

An inspection of the use of contingency asylum accommodation – key findings from site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks

News story

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During the week of 15 February 2021, as part of ICIBI's [inspection of contingency asylum accommodation](#), inspectors from ICIBI and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) visited Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, spending two days at each site. The Independent Chief Inspector made a follow-up visit to Napier Barracks on 4 March.

[HMIP](#) is producing a detailed written report, which the Independent Chief Inspector will append to ICIBI's full inspection report on completion of this inspection. As well as Penally Camp and Napier Barracks, ICIBI's report will cover hotels and any other forms of contingency asylum accommodation. ICIBI's report and recommendations will be submitted to the Home Secretary and published in the usual way. Meanwhile, the points below, which have been shared with the Home Office, provide a high-level overview of what inspectors found during their site visits. The headings are those typically used by HMIP.

ICIBI's inspection of contingency asylum accommodation is ongoing and inspectors are continuing to gather, analyse and test written and oral evidence from the Home Office, the contracted third parties, national and local stakeholders, and asylum seekers who are or have been in contingency accommodation. While the public 'call for evidence' has closed, ICIBI is still keen to receive evidence, including the latest information, about contingency asylum accommodation in general and about specific sites, including Penally Camp and Napier Barracks.

Leadership and management

- Opening Penally Camp and Napier Barracks as contingency asylum accommodation, particularly doing so safely during a pandemic, presented substantial logistical and other challenges. Despite this, the Home Office gave its accommodation contractors less than two weeks to make each site operational.
- Local stakeholders who needed to set up essential services for residents, such as healthcare, were not consulted in advance of the Home Office taking the decision to proceed. They were given insufficient time to prepare before the first asylum seekers arrived and there seems to have been little understanding or regard on the Home Office's part of what impact this would have at the local level.
- In September/October 2020, Public Health England had advised the Home Office that opening multi-occupancy dormitory-style accommodation at Napier was not supported by current guidance, and both they and Public Health Wales expressed concerns about the COVID-safety of the accommodation. Both sites were opened before Public Health Wales and Public Health England recommendations had been actioned.
- Public Health England further advised that if the accommodation was to be used, the ability to isolate positive cases and/or establish effective cohorting arrangements was essential to containing any COVID-19 outbreak. Given the cramped communal conditions and unworkable cohorting at Napier, once one person was infected a large-scale outbreak was virtually inevitable. In our resident survey at Napier, none of those who responded felt they had been kept safe from COVID-19. At Penally, where overall numbers were lower and cohorts smaller, the vast majority still did not feel they were being kept safe from the risk of infection.
- The Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate (CPFSI) informed us of serious concerns about fire safety at Napier that had not been fully addressed at the time of the ICIBI/HMIP inspection visit. The work recommended by CPFSI at Penally had been largely completed.
- While COVID-19 restrictions had meant that some asylum seekers had been accommodated at Penally Camp and Napier Barracks for much longer than had been originally envisaged, the Home Office had been slow to recognise the impact on residents of prolonged isolation in accommodation that was not designed or intended for long-term stays.
- The resources, skills and assurance systems required to support long-term communal accommodation were inadequate at both sites:
 - On-site management structures were unclear, partly because of the multiple sub-contractors and partly because of inadequate oversight by the contracting companies.
 - Managers at both sites lacked the experience and skills to run large-scale communal accommodation.
 - The Home Office did not exercise adequate oversight at either site and Home Office staff were rarely present. There were fundamental failures of leadership and planning by the Home Office.

Safety

- We met many men who described feeling depressed and hopeless at their circumstances. In our resident survey, all of those who responded at Napier and the vast majority at Penally said they had felt depressed at some points. At both sites about a third of respondents said they had mental health problems; about a third of respondents at Napier said they had felt suicidal.
- We had serious safeguarding concerns in relation to Napier. There was inadequate support for people who had self-harmed. People at high risk of self-harm were located in a decrepit 'isolation block' which we considered unfit for habitation. Residents who may have been children were also housed in the same block pending an age assessment; in one case we were told that this had been for up to two weeks.
- Residents at both sites were normally able to come and go. The exception was during the major COVID-19 outbreak at Napier, when over a hundred people were confined to their billets for approximately four weeks and unable to go outside except to use the mobile toilets or showers. They were warned that they might be arrested if they left the camp. In at least one case, a resident was forcibly returned to the camp by the police.
- At both sites, residents described feeling trapped in poor conditions and feared that if they moved out they would jeopardise their only source of support and possibly their asylum cases.
- Residents at both camps, especially Napier, told us they had been shouted at and intimidated by protestors and members of the public who did not want them there and that this was another reason they did not want to leave the camp. While Napier was close to a town (Folkestone), Penally Camp was isolated and the nearest town (Tenby) was a long walk.

