

**Detainees under escort:  
Inspection of escort and  
removals to Nigeria**

**20–21 April 2011**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

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# Introduction

This report describes the findings of inspectors accompanying an escorted overseas removal by the UK of 53 detainees to Lagos, Nigeria on 20 and 21 April 2011, and a review of records relating to the previous three removal charter flights to Nigeria. The aircraft were chartered by the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and G4S were contracted to carry out the removals. Over 100 escorts were involved in the removal.

On the whole, the process of collecting detainees from immigration removal centres and transporting them by coach to the airport was well organised. Escorts generally dealt sensitively with the inevitable stresses and last minute complications that arose. Detainees had long waits on the coaches before being taken to the departure airport and then a long flight. Physical conditions and health care were adequate but detainees were not allowed hot drinks or blankets, unlike the escorts with whom they shared the transport.

In some cases, we did not consider that staff were properly coordinated during potential and actual incidents, which raised tensions. Force and restraints were sometimes used – both full control and restraint and ‘light touch’ compulsion, which involved compliant detainees sometimes being held by the arms unnecessarily. Some objected strongly to this and the procedure raised tensions. Where there was use of full control and restraint, we saw generally good management but force and restraints were sometimes applied for longer than was necessary. In one case a detainee on board the aircraft continued to have his head restrained when he had become compliant. There is currently no accredited training to guide and support staff who have to use force in such confined spaces. One detainee was subject to formal self-harm prevention procedures and others had diagnosed or suspected mental health issues.

These issues underlined the importance of escorts performing their duties in a calm and professional manner. This is generally what occurred but escorts sometimes spoke to detainees in patronising terms and inspectors were very concerned at the highly offensive and sometime racist language they heard staff use between themselves. Quite apart from the offence this language may have caused to those who overheard it, it suggested a shamefully unprofessional and derogatory attitude that did not give confidence that had a more serious incident occurred, it would always have been effectively dealt with.

On arrival in Lagos, Nigerian officials came onto the plane to complete admission procedures. Their attitude was forceful and aggressive. There were no arrangements to provide any advice or support to detainees who did not have family or other contacts in Lagos. As one detainee tried to explain he had spent most of his life in London, UK escorts mocked his accent.

Escorted removals are a difficult and distressing process. On this inspection, most escorts, most of the time, performed their duties well and dealt sensitively with the needs of individual detainees. However, tensions were sometimes raised when force or restraint was used unnecessarily and some staff demonstrated an unacceptably unprofessional attitude. Detainees arriving in the receiving country, sometimes with very few resources, faced hostility and had no advice or assistance. UKBA should ensure that detainees without local support receive some assistance when they first arrive. It is a concern that we also need to call on UKBA to ensure that detainees are treated decently at all times, with no physical or verbal abuse, throughout their journey and when they arrive.

**Nick Hardwick**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Prisons**

**July 2011**

# Section 1: Summary

- 1.1 Inspectors accompanied a charter flight removal of 53 detainees to Lagos, Nigeria on 20 and 21 April 2011. They also reviewed records of the previous three charter flights to Nigeria. This is the second overseas escort inspection conducted by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. The entire removal process was inspected, from the point at which detainees were collected from immigration removal centres, to the end of the journey to the destination country. New expectations have been drafted and were piloted during this inspection. They will be revised, sent out for consultation and published in due course.
- 1.2 The process for collecting detainees from Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) and transferring them by coach to the airport was, on the whole, well organised with good liaison between IRC staff and escorting officers. However, there were long waits on coaches and in one case a lone female detainee was left on a coach with male detainees for longer than was necessary. A large number of staff were involved, but their informal dress and generally respectful manner ensured that detainees did not feel overwhelmed. Most staff showed a mature and tactful approach to defusing tensions and resolving last-minute issues about property, but this was not always the case; in one IRC case a detainee's concerns about his property were dismissed. Searching at the IRCs was generally appropriate, but there was insufficient privacy at one.
- 1.3 Staff carried out their standard security roles efficiently, but their response to unplanned events was not always appropriate. Force and restraints were in some cases used for longer than necessary and lacked comprehensive and coordinated planning. There were no clear accredited procedures for use of force on the aircraft. Escorts took hold of detainees' arms during movements between vehicles and buildings, whether or not this was justified by individual risk or the physical security of the area, and this unnecessarily raised tensions.
- 1.4 Detainees who were at risk of self-harm were not always monitored in accordance with their care plans. Access to phones and legal advice was reasonable overall, but detainees were not routinely informed that they could borrow a phone to call advisors or their family.
- 1.5 Physical conditions, including food, were adequate, but hot drinks, blankets and pillows were not offered to any detainees on the aircraft, though all were made available to staff. There was inconsistency over whether detainees were able to keep paper money with them. Health provision was appropriate.
- 1.6 Staff were generally courteous and positive in their dealings with detainees but some spoke to them in patronising terms. In some cases, extremely offensive and wholly inappropriate language was used to describe detainees, including demeaning racist terms. A man who could not walk was carried bodily to a van and to a toilet, with little regard for his dignity. There was no individual risk assessment to show why he could not use his crutches.
- 1.7 On arrival in Nigeria detainees could contact family, but those without resources or arranged accommodation did not receive other welfare assistance. The conduct of Nigerian immigration staff towards detainees reluctant to leave the aircraft was aggressive and included physical assault. We were told that this incident was under investigation.

