

Detainees under escort:
Inspection of escorts and removals to

Nigeria and Ghana

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

26–27 March 2019

Glossary of terms

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Fact page

Departure airport

Birmingham

Destination countries

Nigeria and Ghana

Destination airports

Lagos and Accra

Escort contractor

Mitie Care and Custody

Number of detainees escorted

19

Number of escort staff

68

Health care staff

4 (2 on flight)

Length of journey

16 hours 20 minutes (maximum)

Introduction

Operation Majestic is a regular removal flight to Nigeria and Ghana. We have inspected this flight four times before, most recently in July 2018.

On this escort, numbers were low and we observed better engagement between escorting staff and detainees than we have often seen. There was also improved provision of information regarding filming and the escorting of detainees onto the aircraft. Staff at immigration removal centres (IRCs) generally ensured detainees were handed over to escort staff promptly and the presence of a Home Office member of staff at one IRC was particularly useful for detainees and for staff.

Escort staff mostly interacted positively with detainees, and remained calm when dealing with those who continued to argue against their removal. However, waist restraint belts were still being used on cooperative detainees for extremely long periods without them being given a chance to demonstrate compliance. It is unacceptable that this problem continues to occur despite promises of remedial action.

Despite repeated recommendations, some standards of common decency were not met, such as allowing detainees to go to the toilet in private and providing pillows and blankets on a long overnight flight.

There continued to be long waits on coaches and long journeys, which contributed to detainees' stress during removals. The departing airport was in the Midlands while three of the four IRCs that detainees were collected from were in the London area.

Disembarkation at both Nigeria and Ghana was orderly and prompt.

Overall, this operation was completed reasonably well. However, unnecessary use of restraint continues to be a problem, and improvements are still necessary to promote detainee privacy and dignity at a time of stress for people being removed from the United Kingdom.

Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

June 2019

Section 1. Summary

- I.1** Sixty-eight escorts removed 13 detainees to Nigeria and a further six to Ghana. Thirteen removals were cancelled from an initial detainee manifest of 32, mostly for outstanding legal matters. The operation was conducted reasonably well overall, although some previously noted concerns remained.
- I.2** The briefing at Spectrum House (Mitie Care and Custody's head office, near Gatwick Airport) was reasonably good, and staff were generally attentive. It did not overstate the risks involved, and advice was given on the need for accurate record keeping and promoting detainee welfare. However, as we have commented on previous operations, the briefing did not adequately cover the risk factors and vulnerabilities of specific detainees. Escort risk assessments that we reviewed provided insufficient detail on these issues.
- I.3** During the discharge process, coach commanders welcomed all detainees, told them what was going to happen and informed them that they were being filmed for safety and security reasons. All detainees we spoke to had received at least three days' advance notification of their removal in line with the recent High Court suspension of the Home Office's removal window policy.¹
- I.4** Due to the relatively few detainees being deported, the escort operation was not subject to the normal tight time constraints. This allowed escorting staff to take more time with detainees and they interacted well with them. Searching was completed reasonably sensitively.
- I.5** Escorting staff continued to keep toilet doors slightly ajar when detainees used them, including for female detainees. This was observed at IRCs, on coaches and on the aircraft. This practice was not based on individual risk assessments and was an unnecessary intrusion into detainees' privacy. The paramedics at the IRCs read all confidential medical notes, and some discussed medical matters in the hearing of others.
- I.6** Home Office charter flight information leaflets were available at some centres and on some coaches. Although they were not specifically tailored to removals to Nigeria or Ghana, they provided some useful information, such as on how to make a complaint to the Home Office. We saw no documentation on how to make a complaint about escort staff. There was a supply of Home Office complaint forms on some coaches, but it was unclear how detainees would know to ask about them.
- I.7** Although we observed some good dynamic risk assessments being made, we also observed some unjustified use of restraints. In Yarl's Wood, for example, if a detainee said that they did not wish to be removed, this was considered to be sufficient justification for the use of a waist restraint belt, even if they were compliant and cooperative.
- I.8** During the operation, waist restraint belts were applied on seven detainees who were removed, including three women. In all cases, there was insufficient reassessment of ongoing risk, and restraints remained in place for too long. Only one detainee resisted boarding the aircraft. He was carried on using approved techniques.