Respect

- The environment at both sites, especially Napier, was impoverished, run-down and unsuitable for long-term accommodation.
- Cleanliness at both sites was variable at best and cleaning was made difficult by the age of the buildings. Some areas were filthy.
- The accommodation contractor had made efforts to improve the facilities (for example, installing mobile shower and toilet units), and at the beginning of March 2021 work was in hand at Napier to reconfigure the interior of some blocks into smaller living units. However, the age and general condition of the buildings made the costs of more substantial refurbishment prohibitive given the uncertainty over how long they would be required as asylum accommodation.
- At Napier, the number of residents had reduced from almost 400 in mid-January 2021 to 62 in mid-February. Since December 2020, the number at Penally had reduced to c.80, having been double this at its height. The multi-occupancy billets at both sites were cramped, which made effective social distancing difficult, and inspectors heard that this had been impossible before the numbers were reduced.
- Most current residents had been in Penally or Napier for several months. They did not know how much longer they would be in the camp and this was

a major cause of distress. They had been told initially that they would be there for a few weeks. Over the months, they had been told various things about their stay and about moving on and now did not trust anything they heard. Residents told inspectors they did not understand why they were still in the camp while others had been moved out, and some believed (mistakenly) that it was in some way connected to the Home Office's view of the strength of their asylum claim, and the fact they had been in Penally or Napier would count against them.

- Most residents were awaiting a substantive asylum interview but did not have a date for this. Home Office communication with them was poor. It had only recently commenced video meetings with residents. These meetings did not provide information about individual asylum claims, which was what concerned residents most. The dearth of official information gave rise to misunderstandings and rumours, which had a negative effect on individuals and the collective mood.
- Managers did not systematically survey or consult residents.
- Most residents we spoke to said that onsite security and services staff were friendly and treated them with respect.
- All residents had a mobile phone throughout their stay and could access the internet, although WIFI at Penally had been poor until recently. They had little to do to fill their time, a lack of privacy, a lack of control over their day-to-day lives, and limited information about what would happen to them. These factors had had a corrosive effect on residents' morale and mental health.
- While there were some restrictions regarding access to the sites, mostly COVID-related, local voluntary groups were supporting residents at both camps, including with clothing and other necessities, by organising activities and signposting and facilitating access to legal representatives. Meanwhile, to supplement its contracted telephone helpline service, Migrant Help had arranged to have someone onsite at both sites.

Preparation for leaving the accommodation

- Most residents had been in hotel accommodation before being moved to either Penally or Napier. Typically, they received little notice (a matter of hours) of the plan to move them to one of the camps and no explanation of why. The same was true of moving them from Penally or Napier. Most were moved back to a hotel. At the beginning of March 2021, Napier residents were informed that they would all be relocated by 2 April. They were not told to where. Most did not believe it would happen and feared that if there were new arrivals before they left they could again become trapped by a new COVID-19 outbreak.
- There was little focus on helping residents to prepare for next steps, but the visiting agencies and charities provided useful practical support for those who were moving on.

Penally Camp Images

Napier Barracks Images

- [Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021.](#) (JPEG, 2.58MB)

- [Living accommodation at Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021.](#) (JPEG, 1.41MB)
- [Living/sleeping area, Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021.](#) (JPEG, 1.79MB)
- [Living/sleeping area \(photo 2\), Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021.](#) (JPEG, 2.21MB)
- [Isolation room, Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021](#) (JPEG, 1.42MB)
- [Isolation room \(photo 2\), Napier Barracks. 17 February 2021.](#) (JPEG, 1.55MB)

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[Change of British High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean: Mr Scott Furssedonn-Wood MVO](#)

Press release

Mr Scott Furssedonn-Wood MVO has been appointed British High Commissioner to Barbados, and non-resident High Commissioner to Dominica, Grenada, Antigua & Barbuda, St Vincent & the Grenadines, St Lucia and St Christopher & Nevis in succession to Ms Janet Douglas CMG.



