

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

Drumkeen House

2 November 2011

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

Crown copyright 2012

Printed and published by:
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
1st Floor, Ashley House
Monck Street
London SW1P 2BQ
England

Contents

Overview	4
The healthy custodial establishment	5
1: Escorts, vans and transfers	7
Arrival and accommodation	7
Positive relationships	8
Legal rights	8
Casework	9
Duty of care	9
Childcare and child protection	10
Diversity	10
Activities	11
Facility rules	11
Complaints	11
Services	11
Preparation for release	12
2: Summary of recommendations	13

Overview

Drumkeen House Short-Term Holding Facility

Inspected: 2 November 2011

Inspectors

Hindpal Singh Bhui

Colin Carroll

Beverley Alden

Rachel Lindsay (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland)

Drumkeen House was the main centre of UK Border Agency (UKBA) operations in Northern Ireland. As well as a reporting centre, where those subject to reporting conditions attended, the building also housed a short-term holding facility (STHF). The private security firm Reliance managed the facility and provided escorting services on behalf of UKBA. Unlike many other STHFs, the facility did not have dedicated staff. Rather it was opened only when a detainee was held. Staff were called from the escorting teams to staff the facility. During our inspection two detainees were held.

The facility comprised a staff office and two identical holding rooms. The rooms had tables and chairs, payphones, complaints boxes, water fountains, televisions and toilets. Thirty-seven detainees were held in the three months before our inspection for an average of one hour and 31 minutes. The longest period of detention was four hours and 31 minutes. UKBA had regular oversight of the facility. There were no plans for independent custody visitors to oversee Drumkeen House.

The healthy custodial establishment

- HE.1 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.
- HE.2 All inspections carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the UN Optional Protocol to the 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.
- HE.3 The concept of a healthy prison was introduced in this inspectorate's thematic review *Suicide is Everyone's Concern* (1999). The healthy prison criteria have been modified to fit the inspection of short-term holding facilities, both residential and non-residential. The criteria for short-term holding facilities are:
- Safety** – detainees are held in safety and with due regard to the insecurity of their position
- Respect** – detainees are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention
- Activities** – detainees are able to be occupied while they are in detention
- Preparation for release** – detainees are able to keep in contact with the outside world and are prepared for their release, transfer or removal.
- HE.4 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.

Safety

- HE.5 Almost half the detainees arrived at the facility from the reporting centre. They were given a rub-down search on arrival and departure. They were routinely handcuffed from the holding room to vehicles, regardless of individual risk. Escort staff were courteous.
- HE.6 Authority to detain paperwork (IS91) was issued correctly but not all detainees received written reasons for their detention (IS91R). Detainees could telephone their legal representatives but had to seek the permission of an immigration officer to use a fax machine. Information displayed regarding legal advice agencies was out of date. Children had not been held at the facility.
- HE.7 Bullying and intimidation were unlikely given that detainees were often held alone and that staff sight of the holding rooms was good. A workplace coach had provided staff with some training on suicide and self-harm prevention. There were two systems for

managing detainees at risk of self-harm: the commonly recognised ACDT (assessment, care in detention and teamwork) system and Reliance' own system. Staff did not carry ligature knives. Staff were trained in control and restraint (C&R) techniques. Use of force was rare and had been used once in the three months prior to our inspection.

Respect

- HE.8 The two small holding rooms allowed for separation of men and women. They lacked natural light but detainees were only held for short periods: the longest recent period of detention had been four and a half hours. The toilets lacked seats, opened directly on to the holding rooms and did not provide floor to ceiling screening.
- HE.9 Relationships between staff and detainees were good and staff were helpful and polite. However, telephone interpretation was not used with a detainee who could not understand English.
- HE.10 Staff had received some equality training during their initial induction. Reliance information booklets in 11 languages were freely available. No complaints had been made since the facility opened. Complaint forms in different languages could be deposited in easily accessible secure complaint boxes. Drinks and food were available on request.

Activities

- HE.11 There were sufficient activities available given the relatively short time that detainees were held in the facility. Detainees could not exercise outside but were assisted to practise their religions.

