

6 January 2015

Dear Sarah,

Parliamentary inquiry into Immigration Detention

Thank you for your letter dated 11 December regarding the parliamentary inquiry into Immigration Detention that you are chairing. For ease of reference I have answered the questions in the order they were asked:

1. We are contracted to deliver and have designed a regime and management structure to cater for all detainees irrespective of their length of stay.
2. The centres at Harmondsworth and Colnbrook have been clustered as part of our operating model for the new contract. This means that the centres share services where appropriate (e.g. single control room) and allows for more flexible and efficient deployment of a workforce offering the taxpayer significant saving when compared to the previous contracts.

We do not operate the centres on a defined staff to detainee ratio. Our approach is to design the service to meet the contractual specification and to provide the most efficient solution possible whilst maintaining the highest standards of safety, security and decency for detainees, our people that work in the centres and all other stakeholders that use the centres. It is our view that safe and sustainable deliverable outcomes are more important than notional staff to detainee ratios. We are not aware of the staff to detainee ratios previous contracts may have employed.

3. Our management of facilities within the prison system is restricted to providing services to the core custodial function as opposed to delivering full management of the facility as we do in immigration. In that context, the management challenges are different. However, more importantly, we do not consider the two services to be overlapping. Whilst they both operate in a secure environment the needs and circumstances of the individuals we serve are entirely different.

We deliver services which are entirely bespoke to Immigration Removal Centres and the needs of detainees. Our regimes are tailored to meet the particular challenges of language, culture and decency whilst detained. Our team is experienced in operating in heavily regulated environments and ensuring that we are compliant with legislation, Detention Service Orders (DSOs) and wider Inspectorate tests as a fundamental part of service delivery. However, it does not translate into creating a management culture based upon

prison delivery.

4. The vast majority of staff working with detainees are Detention Custody Officers (DCOs) as defined in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Other members of staff who have regular contact with detainees will include education and religious professionals who all have induction training in the needs and circumstances of detainees.

After clearing our recruitment, selection and vetting processes all DCOs attend a six-week initial training course bespoke to working with detainees in a detention centre. Our recruitment processes are biased towards identifying individuals that are, by nature, empathetic and have good interpersonal skills. The course is designed to build upon these qualities as well as equipping individuals with the necessary skills to perform the statutory duties of a DCO. It is only on successful completion of this course that DCOs are formally accredited by the Home Office to perform their duties.

All DCOs have ongoing refresher and personal development training in order to maintain their accreditation, help improve our service and aide their personal development. More importantly we seek to develop a culture and regime that is focused upon the needs of each detainee recognising that we are caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This overlays the practical training all our people receive.

5. The onsite Home Office team are considered first responders for the National Referral Mechanism and a process is in place for them to refer any potential victims of trafficking to the UKHTC (United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre). They would also contact the case working unit to inform them of this action and discuss any concerns. Mitie does not currently deliver any specific training in this area for our staff. Our staff would raise any concerns involving detainees via the Security Information Report (SIR) process already in place. Nevertheless, training in this area would clearly be of benefit and as such I will raise the issue with Home Office colleagues at the earliest opportunity.

With effect from July 2014 our initial training course for DCO's at Campsfield has had a Mental Health Awareness element added to the training programme delivered by a third party specialising in this area. We are planning to develop this mental health course so that it can be delivered to all staff on an annual basis.

6. Detainees can be held in segregation on two detention rules: Rule 40, Removal from association and Rule 42, Temporary confinement. We also operate an Assessment, Care in Detention Teamwork (ACDT) at risk casework system to highlight detainees at risk of self-harm. This staff-led casework system seeks to map the care required to ensure detainees remain as safe as possible. This can include referral to healthcare and mental health services or more immediate responses such as constant observation or case review.
7. We have used body mounted cameras in our establishment at Campsfield House IRC for the past three years and at Heathrow IRCs since the commencement of the contract. They are only worn by a small team of duty shift managers and are only activated to record an incident once it has started to develop. We have not commissioned an independent review into how this has affected trust between detainees but our experience is that it is positive.

We see cameras as an aid to the de-escalation of incidents – when all parties know they are being recorded it can help modify behaviour. However, we do not see cameras as the primary method for developing and maintaining trust, which will always be built upon excellent staff/detainee relationships.

8. We believe our education provision compares favourably with that of the previous regime. We are not able to comment specifically on previous provision as we do not have sufficient data to do so. Our current education and classes programme is highlighted below. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this programme is subject to potential amendments as we progress through the contract and better understand the needs of the detainees in our care. It is also not an exhaustive list of the activities we provide across the centre which further include for example, a comprehensive gym programme, cultural kitchen classes, faith provision, detainee welfare services, library, music and yoga.

Colnbrook: English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) Class: 0900-1700 Monday – Friday. I.T. Class: 0900-1700 Monday – Friday. Arts & Crafts: 0900-1700 Sunday – Monday and Wednesday – Friday and two further evenings a week. One First Aid Training Course with the Red Cross per month.

Harmondsworth: ESOL Class: 0900-2045 Monday to Friday. Literacy Support Sessions which include drop-in classes for CV writing; letter writing; form-filling; reading legal documentation: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Arts & Crafts: 0900-2045 Monday – Friday. One First Aid Training Course with the Red Cross per month. English 0900-1200 Monday – Friday, I.T. classes 1400-1700 Monday – Friday, e-learning self-study x 5 evenings a week in Maths, ESOL, Word processing, Spread Sheets, Presentations, ITC, Art, Photoshop.

9. The movement of detainees around the immigration system is managed and coordinated by the Home Office Detention Population Management Unit (DePMU). The movements are delivered by another contractor.
10. We hold weekly minuted Detainee Consultative Committee Meetings at our centres which involve nominated detainees meeting with senior management to discuss issues that are affecting them or to listen to suggestions on how we might improve outcomes for detainees. We have found these to be an excellent forum in which to engage with detainees in a transparent and productive way and many initiatives have been introduced as a direct result of this communication.

There are a range of NGOs and voluntary sector organisations who attend the centres to work with detainees such as Hibiscus, His Church and Asylum welcome. Detainees are free to engage with these and other organisations as they wish and all detainees have mobile phones which they may choose to use to contact independent organisations.

11. Transparency – we have a duty to maintain the safety, security and decency of the centres for all stakeholders. In that context, IRCs are secure environments and what constitutes ‘transparency’ is difficult to define as it has different meanings for different people

depending upon their standpoint. Transparency for us is monitoring, recording and displaying that we first and foremost meet the needs of detainees, maintaining a safe working environment for our people, ensuring we meet the demands of our customer and complying with all statutory, monitoring and inspectorate regimes. In that context we have not experienced any attempts by the Home Office to fetter or block our attempts to engage with detainees or the bodies that audit and monitor what we do in a transparent manner. If anything, they encourage it.

12. We have not reduced the searching cycle at the centre nor have we requested to do so. We search detainees, property and buildings as documented in the contract and in line with the relevant DSOs.
13. NHS England commissions healthcare services at the centres and whilst there are touch points between our delivery and that of the new provider Central and North West London Foundation Trust (CNWL) we do not feel qualified to comment on clinical procedure and governance. The process of Rule 35 is wholly owned by clinicians acting on behalf of the healthcare provider and the Home Office casework team.
14. Thank you for your kind offer for Mitie to make recommendations for the report. On this occasion we have no further comments or recommendations to add.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me on +44 (0)790 151 8631 or email me at colin.dobell@mitie.com

Yours Sincerely,

Colin Dobell

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