



APPG on Immigration Detention – Annual General Meeting

Monday 2 February 2026, 14.00 – 15.00
Room Q, Portcullis House, Houses of Parliament

Attendees

- Chairs:** Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP (Labour) – Chair
Rt Hon. Esther McVey MP (Conservative) – Speaker-nominated Chair
- Parliamentarians:** Apsana Begum MP (Labour)
Rt Hon. Diane Abbott MP (Labour)
Rt Hon. John McDonnell MP (Labour)
Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE (Labour)
Feryal Clark MP (Labour)
Bambos Charalambous MP (Labour)
Baroness Verma (Conservative)
- Speakers:** David Skinner – Chair, Gatwick Independent Monitoring Board
Clea Kahn – Vice-Chair, Gatwick Independent Monitoring Board
- Other attendees:** Representatives from:
- Gatwick Independent Monitoring Board
 - Independent Monitoring Boards National Secretariat
 - Medical Justice
 - APPG Secretariat
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Meeting summary

1. AGM business

This section of the meeting was chaired by Rt Hon. Esther McVey MP, appointed by the Speaker.

Attendees elected the following Members as officers of the APPG:

- Chair:** Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP (Labour)
Officers: Rt Hon. the Lord Garnier KC (Conservative)
Baroness Hamwee (Liberal Democrat)
Rt Hon. John McDonnell MP (Labour)

Ms Ribeiro-Addy extended the APPG's thanks to Mohammad Yasin MP, who stood down as an officer this year, having served since 2021.

Attendees approved the following APPG documents:

- Income and Expenditure Statement
- Annual Report 2024-25
- Due Diligence Statement (completed by APPG Chair)

Copies of the above documents are available at www.appgdetention.org.uk.

2. Remarks by APPG Chair

Ms Ribeiro-Addy thanked all the Members of the APPG for their continued support of the group throughout the year and in particular Lord Garnier, Baroness Hamwee and Mohammad Yasin MP who served as officers during 2024-25

She also thanked Medical Justice for providing the group's Secretariat throughout the year.

The importance of the group's subject matter could not be overstated. Depriving someone of their liberty was one of the most serious actions a government could take, and an extremely significant interference with a person's rights. Moreover, the experience of immigration detention could be devastating – particularly its impacts on mental health.

It was therefore right that government's use of detention and treatment of detained people was carefully scrutinised - and the APPG played a vital role in ensuring that.

Immigration detention policy rarely stood still – and 2025 was no exception. Some key developments included:

- August 2025 – introduction of the UK-France “one in, one out” scheme – under which some people crossing the Channel via small boat to seek asylum, were instead now being detained and then removed back to France
- November 2025 – commitment by the Home Secretary to increase the number of enforced returns – including, potentially, families.
- December 2025 – re-opening of Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre, near Oxford, with a current capacity of 160 spaces, and plans to expand to 400.

- Throughout the year – serious concerns raised by independent inspectors and monitoring bodies about conditions in immigration removal centres – including about the use of force against detained people, and ineffective safeguarding;

Against this backdrop, the APPG had had an active year:

- March 2025 – meeting with Dame Angela Eagle MP, then Minister for Border Security and Asylum to discuss a number of issues including the government’s response to the Brook House Inquiry’s recommendations.
- March 2025 – panel event with HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and expert by experience campaigner Joel Mordi to discuss current conditions in IRCs
- July 2026 – visit to Harmondsworth IRC, providing useful insight into how IRCs are run and what life is like for those detained.
- November 2025 – panel event with NGOs to examine the detention aspects of the UK-France “one in, one out” policy.
- Through year – Chair and other Members had tabled questions, spoken in debates, and written to the Home Secretary on issues of concern.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would share a list of proposed activities for 2026 with APPG Members by email.

3. Situation at Brook House and Tinsley House IRCs

David Skinner (DS) – Chair, Gatwick Independent Monitoring Board

Mr Skinner thanked the APPG for inviting the Gatwick IMB to speak. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 required every IRC to be monitored by an independent board of community members appointed by the Secretary of State. Mr Skinner, Ms Kahn and two other Gatwick IMB members were attending today, along with a colleague from the IMB National Secretariat.

The last couple of years at Brook House and Tinsley IRCs had been busy. In the last few months, the make-up of the two IRCs had changed significantly as a result of the “one in, one out” scheme.

Clea Kahn (CK) – Vice-Chair, Gatwick Independent Monitoring Board

Gatwick had two sites: Brook House and Tinsley House IRCs. Brook House had a capacity of 425, and Tinsley House 198. Tinsley House also had an area for detaining families, known as the Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA). The PDA had not been used for about a year.