Preparation for release

- HE.12 Visits were not facilitated given the short-term nature of detention. There was good access to telephones. Most detainees left the facility for Larne House short-term holding facility. Detainees did not always receive information about what would happen to them after leaving the facility.

Section 1

Escorts, vans and transfers

Expected outcomes:

Detainees under escort are treated courteously, provided with refreshment and comfort breaks, and transported safely

- 1.1 The private security firm Reliance held the contract for escorting detainees on behalf of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and were based at Drumkeen House. Escort journeys were brief given the relatively short distances from Larne House short-term holding facility (STHF) and the Belfast airports. UKBA produced movement orders on site rather than in the detainee escorting and population management unit, which helped to reduce the time detainees spent in the facility.
- 1.2 We observed two escort operations during which escort staff were courteous to detainees. We were unable to see any detainee welfare records, but escort staff were familiar with the requirement for scheduled breaks and refreshments. All detainees were handcuffed while moving from the holding rooms on to the escort vehicle, irrespective of individual risk.
- 1.3 Reliance had recently introduced a new fleet of vehicles, two of which we inspected. The six-seat vans were spacious, comfortable, clean and free of graffiti, but had limited storage space. They were well equipped with a first aid kit (including an anti-ligature knife), welfare box, and integral CCTV with audio. Rear windows were blacked out. Detainees were able to watch films on built-in DVD players. Bottled water was carried but no food, which was not unreasonable given the short journey times.

Recommendation

- 1.4 Detainees should not be handcuffed unless an individual risk assessment suggests otherwise.

Arrival and accommodation

Expected outcomes:

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

- 1.5 Almost half the 37 detainees held during the three months prior to our inspection were detained after attending the adjacent reporting centre: 27% had come from Larne House STHF to be interviewed by immigration officers; 17% had been arrested in the community by police or immigration officers; and 8% had been picked up at Belfast International or Belfast City Airports. Detainees were given a rub-down search on arrival and all property was bagged and tagged.
- 1.6 The facility was only open when required and, unlike many other STHFs, did not have dedicated staff present five days a week. Reliance operations in Northern Ireland were based at Drumkeen House and staff could easily be brought to the facility when needed.

- 1.7 There were two separate, identical holding rooms furnished with a fixed table and four chairs, enabling men and women to be held separately. One room had been decorated in a more child friendly manner and had a baby changing unit on the wall, though no children had been held. The temperature of each room could be controlled by staff.
- 1.8 The male and female toilet cubicles were located in the holding rooms. The toilets did not have floor to ceiling screening, which afforded little privacy when more than one person was in the room. Both toilets lacked seats. There was a toilet for disabled people in the reporting centre which detainees could use. If a detainee felt unwell, detainee custody officers (DCOs) could contact a medical advice line provided by Reliance.
- 1.9 Detainees were able to retain mobile phones without cameras or recording equipment. A dummy phone was available into which detainees could insert their own SIM card. A payphone in each of the holding rooms could receive incoming calls, and the numbers were prominently displayed. The payphones accepted cash and credit cards. Detainees were not routinely allowed to take cash into the holding room, although if they wished to use the payphone this was permitted. Staff told us that detainees were offered a free telephone call on arrival.
- 1.10 There was a generic information booklet in 11 languages in each room and the equality and diversity policy in 15 languages. A detainee feedback survey was available in English only. Staff were not aware of any detainee having completed one.

Recommendation

- 1.11 Detainees should have access to toilets with seats and floor to ceiling screening, which provide suitable privacy.

Positive relationships

Expected outcomes:

Those detained are treated respectfully by all staff, who have proper regard for the uncertainty of their situation and their personal circumstances.

- 1.12 Interaction between staff and detainees was courteous and helpful. However, one detainee spoke little English and no telephone interpretation service was used. Staff told us that they routinely introduced themselves and addressed detainees by their preferred names. Staff wore name badges.

Recommendation

- 1.13 Professional telephone interpretation services should be used for detainees who do not speak English.