## Section 2: Background

- 2.1 Charter flights to Nigeria, referred to as Operation Majestic, take place about four times a year. The aircraft are chartered by UKBA which, at the time of our inspection, contracted G4S to carry out the removal of detainees.
- 2.2 Detainees were transferred in coaches to Stansted airport from four IRCs: Brook House, Harmondsworth, Colnbrook and Yarl's Wood. On the morning of the departure 59 detainees had been identified for removal, but six removals were cancelled for legal or other reasons during the day. Inspectors accompanied three of the coaches. At Stansted, normal air travel security checks were conducted at the Inflight Jet Centre, not the main terminal building.
- 2.3 One hundred and thirty-one escort staff were on the aircraft. The aircraft began take off at 12.15am, and touched down in Lagos at 6.43am. Two inspectors travelled on the aircraft.

## Section 3: Safety

### Preparation and departure from removal centres

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- 3.1 IRC and G4S staff worked well together to facilitate the departure of detainees from the centres. In general they interacted with detainees in a calm and tactful way, although some searching was not carried out in sufficient privacy. The language used by those leading the process was not always appropriate. There were long waits on coaches.
- 3.2 Staff, including security staff, were not wearing uniform (see section on positive relationships). This created a more informal atmosphere and helped with the initial searching and the management of some detainees at IRCs who were reluctant to leave. On the removal monitored, the G4S staffing complement comprised a senior supervising officer, two assistant senior supervising officers, four coach commanders and 131 escorts. There was also a security team of eight. The regular notional allocation for Operation Majestic is 70 detainees and 140 staff.
- 3.3 In general, staff showed a mature and skilful approach to defusing tensions and solving problems at this stage. One detainee initially refused to leave an IRC because he did not have a suitcase, which he said had been couriered to the IRC. Staff made it clear that the removal would not be postponed, but also took pains to ensure that the suitcase was located.
- 3.4 At each IRC the coach commander shook hands with each detainee, introduced himself and explained what would happen next. The coach commander then filled in the necessary paperwork while detainees were given rub down searches and had their mouths and shoes inspected.
- 3.5 Searching was carried out thoroughly but respectfully. At Harmondsworth the security staff made an effort to pick up the mood and disposition of each detainee and interacted positively with each. However, at Yarl's Wood, the search was conducted at the reception desk in front of a number of people, and afforded detainees no privacy.
- 3.6 While senior officers generally treated detainees with respect and showed concern for their dignity, during a staff briefing one senior officer referred to potentially disruptive detainees as 'nasties', which was dehumanising. This included a detainee who had self-harmed. It was not clear if the detainee had harmed himself to deliberately disrupt his removal or as a coping mechanism. Other staff used frivolous and demeaning language in the hearing of colleagues which undermined the general ethos of respect (see sections on diversity and positive relationships).
- 3.7 The coach commanders took a pragmatic approach to solving detainees' last minute problems. One detainee was brought from his room to the discharge area by IRC staff. He said that his mother had arrived at the centre four hours earlier with his luggage, including clothing. For reasons that were unclear, the IRC had not accepted the property. The detainee was frustrated and anxious that he did not have his possessions and, despite wanting to return to Nigeria, threatened not to cooperate with the removal. The coach commander said that the detainee could phone his mother and ask her to return with his belongings if he complied with the removal. The detainee agreed and was allowed to phone his mother. Before the coach left the removal centre his belongings arrived and he was able to bring them onto the coach.

- 3.8 In some cases, departure from the IRC took a long time. The first detainee boarded the coach at 5.50pm but the coach did not depart until 8.30pm, over two and half hours later (see recommendation 4.7).

