

Detainees under escort

A short review of detainees under escort at Queen's
Building and Terminal 3, Heathrow Airport

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Introduction

Under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, this Inspectorate acquired a statutory duty to inspect immigration escorts, in addition to its duties in relation to immigration removal centres and short-term holding facilities. Detainees can be at their most vulnerable under escort: it may be their first experience of detention, and they may have little or no idea what will happen to them next.

In preparation for the new duty, inspectors carried out two visits to facilities at Heathrow, in March and July 2005, and conducted structured interviews with detainees who had just experienced escorts. Twelve detainees were interviewed on the first occasion, and 13 on the second. Between the two visits, the escort contract had changed hands: from Global Solutions Limited (GSL) to Securicor.

Detainees' responses reveal a number of common themes and concerns: about the length of journeys and the number of 'comfort breaks', the state of the vans, the attitude and training of staff, and the support and information available to people who had sometimes been summarily removed from their homes without any preparation or information. Case studies illustrate this in more detail, and raise particular concerns about suicidal detainees and children.

Those themes form the basis of our recommendations to IND and the escort contractor; and those recommendations in turn will inform our own expectations when we begin routine inspections of escort arrangements later this year

Anne Owers
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

April 2006

Section 1: Background and methodology

- 1.1 HM Inspectorate of Prisons now has the power to inspect detainee escorts, which are under the control of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). A full inspection programme is due to start in the summer of 2006. In preparation for this, we conducted two pilot detainee escort inspections to provide comparators for our forthcoming inspections.
- 1.2 Two unannounced visits were carried out in March and July 2005. Queen's Building and Terminal 3 at Heathrow airport were chosen as the sites for these inspections because of the high volume of detainees arriving under escort from detention holding facilities all over the country.
- 1.3 Global Solutions Ltd (GSL) held the national escorting contract during the first inspection but in the period between the first and second inspection, the contract passed to Securicor (April 2005).
- 1.4 Inspectors kept fully in mind that although these were custodial escorts, detainees were not held because they had been charged with a criminal offence and had not been detained through judicial processes.
- 1.5 The inspection process consisted of general observation, a physical examination of the escort vans, interviews with escorting staff and structured interviews with detainees using a professional interpreting service when necessary. We also examined available escorting records.
- 1.6 We spoke to 25 detainees over the course of both inspections and asked them all the same set of questions about:
 - Journey lengths
 - Cleanliness and comfort of vans
 - Comfort breaks
 - Escort staff–detainee relationships
 - Information provided about the escort van and the journey

Staff were also asked to comment on these areas.

Inspection 1: Queen's Building and Terminal 3

17 March 2005

- 1.7 The short-term holding facility at Queen's Building held detainees who had imminent removal directions from Heathrow terminals. Everyone had been brought from immigration removal centres or short-term holding facilities around the country. Most were 'other port removals' – their cases were managed by other Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) offices and ports and they were simply being removed via Heathrow. We were told that up to 70 people might be escorted in and then detained over the course of a day at Queen's Building. Over 45

individuals had been through the holding room by late afternoon on the day of inspection, 10 of whom we interviewed.

- 1.8 As Queen's Building was non-residential, many detainees spent the preceding night at nearby Harmondsworth immigration removal centre (IRC) or Colnbrook IRC. Detained women and families also arrived from Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire or Tinsley House near Gatwick, both of which had family and women's accommodation.
- 1.9 In the Heathrow Terminal 3 holding room there were passengers who had just arrived off flights but were being held for further examination. We interviewed two individuals who had been escorted that morning from other places of detention. One was about to be removed from the country and the other was to be transferred to an immigration reception centre.
- 1.10 Global Solutions Ltd also supplied detention custody officers (DCOs) to staff the airport holding rooms and had a team of DCOs on site to escort people to their flights.
- 1.11 Vehicles and DCOs entering the airside areas of Heathrow had to be approved by airport security. This meant that only approved staff, in an approved vehicle, could be allocated to airside movements within the Heathrow complex. If an approved crew could not undertake the whole journey, detainees coming from some distance away were driven by their escorts to a local transfer site, where they were handed over to a Heathrow escort for the final part of the journey. We were told that restraints were rarely used and saw no detainees arriving or being escorted to flights in handcuffs.