¹ See Home Office guidance, 'Suspension of Enforced Removal Window', 3 April 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792021/Suspension_of_enforced_removal_window.pdf

- I.9** During the flight, some escorts tried to engage with detainees to reassure them but others did not, and we saw a few escorting staff sleeping or not paying sufficient attention to the detainee they were supervising.
- I.10** The positioning and number of escort staff on the flight during the immigration surgery remained unnecessarily intimidating and not proportionate to risk. However, all detainees who wished to do so were able to speak to the chief immigration officer.
- I.11** Disembarkation at both Nigeria and Ghana was relatively swift and orderly. The longest total journey time was over 16 hours and the longest time that a detainee spent in a waist restraint belt was approximately 14 hours.

Section 2. Background

- 2.1** 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 monitors the treatment of and conditions for detainees. Escorts are included in this remit. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.
- 2.2** This was the fifth charter flight to Nigeria and Ghana that we have inspected. The aircraft was chartered by the Home Office Immigration Enforcement, and Mitie Care and Custody was the escort contractor. Detainees were collected from four immigration removal centres (IRCs): Colnbrook, Harmondsworth, Yarl's Wood and Brook House. Yarl's Wood removals were all female detainees, whereas male detainees were removed from the other centres.
- 2.3** There were 19 detainees on the flight, fewer than the 32 expected because of outstanding legal matters for detainees, including late legal interventions against removal. Thirteen were removed to Nigeria and six to Ghana. We inspected the entire process, from the point at which detainees were collected from IRCs to their arrival in Nigeria and Ghana. Inspectors attended Colnbrook, Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood IRCs before the escort teams arrived. One inspector attended the initial escort briefing and accompanied staff to Brook House IRC. Representatives from the Nigerian and Ghanaian embassies were also present on the flight.
- 2.4** Two inspectors travelled on the flight, which took off from Birmingham airport at approximately 10.55pm² on 26 March 2019. It landed in Lagos at approximately 5.28am, and in Accra at approximately 7.24am. The longest journey time, from boarding a coach at the IRC to alighting in Ghana, was approximately 16 hours 20 minutes.
- 2.5** The records for the previous three flights to Nigeria and Ghana were examined as part of this report. Those removals had taken place on 18–19 September 2018, 27–28 November 2018 and 30–31 January 2019. The numbers of detainees on those flights had been, respectively, 22, 26 and 15.

² All timings are Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) unless stated otherwise.

Section 3. Safety

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are escorted in safety and due regard is given to individual needs and risks. Removals are conducted in accordance with law. Security and good order are maintained through proportional operational arrangements and force is only used as a last resort.

Preparation and departure from removal centres

- 3.1 The operation started with a staff briefing at Spectrum House (Mitie Care and Custody's head office, near Gatwick Airport). All staff had previous experience of removal work.
- 3.2 Staff were attentive to the briefing, which was balanced and did not overstate the risks involved. Advice was given on the need for records of any use of force to be made, and for person escort records (PERs) to be completed in detail. However, the briefing did not cover the risk factors and vulnerabilities of specific detainees provided in advance by the Home Office to Mitie Care and Custody. Staff were told that this information was available from their coach commander, the officer in charge of the coach. However, we did not observe any additional information sharing, including in the case of one detainee who had previously self-harmed. Staff were told that complaint forms were available on coaches, that they should facilitate telephone calls to legal advisers, family, friends, and that blankets and pillows were available for detainees' use on the flight.
- 3.3 Escort staff generally still wore a uniform comprising dark trousers and polo shirts, although some had reverted to military-style camouflage trousers, which managers had previously told us were no longer permitted. Handcuffs continued to be prominently displayed and at Harmondsworth, a waist restraint belt was left ready for use, within sight of detainees.
- 3.4 At Colnbrook, detainees due to be removed usually remained in normal accommodation, but the practice at other IRCs differed. For example, at Yarl's Wood, they were routinely taken to a relatively open and comfortable separation unit (the Nightingale unit) a day before departure. At Harmondsworth detainees were relocated to the induction wing within 48 hours of their planned removal.
- 3.5 On the day of departure, at Brook House, two detainees were collected by escorting staff from the centre's care and separation unit (CSU). One of these detainees had been taken in handcuffs from his wing to the CSU by six G4S staff wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE). Home Office risk information described him as presenting only a moderate risk to successful transfer. It emerged during his search by escort staff that he had a blade in his mouth.
- 3.6 With these exceptions, IRC staff brought detainees to the discharge areas. This process was generally managed effectively and with no use of force. At Colnbrook, several detainees were brought to the discharge area at once and this led to multiple detainees being held in one holding room. This became a problem when the holding room had to be hurriedly cleared to separate the detainees from one detainee who began to verbally protest about his removal.
- 3.7 All detainees we spoke to had been given at least 72 hours' notice of the flight. This was in accordance with the recent High Court suspension of the Home Office's removal window

