers could not easily retrieve and review it, as they had to request the Home Office to send staff to the facility to download it. This was time-consuming and could potentially delay the gathering of any required evidence.
- I.12** There had been two recorded uses of force since the facility had opened, both of which were minor. One involved placing a detainee in the recovery position prior to an ambulance attending, as there were concerns for their health. The second was a DCO holding a detainee's arm when he had become agitated during a search. The documents we reviewed indicated that the incidents had been handled appropriately and that de-escalation techniques had been used.
- I.13** There was a separation cell, which we were told had not been used since the facility opened due to safety concerns. This cell was austere with no natural light and contained a hard plastic plinth. Mitie Care and Custody had not published written guidance for its use.

Recommendations

- I.14** **Mitie Care and Custody should ensure that detainee custody officers are aware of the potential vulnerabilities of detainees and of safeguarding mechanisms.**
- I.15** **Male detainees should not be held in the designated women's corridor. Women should not be held in rooms outside the designated women's corridor. Only female DCOs, and not male DCO's, should check women's rooms at night.**
- I.16** **Detainees' personal items should only be removed following an individual risk assessment.**

Safeguarding children

Expected outcomes:

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

- I.17** Children were not held at the facility, and there had been no cases of detainees whose age was in dispute.

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are fully aware of and understand their detention, following their arrival at the facility and on release. Detainees are supported by the facility staff to freely exercise their legal rights.

- I.18** Detainees who already had a legal representative could easily maintain contact with them. Details of the Civil Legal Advice helpline were displayed in English and other languages. Detainees could consult their legal representatives in a private interview room. However, the facility did not provide a list of local legal representatives and their telephone numbers. The facility had several helpful multi-lingual notices warning detainees against using fake solicitors.
- I.19** Detainees were issued with the reasons for their detention (IS91R) but in English only. We were told that Home Office staff explained the reasons to non-English speakers through professional interpreters.

Recommendation

- I.20 Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand.**

Respect

Accommodation and facilities

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are held in a safe, clean and decent environment. They are offered varied meals according to their individual requirements. The facility encourages activities to promote mental well-being.

- I.21** The facility was clean and had reasonable levels of natural light, although windows were frosted and prevented a view of the outside. Very little had been done to soften the environment, which felt clinical. The facility was well-ventilated during the inspection, but windows could not be opened, which prevented detainees from controlling airflow. It could accommodate 32 detainees in 12 bedrooms, and also included a reception area and rooms for health care, interviews, association and dining, an exercise yard, multi-faith room, an unused separation cell (see paragraph 1.13), staff offices and a visits area. During our inspection, the capacity of the facility had been limited to 12 detainees due to concerns about electronic locks.
- I.22** The bedrooms were basic but clean and well maintained, with one to four beds. Couples could share a room. Detainees, including those in single rooms, could not lock their doors from the inside. Personal safes in rooms enabled each detainee to store valuable items. Clean pillows, blankets and bedding were issued to new arrivals. Each bedroom had an automatic shutter on the window, which lowered at 10pm. The light switch was by the door and some distance from the bed, which could cause difficulty for detainees trying to navigate around the room in the dark.
- I.23** The exercise yard was small and, despite commendable efforts to decorate it with pictures, was fully enclosed and had overhead netting, resembling a high-security prison yard. It had tables, chairs and some pictures on the walls. It included a sheltered area for use when it rained, as well as a cigarette lighter on the wall. We were told that it was never locked so detainees had free access, and those who wished to smoke or go outside at any time could do so. Cigarette butts were over-spilling from the ashtray.
- I.24** Catering arrangements were adequate. Detainees could access the dining room 24 hours a day. All food and drink had to be consumed in the dining room, and could not be taken elsewhere. The dining room was a relaxed environment with tables and chairs and comfortable seating. Biscuits, porridge, cereal, fruit, rice, noodles and hot and cold drinks were freely available. A variety of hot ready meals, including vegan, halal and kosher, were provided at regular mealtimes. A menu card listing the options had been translated into a range of languages. Staff told us that they provided meals for detainees who arrived outside mealtimes. The food storage and preparation areas were clean and well stocked. Detainees could buy a limited range of confectionery and soft drinks from the facility shop.
- I.25** There were sufficient activities to occupy detainees held for short periods, including newspapers, magazines and books, although most were in English. The association room had a television, games console, two computers, board games and a selection of jigsaws. Detainees could also request portable DVD players and DVDs to watch in their rooms.