Mr Scott Furssedonn-Wood MVO has been appointed British High Commissioner to Barbados, and non-resident High Commissioner to Dominica, Grenada, Antigua & Barbuda, St Vincent & the Grenadines, St Lucia and St Christopher & Nevis in succession to Ms Janet Douglas CMG who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service. Mr Furssedonn-Wood will take up his appointment in April 2021.

Full name: Scott Furssedonn-Wood

Married to: Elizabeth Furssedonn-Wood

Children: Two daughters, one son

Dates	Role
2017 to Present	Deputy Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
2016	FCO, Temporary Additional Head, EU Exit, Europe Directorate
2013 to 2016	Kolkata, Deputy High Commissioner
2010 to 2013	Washington DC, Head of Political Team
2008 to 2010	Washington DC, First Secretary – Strategic Threats
2006 to 2008	FCO, Private Secretary to the Minister of State for the Middle East & the Americas
2004 to 2006	Brussels, Head of European Parliament Section, UK Permanent Representation to the EU
2001 to 2003	Brussels, Second Secretary – Institutions, UK Permanent Representation to the EU
2000 to 2001	FCO, Head of Forced Marriage Unit, Consular Directorate
2000	Joined FCO

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[IWD spotlight on Executive Director, Bernice McNaught](#)

Bernice McNaught is Executive Director, Repayments and Customer Compliance at SLC

Technology careers are still often seen as being male-dominated and perhaps, not a traditional road to business leadership. But women are making headway in both tech and the boardroom, getting there through many different routes. What's the key? Follow what interests you and have the right support around you at the right point of your career.

I have benefited from very specific interventions from teachers, lecturers, managers who pushed and encouraged me to overcome the doubts we all have when it comes to our abilities. Indeed I have a lot to thank my guidance teacher Ms Duncan; without her support I wouldn't have considered studying science. She passionately believed that your choices in life should be based on your ability and not your gender.

I wasn't particularly interested in academic study, but LEAN (from Toyota) and systems thinking fascinated me. I spent the last year of my degree here in Scotland, followed by a PhD at Manchester, studying manufacturing and product development techniques in high tech industries. I loved the practical application of theory.

The completion of my PhD aligned with a period in the early '90s when large technology companies were hiring software developers in their droves, so it seemed natural to join Oracle as a developer and I spent almost 8 years in product development and latterly, on client projects. This led to a long stint at Deloitte where I was able to marry the technical skills with business and functional skills. Again, that marriage of learn and do (what we now call agile delivery) appealed to me.

What I didn't realise at the time was that I was developing some foundational skills which I still call upon today. Technology and engineering, both science topics, teach us to approach a problem or to design, build, test, measure a solution methodically and analytically, using proven techniques, keeping a constant eye on data at the heart of the process. Those skills serve me well in the various roles I play here at SLC, as the executive director in charge of SLC's repayments and customer compliance business, the change function and as the business sponsor of our transformation programme, Evolve, which is fundamentally a technology-enabled transformation. Both the business and the technical skills we need to exploit the new technologies we are implementing are a critical part of our transformation.

The people side is of course vital to both executive leadership and to transformation. That mostly comes with the experience I've gained as I've taken on more responsibility, working with teams here at SLC, seeing people develop and grow skills is a highly rewarding part of the job.

It is a broad mix of skills that are required to sustain us and allow us to thrive into the future. We live in a technology-enabled world, more women working their way through STEM careers will ensure that we have the best balance of diversity across the business and in the boardroom.

[All female Ambassadors posted to the Netherlands join influential Dutch SER Topvrouwen network](#)

On 8 March we celebrate International Women's Day, marking women's achievements and contributions to our societies. However, women still encounter significant obstacles. This year's theme for International Women's Day is to 'Choose to Challenge' and call out gender bias and inequality. The diplomatic community in the Netherlands and SER Topvrouwen are united in

their mission for equal representation of women in business and government. Investing in the potential of women and girls benefits the whole of society and we have a shared responsibility to build a more inclusive world.