policy.³ On arrival in the discharge area, detainees were greeted by the coach commander, who generally engaged well with detainees, politely explained what was taking place and gave clear information about what would happen on the escort. In most cases, coach commanders told detainees that they were being filmed for safety and security reasons, but did not elaborate if it was for the entire removal operation or just at key times, such as when boarding the aeroplane. Staff were diligent in asking detainees if they had any telephone numbers that they needed to note down, before their mobile phones/SIM cards were temporarily removed from them for the journey.

- 3.8** Escort staff usually told detainees asking about legal issues that this was beyond their control, but that a telephone would be available to them on the coach, so that they could contact their lawyers (see also paragraph 4.4). Rub-down searches were carried out in separate rooms or behind a screen. Staff carrying out searches were polite and engaged well with detainees. The door to the search room was kept open at Brook House and Colnbrook, although staff did not congregate outside, as we have seen in previous inspections.
- 3.9** A member of the Home Office team was present at Colnbrook for most of the duration of the discharge process. While there mainly to undertake compliance checks on behalf of the Home Office, they were also helpful in assisting escort staff and detainees by answering questions or making calls to other parts of the Home Office. Home Office staff were not present in any other IRC discharge areas; detainees there were told that they could only see these staff once on board the plane (see also paragraph 3.34).

Safeguarding adults and personal safety

- 3.10** Staff were generally confident, experienced and understood the escort process for removals. They had received training in the Home Office Manual for Escorting Safely, and the Home Office confirmed that all staff were certified as detainee custody officers under part 8 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- 3.11** Unless they were in a waist restraint belt, detainees generally walked from centre discharge areas onto coaches without guiding holds (holding the detainee's hand and elbow). In a few cases, staff persisted in using such holds unnecessarily.
- 3.12** Detainees were still physically guided while boarding the plane. However, unlike at previous inspections, detainees were informed of this practice and were therefore not surprised when it took place. The decision to use this level of closer escorting was justified based on the airfield being an insecure area and the risk of injury being higher if there was an incident during boarding. Female staff guided female detainees onto the aircraft. Detainees were filmed while boarding the plane and detainees had been informed of this.
- 3.13** Detainees could still only use toilets on the coach and aircraft with the door left ajar. This practice was an unnecessary intrusion on privacy and not based on individual risk assessment.
- 3.14** The risk sections in several PERs contained vague comments, such as 'disruptive behaviour on transfer' and 'criminal activity', without specifying the exact nature of the threats that these detainees posed to others or to the removal operation. Escorts were not given

³ See Home Office Guidance, 'Suspension of Enforced Removal Window', 3 April 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792021/Suspension_of_enforced_removal_window.pdf

advance notice of any detainees who had been assessed as vulnerable by the Home Office under its adults at risk policy.