Detainee sample

- 1.12 We interviewed a total of 12 detainees, all of whom had undergone one or more escort journeys during their detention. We also looked at their documentation, which usually comprised the movement notification, issued by the detainee escort and population management unit (DEPMU) – a centralised unit within IND – and the IS91 (authority to detain form), issued by the IND official making the decision to detain. The detainee profile is set out below: male detainees have been given the code Terminal Three (T3) M and women, T3W, followed by numbers 1-12. Half of the sample (five men and one woman) spoke little or no English and were interviewed using the Language Line telephone interpreting service. Illustrative individual case studies are provided on pages 16-18.

Men

- Turkish man, Language Line interview (T3M 1)
- Chinese man, Language Line interview (T3M 2)
- Chinese man, resident in Honduras, Language Line interview (T3M 3)
- Jamaican man (T3M 4)
- Pakistani man (T3M 5)
- 2 Israeli men (Russian speaking), interviewed together using Language Line (T3M 6 and 7)
- Zimbabwean man (T3M 8)
- Zimbabwean man (T3M 9)

Women

- Chinese woman, Language Line interview (T3W 10)
- Nigerian woman (T3W 11)
- Jamaican woman (T3W 12)

Inspection 2: Queen's Building

29 July 2005

- 1.13 Since April 2005, Securicor had been IND's main escort contractor. Securicor also managed the short-term holding facility.
- 1.14 Records for the month of the inspection only were retained on site. Between 1 and 28 July 2005, 1,053 detainees were entered in the daily log. This included some who had been entered twice if they left and returned because of a failed removal. Forty-nine were listed as minors.
- 1.15 We interviewed the IND escort monitor, who had been appointed recently to check escorted movements through the area, and the Securicor service delivery manager for Heathrow. We also spoke to one member of Securicor escort staff at length and had brief discussions with a number of other staff during the course of the inspection.

Detainee sample

- 1.16 We interviewed a total of 13 detainees, all of all of whom had undergone one or more escort journeys during their detention. We also looked at their documentation, which usually comprised the movement notification, issued by DEPMU and the IS91 (authority to detain form), issued by the IND official making the decision to detain. The detainee profile is set out below: male detainees have been given the code Queen's Building (QB) M and women QBW, followed by numbers 1-13. Six of the sample spoke little or no English (two women and four men) and were interviewed using the Language Line telephone interpreting service. Individual case studies which further illustrate the points raised can be found on pages 16-18.

Women

- Brazilian woman, Language Line interview (QBW 1)
- Brazilian woman, Language Line interview (QBW 2)
- Ghanaian woman, (QBW 3)
- Angolan woman (QBW 4)
- Nigerian woman (QBW 5)

Men

- Turkish man (QBM 6)
- Turkish man (QBM 7)
- Brazilian man, Language Line interview (QBM 8)
- Turkish man, Language Line interview (QBM 9)
- Zimbabwean man (QBM 10)
- Bangladeshi man, Language Line interview (QBM 11)
- Somali man, Language Line interview (QBM 12)
- Zambian man (QBM 13)

Section 2: Findings and case studies

Inspection 1: Queen's Building and Terminal 3

17 March 2005

Journey length

- 2.1 Journey length varied from several minutes for those detainees who had come from the nearby Harmondsworth or Colnbrook removal centres, to a reported journey length of eight hours (T3M 2). The escort record indicated that this detainee's journey had been broken by a stop at Manchester airport, and his total unbroken journey was therefore just under five hours. Interestingly, a few detainees underestimated the length of their journeys, explaining that they lost all track of time in the van. For example, T3W 12 thought her longest journey length, recorded as four and a half hours, was 'about two hours'.
- 2.2 Maximum journey lengths recorded on the IS91 (authority to detain form) tended to be around five hours. The longest was five hours and 25 minutes for T3M 9 who had travelled from Manchester airport to Heathrow. Six of the 12 detainees had recorded journeys of over three hours, and five of this number had travelled for more than four hours. The remaining six detainees had travelled for less than an hour, usually from and to Harmondsworth or Colnbrook. In at least two cases, there had been long waits outside detention centres in escort vans; T3M 4 said he had waited for two hours outside Campsfield House, while T3M 5 had a two and a half hour wait outside Harmondsworth following a journey of no more than minutes from Heathrow.