### Recommendation

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- 3.9 **Searching in the IRC should take place away from the reception desk and, if possible, in a separate room.**

## Security, order and rules

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- 3.10 Staff understood their responsibilities but the lack of planned seating arrangements created some confusion, and officers were too quick to crowd round actual or potential incidents on the aircraft. Staff took hold of detainees' arms, however compliant they were, at all points of transfer between vehicles and buildings. Force was initially used appropriately in the examples seen, but holds were not released at the earliest point and restraints were kept on when there appeared little further need for them. There was a lack of overall coordination and planning. Escort staff did not have full accredited training on the use of force in confined spaces.

### Security

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- 3.11 With 2.47 officers to every detainee, staff were in control of events. Their informal clothing helped to mitigate the negative effects of such a large number of officers. It was evident during boarding that staff had allocated roles and responsibilities and that they knew what these were.
- 3.12 All female detainees were seated in the middle rows of the aircraft with an officer on either side, while those male detainees judged to present a lesser risk (the majority) were seated in a side row with one escort.
- 3.13 However, in some cases a seated detainee was moved while staff were bringing another detainee on board, leading, in one case, to confusion and the aisle being blocked with people. While supervisors needed some flexibility to be able to respond dynamically to risks and needs at the time of boarding, the lack of an initial seating plan for detainees and staff on the basis of individual risk appeared to make the boarding process more stressful and unsettling for all concerned.

### Recommendation

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- 3.14 **There should be an aircraft seating plan in line with assessed risk.**

### Good order and behaviour management

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- 3.15 At one IRC, two detainees were located in segregated accommodation: one in Rule 40 (removal from association in the interests of security or safety) and one in Rule 42 (temporary confinement of a violent or refractory detainee). The centre's security manager oversaw the removal and briefed the centre staff involved, although no G4S escort staff were present at the briefing (see use of force section).



- 3.16 While staff roles on the aircraft were mainly clear, some officers crowded round when there was any sign of a potential issue. For example, about seven officers gathered round when one detainee was being restrained, making it difficult for the person filming. When a detainee loudly protested against being made to disembark at the end of the flight, a similar number gathered and several tried to speak to him in quick succession. This increased tension and reduced effective communication.

## Recommendation

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- 3.17 **Staff should approach tense and potentially volatile situations in a calm fashion that allows for effective communication with detainees, and senior staff should take immediate control of such situations.**

## Use of force

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- 3.18 At all IRCs, detainees were escorted from the discharge area onto the coach by three escorts. Although the journey from the discharge area to the coach was in a secure area, two escorts held detainees' elbows and a third walked behind. Laying hands on detainees was unnecessary as they could easily have been controlled in the event of an attempted escape. The same approach was taken at Stansted airport, again without individualised risk assessment and raised tension levels. Several detainees, who were fully complying with instructions, objected to escorts holding their elbows, and one woman loudly objected to the fact that a male member of staff had taken hold of her elbow.
- 3.19 The security manager asked one of the two nurses to film the first planned removal. The nurse was not trained in using the camera and a DCO had to quickly instruct the nurse. It was not clear what would happen should there be an injury or injuries during the use of force.
- 3.20 The process of boarding the plane was filmed. There was at least one incidence of a detainee boarding at one end of the plane when the member of staff filming the process was at the other end. This was immediately identified and rectified by the senior supervising officer.
- 3.21 Force was used to remove the detainee in rule 42 accommodation at one IRC. The detainee was shouting that he had a right of abode in the UK and that he wanted to speak with his solicitor. The security officer knocked on his cell door and asked the detainee to sit on his bed. The detainee refused. The security officer repeated the instruction and again the detainee refused to comply. The security officer asked the three officers in PPE to 'take control' and opened the cell door. One of the officers was carrying a standard reinforced Perspex shield. Control and restraint methods were correctly used. G4S escorts, including the coach commander, entered the cell and placed escort staff's rigid handcuffs on the detainee. The detainee was then lifted up and escorted from the centre by G4S staff. As this was a continuous use of force to restrain the detainee, albeit successively by staff of different companies, planning and briefing should have involved G4S as well as centre staff.
- 3.22 Force was used by staff on one female detainee in the process of leaving Yarl's Wood. As the search was initiated the detainee began shouting, then threw both arms out, striking two DCOs, although it did not appear to be a concerted effort to deliberately strike staff. Staff then used control and restraint on the detainee in a proportionate manner. The coach containing the other detainees was discreetly moved back away from the door to avoid onlookers as the detainee was put into a separate vehicle. She remained handcuffed as she was escorted to the bus by four DCOs, one of whom was walking behind her and holding both her arms, another of whom was walking in front holding one of her arms.