- 3.15** One detainee removed from Yarl's Wood was on an ACDT.⁴ The coach commander was unaware of the reasons for the ACDT, and no details were recorded on the PER. For one detainee at Brook House, although not on an open ACDT document, the risk information stated that he had been found hanging by a ligature and had threatened to harm himself with broken glass. It also stated that he had told staff that he would do anything possible to avoid removal. However, it was unclear from the information provided to escort staff whether he had been recently assessed for current risk of self-harm.
- 3.16** Nine detainees were placed in waist restraint belts and eight of these were compliant throughout. The longest use of a waist restraint belt was for about 14 hours, for a detainee who was compliant throughout the process. Restraints were taken off two of the nine detainees when their removal was cancelled. Restraints were not used for 12 detainees, and they remained compliant throughout the operation.
- 3.17** Of the seven detainees still wearing waist restraint belts, including three women, four were transferred to the airport individually in a separate 'chase van', rather than on the coach. As the senior members of staff present, coach commanders generally made the assessment as to whether restraints were needed. The coach commander at Yarl's Wood was the exception, as she told staff before the start of the handover that they did not need to seek her authorisation to apply a restraint belt.
- 3.18** In some instances, we saw good dynamic assessment of risks before detainees were placed in a waist restraint belt. For example, at Brook House, two detainees said that they did not wish to be removed, but they complied with instructions. Appropriately, waist restraint belts were not used for these detainees, and they were allowed to walk freely onto the coach.
- 3.19** However, in a few cases, the application of the belt did not appear justified by the presenting risks. Two detainees from Yarl's Wood were placed in a belt despite being compliant throughout the discharge process. They had been assessed before departure as presenting minimal or no risk to successful transfer. However, the coach commander decided to apply restraints because both had made a statement that they did not want to be removed; and because she considered that one detainee's application to remain would be unsuccessful, and that the other was disengaged and on an ACDT (although she did not know why).
- 3.20** At Brook House, one detainee who had been assessed as presenting a high risk of disrupting removal was accommodated in the CSU on a pre-arranged plan. Escort staff were told that he had swallowed an object, but the nature of it was unclear. Six G4S staff wearing full PPE and with a riot shield were stationed by his cell door as it was opened. He came out quietly, in handcuffs, presenting no resistance, and was taken into custody by the escort staff. The handcuffs were removed and he was placed in a waist restraint belt in the secure position (where detainees' arms are pinned to their sides so they cannot move them). He was walked onto an escort van, although his removal was subsequently cancelled following legal intervention. Detainees removed from the Brook House CSU were searched on the landing while in restraint, rather than in a private space, which would have been more appropriate.
- 3.21** A detainee from Harmondsworth was on an open ACDT document. During his search, a razor blade wrapped in tissue was found. The escort staff decided to put him into a waist restraint belt for his own safety. No enquiries were undertaken to see if he had a history of self-harm, and what form this might take. He was not thoroughly searched, for example using

⁴ An 'assessment, care in detention and teamwork' (ACDT) document is designed to support detainees highlighted at increased risk of committing an act of self-harm or attempting suicide.

a hand-held metal detector. His removal was subsequently cancelled through legal intervention.

- 3.22** Staff kept the waist restraint belts in place until the aircraft had taken off in all cases but then removed them promptly in most cases. For one detainee, the PER and our own observations provided evidence that the continued use of a restraint belt was initially justified, as she was agitated and during the flight tried to bang her head against the seat in front of her. Escort staff used proportionate force to ensure compliance and to prevent her from injuring herself (see also paragraph 4.19). She was spoken to by a representative from the Nigerian embassy at 12.50am, when it was noted that she 'had calmed down'. However, the restraint belt was not removed until 2.15am, just under 10 hours from when it had been applied.
- 3.23** In another case, a detainee from Brook House had been placed in restraints at 1.30pm due to allegedly having a blade secreted in his mouth. He informed staff at 4.40pm that he had swallowed the blade, and completed documentation indicated that the detainee was subsequently compliant. PER entries noted at 10.17pm that the detainee 'boarded aircraft – all ok', at 1.20am that 'sub appears to be sleeping' and at 2.30am that 'all ok had drink'. Therefore, there was no apparent reason to keep him in a restraint belt, yet it was not removed until 3.25am; nearly 14 hours after it was first applied. If there was an ongoing risk, it was unclear what it was and how it had been judged to have sufficiently reduced to have justified the removal of the restraints at 3.25am.
- 3.24** One detainee was carried onto the aircraft due to non-compliance with repeated staff instructions to disembark from the coach and board the aircraft. Escort staff acted professionally and the procedure was carried out swiftly but safely. Leg restraints were applied but quickly removed once the detainee was located on the aircraft.
- 3.25** Use of force techniques were applied correctly. The use of force documentation we reviewed was generally complete and provided sufficient detail, although some reports were difficult to read because of poor handwriting.
- 3.26** Records from the previous three removal operations to Nigeria and Ghana indicated only seven uses of force in total. Incident reports and PER entries from these previous removals suggested that restraints had been applied as a precautionary measure in some instances and had all been removed routinely after take-off.
- 3.27** The Home Office chief immigration officer (CIO) held a surgery during the flight, to answer detainees' questions. However, security measures during this exchange were disproportionate and remained unnecessarily intimidating, with at least four or five officers surrounding the detainee, without specific regard to the risks posed, while the CIO leant over the seat in front to speak to the detainee (see also paragraph 3.34).