Cleanliness and comfort of vans

- 2.3 The majority of detainees described reasonably clean vans and reasonably comfortable seats. However, a number had shared a vehicle with four or five others and complained about the lack of space and poor ventilation. One detainee (T3M 8) sat next to a man who had been sick during a journey of more than five hours. He said that staff stopped the van briefly to clean up the mess, but used no cleaning products or disinfectant. All five men then had to endure an unpleasant and smelly environment for the remainder of the journey.
- 2.4 Staff expected that detainees would be provided with something to eat either at the point of departure or at the destination. If escort staff anticipated a long journey they said they collected a stock of sandwiches, crisps, biscuits and water from a removal centre, although they could not anticipate meeting every need. They did not normally carry baby items.

Comfort breaks

- 2.5 This was a major area of concern for many detainees. Many of them had experienced lengthy journeys, but five out of the six who travelled for more than three hours said they had either been refused a comfort break or did not feel that they could request one. There were, however, reports of vans stopping when escort staff wanted to go to the toilet or have refreshments, and this increased the detainees' frustration. Staff told us that they tried to stop every two and a half hours but that frequently the police stations used for the purpose were not willing or able to

provide a comfort break. T3M 4 said that when he and others on his van asked to go to the toilet they were told that escorts did not stop for anything, including emergencies.

Escort staff–detainee relationships

- 2.6 There were generally three staff to a van, although their number and the gender mix varied according to whom they were carrying and any identified special needs or risks.
- 2.7 There were some reports of friendly behaviour and interaction with staff and some reports of abusive treatment (see T3M 5 case study on pages 16-18), but the majority of the detainees felt that escort staff were simply 'doing their duty'. This appeared to involve minimum interaction, which placed little emphasis on the human dimension of transporting sometimes distressed and often disorientated and unprepared people. Perhaps the most consistent way that this approach was manifested was in the lack of information given to detainees (see paragraph 2.13 below).
- 2.8 Those detainees who did not speak English said they could not judge whether or not staff were speaking to them respectfully. Few detainees remembered being addressed by their names, but most of those who did said they were addressed politely. One detainee (T3W 12) remembered some escort staff addressing her by surname alone, while others used her first name.
- 2.9 One detainee (T3M 4) said that the escort staff became as frustrated as the detainees at the delay in getting into a centre (a two-hour wait outside Harmondsworth) and he felt that staff took their frustration out on detainees. The example he gave was of staff agreeing to requests, but then not acting upon them.
- 2.10 Staff commented that detainees were often upset or complained about circumstances over which the staff had no control. They often had to deal with the frustration of those who had been detained when complying with a regular reporting requirement and had been given no chance to collect clothing, important documents or other property or money. This frustration was compounded by the detainees' realisation that they were then being taken further away from their British homes by the escort, and that recovering property was less likely. People collected from police stations had sometimes been detained for days without a change of clothing or a shower.
- 2.11 Escort staff said they never opened F2052SHs (self-harm monitoring) forms, or equivalent documents; and did not write their concerns on the IS91 (authority to detain form) which they carried. If they had a concern they were most likely to notify the receiving destination verbally.
- 2.12 Although they escorted families with children from time to time, staff were not generally CRB-checked to enhanced level and GSL had no formal child protection policy, although this was under consideration.

Information about the escort van and journey

- 2.13 None of the detainees we spoke to had been given any information about emergency procedures that might be needed during the escort; none had any written information (apart from removal directions in some cases) and none of those who did not speak English had been given written or verbal information in their own language. Most said they did not know where they were going, or how long the journey was likely to take. The exceptions were those detainees who had received removal directions, which noted date and time of flights (e.g. T3M