- 3.23 One detainee was carried onto the plane in handcuffs. He shouted that his head hurt and was examined by a medic. The detainee was not violent but was upset and distressed, and appeared to be in a confused state. While he was being checked by the medic two officers sat beside him and a third stood in the row of seats behind and held onto his forehead. The detainee had been trying to strike staff with his head while being carried, but it was not clear why it was necessary to continue holding his forehead given that he became physically compliant once seated, and was not then violent or refractory. Escort staff had not received training on appropriate use of force in the specific confined environment of an aircraft passenger cabin. Attempts had been made to source such training and we were told that NOMS and UKBA were still in negotiation on this.
- 3.24 The female detainee who had been handcuffed (see 3.22) remained so once she had boarded. It was a G4S policy for refractory detainees not to have cuffs removed until after take off, although some staff said they would remove them earlier if the risk the detainee posed had significantly reduced. They saw ongoing discussion with the detainee as an integral part of this de-escalation and risk reduction. There was no further use of force by British escort staff during the flight (but see preparation for reintegration section).
- 3.25 The three previous Operation Majestic flights had been relatively uneventful, with no use of force and a single use of handcuffs.

## Recommendations

- 3.26 **Escorts should not hold detainees' elbows when escorting them through secure areas, and should do so in less secure areas only on the basis of risk assessment.**
- 3.27 **Male staff should not lay hands on female detainees, other than in cases of urgent need.**
- 3.28 **All planned uses of force and all boarding of aircraft by detainees should be filmed by a dedicated and trained DCO.**
- 3.29 **Planning and briefing in preparation for planned interventions should include all staff who are likely to be involved.**
- 3.30 **All escorting staff should receive full accredited training for the use of force in any situation which may arise, especially on board an aircraft.**
- 3.31 **Escort staff should receive clear guidance on when to remove handcuffs placed on a detainee before or during the boarding process.**

## Personal safety

- 3.32 Detainees behaved appropriately with each other, but some escort staff swore or used intimidating language in their interactions with detainees. Recorded monitoring of those at risk of self-harm was not carried out in line with assessed need.

## Bullying and intimidation

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- 3.33 There was no evidence of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour between detainees. However, inappropriate language was occasionally used by escorts when speaking with detainees. At one IRC a detainee who wanted to make a phone call was told that he could make it on the condition that he did not disrupt his removal. A member of staff told him, 'No messing around. If you mess around, we'll crawl all over you.' Another told a detainee, 'I'm not here to bullshit you'. As the last detainee was being persuaded to leave the aircraft at Lagos, G4S staff also unhelpfully and loudly imitated him (see recommendation 5.10 in preparation for reintegration section and 4.25 in diversity section).

## Emotional distress and self-harm

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- 3.34 Self-harm monitoring and support (ACDT) observation logs were not updated within the timeframe specified in the action plans. We examined two ACDT booklets: one called for observations every 20 minutes and another for observations once an hour. In both cases, the observations had not been conducted as often as required.
- 3.35 We spoke to one detainee who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and was on an open ACDT. He confirmed that he had been treated well by escorts. He had been subjected to a 'rapid entry extraction' from his IRC room at 5.40am on the morning of the flight, in order to avert the risk that he might conceal a razor blade on his person. The plan had been authorised by senior staff in the detainee population management unit. The detainee was taken into the custody of G4S officers at Brook House, who stayed with him until he was removed from the centre later in the day.
- 3.36 At Yarl's Wood, one detainee had been held in separation since 10am after becoming refractory. She also had suspected mental health issues, for which she had been linked into community mental health services during her stay at the centre. The reason given for segregation was to avoid disrupting other detainees, and to enable staff to spend the day talking to the detainee to help calm her down. However, the duty manager said that she was not being held under Rule 40 or 42. The detainee was held in the former Family Care Suite, a self-contained unit with bedrooms, a kitchen, television room and toilet facilities. Two female members of staff were in the unit with her. The detainee had been seen by a nurse from the health care team that day, and had been cleared to fly. There was no active ACDT.

## Recommendations

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- 3.37 **Recorded observations of those at risk of self harm should be in line with the frequency judged necessary during assessment.**
- 3.38 **The holding in separation conditions, pending removal, of any detainee in an IRC should be subject to the same requirements for approval and monitoring under Rule 40 or 42 as any other instance of separation.**

## Legal rights

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- 3.39 Staff facilitated access to legal advice and most detainees were allowed to use G4S mobile phones to call key contacts en route to the aircraft. Not all detainees were aware that they

could borrow a phone. UKBA staff made regular checks to ensure no injunctions had been granted to prevent detainees from being removed.