Recommendations

- 3.28** **Initial staff briefings and person escort record information should communicate key information regarding the specific risks and vulnerabilities of individual detainees.**
- 3.29** **Unless an individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, escort staff should permit detainees to use the toilet in complete privacy at IRCs, on coaches and on the plane.** (Repeated recommendation 3.32)
- 3.30** **Restraints should only be applied in response to specific and present risks, and only for the minimum amount of time.**

Legal rights

- 3.31** Detainees could contact legal representatives and submit applications before their removal, and appropriate facilities were in place. All detainees were aware of the exact date of their removal (see paragraph 3.7).
- 3.32** Detainees were told during their discharge that they would be given access to a mobile phone on the coach, so that they could call their legal advisers (see also paragraph 4.4).
- 3.33** Coach commanders also assured detainees that if a legal representation was received, they would stop the removal. If detainees raised a legal query about their case, escorting staff generally advised them that they would be able to speak to an immigration officer on the plane (see below). Detainees were allowed to keep legal documentation with them throughout their journeys.
- 3.34** On the flight, all detainees were asked if they wished to speak to the CIO. Those who asked to do so, were taken in turn to a seat at the rear of the front section of the aircraft (see also paragraph 3.27). The CIO dealt thoroughly and politely with all the questions raised. In total, he spoke to eight detainees, and a few other detainees were provided with responses by escorting staff in response to factual questions, such as whether the CIO had their passport.
- 3.35** Where appropriate, the CIO undertook to contact the Home Office when the flight landed in both Nigeria and Ghana, to ensure that there had been no last-minute successful legal interventions to removal.

Section 4. Respect

Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are escorted in decent physical conditions and individual needs are addressed.
Detainees are treated with humanity and respect.**

Physical conditions and property

- 4.1 The coaches were all clean, in working order and suitable for the planned journeys. Sanitary products were distributed to detainees on the coach from Yarl's Wood, but not in private, and there were no disposable sanitary bags available.
- 4.2 There were relatively few detainees to collect from each IRC and coaches generally left on time. However, some detainees still spent a long time waiting on coaches before the start of their journeys – over two hours in some cases and nearly three hours for one detainee from Colnbrook.
- 4.3 All detainees remained on the coach or escort vans until boarding the aircraft. Boarding began at 9.33pm, by which time many detainees had been in these vehicles for several hours – and in the case of one detainee, nearly eight hours.
- 4.4 Detainees received water, sandwiches, crisps and fruit soon after the coaches began their journeys. On some coaches, hot drinks were also provided. Escort staff were generally proactive in encouraging detainees to make telephone calls to legal advisers, family or friends during their journeys. However, unusually, there were relatively few working mobile phones available for detainees to use (for example, there was only one on the coaches from Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood), leading to lengthy waits to use one in some cases.
- 4.5 Hot food and drinks were provided on the flight at regular intervals, and a vegetarian meal option was available. However, detainees (including the women) could not use the toilets in private (see paragraph 3.13 and recommendation 3.29) and detainees were still not routinely offered blankets or pillows.
- 4.6 Detainees' property was generally handled efficiently. We observed escorting staff reassuring detainees that they would depart with all their property. Detainees could wear their belts and keep paper money with them. However, at Yarl's Wood detainees resorted to keeping money in their underwear as they were not permitted to retain any bags, and some had no pockets in their clothing.

Respectful treatment

- 4.7 As the flight was not busy, and detainees were collected from only four centres, the escort operation was not subject to the normal tight time constraints. Escorting staff took more time than usual to process each detainee, and one-to-one engagement was mostly good, and better than we have previously seen.
- 4.8 The treatment of detainees was respectful and staff engaged well with them. The coach commander at Brook House demonstrated considerable skill in persuading one detainee to conform to search requirements.