- 9). As these were in English, only those detainees who could read English could understand them.
- 2.14 DCOs were also dissatisfied with the quality of information supplied by IND. They expected two standard documents: the one-sheet movement notification issued by DEPMU and the three-page IS91 (authority to detain form), issued by the detaining IND official. Often the first was late, and they were kept waiting at the detention centre for it to be faxed. A late-arriving escort during the inspection described having been kept waiting for two hours at Harmondsworth IRC for the movement notification, making it unlikely that the removal directions could be met.
- 2.15 The information on the two documents sometimes did not match. Of particular concern was that important information might be missing from the IS91. We were shown the documents of someone brought in during the inspection. His movement notification, alongside 'special needs' indicated 'serious criminal activity'. His IS91, alongside 'risk factors' had 'not known'. Apart from being inconsistent, the first description gave staff no idea whether the person's criminal past involved present risk to them or others. In other cases, medication was attached to documents, but without any comment about what should be done with it. Without this information, escorts were unable to properly anticipate care needs, risk of disruption, what sort of vehicle was required and how many staff might be appropriate.

Inspection 2: Queen's Building

29 July 2005

Length of journeys

- 2.16 The majority of escort journeys took two to four hours, but journey lengths varied from about an hour for QBW 2, who came from nearby Colnbrook, to six hours for QBM 9 and QBM 12, both of whom had travelled from Campsfield House. QBM 9 had changed vans three times, while QBM 12 stayed in the same van throughout the journey.
- 2.17 We found a tendency among detainees to underestimate the amount of time they had been in transit, a finding that was also noted during our previous visit to Queen's Buildings in March 2005. For example, QBW 1 and QBW 2 reported journey lengths of 30-40 minutes and 20-25 minutes respectively. In fact, records indicated that these women had had journeys of two hours and 50 minutes and one hour and five minutes respectively. More perplexingly, given the disparities in journey length, the IS91 (authority to detain forms) indicated that both detainees had been picked up from Colnbrook – which was no more than 20 minutes' drive from the airport – at the same time in the morning. Whatever the reason, there were clearly significant delays during transit.

Cleanliness and comfort of vans

- 2.18 All detainees told us that the vans were clean, and 10 of the 13 said that they were comfortable. Three detainees, QBM 6, who had come from Colnbrook, QBM 9 and QBM 12, who had both travelled for six hours from Campsfield House, said that conditions were cramped. QBM 6 added that the van was cold and that he 'felt terrible' because people could see in through the clear windows.

- 2.19 Staff we spoke to agreed that the clear windows, combined with their own conspicuous yellow shirts and the 'Securicor' marking on the vehicles, drew attention to the people they were escorting. They also felt that the vehicles, as currently equipped, were not fit for purpose. They told us that the two three-person bench seats were so close together that they were not only uncomfortable but did not permit the control or restraint of a violent detainee. The seats had soft coverings which were not easy to clean. A DCO described a frightened young woman who had urinated in the vehicle, which then had to be taken out of commission. The same DCO said there was neither air conditioning nor heating in the back, and although vehicles carried a first aid kit, there were no general cleaning materials.
- 2.20 We were told by staff that use of handcuffs was rare, except when people were being taken to visit embassies or to courts. The controller had to be telephoned for authorisation in other circumstances.

Comfort breaks

- 2.21 Detainees' comments in relation to comfort breaks tended to be negative. QBM 7 said that detainees were 'too scared' to ask for a break. Several detainees said they were offered water but none reported receiving food. Two of the three detainees on the longest journeys, from Campsfield House and Yarl's Wood, said they were offered comfort breaks. The third, QBM 9, said that the three stops made on his journey were for the purpose of changing vans and that he was offered water but not use of the toilet. QBM 12 reported three breaks during the six hour journey from Campsfield House, when those who wanted to use the toilets were allowed to do so. However, he added that the others were told to remain in the van and were not allowed to stretch their legs.
- 2.22 Staff told us that they had recently been given instructions to carry water and sandwiches if going on long journeys, and that comfort breaks were to be offered on journeys of more than two-and-a-half hours. These were recorded on the driver's log. IS91s indicated that one month previously, QBM 10 had completed a journey of 10 and a half hours from Dungavel IRC to Colnbrook, with only one recorded comfort break of 20 minutes. It is possible that other breaks may have been provided and recorded in the driver's log, but there was no evidence of this on site.

