

Report on short scrutiny visits to

Immigration removal centres

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

12 May 2020

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Glossary of terms

We try to make our reports as clear as possible, and this short glossary should help to explain some of the specialist terms you may find. If you need an explanation of any other terms, please see the longer glossary in our 'Guide for writing inspection reports', available on our website at: <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/about-our-inspections/>

Adults at Risk policy

Under the Home Office's Adults at Risk in Detention policy, a detainee is assessed at Level 1 where a vulnerability is self-declared. Level 2 applies where there is professional or other evidence of the vulnerability. Level 3 is the highest level of risk. The Home Office will assess a detainee to be at this level where they consider that a period of detention is likely to cause harm.

FFP3 mask

Filtering face piece (FFP) masks come in three respirator ratings: FFP1, FFP2 and FFP3. FFP3 offers the wearer the highest level of protection and is recommended for use during outbreaks of SARS, Avian Flu and Coronavirus.

Face fit testing

A face fit test should be carried out to ensure FFP3 respiratory protective equipment can protect the wearer. Any health care professional required to undertake an emergency intervention that creates aerosol-generated air-borne droplets is required to wear an FFP3 mask to protect themselves. (For details see: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/face-mask-ppe-rpe-coronavirus.htm>)

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Safety equipment including masks, aprons and gloves, worn by frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reverse cohort unit (RCU)

Unit where newly-arrived prisoners are held in quarantine for 14 days.

Rule 35 reports

Detention centre Rule 35 requires that the Home Office be notified if a centre doctor considers a detainee's health to be injuriously affected by continued detention or the conditions of detention, or if a detainee may have been a victim of torture or has suicidal intentions.

Shielding

Those who have health conditions that make them vulnerable to infection are held for at least 12 weeks in a shielding unit.

Short scrutiny visit (SSV)

A new type of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) visit in which three similar establishments (for example, young offender institutions or local prisons) are visited. The aim of these visits is not to report on how an establishment meets HMI Prisons' Expectations, as in a regular full inspection, but to give a snapshot of how it is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to share any positive practice found.

Social distancing

The practice of staying two metres apart from other individuals, recommended by Public Health England as a measure to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

About this report

- A1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMI Prisons) is an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, young offender institutions, secure training centres, immigration detention facilities, police and court custody and military detention.
- A2 All visits 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.
- A3 HMI Prisons normally reports against a wide range of detailed standards, which are listed in our Expectations. Inspection teams of up to 12 people are usually in immigration removal centres (IRCs) over two to three weeks, speaking to detainees and staff, observing life in detention and examining a large amount of documentation and evidence. The COVID-19 pandemic has required a substantial revision of such norms, at least in the short term.
- A4 A detailed briefing document on our new methodology is available on the HMI Prisons website (<https://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmiprison/2020/03/covid-19-update/>). It discusses the reasons for the actions we are taking, the primacy given to public health considerations and their place within the approach of what we have termed 'short scrutiny visits'. The purpose of our current approach is to:
- fulfil HMI Prisons' statutory duty to report on treatment and conditions effectively, without adding unreasonable burdens to a system currently dealing with unprecedented challenges
 - promote transparency about the response to COVID-19 in places of detention and ensure that lessons can be learned quickly
 - use an adapted methodology which provides effective independent scrutiny while adhering at all times to the 'do no harm' principle. This means that HMI Prisons will not put detainees, detention centre staff or its own staff at unreasonable risk and will work in line with national public health guidance.
- A5 HMI Prisons recognises that at times of crisis and operational pressure, the risks of both conscious and unintentional mistreatment increase, and external perspective and oversight of closed institutions become even more important than usual. By identifying concerns, we also aim to promote more effective and safer practices in IRCs, thereby supporting public health. Our methodology will be reviewed and updated in line with changing circumstances.
- A6 Key characteristics of short scrutiny visits are that only two to three inspectors will attend IRCs, including a health inspector. Each visit will take place over the course of a single day, and will focus on a small number of issues which are essential to the care and basic rights of those detained in the current circumstances. These critical areas include: care for the most vulnerable detainees and the need for meaningful human contact; support for those at risk of self-harm and suicide; hygiene; legal rights; health care; access to fresh air; contact with families, friends and the outside world; and support for those being released.
- A7 Short scrutiny visits do not allow the exhaustive triangulation of evidence that characterises inspections. However, they do enable us to tell the story of life in detention during the

