

## House of Commons Inquiry into Immigration Detention

<p><b>The UK is currently the only country in the European Union that doesn't have a maximum time limit on immigration detention. Does this pose any significant managerial challenges?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is our view that that the length of detention does not pose any additional managerial challenge to the management of detainees at Yarl's Wood.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What training is given to staff regarding the immigration system, i.e. are staff able to understand the particular circumstances of detainees?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every frontline employee attends a seven-week Initial Training Course for Detention and Custody Officers, which is Home Office approved. Employees must complete this course in order to receive their Detention Custody Officers Licence.</li> <li>• Modules covered in the course include resident welfare, mental health awareness, human trafficking and vulnerable residents and multi-agency public protection.</li> <li>• Frontline employees also receive training on the Immigration and Asylum Act, Human Rights Act, Directors Rules, Powers and Protection and responsibilities of a Detention Custody Officer.</li> <li>• All employees receive regular safeguarding training.</li> <li>• Key components of these courses are renewed annually.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What training is given to staff relating to the National Referral Mechanism and recognising signs that an individual may have been trafficked? What training is given to staff relating to the management of mental health illness? Is this training given to all staff? Is training gender specific?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The human trafficking module of the Initial Training Course (see above) is renewed annually and includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Indicators of human trafficking</li> <li>○ Awareness of agencies working to combat and support victims of human trafficking</li> <li>○ Signs of forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The mental health module of the Initial Training Course teaches employees to be able to spot signs of mental health problems which are referred to the centre's health team. This includes a dedicated mental health nurse, GP services and visiting psychiatrists.</li> <li>• Following the completion of this training and attainment of their Detention Custody Officers Licence, employees receive refresher training on an annual basis.</li> <li>• Our formal training does not differentiate between males and females, however given that the majority of residents in Yarl's Wood are female, there are specific protocols in place to deal with certain circumstances that relate to women only.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Given that the detainees at Yarl's Wood are almost all female, what assessment have you made of the suitability of the current male/female staff ratio? How successful have Serco been at retaining staff at Yarl's Wood?</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have taken significant steps in the last year to attract more female employees to operational roles in Yarl's Wood.</li> <li>• This includes making working at Yarl's Wood more family friendly, by planning shift patterns around the school run, providing a mini bus to transport employees to and from the centre, amending the job description to remove the requirement of a valid driving licence and targeting recruitment drives at the local community through leaflet drops.</li> <li>• This has resulted in the recruitment of an additional 18 female officers in the last 12 months, taking the total gender balance to 49 per cent female and 51 per cent male.</li> <li>• We take steps each day to ensure that during each shift there is an appropriate gender balance and keep this under constant review.</li> </ul>

- We must also be compliant with anti-discrimination law which applies equally to males and females, but we ensure that we have an appropriate ratio to meet Genuine Occupational Requirements appropriate for those activities that can only be carried out by a female.

**In what circumstances is segregation used to manage issues of behaviour? What safeguards and support are there for mentally disordered detainees who are held in segregation?**

- Segregation is only used as a last resort when an individual's behaviour is considered detrimental to the good order and safety of the establishment, individual or others.
- Residents are segregated for a minimum amount of time necessary and all instances of segregation are approved by the Home Office.
- When a resident is held in segregation a daily meeting is convened by the centre, Home Office, Independent Monitoring Board and G4S healthcare workers to assess and respond to the individual needs of the resident and re-integrate them at the earliest opportunity.
- A multi-disciplinary complex case review is set up and attended by caseworkers, social workers, and family members - if known.
- The whole process is overseen by the Deputy Centre Manager, who is a qualified social worker, and a full-time Safeguarding Lead.
- In addition, the centre works closely with G4S which provides full healthcare provision with an onsite dedicated mental health nurse, visiting psychiatrists and seven day GP provision. We also work closely with local NHS mental health providers.

**What systems are in place to allow detainees to feedback to the centre management about facilities and staff at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre? Are detainees able to contact individuals and organisations outside of the IRC and independent from the management in private? Do Serco have any system in place to make operations at Yarl's Wood IRC transparent and have any attempts to increase transparency ever been blocked by the Home Office?**

The centre is managed transparently, with a number of ways for residents to feedback their views to the centre's senior management team and independent organisations outside Yarl's Wood.

Access to outside organisations:

- Confidential access complaint boxes discreetly located throughout the centre. These boxes are secure and only opened by Home Office personnel. Yarl's Wood employees do not have access.
- Residents have unrestricted access to mobile phones and 40 public telephones in the residential areas. They can contact outside organisations at any time and no calls are monitored.
- Residents have access to email, restricted internet services and faxes.
- Local charities Hibiscus and Befrienders are regular visitors to Yarl's Wood. They meet with residents and the Befrienders carry out an annual independent survey, which can be filled in anonymously. The results of this are fed back to the senior management team.
- The Independent Monitoring Board is also resident on site, with full and independent access to all areas, detainees and complaints information in the centre.
- HM Chief Inspector of Prisons conducts independent and unannounced audits and has free access to the detainees, which inform inspectorate reports.

Access within the centre:

- Weekly focus groups with residents, twice-yearly questionnaires and exit surveys which can be filled in anonymously.
- Weekly focus groups on topics proposed by residents and employees.
- Employees and residents dine together daily, which has improved trust and helped build positive relationships.
- The Deputy Centre Manager attends the visitors' centre daily to answer any queries that family and friends may have.

- There is a resident chaplaincy and religious leaders from a variety of faiths attend the centre to support detainees.
- Formal complaints are investigated independently by the Home Office, police and Prisons and Probation Ombudsman as appropriate.

**Serco also manages facilities within the prison system. What are the managerial differences between the criminal justice system and immigration detention system?**

- In prisons, the managerial system is designed to prioritise security, safety, decency, discipline and the rehabilitation of offenders.
- In a detention centre like Yarl’s Wood, security, safety and decency are also important, but the welfare of the residents is a primary concern of the management team.
- The design and build is very different to allow residents to move freely around the centre and live as independently as possible, by preparing their own meals, having access to amenities and being able to communicate freely with the outside world through telephone, email and fax.
- Residents in Yarl’s Wood can see visitors daily and there are no restrictions within the visiting times of 2-5pm and 6-9pm.

**Do Serco have any concerns regarding the search regime at the IRC? Have Serco ever requested a lightening of the search regime or other changes to the management of detainees If so, what was the Home Office response?**

- We have in the past explored with the Home Office the possibility of reducing the number of searches of residents undertaking legal visits. However, following a review, Serco and Home Office concluded that basic level searches should remain for each residential visit, based on level of risk.

**The panel has received a number of submissions criticising the current health provision for detainees. What improvements would Serco like to see and what impact has the transfer of responsibility for commissioning services to NHS England had? Additionally, what is your perception of how rule 35 operates? Could it be improved in any way?**

- Healthcare provision in the centre is provided by G4S and NHS England.
- The provision of healthcare services has only recently transitioned to G4S and those new services are settling in. We are working closely with the NHS and the new provider to ensure that services are delivered in line with the required standard.
- There is provision and support for those residents who have been the victims of torture.

**The panel will be publishing a report with a number of recommendations regarding the way in which the detention system operates in the UK. Are there any recommendations that Serco would like to see included in the report?**

- We believe the detention system operates well in general. Where we have had suggestions or requests in the past we have resolved them as part of our ongoing conversations with the Home Office and other partners.