Escort staff-detainee relationships

- 2.23 Staff described the pressures of 12-hour shifts involving long, uncertain, multi-stop journeys, including queuing at some removal centres, and frequent collection from police stations where people had been held for days without a shower or change of clothing. The minimum number of escorting staff was two, subject to risk assessment – three were necessary for control and restraint to be applied. Escorts accompanying women or families with children needed to include at least one woman member of staff.
- 2.24 Most detainees said the behaviour of escort staff was appropriate, and a number described them as being 'sympathetic', 'friendly' and 'polite'. Only one detainee, QBM 7, said he had had a negative experience of escort staff, but reported no specific instances of poor staff behaviour. Instead he said he felt they viewed him and the other detainees as 'criminals' who were 'wasting tax payers' money'. Detainees often reported a lack of communication from staff, who were 'just doing their jobs', which did little to reassure and calm them. Even when language was a barrier, it was clear that some effort at positive communication by staff could make a significant difference to anxious detainees. For example, QBM 12 said that while he

understood little English and was not spoken to by the staff, the 'nice and friendly' behaviour of staff towards the English-speaking detainees helped to put him at ease for the journey.

- 2.25 All staff we spoke to agreed that the best way to ensure compliance was to treat people civilly, and some said they had attempted to communicate with non-English speakers using sign language. While some staff said they looked at the documents they were carrying to find out detainees' names, others made no such attempts and were less aware of the need to address detainees in a respectful manner. Indeed, a couple of DCOs were heard referring to their job as 'delivering the bodies'.
- 2.26 Vehicles had CCTV cameras in the back to record the journey and any incidents that occurred but incident documentation was not carried. In the event of an incident, the escort was supposed to telephone their control, where a summary would be recorded. An incident report form was then filled in when they arrived at Queen's Building. These forms were not kept on site so we were unable to look at any.
- 2.27 DCOs received initial training, which included control and restraint (C&R) but refresher training, other than for C&R during employment, was limited. Some said they learned how to deal with incidents on the job and were not aware of, but would have appreciated, written policies. For example, one experienced escort officer wondered what her status was when she entered foreign embassies with detainees, or how she was supposed to react if anything happened. Some were uncertain about suicide and self-harm documentation or policy, although those we spoke to understood that they were allowed to update an IS91 (authority to detain form) if any special needs or risks came to light. None were aware of any child protection policy and they did not know if they were Criminal Records Bureau checked to enhanced level. They were uncertain about complaints procedures if detainees wished to complain.

Information about the escort van and journey

- 2.28 As was the case during our previous inspection, none of the detainees we asked had been given any information about emergency procedures, none had any written information (apart from removal directions in some cases, e.g. QBM 10) and none of those who did not speak English were given written or verbal information in their own language. Most said they did not know where they were being taken to, or how long the journey was likely to take.
- 2.29 A general complaint from escort staff was the lack of information provided to them or to detainees by the detaining IND authority. There were usually only two documents: the movement notification and the IS91. Although the IS91 included space for any risk factors or special needs, it was nearly always blank.
- 2.30 Detainees had often been given little information about what to expect. Some did not have their removal directions with them, which meant escort staff had to explain, using the limited information available to them, that they were being taken to the holding facility or airport for removal from the country. It was not uncommon for immigration officers to fax documents to police stations holding immigration detainees, where they were not always passed on. Sometimes the faxed documents were handed over to the escort staff when they turned up, which might be two or three days later. Escort staff did not necessarily know what documents were supposed to be given to the detainee, and they were unable to explain the content if the detainee spoke no English.
- 2.31 Escorts often had to deal with stresses that should have been addressed earlier. Detainees detained at reporting centres or by enforcement teams often had only the clothes they were wearing and the contents of their pockets or handbag. They were not allowed to collect

property from home if arrested elsewhere. Even those detained at home were only allowed to gather up a limited amount and officers often packed for them. They were sometimes told that they would be able to contact people who could deliver property and money later. This was often not the case and was likely to increase detainees' subsequent anxiety, which escort and custody officers then had to deal with. There was no policy to enable detainees to recover their property and visitors were not allowed at the airport. It was possible that detainees had not had any visitors in the short-term holding facilities or in the police stations in which they had previously been held. If the detainee had no money and was not allowed a free telephone call, there was no way to inform others of their predicament. Staff said that this sometimes caused disruptive behaviour.