current crisis and comment on the proportionality of the action being taken. This report encompasses four IRCs, visited on the same day by different teams. Findings in the report are presented thematically rather than focusing on individual centres.

- A8** For more information and updates on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, see our website: <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/2020/03/covid-19-update/>.

Introduction

This report discusses findings from short scrutiny visits to four immigration removal centres (IRCs): Harmondsworth, near Heathrow Airport in west London, managed by Mitie; Brook House, near Gatwick Airport was managed by G4S at the time of our visit, but the contract transferred to Serco on 21 May 2020; Morton Hall in Lincolnshire, managed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS); and Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire, managed by Serco. The first three all held adult male detainees, while Yarl's Wood held both adult women and, in a separate short-term holding facility (STHF), adult men.

All IRCs had dramatically reduced their populations since March 2020, partly because if there is no reasonable prospect of removal, immigration detention ceases to be lawful. The fact that immigration detention is an administrative process rather than a sentence of the court means that releasing detainees is a simpler process than releasing prisoners; it is likely that the releases had helped to prevent the spread of the virus in these establishments.

Nevertheless, of those who remained in detention, some had been held for extended periods: 12 people had been in detention for over a year and more than a fifth had been detained for over six months. For most, removal during the pandemic appeared a remote possibility given the imposition of travel bans across the world. Many detainees were frustrated at their ongoing detention and there had been some resulting protests. We also found a high percentage of detainees – nearly 40% – identified as being adults at risk in detention (see Glossary of terms), often because they met the criteria for shielding. We were pleased to find that processes for supporting and reviewing the detention of the most vulnerable detainees were in place and that levels of self-harm were generally low.

In all centres, we found generally good management planning for the crisis, including sufficient stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE, see Glossary of terms), proportionate restrictions and reasonably good communication with detainees and staff. Cleanliness and hygiene were good. New arrivals were normally kept apart from other detainees for 14 days to prevent the spread of the virus, but cohorting was undermined to some extent by cross-deployment of staff.

Management of health care and joint working to manage the pandemic were effective across all sites. Mental health support was reasonable across all sites and administration of medicines continued to be effective.

In total, there had been only three confirmed detainee cases of COVID-19 in immigration detention centres. The fact that the disease had not spread suggested good infection control, which was likely to be supported by the low numbers in detention and, despite some poor distancing in practice, the fact that detainees were located in different parts of each centre and had sufficient space.

We saw none of the extreme restrictions that we have observed in crowded prisons. Detainees in all centres had generally good freedom of movement and those in Morton Hall and Yarl's Wood could move around the centres and their grounds all day. There was reasonable access to activity areas in all centres, and most detainees could work if they wished to do so. However, there were also some inconsistencies between centres. It was not obvious why some IRCs had been unable to sustain activities that others were still providing. For example, libraries were open in Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood, but closed at Brook House and Morton Hall. Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood were continuing to run education classes with limited detainee numbers and appropriate social distancing, but the other sites were not. We met otherwise stressed and frustrated detainees who spoke very positively of the benefits of these activities to their mental health.

All detainees had access to phones, internet and video-calling. Welfare staff were still providing useful assistance and some community support groups were in phone contact with detainees. While most

detainees were released to suitable accommodation, we were concerned to find that, between the start of March and our visit, nine had left Harmondsworth without a fixed address. Conversely, in most centres, some detainees had been granted conditional bail but were not released because of a lack of confirmed suitable accommodation. This was one of the most frequently mentioned frustrations from detainees.