- 4.9** There was generally good engagement with detainees while they were on the coach. Staff did not joke between themselves, or talk over detainees' heads, to the same extent that we have seen in previous escorts. Escorting staff were sensitive to detainees, and limited conversation when it was clear that they would rather reflect quietly than converse.
- 4.10** On the coach from Yarl's Wood, however, we saw some staff give incorrect information to detainees in an apparent effort to make them feel more hopeful about their removal. For example, we overheard staff telling a detainee that she would be able to reapply for a visa to return to England, and that her cooperation with her removal would strengthen her application.
- 4.11** Most detainees continued to endure long journeys and spent excessively long periods in transit. For example, one detainee experienced a total journey time of over 16 hours, 14 hours of which he spent in a waist restraint belt (see paragraph 3.23).
- 4.12** Unless they were in a waist restraint belt, detainees generally walked from centre discharge areas onto coaches without guiding holds (holding the detainee's hand and elbow). In a few cases, staff persisted in using such holds unnecessarily.
- 4.13** Home Office charter flight information leaflets were available in some centres and on some coaches, but were not sufficiently promoted to detainees or routinely provided. While these were not specifically tailored for removals to Nigeria and Ghana, they provided some useful information, such as on how to make a complaint to the Home Office.
- 4.14** Detainees were not given written information on how to make a complaint about escort staff. This information and Home Office complaint forms were generally available on the coaches, but it was unclear how detainees would know to ask about them.
- 4.15** Detainees who did not wish to be removed made their protestations in a largely calm manner. For the few who provided some management difficulties, staff responded in a professional manner. All detainees appeared to speak English reasonably well and interpretation was not needed.
- 4.16** Detainees in waist restraint belts were positioned in the centre seats, with a member of escort staff on either side. Other detainees were seated in a window seat or in the centre of the plane, with a member of escort staff next to them. When the risk level of detainees originally seated in the centre seats was assessed to have dropped, they were able to move to a window seat if they so wished.
- 4.17** In all IRCs, envelopes containing medical notes had been prepared by centre healthcare staff. Escort paramedics from IPRS Aeromed (the supplier of travel-related medical services) opened them routinely, rather than on the basis of individual risks. They spoke to detainees if there were any medical matters to clarify, but these conversations could be overheard by escorting staff and therefore provided the detainee with no privacy.
- 4.18** Two staff from IPRS Aeromed were present on the plane. They checked on detainees throughout the flight, including those on whom force had been used. On arrival in Lagos and Accra, sealed medical notes and medication were given to each detainee.
- 4.19** On the flight, staff managed a detainee in considerable distress particularly well. More than an hour into the flight she continued to cry loudly. Staff sat on either side of her, and another leant over the seat in front, holding her forehead to prevent her from head-butting the seat in front and injuring herself. Two other members of staff stood alongside, to provide support and assistance if needed. They all behaved in a calm and patient way while trying to calm the detainee down (see also paragraph 3.22).

- 4.20** We continued to observe some escorts who appeared to be asleep during the flight, rather than supervising the detainees. Others stayed awake and we saw effective communication between them and detainees in some cases.

Recommendations

- 4.21** Detainees should be able to submit complaints about escort, centre and Home Office staff. They should be fully informed of these processes, and of the availability of complaint forms. (Repeated recommendation 4.24)
- 4.22** Staff should not sleep while they are responsible for the personal supervision of a detainee. (Repeated recommendation 4.25)

Section 5. Preparation for reintegration

Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are prepared for their arrival and early days in the destination country.
Any unacceptable behaviour in destination countries is appropriately challenged.**

- 5.1** Several detainees told us that they had little or no connection with the countries to which they were being removed, and had lived in the UK for many years. Two female detainees from Yarl's Wood were fearful for their safety upon their return. Others told us they were leaving behind their children; in the case of one detainee, the children had been placed in foster care.
- 5.2** Little specific advance information was given to people being removed to Nigeria or Ghana. Two booklets, *Returning to Nigeria* and *Returning to Ghana*, were available in some IRCs, but they were not systematically given to them. Although some were issued on coaches, we saw this happen in only a few cases.
- 5.3** The fact that the CIO could issue emergency grants to help with onward travel was not well advertised. Detainees were not routinely advised of this and it was not mentioned in the Home Office charter flight information leaflet. One detainee on the flight was deemed to be eligible for a small destitute payment to help with onward travel. However, this decision had been made too late for him to have been referred in advance to the British High Commission for available local enhanced support services (see below).
- 5.4** The handover between British and local officials in Nigeria and Ghana was efficient. However, there were no female immigration officials present at either destination.
- 5.5** On arrival in Nigeria, a representative of the British High Commission met the plane. She informed us that a 'meet and greet' service was provided for detainees. The service advised detainees on issues such as opening bank accounts and changing money, and, for those who were eligible, some limited financial support and up to two nights' accommodation were available. However, to access this support, detainees needed to be referred by the Home Office, and this rarely happened. Instead, the service was usually taken up by families who returned willingly and collectively on normal scheduled flights. The CIO acknowledged this lack of referral and explained that it was often due to the difficulty in checking that a detainee was in genuine need. However, this meant that some detainees were potentially not receiving support for which they were eligible.