Selected case studies

Account of T3M 5

T3M 5's journey from Heathrow to Harmondsworth took 10 minutes, but this was followed by a two and a half hour wait outside the centre. He had not expected that it would take that long to get into the centre. On several occasions, he asked staff how long it would be before he could go to the toilet and on each occasion was told that it would be 10-15 minutes before the van could enter. On the last occasion he asked, he said one of the escort officers told him to 'shut the fuck up'. At this point he said he stopped asking and waited until the van was allowed into the centre.

When in the centre, he said that escort staff made a point of processing the paperwork for all the other detainees first. When two others had been allowed in before him, he said he stood up to protest and was pushed hard into his chair by one of the escort officers, who said 'don't fuck with us'. When he appealed to reception staff, they apparently told him they could not help.

T3M 5 had made a large number of trips (over 20) and thought that treatment by escort staff was variable, 'often good', but in 'about 40%' of cases, he felt they mistreated detainees.

Account of T3W 10

This young Chinese woman, who spoke no English, had arrived at Heathrow three months previously and was arrested for not having a passport. She had been given a custodial sentence and had just been released at the time of the inspection. She had been told the previous day that she was being moved in two days' time. Another Chinese prisoner who spoke some English was asked to explain this to her. In fact, the movement took place a day early. She did not know where she was going, why, or what would happen next. When she arrived back at the airport she was frightened but staff were unable to communicate with her. An immigration officer told us that she was not there to be removed but to be transferred to Oakington reception centre, for 'fast-track' asylum processing, three months after her arrival. This had not been explained to her.

Account of QBW 4

QBW 4 was an 18-year old Angolan woman, who was accompanied by her six-year old son. She explained that she had been detained at home by five officers at 6am the previous day. She had been given removal directions to Luanda, Angola, on the same day. Her son had been staying with their foster mother of the last three years (when they arrived in the UK in 2002, both mother and child were minors). The arrest team then went to the foster mother's home to collect QBW 4's son. They put some of her clothing into a bag but did not pack her son's clothing, and he had only his school bag with him. The arrest team wrongly told the worried foster mother that she could bring money and clothing to the airport for them. When the foster mother arrived at the terminal building with clothing and money to give them, she was told that it could not be delivered. Airport security rules prevented people travelling with any bag they had not packed themselves, even though the bag accompanying the detainee had been packed by detaining immigration officers and all luggage was subject to screening and search.

There was no policy to allow money to be handed over, which would have involved immigration service or custody staff collecting and delivering it, and neither group wanted to compromise their position by handling money on behalf of others. The woman had 3p in her purse at the time and no idea what she and her son would do on arrival in Luanda. On this occasion, immigration staff were persuaded to collect money from the waiting foster mother.

The young woman was distressed and agitated, which in turn appeared to affect her son's frenetic behaviour. He was clinging, demanding and, at times, mimicked her physical expressions of alarm. Staff were clearly unsure how to react, and could only offer him sandwiches.

Account of QBM 11

The lack of information or explanation of what was happening was a concern for a number of detainees who had not been given notice of movement. QBM 11, a 37-year old Bangladeshi man, said he was woken at 1am and informed that he was to be taken to the airport from Oakington reception centre. He asked for an immigration officer, but was told he could see one at the airport. He left Oakington at 2am. He was given flight details but did not understand them as they were in English and no one had interpreted them for him. He arrived at Queen's Building at 5.55am and refused to board a morning flight. He was still in the waiting area when interviewed at 12.30pm on the same day and had still not seen an immigration officer, nor had anyone attempted to speak to him through an interpreter. It later transpired that Oakington staff had assessed him as being at high risk of self-harm and he was on an open F2052SH (self-harm monitoring) form. He had attempted to commit suicide three months earlier and his family had informed Oakington staff that he would probably try again, but his IS91 (authority to detain form) did not include any information on risk of self-harm. It was clearly inappropriate to deny a vulnerable man a night's sleep, and to move him in the early hours of the morning with no notice and no explanation in a language he could understand. Records also indicated that before he arrived at Queen's Building, he had been in four other places of detention during the previous 33 days.