There was a high level of assessed vulnerability among those who remained in detention, and many had been held for long periods at a time when the prospect of removal appeared remote. However, overall numbers had been greatly reduced in all IRCs, and this allowed managers to provide reasonably safe and open regimes. We hope this report will help to reduce the inconsistencies between centres and provide the best possible environment for all detainees for as long as they continue to be held.

Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

May 2020

Notable positive practice

- The low numbers in all centres meant that all detainees could be accommodated in single rooms, usually with toilets and showers.
- There was generally good use of translated material at all sites, including NHS material on COVID-19 in multiple languages.
- At Harmondsworth, health advice about COVID-19 was available on all detainee and staff computers.
- At Yarl's Wood, staff had produced visual materials with clear drawings to help those with limited English identify key words and concepts in conversations with staff.
- Education classes were still taking place, properly supervised and with reduced numbers of detainees, at Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood. Detainees appreciated the opportunity to participate in these classes and described the benefits to their mental health.
- At Morton Hall, detainees on the reverse cohorting unit (RCU – see Glossary of terms) were allowed to use personal mobile phones from their stored property to access their emails and the internet.
- At Brook House, specific staff had been assigned to encourage social distancing, with positive results.

Section 1. Safety

In this section, we report mainly on the actions taken to promote safety; the treatment of detainees during arrival and early days; and the support for the most vulnerable detainees, including those at risk of self-harm.

Leadership and management

- 1.1** All IRCs had been operating with populations well below their capacity before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. This was the result of an established Home Office policy to maintain lower numbers in detention. From March 2020, as preparations for managing the COVID-19 pandemic intensified and it became increasingly clear that the possibilities for removal would become more limited, there had been dramatic further reductions. There were over 600 releases from the largest centre, Harmondsworth, in March. The 63 remaining detainees represented approximately a tenth of the centre's full capacity. Similarly, in Morton Hall, the population had decreased by around two-thirds to 76 on the day of our visit; there were 42 detainees in Brook House; and only 16 women remained in Yarl's Wood. Many of the releases were the result of detainees being granted bail. An additional 57 men were in the Yarl's Wood residential short term holding facility (STHF).
- 1.2** Detainees held in prisons because their risk was initially assessed by the Home Office as being too high for the immigration estate had started to be transferred to IRCs. We were told that the risk assessment had changed as a result of lower detainee numbers, the number of single occupancy rooms and higher staff to detainee ratios. Transfers were only accepted from prisons without current outbreaks.
- 1.3** In all centres, we found generally good management planning for the crisis, with some focused early efforts to obtain sufficient levels of PPE (personal protective equipment, see Glossary of terms), which was easily available in all centres. Restrictions imposed on detainees were proportionate and freedom of movement was good in all centres, although there had been some early confusion in Brook House, where managers had, in consultation with the Home Office, imposed a restricted regime with very limited time out of cell. This decision was quickly reversed, and a new proportionate regime was introduced the next day.
- 1.4** Management communication with detainees and staff had been reasonably good. Health and education leaflets had been produced in multiple languages and distributed to detainees. In Harmondsworth, health information was available on all staff and detainee computers. We saw posters about protective measures displayed prominently around centres. Staff in some centres felt that communication between them and detainees had been enhanced by the high ratio of staff to detainees.
- 1.5** Home Office data showed that there had been only three confirmed cases of COVID-19 across the immigration estate since the start of the crisis. The fact that the virus had not spread following these cases suggested good infection control. During our visits, there were no cases of detainees who were known to have the virus, although one man was placed in protective isolation after arriving with symptoms at the Yarl's Wood residential STHF.
- 1.6** In our surveys, most staff reported that they felt adequate steps had been taken to ensure the safety of detainees and, to a lesser extent, staff. Social distancing among both staff and detainees was generally well observed and was made easier by the small numbers in the centres. Staff generally reinforced messages about distancing well, and in Brook House specific staff had been assigned to encourage social distancing, which was a positive initiative.