Legal rights

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to obtain expert legal advice and representation from within the facility. They can understand and retain legal documents. They can communicate with legal representatives without difficulty to progress their cases efficiently.

- 1.14 Detainees were not always issued with reasons for detention (IS91R). One detainee whom we spoke to did not have any written documents while he was held in the facility, although he confirmed that the immigration officer had used a telephone interpreter to explain his detention.
- 1.15 Detainees could contact their legal representatives by telephone but there was no fax machine. If a detainee wished to fax a document to a lawyer, a DCO referred the request to UKBA for authorisation, which wasted potentially limited time.
- 1.16 Some notices promoting legal advice agencies were out of date or misleading. Details of the defunct Refugee and Migrant Justice and Immigration Advisory Service were displayed and a poster for the community legal advice helpline only provided details of immigration agencies in England and Wales. An informative poster displayed contact details of the Northern Ireland Law Centre, the Law and Migrant Rights Centre and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities.
- 1.17 Legal visits were not permitted but detainees being transferred to Larne House residential STHF could receive visits there.

Recommendations

- 1.18 Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand.
- 1.19 Detainees should be able to fax documents to legal representatives without seeking the authorisation of UKBA.

Casework

Expected outcomes:

Detention is carried out on the basis of individual reasons that are clearly communicated.

Detention is for the minimum period necessary.

- 1.20 During the three months prior to our inspection, the facility was occupied on only 22 days: 37 detainees had been held, 30 male and seven female. The average length of detention was one hour and 31 minutes and the longest period four hours and 13 minutes.
- 1.21 The authority to detain (IS91), including the risk assessment, was completed correctly in the case that we examined. DCOs told us that they would refuse to accept a detainee without a completed IS91 and that they had never been asked to do so by UKBA staff. A notice on the facility door said that nobody would be admitted without an IS91.

Duty of care

Expected outcomes:

The centre exercises a duty of care to protect detainees from risk of harm.

Bullying

- 1.22 Bullying and intimidation were unlikely given that most detainees were held alone and men and women were held separately. Staff said that they would speak to or separate detainees to reduce tension. Each room had a half-moon ceiling mirror and a CCTV camera, and was

partitioned from the staff office by a window. This offered good oversight and enabled detainees to gain staff attention in an emergency.

Suicide and self-harm

- 1.23 There had been no incidents of self-harm although one detainee had threatened it (see section on facility rules). DCOs had received training from a workplace coach in suicide and self-harm prevention. ACDT booklets were kept in the facility and a Reliance 'suicide and self-harm warning' form was also kept. DCOs could not explain the difference between the two systems or when they would be deployed and the Reliance forms may not have been recognised by staff working in immigration removal centres.
- 1.24 An anti-ligature knife was attached to the first aid box in the DCOs' office but DCOs did not carry knives, which could cause unnecessary delay in an emergency.

Recommendations

- 1.25 The universally recognised ACDT booklets should be used for detainees in crisis rather than the Reliance suicide and self-harm warning forms.
- 1.26 Staff should routinely carry anti-ligature knives.

Childcare and child protection

Expected outcomes:

Children are detained only in exceptional circumstances and for the minimum time. Children's rights and needs for care and protection are respected and met in full

- 1.27 Children had not been held at the facility. A team of UKBA staff worked with families who had exhausted their appeal rights and were being removed under the family returns procedure. We were advised that no families had reached the final return stage, which could involve use of the holding room.

Diversity

Expected outcomes:

There is understanding of the diverse backgrounds of detainees and different cultural norms. Detainees are not discriminated against on the basis of their race, nationality, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation, and there is positive promotion and understanding of diversity

- 1.28 DCOs received equality training as part of their initial induction, but no subsequent refresher training. Staff were not aware of any detainee with a disability being held in the facility recently. Copies of the Bible and the Qur'an were available on request, together with prayer mats and a compass, but were not freely available in the holding rooms. Staff were familiar with the requirements of Ramadan and information about a number of other key dates on the religious calendar were posted on the staff notice board.

Recommendation

- 1.29 Staff should receive ongoing equality training.