People detained under the 'one in, one out' policy might be thought of as an exceptional cohort. But every year for several years there had been an 'exceptional' cohort – for example people detained for removal under the Rwanda scheme in 2022 and 2024. These cohorts typically faced the same issues – difficulties in accessing legal support, language issues, and confusion and anxiety because most would not have experienced a carceral environment before.

Brook House was built to a Category B prison standard and was very prison-like. The environment at Tinsley House was more relaxed. Both centres were old, however, and not in great shape. Some renovations had been carried out this year which had somewhat improved physical conditions and, importantly, the mobile phone signal, which is critical in enabling detained men to be in contact with legal representation, family and friends.

Rooms at Broom House were quite small, and men were locked in them for very long periods. The lock-up period had increased at end of 2023 because there were not enough staff to take breaks. Men were therefore now locked in their rooms for 12 hours out of every 24 hours.

Brook House was noisy and chaotic, and there were not many quiet spaces for a person to collect their thoughts. Detained people found it very stressful, particularly neurodiverse people. There was also volatility and interpersonal conflict, drug use, and a lot of people with mental health issues detained at the centre. This created a higher level of stress for people.

In 2024 there were 28 incidents at Brook House, for around twelve of which National Tactical Response Group teams were called in. This was a large spike. In 2025 there had been 11 incidents. There had been a lot of people going onto the anti-suicide netting between the walkways who need to be negotiated with. Usually staff were not bad at de-escalating such incidents.

There had also been a lot of incidents of force used on detained people. The majority were spontaneous, to break up altercations and to prevent acts of self-harm.

One of the IMB's biggest concerns though were the levels of vulnerability amongst the people detained at Brook House and Tinsley House. A lot had serious mental health conditions. The IMB had also seen a lot of young people being detained – every week currently there were a couple of individuals detained who were then verified to be children. During one week in December 2025, there had been 7 age-dispute cases – of these 5 were given an age assessment, and 4 were subsequently determined to be children.

Reception processes and the health screenings meant to take place within 24 hours of arrival were not effective at identifying vulnerable people.

There had been some improvements in terms of the management of vulnerability. For example, the Home Office Detainee Engagement Teams have increased their presence in the IRCs in the past few years, including by holding regular surgeries. There was also more dynamic use of constant watch for people who were actively suicidal, since it could be a very intrusive

experience for the person being watched. There was also more attention to the management of anti-social behaviour.

However, a key problem was that safeguarding systems did not speak to each other. This meant that while the day-to-day management of and support to vulnerable or suicidal men might be reasonably effective, this management and support did not then link up to safeguards which might route the vulnerable person out of detention. For example, a person who was at risk of self-harming or attempting suicide might be put on the Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork (ACDT) process to manage this risk, but they would not be referred for a medical review, known as a Rule 35 report, that could prompt their release from detention.

Even when a Rule 35 report was submitted to the Home Office highlighting a person's vulnerabilities, in most cases this did not lead to their release; there was a tendency for the Home Office to maintain detention. The system was not working as well as it should.

The IMB was also concerned about the duration of people's detention. Duration of detention was a major stressor and harmful to people's mental health. The IMB had continually argued in their annual reports that it was inhumane to not have a time limit for detention. The government had rejected the Brook House Inquiry's recommendation to set a 28-day time limit on detention. The IMB believed the recommendation was reasonable. In 2024, the average person's stay at Brook House / Tinsley House had been 30 days, but a quarter of the population were detained for more than 70 days. One man was released after 708 days (1 year and 11 months) in detention. The longest stayer as at the end of December 2025 had been detained for 1 year and 6 months.

Almost 100% people were being handcuffed during off-site hospital appointments. They reported finding this humiliating. The approach raised serious concerns about fair and humane treatment in detention, and detained people's dignity. The IMB hypothesised that this risk averse approach is fuelled by IRC contractors' concerns about fines they would receive from the Home Office if a person absconded during the hospital visit.

The use of separation for people with mental health issues was another concern. There was an area of Brook House IRC called the Care and Separation Unit which was used to manage behavioural issues. Previously, vulnerable people needing additional support were also being placed there. This practice had now stopped, which was positive. However, those individuals were now on regular wings, where they did not receive the same level of individual attention. The impacts of this were being seen: for example, there had been an incident recently where a vulnerable person with hygiene issues connected to their mental health had been assaulted whilst on the residential wing. Boiling water had been poured over them by another detained person, who was then arrested.

Inadequate use of interpretation/translation was another problem. It was particularly acute for people detained under the 'one in, one out' scheme. These individuals were already struggling to understand their situation, and the IMB were seeing people who were so distressed that they were having to have information repeated over and over again to them. This was often not given

in their own language and there was also a lot of technical legal terminology that they did not understand. Interpretation was also not being consistently provided in healthcare.