- 3.40 Detainees were given access to legal advice, and for Yarl's Wood detainees escort staff noted down phone numbers and explained that they could use a G4S mobile phone to make calls once the coach had left the centre. However, two male detainees interviewed on the aircraft said that they had wanted to phone a lawyer after leaving the IRC, and had not been able to as their own mobile phones had been taken; they were unaware that they could borrow a phone from G4S staff.
- 3.41 At every stage, UKBA officials checked whether there was any updated information; on landing at Lagos, the UKBA manager made a further check with her office that no last minute injunctions had taken effect. Of 15 women due to be removed from Yarl's Wood IRC on the morning of departure, three had been granted injunctions preventing their removal by the time the coach arrived to collect them.

### Recommendation

- 3.42 **All detainees should be told, in a language they understand, that when their own mobile phone is taken they can borrow one from escort staff to call a legal adviser or other key contacts.**

## Child care and protection

- 3.43 There were no children on the flight. Forms for childcare plans were available for use when children were being removed. Escorting officers had received basic child protection training during their initial and annual refresher training.

# Section 4: Respect

## Physical conditions

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- 4.1 Conditions on the coaches and aircraft were reasonable but many detainees spent long periods on a coach. Privacy in the toilets was restricted by keeping the door ajar. Food and other services were sufficient but detainees were denied hot drinks or blankets, regardless of individual risk factors.
- 4.2 The coaches were sufficiently comfortable and each had a toilet for detainee use. However, they were not allowed to close the door, which was kept ajar by DCOs placing their handcuffs in the door. At one IRC detainees began boarding the coach at 5.50pm, left the IRC at 8.30pm, arrived at Stansted at 9.45pm and did not disembark until 11.10pm. With a long flight to follow, this amount of time on the coach was excessive.
- 4.3 During the journey between the IRC and Stansted airport, detainees were given a packed lunch consisting of a sandwich, crisps, an apple, a bar of chocolate and a bottle of water. They were given their choice of the selection of sandwiches before staff were served, and religious and other forms of diet were catered for.
- 4.4 On one coach a graphic and violent film was shown depicting a rape, murder and stabbing. While approved for public viewing, this film was a poor choice for an already tense and stressed group of people.
- 4.5 Conditions on the aircraft were the same as for a normal charter flight, but without freedom of movement other than escorted access to the toilet. Normal airline food was served but hot drinks were not available to detainees. However, staff requested hot drinks for themselves and consumed them in the sight of detainees. This was inequitable and took no account of individual risk factors. Similarly, blankets and pillows were not made available to anyone on the outward journey, although they were issued to all staff on the return journey.

## Recommendations

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- 4.6 **Unless individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, detainees should be able to use the toilet with full privacy, consume hot drinks and obtain pillows and blankets during flights.**
- 4.7 **The time spent by detainees on a coach should be monitored, and alternatives found to holding them for long periods on a vehicle.**
- 4.8 **Graphic and/or violent films should not be shown on coaches or other settings where detainees cannot opt out of seeing them.**

## Property and clothing

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- 4.9 Apart from at one IRC, proper care was taken over detainees' property, but there was an inconsistent approach to paper money.
- 4.10 At the IRCs, detainees were asked to check their possessions. Property that was in clear plastic bags was placed in large opaque bags, zipped up and sealed to prevent tampering.
- 4.11 At Colnbrook IRC, detainees were not allowed to check the contents of each bag; rather they were allowed to confirm the number of items of luggage. This was not explained clearly to detainees and led to some confusion. One detainee was concerned about the contents of one of his clear plastic bags, which was sealed and contained a number of documents. When asked to check his property the detainee believed that he was able to check the contents of each bag. He tried to examine them but staff became impatient and told him there was no time. The detainee was not confident that his property was all there and became distressed. In the end, he signed to say that he had his property without checking the contents. At Harmondsworth IRC the process was relatively smooth: staff had placed each detainee's luggage, clearly labelled, in a departure area, and the escort and IRC staff worked together to ensure that each detainee was content that all their property was present.
- 4.12 Male detainees were not allowed to retain paper cash. This policy was not applied to removals to other countries; escort staff told us that Nigerian detainees might lose money, or subsequently claim to have lost it, on the plane. The coach commander counted the money in front of the detainee, sealed it in a bag and asked the detainee to sign for it. This delayed the departure process. Female detainees travelling from Yarl's Wood were able to keep paper cash with them and one retained a bible, but all other property not already in a suitcase was placed in a large bag and sealed. Some detainees were unhappy at not being able to keep a handbag with them.