The main exception was at Harmondsworth, where we observed inconsistent adherence to social distancing among both staff and detainees. In our Harmondsworth survey, while staff were largely positive about most aspects of the centre, their main criticisms were of poor attention to social distancing of some of their colleagues and some detainees, the presence of too many staff in the centre when compared with the small number of detainees and what they felt was the relatively late introduction of health and safety measures, such as posters and two-metre markers. Large numbers of men were passing through the STHF at Yarl's Wood, which had narrow corridors where distancing was hard to maintain.

Arrival in detention

- 1.7** In order to minimise risks, new male receptions were being directed in turn to the larger IRCs: Brook House, Morton Hall and the Heathrow centres, Harmondsworth and Colnbrook. This meant that each IRC took new receptions only once every three weeks.
- 1.8** On arrival, detainees at most centres were screened before leaving escort vehicles for signs of COVID-19. At Morton Hall, they were screened in a private room in reception. Reception processes, including a safety interview and health screen, were also carried out at all sites. All centres had well established arrangements for cohorting (separating) newly arrived detainees, who stayed on the same unit for 14 days. However, detention staff were not dedicated to cohorted units, which undermined the principle of cohorting and increased the risks of cross-contamination. We spoke to a detainee at one site who was placed in one of the cohorted units for non-compliant behaviour, which compromised the cohorting principle. We spoke to detainees on all cohorted units and received positive reports on the level of support they had received. They were also able to access recreational facilities at each centre.
- 1.9** Considerable numbers of men were detained after crossing the English Channel and brought to Yarl's Wood residential STHF. In the weekend before our visit, 102 men had arrived, 57 of whom remained in the STHF on the day of our visit. They were given a screening interview by phone or video-conference by Home Office staff. All were also given a health screening on arrival, and any who showed or described what might have been symptoms of COVID-19 were placed in isolation, and taken to separate nearby accommodation used by the Home Office specifically for those with symptoms or who had tested positive.

Support for the most vulnerable detainees, including those at risk of self-harm

- 1.10** Rule 35 reports (see Glossary of terms) and Home Office responses were generally timely, although we found a small number of lengthy delays: for example, at Morton Hall the temporary lack of a GP meant that one assessment had taken five weeks to complete. From the beginning of January 2020, 47% of Rule 35 reports had resulted in the release of the detainee. This was a much higher percentage than we found in our two full inspections in 2019 (at Brook House and Morton Hall), when in both cases, just 14% of detainees were released. There was a large variation in release rates between the four IRCs, from 61% in Harmondsworth to 16% in Morton Hall. The reasons for this variation were unclear.
- 1.11** In three of the centres, levels of self-harm were low, with few incidents since 23 March (when restricted regimes were implemented nationally). However, in Harmondsworth, levels of self-harm had not fallen in line with the reduction in population and there had been 23 incidents since 23 March.