Respectful treatment

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are treated with respect by all staff. Effective complaints procedures are in place for detainees. There is understanding of detainees' diverse cultural backgrounds. Detainees' health care needs are met.

- I.26** We interviewed all six detainees held and they were all very positive about the respectful and helpful approach of facility staff. We observed staff who were polite and respectful, and who interacted well with the detainees. The atmosphere in the facility was relaxed. Staff wore name badges, but it was difficult to read them to identify their names.
- I.27** Detainees could complain formally in writing. Complaint forms in English and other languages were available, and there were three secure boxes for detainees to post complaints. However, complaint forms were stored in a binder in the association room labelled in English only, and could have been hard to find for those unable to read English. We posted a dummy complaint, which was responded to the next day. Four complaints had been submitted in the previous six months. The responses were polite and addressed the issue raised, but the response to one took just over four weeks, which was too long. Detainees were likely to have left by the time there was a response to the complaint, even if dealt with promptly, but staff made efforts to pass responses on to them, either at other centres or through email.
- I.28** Although there was a lift for those unable to climb the stairs into the facility, there was no other provision for detainees with disabilities. We were told that, because of this, detainees with physical disabilities would not be held at the facility. Staff we spoke to had had no recent equality and diversity refresher training.
- I.29** Professional telephone interpreting was used reasonably regularly. The logs we saw showed it had been used 248 times in the previous six months.
- I.30** The designated multi-faith room was open to detainees 24 hours a day. It was equipped with religious texts and prayer mats, and the direction of Mecca was indicated on the ceiling. Airport chaplains of various faiths attended the facility when requested.
- I.31** Women detainees were usually held on a corridor designated for their use (see paragraph I.10). There were toilets and showers for women, and a freely available choice of sanitary protection. Three pregnant women had been held at the facility since it had opened.

Preparation for removal and release

Communications

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with the outside world using a full range of communications media.

- I.32** Detainees could not retain mobile phones with cameras and internet access. Replacement mobile phones were routinely given for them to use with their own SIM cards. If their SIM card was not compatible with the facility's loan phones, detainees could retrieve telephone numbers from their mobile phone. All the detainees held during the inspection had facility-issued mobile phones. Two payphones, with privacy hoods, were also available, and detainees could buy phone cards from the facility shop.
- I.33** Detainees could access the internet and web-based email accounts, and none of the sites we tested were blocked. However, video-calling and social networking sites were blocked. When the facility opened, detainees had no access to internet and email for nearly two months before the problem was fixed at the end of July 2018, which was unacceptable. Mobile phone signals were also a problem at that time.
- I.34** Visitors could attend the facility, but it was not signposted and could be difficult to find. The Home Office website² had not been updated with details of the new facility. Detainees were allowed legal visits. These were booked in 30-minute slots between 2pm and 9pm daily, although staff told us that they would allow additional access to any family member who had travelled a long distance. Visitors could bring property into the facility for detainees. The visits room was adequate, with some toys and activities for young children.
- I.35** Detainees could telephone family, friends and legal representatives to advise them of their transfer to further detention. The facility did not provide the useful information cards with the address and telephone number of IRCs that we usually see. We were told that these would now be provided.
- I.36** A group of volunteers, Manchester Immigration Detainee Support Team, visited detainees weekly to provide additional support and advice. Posters advertising this service were displayed throughout the facility.

Recommendations

- I.37** Detainees should be permitted access to video-calling and social networking sites, as well as the internet and email.
- I.38** The facility should be signposted for visitors, and the Home Office website updated.

² <https://www.gov.uk/immigration-removal-centre>

Leaving the facility

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are prepared for their release, transfer or removal. They are able to retain or recover their property. Families with children and others with specific needs are not detained without items essential for their welfare.