## Recommendations

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- 4.13 **When detainees are being discharged from removal centres, staff should clearly communicate property checking procedures to them. Detainees should not be required or allowed to sign for their property unless they have checked it to their satisfaction.**
- 4.14 **Detainees should be allowed to retain paper cash on departure from the removal centre.**

## Positive relationships

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- 4.15 Staff generally interacted with detainees in a respectful and positive manner, and this was aided by their informal dress. One officer used inappropriate language with a female detainee.
- 4.16 Staff had been instructed to dress down on the flight, and did not wear uniforms. We were told that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had advised UKBA staff that they might face hostility if they had to go into Lagos airport in recognisable uniforms. Their informal dress also helped to promote a more relaxed atmosphere on the aircraft.

- 4.17 Most G4S staff were polite and respectful to detainees, especially female detainees, and went to great lengths to explain what was happening. Female detainees in particular spoke highly of the courtesy and respect shown to them. However we observed one male DCO addressing detainees as 'darling', which was inappropriate (see recommendation 4.25) and some staff used highly offensive language in the hearing of detainees (see Diversity section).

## Diversity

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- 4.18 Some officers used highly offensive and racist language during conversations that could be overheard by detainees. A detainee with mobility difficulties was not allowed to use crutches and there was no evidence of an individual risk assessment to support this decision. One female detainee was held with male detainees on a coach for an unnecessary length of time.
- 4.19 One female detainee was discharged from Colnbrook. Apart from two detainees in segregation, she was the last to be discharged from the centre, and was appropriately searched by two female escorts, and sat near the front of the coach with a female officer. However, when the coach arrived at Stansted she remained there with the male Colnbrook detainees and passed through security with them. She was only able to join the women on the Yarl's Wood coach once she had boarded the plane. There was no apparent reason why she could not have been placed on the Yarl's Wood coach with the other female detainees as soon as the coach arrived at Stansted.
- 4.20 Bibles and Qur'ans could be taken onto the aircraft. Both the initial training of escort officers and the annual refresher training included modules on cultural awareness (as well as managing self-harm risks, child protection and matters of security and procedure).
- 4.21 A senior officer used wholly unacceptable terms to describe some minority groups; these included 'gippos', 'pikeys' and 'typical Asians'. This was not in the hearing of detainees, but it could be heard by other officers and communicated a disrespectful and racist attitude.
- 4.22 Interaction between staff and detainees sat together was good and conveyed respect. However, some staff not seated with detainees had inappropriate conversations with each other which could have been overheard by detainees. One discussion involved extremely offensive racist language with reference made to 'fucking pikey cunts'.
- 4.23 One detainee said that he was unable to walk. He was not allowed to use crutches and was carried to a van, then subsequently, on asking to use a toilet, carried from the van to a toilet. Staff said that there was a blanket ban on crutches as a potential weapon, with no reference to individual risk assessment. No wheelchair was provided. There was no evidence of a care plan.

## Recommendations

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- 4.24 **Where female detainees are escorted from different removal centres, they should be located together as soon as is practicable.**
- 4.25 **Staff should never use racist or offensive language, in or out of the hearing of detainees.**

- 4.26 **Appropriate aids should be made available for any detainee with mobility difficulties unless specific documented risk assessment shows good reasons for not doing so.**

## Complaints

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4.27 Although the UKBA monitor on board gave the opportunity for oral questions and complaints, detainees were not told how they could make a formal written complaint after removal. This deprived UKBA of a potentially valuable source of information.

- 4.28 Oral complaints from detainees were addressed by staff and in particular through the surgery held by the UKBA manager on board the aircraft. Detainees were not given information on how to submit a written complaint or submit comments on their experiences once they had arrived in their destination countries. This deprived UKBA of a potentially valuable source of information about the treatment experienced by detainees during the whole removal process.

## Recommendation

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- 4.29 **Detainees should be provided with information on how to make a confidential written complaint or submit comments on their experiences of removal. Reasonable efforts should be made to enable submission of such information following arrival in home countries.**

## Health

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4.30 Health care needs were adequately met and detainees were appropriately attended to by accompanying medics.

- 4.31 A medic, employed by a private security company, was on each of the five coaches collecting detainees from the IRCs. They had been trained to 'First Person on the Scene' intermediate level, had completed hostile environment medical training and a two-day trauma training package. Two medics flew on the aircraft to Nigeria. At the IRCs, appropriate attention was paid to medical confidentiality.