- I.12** Levels of assessed vulnerability in all centres were high. According to data provided shortly before our visits, the Home Office had assessed 66 detainees across the estate to be at Level 2 of its Adults at Risk Policy (see Glossary of terms) because of professional or other evidence of risk. An additional 19 detainees had been assessed at Level 3, although this was mainly because they met the criteria for shielding.
- I.13** Overall, the Home Office had assessed 39% of detainees to be at Levels 2 or 3. In our two inspections in 2019, we found 13% of detainees in Brook House and 23% of detainees in Morton Hall to have been assessed at these levels.
- I.14** Vulnerable detainees, including adults at risk and those at risk of self-harm, were reviewed regularly in all centres, including at weekly multi-disciplinary meetings. In all centres, assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT - case management for detainees at risk of suicide or self-harm in IRCs) and other care planning processes were still being delivered. We were told that the Home Office was closely monitoring the cases of all Level 3 adults at risk.
- I.15** Over a fifth of detainees (22%) had been held for more than six months and 12 had been held for more than a year, eight of whom were in Harmondsworth. Almost half of the detainees were from countries outside Europe, mostly in Africa and the Middle East. In many cases, removal during the pandemic seemed unlikely. Since 23 March, about 15 detainees had been removed on a voluntary repatriation flight to Poland. A similar flight was shortly to take place for detainees wishing to return to Albania. Otherwise, few removals had taken place and few were scheduled.
- I.16** Many detainees were extremely frustrated about their continuing detention and the lack of information about the progress of their cases. Managers in Brook House told us this was the cause of a serious incident of concerted indiscipline. Additionally, there had been a rooftop protest in Morton Hall by a man who had been granted conditional bail but was not subsequently released because of a lack of accommodation (see paragraph 4.7).
- I.17** Face-to-face immigration legal advice surgeries had been suspended, but were still taking place by telephone and, we were told, by video calling. Bail for Immigration Detainees continued to provide a valuable service. The Home Office had also sent useful information to all detainees in March on how to apply for bail. Home Office detention engagement teams had suspended drop-in surgeries in all centres but detainees could still telephone engagement officers and some of the latter were contacting detainees regularly.

Section 2. Respect

In this section, we report mainly on living conditions and health care.

Living conditions

- 2.1** At all the centres, there were positive relationships between staff and detainees. There was also a good ratio of staff to detainees, especially in Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood, and staff had time to talk with them. At Harmondsworth, it was helpful that many staff spoke languages other than English. At Morton Hall, some of the 'key worker' duties, where an officer is responsible for continuing contact with a small number of named detainees, were continuing, albeit infrequently. At Yarl's Wood, staff had produced visual material, with clear drawings to help those with limited English identify key words and concepts in conversations with staff.
- 2.2** Living areas were clean and in reasonable condition across all centres. There was generally enough space to maintain social distancing, but there were some narrow corridors and landings at all sites. Although the residential units occupied by men at Yarl's Wood were not overcrowded, the large numbers and narrow corridors made social distancing almost impossible.
- 2.3** Cleanliness was good in all centres and contractors were undertaking extra cleaning at some. Detainees were still being paid to do cleaning tasks at all centres; a small group of detainees at Yarl's Wood cleaned door handles and surfaces throughout the day. Cleaning materials were now in good supply at all centres. At Harmondsworth, while systems were in place to help ensure availability of cleaning products and soap, many staff and detainees told us that they had not always been distributed in a timely manner.
- 2.4** Detainees in all centres had daily access to showers and to personal hygiene products, and to clean clothing and bedlinen. Detainees in all centres could be accommodated in single rooms, with their own toilets and showers at Yarl's Wood and Morton Hall.
- 2.5** Effective measures were taken at most centres to ensure distancing while detainees waited to collect their meals, although this was not the case on one wing at Harmondsworth. Self-service items such as condiments had been replaced with sachets, which could be served safely.
- 2.6** The detainee shop in each centre continued to function. At Harmondsworth and Morton Hall daily ordering systems had been introduced, which were working well with very prompt delivery. At Yarl's Wood (both the IRC and STHF) and Brook House, the shops were open as normal, and we observed appropriate distancing being maintained between detainees there. Arrangements for Ramadan were working smoothly in all the centres.

Health care

- 2.7** Partnership working between health care, the IRC commissioners and Public Health England (PHE) was in place at all sites. All had developed local delivery plans to manage the COVID-19 restrictions.
- 2.8** All sites had adequate PPE (personal protective equipment, see Glossary of terms). Except for Yarl's Wood, none of the other three sites had achieved full face fit testing for FFP3

masks (see Glossary of terms). Emergency response arrangements were in place, but the lack of face fit testing at some sites meant that resuscitation processes varied according to the staff on duty, which created potential risks.