Housekeeping point

- 1.30 Copies of religious texts should be kept inside the holding rooms.

Activities

Expected outcomes:

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

- 1.31 There was a small selection of foreign language newspapers and magazines, puzzle books and a television in both holding rooms. Detainees could not exercise outside, but the facilities were adequate given the short periods of detention.

Facility rules

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to feel secure in a predictable and ordered environment

- 1.32 A generic information booklet set out basic rules in a range of languages. DCOs received C&R training during their induction and refresher training annually. Staff could ask other DCOs based at Drumkeen House to attend if C&R was necessary. There had been no recent use of C&R. We reviewed documentation generated following the use of force on a distraught female detainee who had threatened self-harm, which suggested that staff had used minimal force for no longer than necessary and had tried to reassure the detainee. She had been transferred to Bangor police station rather than Larne House STHF though a high level of supervision could have been provided at Larne House.

Complaints

Expected outcomes:

There is a published complaints procedure; compliant forms are freely available.

- 1.33 There was a complaints box in each room with complaints forms in English and 14 other languages, but no pens. The complaints boxes were emptied by UKBA. No complaints had been submitted since the facility opened.

Services

Expected outcomes:

Services available to detainees allow them to live in a decent environment in which their normal everyday needs are met freely and without discrimination.

- 1.34 Both holding rooms had a water fountain. Detainees could request hot drinks, crisps and biscuits from a vending machine outside the holding rooms. Petty cash was used to purchase sandwiches.
- 1.35 Women's sanitary products were available in the toilet. Toiletry bags containing basic hygiene items, blankets and pillows were available to detainees who needed them. Clothing packs were not stored on site.

Housekeeping point

- 1.36 Hot drinks, crisps and biscuits should be readily accessible to detainees in the holding rooms.

Preparation for release

Expected outcomes:

Detainees are able to maintain contact with family, friends, support groups, legal representatives and advisers, are given adequate notice of their release, transfer or removal, and are able to recover property. Families with children and others with special needs are not detained without items essential to their welfare.

- 1.37 Visits were not facilitated given the short-term periods of detention. Detainees were given a rub-down search when leaving the facility and asked to confirm that they had received their property. Nearly all detainees left the facility for Larne House. Staff told us that written information given to detainees about their destination consisted of a credit card sized card with a map and contact details for Larne House. These had only just arrived and had not yet been distributed to departing detainees. One detainee we spoke to did not understand what would happen to him when he left the facility.

Recommendation

- 1.38 Detainees should be given information about what will happen to them on leaving the facility.

Section 2: Recommendations and good practice

Recommendations	To the UK Border Agency
-----------------	-------------------------

Legal rights and casework

- 2.1 Detainees should be issued with and allowed to keep the reason for detention (IS91R) document in a language they can understand. (1.18)
- 2.2 Detainees should be able to fax documents to legal representatives without seeking the authorisation of UKBA. (1.19)

Recommendation	To UKBA and the facility contractor
----------------	-------------------------------------

Arrival and accommodation

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

Recommendation	To the escort contractor
----------------	--------------------------

Escorts, vans and transfers

- 2.4 Detainees should not be handcuffed unless an individual risk assessment suggests otherwise. (1.4)

Recommendations	To the facility contractor
-----------------	----------------------------

Positive relationships

- 2.5 Professional telephone interpretation services should be used for detainees who do not speak English. (1.13)

Duty of care

- 2.6 The universally recognised ACDT booklets should be used for detainees in crisis rather than the Reliance suicide and self-harm warning forms. (1.25)
- 2.7 Staff should routinely carry anti-ligature knives. (1.26)

Diversity

- 2.8 Staff should receive ongoing equality training. (1.29)

Preparation for release

- 2.9 Detainees should be given information about what will happen to them on leaving the facility. (1.38)

Housekeeping points

Diversity

- 2.10 Copies of religious texts should be kept inside the holding rooms. (1.30)

Services

- 2.11 Hot drinks, crisps and biscuits should be readily accessible to detainees in the holding rooms. (1.36)