- I.39** Before they left, all detainees were seen by the nurse, given a rub-down search and had their personal belongings returned. Detainees were not routinely handcuffed when leaving the facility or during transfer to an IRC. We were told that, if required, facility staff would give detainees cash to help them reach their destinations, and a small welfare fund was kept for this purpose.

Section 2. Summary of recommendations

Recommendations

To the Home Office

- 2.1 Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand. (1.20)
- 2.2 Detainees should be permitted access to video-calling and social networking sites, as well as the internet and email. (1.37)
- 2.3 The facility should be signposted for visitors, and the Home Office website updated. (1.38)

Recommendations

To the facility contractor

Arrival and reception

- 2.4 Reception and health care interviews should take place in private. (1.6)

Safeguarding adults and personal safety

- 2.5 Mitie Care and Custody should ensure that detainee custody officers are aware of the potential vulnerabilities of detainees and of safeguarding mechanisms. (1.14)
- 2.6 Male detainees should not be held in the designated women's corridor. Women should not be held in rooms outside the designated women's corridor. Only female DCOs, and not male DCO's, should check women's rooms at night. (1.15)
- 2.7 Detainees' personal items should only be removed following an individual risk assessment. (1.16)

Section 3. Appendices

Appendix I: Inspection team

Tamara Pattinson
Hindpal Singh Bhui
Michael Dunkley
Chris Rush

Team leader
Team leader (assisting)
Inspector
Inspector

Appendix II: Photographs

Bedroom for four males



Main association room



Main association room



Men's toilet without seat or lids



Outdoor area



Single room



Appendix III: Facility log analysis

Short-term holding facility logs for Manchester Airport: 1 October 2018 – 31 December 2018

We used individual-level RECOS data provided by Mitie to assess the characteristics and experiences of detainees held at Manchester Airport over a three-month period.

Overview	
Total number of detainees held at the facility during this three-month period	396³
Proportion of detainees who were male	78%
Average (mean) age of detainees	32⁴
Proportion of detainees who were travelling individually	100%
Number of different countries detainees originated from	56⁵
Most common countries of origin	China (13%) Pakistan (11%) Albania (8%) Romania (7%) Eritrea (7%)
Average (mean) length of detention	39 hours 6 minutes⁶
Longest single period of detention	137 hours 5 minutes
Proportion of detention events where detainees were held for over 12 hours during a single period of detention	87%⁷
Proportion of detention events where detainees were held for over 24 hours during a single period of detention	62%⁸
Proportion of detainees held at the facility more than once	4%
Average (mean) cumulative length of detention for those held more than once	56 hours 19 minutes⁹
Proportion of cases with a departure outcome recorded	99%¹⁰

Who was most at risk of being held for over 12 hours?

Gender and country of origin¹¹ were significant in predicting the likelihood of being detained for 12 hours or more at Manchester Airport during the three-month period examined. Males were almost four times more likely to be held for 12 hours or longer at Manchester Airport during this three-month period ($\exp(B)=3.892$; $p<0.001$). People from China were almost three times more likely to

³ Individual detainees within the dataset were identified using a port reference number (PRN). From the 410 detention events recorded between 1 October 2018 to 31 December 2018, details of the PRN were available in 410 cases.

⁴ With ages ranging from 18 to 58 years (median age 30) ($N=395$). One detention case had missing data regarding the age of the detainee.

⁵ In four detention cases, the country of origin was 'Unknown'.

⁶ The median time for the detention events logged was 38 hours 20 minutes ($N=406$). Four detention cases did not have a departure time as they were still being held at the STHF.

⁷ $N=406$.

⁸ $N=406$.

⁹ Ranging from 14 hours 01 minute to 90 hours 40 minutes, with a median length of 62 hours 36 minutes detention ($N=14$).

¹⁰ One detention case did not have a departure outcome and four detention cases were still at the STHF awaiting a decision.

¹¹ China was chosen as the reference category as it was the single most common country for detainees to have originated from during this period.

be held for 12 hours or longer at Manchester Airport during this three-month period ($\exp(B)=2.72$; $p<0.05$).