- 2.9** Harmondsworth and Brook House had longstanding staff vacancies but all sites had effectively managed recent staffing shortages caused by both shielding and sickness pressures. Brook House staffing had benefited from the temporary closure of Tinsley House. All sites had nurses available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with a GP available daily to enable everyone to be seen within the required 24 hours.
- 2.10** Yarl's Wood detainees moved rapidly through the STHF so that many were transported to hostels in the community within five days where, it was expected, individuals would continue to self-isolate until 14 days had elapsed.
- 2.11** All centres were identifying those detainees who might be at greater risk of having COVID-19 as a result of underlying health conditions. These detainees were all offered the opportunity to shield away from others, but in every centre all of these detainees had declined. They were monitored daily by health care staff and this was documented in care plans (see paragraph 1.14).
- 2.12** Rule 35 reporting processes (see Glossary of terms) were in place and most assessments were undertaken promptly (see paragraph 1.10). At Harmondsworth not all assessments included a face-to-face meeting, which could have compromised their effectiveness.
- 2.13** Most sites had increased the number of detainees with in-possession medicines and collections from the medicines hatches took place with adequate social distancing. With the exception of controlled drug administration, all other medicines were delivered to detainees on the wings at Brook House, despite the very low numbers of detainees and the capacity to issue medicines at the administration hatch.
- 2.14** Arrangements for mental health support were adequate. All detainees had access to a mobile phone, making direct communication relatively simple. All sites undertook face-to-face appointments for the most vulnerable detainees in large rooms, which facilitated social distancing. Mental health teams maintained input into the assessment, care in detention and teamwork (ACDT - case management for detainees at risk of suicide or self-harm in IRCs) process.
- 2.15** Substance misuse services maintained effective clinical interventions as required. All sites had a reduced psychosocial service, with some face-to-face interventions for vulnerable detainees.
- 2.16** Dental triage was undertaken at all sites. Morton Hall and Yarl's Wood undertook emergency care on site, while Harmondsworth and Brook House sent detainees out to hospital.

Section 3. Purposeful activity

In this section we report mainly on time out of cell and access to activities.

- 3.1** The degree of freedom of movement varied between the centres, but all detainees had reasonable access to activity areas. At Morton Hall and Yarl's Wood, detainees could move freely around the centre and its grounds throughout the day and evening. We observed detainees generally acting responsibly and maintaining distance in these areas. Where detainees were cohorted, activities for each group were carefully planned and well managed.
- 3.2** At Harmondsworth, detainees could attend classes in the designated cohorts. The education department was delivering art, music, floristry, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and other classes with reduced class sizes. Access to networked computer terminals was readily available at all sites. The education classroom at Yarl's Wood was open, and the teacher available for her usual hours: six women were following formal courses of study. At Brook House the art room was open for two people at a time, but education classes were not taking place, and the education service had been suspended at Morton Hall.
- 3.3** Extra activity packs for detainees' use in their rooms, with education materials, quizzes and puzzles, were available in all centres. Detainees told inspectors they appreciated the packs provided by the Befrienders at Yarl's Wood, containing craft materials and other items. At Brook House most staff and detainees to whom we spoke on the residential units were not aware of the packs which were available in the wing offices, but educational and vocational lessons and resources had recently been put online for detainees' use. Residential unit competitions were held at Morton Hall, the activities team at Yarl's Wood had organised bingo and quizzes, and at Harmondsworth a popular weekly event was held in an exercise yard, with competitions, music and special food prepared. The cultural kitchens were closed at all centres, but most other activity spaces were open.
- 3.4** Libraries were open at Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood, but those at Morton Hall and Brook House were closed. At Morton Hall each residential unit had a small box of books and DVDs available to detainees, but at Brook House no alternative provision was being made.
- 3.5** The gymnasiums were open at all sites except for Morton Hall, and they were supervised to ensure suitable distancing. At Brook House staff encouraged detainees to play games where social distancing was possible, and there was concerted work to disinfect gym equipment after each use. At Yarl's Wood the gym and fitness room were open and supervised all day, with a maximum of two women in each at any given time.
- 3.6** About half of the detainees at Harmondsworth were in paid work, and there were enough work spaces for all who wanted them. At Brook House detainees were employed in tasks on the residential units only, and at Morton Hall some detainees were still in paid work. At Yarl's Wood five women were employed, with two more due to start shortly.