Recommendation

- 5.6** **The Home Office should ensure that necessary checks and referrals are made in advance of detainees' removal, so that they can receive assistance and access sources of information, support and available advice in their destination countries.**

Section 6. Summary of recommendations and good practice

Recommendation

To the Home Office

- 6.1** The Home Office should ensure that necessary checks and referrals are made in advance of detainees' removal, so that they can receive assistance and access sources of information, support and available advice in their destination countries. (5.6)

Recommendations To the Home Office and Mitie Care and Custody

- 6.2** Initial staff briefings and person escort record information should communicate key information regarding the specific risks and vulnerabilities of individual detainees. (3.28)
- 6.3** Detainees should be able to submit complaints about escort, centre and Home Office staff. They should be fully informed of these processes, and of the availability of complaint forms. (4.21, repeated recommendation 4.24)

Recommendations

To Mitie Care and Custody

- 6.4** Unless an individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, escort staff should permit detainees to use the toilet in complete privacy at IRCs, on coaches and on the plane. (3.29, repeated recommendation 3.32)
- 6.5** Restraints should only be applied in response to specific and present risks, and only for the minimum amount of time. (3.30)
- 6.6** Staff should not sleep while they are responsible for the personal supervision of a detainee. (4.22, repeated recommendation 4.25)

Section 7. Appendices

Appendix I: Inspection team

Kam Sarai	Team leader
Michael Dunkley	Inspector
Deri Hughes-Roberts	Inspector
Fran Russell	Inspector

Appendix II: Progress on recommendations from the last report

The following is a summary of the main findings from the last report (31 July–1 August 2018) and a list of all the recommendations made, organised under the three broad tests of healthy detention practice. 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 escorted in safety and due regard is given to individual needs and risks.

Recommendations

Detainees should be given sufficient notice of their removal to allow them to prepare adequately. (3.9)

Achieved

Searching in the IRC should take place in privacy. (3.29)

Achieved

All detainees should be told that they will be filmed and physically escorted onto the aircraft, and informed of the reasons why. (3.30)

Achieved

Female staff should escort women detainees, especially where close contact is required. Male staff should not touch women detainees other than in exceptional circumstances. (3.31)

Achieved

Unless an individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, detainees should be able to use the toilet in complete privacy. (3.32)

Not achieved (recommendation repeated, 3.29)

Escort documentation should clearly identify and explain the specific risk factors that need to be managed. (3.33)

Not achieved

Escort staff should always remain professional and respond to difficult or potentially volatile situations calmly to allow for effective communication with detainees. (3.34)

Achieved

Restraints should only be applied in response to specific risks and only for the minimum amount of time. PER and use of force documentation should provide accurate justification for the application of restraints, including leg restraints and handcuffs, and note how long they were used. (3.35)

Not achieved

Only the minimum number of staff required for security and safety should be around a detainee during the chief immigration officer's surgery. (3.36)

Not achieved

All detainees who wish to do so should be able to see the chief immigration officer during their on-board surgery. (3.37)

Achieved

Respect

Detainees are escorted in decent physical conditions and individual needs are addressed. Detainees are treated with humanity and respect.

Recommendations

The time spent by detainees on a coach should be monitored, and alternatives found to holding them for long periods on a vehicle. (4.8)

Not achieved

Sanitary products should be available in toilets in all coaches and on the aircraft. (4.9)

Not achieved

Detainees should be given pillows and blankets during the flight subject to an individual risk assessment. (4.10)

Not achieved

Escort staff should use respectful language throughout the removal process. (4.23)

Achieved

Detainees should be able to submit complaints about escort, centre and Home Office staff. They should be fully informed of these processes and of the availability of complaint forms. (4.24)

Not achieved (recommendation repeated, 4.21)

Staff should not sleep while they are responsible for the personal supervision of a detainee. (4.25)

Not achieved (recommendation repeated, 4.22)

Person escort records should be completed professionally and provide sufficient descriptive details of the interactions between escort staff and detainees. (4.26)

Partially achieved

Preparation for reintegration

Detainees are prepared for their arrival and early days in the destination country.

Recommendations

Detainees should be given information about their destination country, including the help and support that is available on their arrival. It should be provided in advance of their removal and detainees should receive assistance so they can access sources of support and advice. (5.5)

Not achieved