The IMB was concerned about people's access to quality legal advice. A person might get access to a solicitor. However, the solicitor might not necessarily call them back or meet them in person, or use an interpreter. The IMB were aware of one person whose solicitor failed to arrange an interpreter for his bail hearing. This resulted in the man remaining in detention for an additional two weeks.

The IMB had had serious concerns around healthcare provision at Brook House and Tinsley House in the past few years. While staff intentions might be good, there was not enough capacity and detained people's needs were not being met. The IMB had also received complaints from detained people about their treatment by healthcare staff.

Under Rule 34 of the Detention Centre Rules, every detained person should be offered a physical and mental health examination within 24 hours of arriving at the IRC. The appointment was an important safeguard, providing an opportunity to identify a person's vulnerabilities. However, this was not being properly explained to detained people and they were not being encouraged to attend the appointment. Another concern was the waiting time between a person being referred for a Rule 35 report and the report being completed: this took on average two weeks. Then, even when the report was submitted, people were not necessarily then being released from detention.

4. Q & A

DS: Week in week out, the IMB was seeing the same problems recurring at Brook House and Tinsley House: serious vulnerabilities amongst detained people, difficulties around physical and mental health support, insufficient use of interpretation, and inadequate provision of legal support.

Question: What had happened around implementation of the Brook House Inquiry's recommendations?

DS: Some of the Inquiry's recommendations were accepted, and others were not. The IMB had noticed some improvements in the implementation of use of force policies. In discussing these, the IMB noted that every time force was used by staff against a detained person or someone was separated, as required by policy a member of the IMB was called. The IMB were receiving 3 or 4 phone calls each day.

Many of the problems raised by the Brook House Inquiry had resource implications. For example, if the government was going to provide proper medical or legal support to detained people, that needed to be appropriately resourced.

CK: Some efforts had been made to address staff culture at Brook House, which the Inquiry had identified as a significant issue. The culture amongst contractor and Home Office staff was now

more positive. This did not mean there are no issues around staff culture: there were still examples of abuse of detained people by staff. It was not routine, but it did happen. For example, the IMB were aware of a recent incident where a detained man had his fractured arm squeezed in order to move him into his room by staff. Other officers who witnessed the incident, however, reported it.

Question: Some people detained at Harmondsworth under the 'one in, one out' scheme felt they had been treated very badly and had recently held a protest. People facing removal to France were very disorientated and did not necessarily understand what was happening to them. There could be further unrest.

The APPG could play a role in sharing evidence with the Minister about what was happening on the ground and the need for greater resources. People needed to be reassured that they were safe.

The APPG should also consider pressing on two other issues – the 28-day time limit, and the handcuffing of people during hospital visits.

DS: It would be useful for APPG members to see the letter that people detained under the 'one in, one out' scheme received when first detained. It was 4-5 pages long and contained very technical language. It was difficult to understand even for a native English speaker.

The Home Office gave people 7 days to respond to the letter e.g. with reasons why they should not be removed to France. Even this was difficult for some people to understand.

CK: It was difficult to reassure people that they were safe – there had been deaths at Brook House IRC in 2023 and 2024. Also, the levels of assaults were increasing and people reported not feeling safe.

Question: Did the IMB engage with Serco, the Home Office's contractor at Brook House and Tinsley House?

DS: Yes. There were three organisations at Brook House and Tinsley House: Serco, who manage the day-to-day operations, including buildings and aspects affecting day to day lives of detained people; the Home Office (comprising two teams: one, the Detention Engagement Team (DET), which dealt with detained people's immigration casework, and another which monitored Serco's contract compliance); and Practice Plus Group, which was responsible for physical and mental healthcare. The IMB engaged with all of them. IMB members spoke with detained people and picked up issues from them, and then took these to the relevant teams. The IMB also produced a weekly report documenting issues reported and observed. Then, once a month, they would meet with Serco, the Home Office and healthcare to discuss further. In the IMB's experience, Serco were fairly responsive to questions.

CK: The Home Office's DET had increased the number of surgeries they offered and were more present at the IRCs than previously.

Question: Had there been any improvements under the new government?

CK: Policies around detention have not changed substantially with the change of government. Things had improved slightly in the last couple of years – for example, there was more access to DET, and there had been efforts to improve staff culture.

However, detention was still a very bewildering environment for people. There was also still a tendency to detain on the part of the Home Office, and a tendency to try and ‘manage’ people who were suicidal, rather than release them.

Question: The issue of age disputed children being detained for removal to France under the ‘one in, one out’ scheme was very concerning. Some written questions around this would be timely.

5. Thanks and close