Section 4. Preparation for removal and release

In this section, we report mainly on contact with children and families, and release planning.

Contact with children and families and the outside world

- 4.1** Social visits had been suspended at the four centres we visited. This had a considerable negative impact on some detainees, but other forms of contact with family and friends remained relatively easy. All detainees had a mobile phone and since visits had been stopped in March, all received an extra £10 in their weekly allowance to spend on phone credit. Detainees at each site continued to have access to the internet and their email accounts and were able to use video-calling services to contact family and friends. Take-up varied widely between centres, although the reasons for this were unclear.
- 4.2** At Morton Hall, new detainees living on the reverse cohorting unit (RCU, see Glossary of terms) for 14 days were allowed supervised use of their personal mobile phones to access the internet and emails as they could not go to the computers located in the central hub office.

Leaving the centre

- 4.3** Each of the centres had active welfare support teams to help detainees and all were still offering face-to-face appointments. Detainees mostly reported positively on the support from welfare staff, who continued to provide a range of assistance with personal and practical issues on arrival, during detention and in preparation for removal or release. This included help to make bail applications and support with family issues. Staff at Harmondsworth told us they were better able to provide tailored individual support because of the low numbers in detention.
- 4.4** Community support agencies were not working in the centres when we visited, but we were assured that detainees could still access support from them by email and phone, and centre staff were on hand to help them do this. The exception was Yarl's Wood, where the Kaleidoscope well-being service was still operating. The worker provided some therapy sessions in the centre and conducted remote meetings with detainees. The Kaleidoscope post-release support service was also still functioning.
- 4.5** Two detainees were located in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) at the time of our visit to Morton Hall and one of those had been there for nearly a month. He was unlikely to be able to return to normal location at Morton Hall and restrictions on moving detainees between centres made it difficult to plan for his progression. There were no detainees in CSUs at any other centres.
- 4.6** We were told that no detainees had been released homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic from three of the four centres. However, at Harmondsworth we were concerned to find that, since the start of March 2020, nine detainees had been released without a confirmed address. At Yarl's Wood, one woman due for release on the day of our visit had been at risk of homelessness, but had been put in touch with the Salvation Army who had succeeded in arranging accommodation for her.

- 4.7** In all centres apart from Yarl's Wood, some detainees had been granted bail but were still in detention because of a lack of a suitable address to go to on release or, in some cases, delays in these addresses being checked by the police or probation service. For example, in Brook House, seven detainees granted bail were still in the centre. This was a key concern for many of the detainees we spoke with and in one case it had led to a rooftop protest (see paragraph 1.6). In some cases, the bail period had lapsed without an address being approved, which meant the detainee had to go through the bail application process again, further extending their time in detention.
- 4.8** The men in Yarl's Wood's STHF were generally moved within a few days to designated accommodation in the community. They were transported in taxis to avoid social distancing difficulties associated with coaches. On the day of our visit, the destination was Liverpool, and we were told that the previous week it had been Birmingham. Apparently, the accommodation was all in single rooms, and men were advised to observe social distancing and comply with all infection control requirements. The centre did not have any further information about the situation of these men after they left Yarl's Wood.

Section 5. Appendix

Scrutiny visit team

Hindpal Singh Bhui	Team leader (overall)
Sandra Fieldhouse	Team leader
Martin Kettle	Team leader
Deri Hughes-Roberts	Team leader
David Owens	Inspector
Chris Rush	Inspector
Kellie Reeve	Inspector
Tamara Pattinson	Inspector
Tania Osborne	Health care inspector
Paul Tarbuck	Health care inspector
Shaun Thomson	Health care inspector
Maureen Jamieson	Health care inspector