- 4.32 On the coach from Yarls Wood, a detainee complained of having a headache and another of feeling sick. Both were attended to by the medic. One detainee was eight weeks pregnant and the coach commander and DCOs had been made aware of this prior to arriving at the centre. The detainee had been seen by a GP seven days previously, and by a nurse from the health care team that day. Early pregnancy blood tests had been undertaken, and the results were being forwarded to Nigeria. Once the medic had read the note provided by health care staff at Yarls Wood, it became apparent there were medical concerns regarding the pregnancy which would be relevant to the escort. As a result the medic shared the information, initially with a DCO and then the coach commander.

- 4.33 During the journey, the coach commander received a call advising that the pregnant detainee had secured an injunction and would not be flying. Under normal circumstances she would not have been told this until the other detainees had left the coach, but the coach commander



exercised discretion and made the detainee aware, as she was pregnant and had reported that she felt sick.

## Recommendation

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- 4.34 **Medical information should be shared initially only with the coach commander, who should then decide which other staff need to be made aware.**

## Section 5: Preparation for reintegration

- 5.1 Detainees were able to carry their personal possessions from the plane and to contact friends and family. There was no provision or useful advice for those with no accommodation in Nigeria. Nigerian immigration officials used aggressive language and physical force towards some detainees who were reluctant to leave the aircraft at Lagos, including apparent assault. Escort staff stood by to restrain detainees if necessary, but took no part in enforcing disembarkation. They behaved in a disrespectful way towards a detainee who was worried about leaving the plane.
- 5.2 A UKBA manager routinely accompanied the flight and held a 'surgery', which allowed detainees to ask last minute questions about their cases and about resettlement needs. After the plane touched down, detainees were given their personal possessions, which had been sealed in plastic bags at the removal centres. These included wallets, purses, cash and mobile phones. Detainees were allowed to phone family and friends to let them know they had arrived in Lagos. Those without mobile phones were allowed to use escorts' mobile phones.
- 5.3 There was no provision for detainees without means. When one complained about having nowhere to live in Lagos, an officer replied in an offhand manner that there were charities in the airport. Another detainee had been told that he could go to a mosque. There was no written information with details of non-governmental organisations or charities for detainees without means.
- 5.4 The disembarkation process was slow, and some detainees were treated in a degrading manner. Five Nigerian immigration officials boarded the plane, three of whom spoke to detainees who were brought to the front of the plane one at a time. Detainees sat beside the immigration official who asked them a series of questions, including the state in Nigeria from where they originated, their date of birth, place of birth and occupation. This information was recorded on the back of detainees' emergency travel documents, which had been issued by the Nigerian High Commission in London. Detainees were asked to sign to confirm the information was correct and fingerprints were taken. As this process took place escorts stood in the rows of seats behind the detainees ready to use force should the detainees become refractory.
- 5.5 The Nigerian officials' behaviour towards detainees was forceful and in some cases aggressive. Some detainees said that they had spent many years in the UK, some claimed to have arrived in the UK as children and to have few ties with Nigeria. They were anxious about what would happen to them next. One detainee got into an altercation with a Nigerian officer. The officer, together with a second officer, stood over the detainee and shouted at him in a local language mixed with English. One officer repeatedly poked the detainee in the head and said, 'You are mad. You must obey. You stayed there illegally.' The detainee was clearly humiliated by this. When he said that he had rights, the official replied 'You are home now. You have no rights'.
- 5.6 Another detainee questioned why he had to give his fingerprints. The Nigerian officer shouted at him, "You must obey." and slapped his hand. The detainee was not refractory or violent.
- 5.7 A third detainee, after being interviewed by a Nigerian official, stood in the aisle and asked, 'Where am I going to sleep tonight?' The detainee was not violent and did not appear to be wilfully obstructing the process. A Nigerian immigration officer grabbed the detainee by the

arm, dragged him down the aisle and pushed him off the plane. This appeared unnecessary and degrading as it clearly humiliated the detainee and could have resulted in injury. It was clear that had the detainee resisted, escorts would have restrained him by force, although they made no move to enforce disembarkation from the aircraft. We were told that UKBA was investigating these incidents and that regular dialogue took place with Nigerian officials. There was no evidence of any coordination between Nigerian and UK authorities on the actions to take if a detainee should refuse, after attempts at persuasion, to leave the aircraft.