Account of QBM 13

QBM 13, a 22-year old Zambian man, had that morning been collected from a prison under the early removal scheme. He had not received removal directions and had had no warning of the removal. He had only £6, which was insufficient to get him from the airport to his home in Zambia. He had no change and was therefore unable to ring anyone at home to tell them to expect him, and, in the absence of removal directions, did not in any event know when he would be arriving home. Staff told us that they were sometimes, but not always, able to exchange notes for coins that could be used in the payphone. Those without means were not offered free telephone calls, though detainees with their own mobiles were allowed to keep them as long as they did not have integrated cameras.

Section 3: Summary and recommendations

- 3.1 Journey times varied from several minutes, for those detainees who had come from nearby removal centres, to a reported journey length of eight hours, which could not be verified as the records of cumulative detention were inaccurate. In addition, copies of holding room detention records were not retained on site. The majority of detainees said that vans were reasonably clean and fairly comfortable but some had been in a vehicle with several others and complained about the lack of space and poor ventilation.
- 3.2 During the later July inspection, staff told us that they did not think the vans were fit for purpose because the two three-person bench seats were too close together, there was no air conditioning or heating in the rear and the clear windows allowed the public to see in.
- 3.3 Many detainees made negative comments about the provision of comfort breaks during journeys. Some said that they were offered comfort breaks but others said that they were not and they were too afraid to ask. The escort contract stipulates that comfort breaks should be offered on journeys of more than two and a half hours, but one detainee told us that when he and others on his van asked to go to the toilet they were informed that escorts did not stop for anything, including emergencies.
- 3.4 Staff told us that they expected detainees to be provided with something to eat either at the point of departure or at the destination. If they anticipated a long journey, we were told that a stock of sandwiches, crisps, biscuits and water was carried. However, none of the detainees we interviewed had been offered food during longer journeys. Some detainees said that staff were friendly and supportive but most others said that there was minimum interaction.
- 3.5 The number and gender mix of escorting staff varied according to risk or whether women and children were being escorted. Despite escorting women with children, staff were not generally checked to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) enhanced level and there was no formal child protection policy. Some staff were uncertain about the management of suicide and self-harm and no staff had ever raised at-risk forms, or equivalent documentation, or had ever entered any concerns on the IS91 (authority to detain form). Staff were unaware of any suicide and self-harm policy. Although a detainee's personal medication could be held by staff during the escort, there was no policy allowing the detainee access to it.
- 3.6 All staff working for GSL, and subsequently Securicor, had been trained in the use of control and restraint and received regular refresher training. All vehicles inspected during the July inspection had sealed CCTV installed to record the escort journey and in particular any incidents that might occur.
- 3.7 None of the detainees we spoke to had been given any information about emergency procedures during the escort and most said they did not know where they were going, why, or how long the journey would take. Documentation given to staff was often insufficiently detailed to enable escorts to anticipate needs and assess risk. There were normally only two documents provided to escort staff: the movement notification and the IS91. Although the IS91 included space for risk factors or special needs, it was rarely used.
- 3.8 Detainees detained at reporting centres or by enforcement teams in their homes often had only the clothes they were wearing and the personal property they had been carrying at the time.

There was no policy allowing detainees a phone call or to access any other property and they were not allowed visitors at the airport.

Recommendations

- 3.9 The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) case file accompanying detainees should include a cumulative and comprehensive history of the period of detention, completed at all places of detention including police stations.
- 3.10 Detainees should receive information about escort vehicle emergency procedures and other information about the reasons for their journeys in a language they can understand.
- 3.11 Detainees under escort should be given a comfort break at least every two hours.
- 3.12 Air conditioning and heating in vans should be adjustable in the front and the back according to the needs of detainees under escort.
- 3.13 There should be written child protection and suicide and self-harm policies.
- 3.14 Staff who escort children should be subject to enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.
- 3.15 There should be formal arrangements to enable detainees to recover essential property prior to removal.
- 3.16 Detainees should be allowed a free telephone call at all places of detention.
- 3.17 Holding rooms should retain records on site for a minimum of three months.
- 3.18 IRC staff should inform escort staff of any concerns relating to risk of self-harm.
- 3.19 New escort vehicles should be examined to check that they provide a safe and decent environment.