- 5.8 The final detainee to leave the plane protested that he was not from Nigeria and was in fact from a third country, and was very anxious about disembarking from the plane. After he had been interviewed by a Nigerian immigration officer he stood in the aisle and refused to leave the plane. He tried to explain that he had spent most of his life in London. At this point G4S escorts began mocking his south London accent and laughing at him. This exacerbated an already difficult situation for the detainee. Eventually the detainee realised that force would be used against him should he not comply and he walked off the plane at 8.17am (GMT), about 1.5 hours after arrival.

## Recommendations

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- 5.9 **Detainees without money or contacts should be provided with assistance in sourcing accommodation and support in Nigeria. This assistance should be given before the removal process begins.**
- 5.10 **Escort staff should treat detainees with decency and respect throughout the process of removal without using inflammatory and derisive language.**
- 5.11 **UKBA should agree with the Nigerian authorities' protocols for action in case of refusal by a detainee to leave the aircraft at the destination airport.**

## Good practice

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- 5.12 *Detainees were allowed to make phone calls as soon as the plane touched down. Escorts assisted those detainees without mobiles to make calls.*

# Section 6: Recommendations

<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>To UK Border Agency</u>
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- 6.1 Searching in the IRC should take place away from the reception desk and, if possible, in a separate room. (3.9)
- 6.2 The holding in separation conditions, pending removal, of any detainee in an IRC should be subject to the same requirements for approval and monitoring under Rule 40 or 42 as any other instance of separation. (3.38)

<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>To G4S</u>
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- 6.3 There should be an aircraft seating plan in line with assessed risk. (3.14)
- 6.4 Staff should approach tense and potentially volatile situations in a calm fashion that allows for effective communication with detainees, and senior staff should take immediate control of such situations. (3.17)
- 6.5 Escorts should not hold detainees' elbows when escorting them through secure areas, and should do so in less secure areas only on the basis of risk assessment. (3.26)
- 6.6 Male staff should not lay hands on female detainees, other than in cases of urgent need. (3.27)
- 6.7 All planned uses of force and all boarding of aircraft by detainees should be filmed by a dedicated and trained DCO. (3.28)
- 6.8 Planning and briefing in preparation for planned interventions should include all staff who are likely to be involved. (3.29)
- 6.9 All escorting staff should receive full accredited training for the use of force in any situation which may arise, especially on board an aircraft. (3.30)
- 6.10 Escort staff should receive clear guidance on when to remove handcuffs placed on a detainee before or during the boarding process. (3.31)
- 6.11 Recorded observations of those at risk of self-harm should be in line with the frequency judged necessary during assessment. (3.37)
- 6.12 All detainees should be told, in a language they understand, that when their own mobile phone is taken they can borrow one from escort staff to call a legal adviser or other key contacts. (3.42)
- 6.13 Unless individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, detainees should be able to use the toilet with full privacy, consume hot drinks and obtain pillows and blankets during flights. (4.6)
- 6.14 The time spent by detainees on a coach should be monitored, and alternatives found to holding them for long periods on a vehicle. (4.7)

- 6.15 Graphic and/or violent films should not be shown on coaches or other settings where detainees cannot opt out of seeing them. (4.8)
- 6.16 When detainees are being discharged from removal centres, staff should clearly communicate property checking procedures to them. Detainees should not be required or allowed to sign for their property unless they have checked it to their satisfaction. (4.13)
- 6.17 Detainees should be allowed to retain paper cash on departure from the removal centre. (4.14)
- 6.18 Where female detainees are escorted from different removal centres, they should be located together as soon as is practicable. (4.24)
- 6.19 Staff should never use racist or offensive language, in or out of the hearing of detainees. (4.25)
- 6.20 Appropriate aids should be made available for any detainee with mobility difficulties unless specific documented risk assessment shows good reasons for not doing so. (4.26)
- 6.21 Detainees should be provided with information on how to make a confidential written complaint or submit comments on their experiences of removal. Reasonable efforts should be made to enable submission of such information following arrival in home countries. (4.29)
- 6.22 Medical information should be shared initially only with the coach commander, who should then decide which other staff need to be made aware. (4.34)
- 6.23 Detainees without money or contacts should be provided with assistance in sourcing accommodation and support in Nigeria. This assistance should be given before the removal process begins. (5.9)
- 6.24 Escort staff should treat detainees with decency and respect throughout the process of removal without using inflammatory and derisive language. (5.10)
- 6.25 UKBA should agree with the Nigerian authorities' protocols for action in case of refusal by a detainee to leave the aircraft at the destination airport. (5.11)

## Good practice

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- 6.26 Detainees were allowed to make phone calls as soon as the plane touched down. Escorts assisted those detainees without mobiles to make calls. (5.12)