Joanna Roper, British Ambassador to the Netherlands, says:

The UK and the Netherlands are close partners, working together to promote gender equality and inclusion in our own countries and around the world. As part of our EmbasShe initiative, we strive to achieve equality for women and girls in all aspects of life: access to education, equal pay, and representation in top positions across all sectors.

Caroline Holtgreffe, SER Topvrouwen Director, says:

SER Topvrouwen is proud that the ambassadors have joined the SER Top Women network. This connection contributes to our shared mission. And no doubt we can learn from and inspire each other!

Adia Sakiqi, Albanian Ambassador to the Netherlands, says:

I am privileged to chair such a powerful and fast-growing group of the Women Ambassadors to the Netherlands. Becoming part of SER Topvrouwen will take our group to another level, that of connectivity, as this network is there to inspire, support and empower.

About [SER Topvrouwen](#)

SER Topvrouwen endorses the importance of having a larger share of women at the top levels of business in the Netherlands. By including women with talent and ambition in our database, we want to stimulate the rise of women to top positions. The database is open to women with relevant work experience in business or public and semi-public organisations at administrative, management or executive level. The desire to enhance innovative capacity and achieve balanced decision-making and the broadest possible sensitivity to development in society means that gender diversity in companies belongs at the top of the agenda in the boardroom. SER Topvrouwen will involve all parties – companies, executive search agencies, men and women – in the debate about diversity and accelerating diversity.

The Women Ambassadors Group is a collective of female Ambassadors accredited to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The coordinator this year is the Albanian Ambassador to the Netherlands, H.E. Adia Sakiqi. The group organises events and highlights work by the female Ambassadors and like-minded organisations in the Netherlands.

About [British Embassy The Hague](#)

The British Embassy's EmbasShe campaign has been active on gender equality and female leadership since 2018. The campaign focuses facilitating conversation and opportunities within the Embassy and by working with external partners. The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is dedicated to inclusion and diversity in all areas of work. The Girls Education campaign is one of their important foreign policy priorities this year. British Ambassador to the Netherlands, H.E. Joanna Roper previously served as the FCDO's Special Envoy for Gender Equality.

[Proposed new byelaws to protect salmon stocks on the Severn](#)

The Environment Agency is urging anglers, netsmen and interested parties to have their say on proposed new byelaws that aim to protect the salmon and sea trout stocks on the River Severn and Severn estuary.

It is hoped that the proposed new measures, which will also protect stocks on the River Usk and Wye, will be in place for the next 10 years* and contribute to a reversal of the current decline of returning adult salmon numbers.

A consultation which seeks views on the Environment Agency's proposed measures to better manage salmon fishing on the Midlands rivers opens from 5 March 2021 and runs for 4 weeks.

Evidence shows an international decline in wild Atlantic salmon stocks. This consultation provides the opportunity to express views on the suggested byelaws to improve the chances of salmon survival and further increase numbers that can successfully spawn. Leading to recovery and the long term future sustainability of this iconic species.

The proposed new byelaws would:

- Prohibit the operation of the commercial draft net and putcher fisheries, and require the release of all salmon and sea trout caught by the lave nets in the Severn Estuary.
- The number of available lave net licences to be set at 22 through a new Net Limitation Order, to allow this heritage method to continue without impacting the fish stocks.
- Require mandatory catch and release of all salmon and sea trout caught by rod and line and lave nets.

- Restrict angling fishing methods in order to improve the handling and survival of released salmon.

Kevin Austin, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Natural Environment at the Environment Agency, said:

We are taking decisive action to protect salmon stocks by introducing rod and net fishery byelaws where necessary in order to protect salmon and dependent fisheries.

The decline in the numbers of wild salmon seen not just in English rivers but throughout the North Atlantic is of great concern and we are determined to protect the future of this important species. We must all work together to successfully protect this iconic fish for future generations.

Chris Bainger, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

It is essential we take urgent action now to prevent any further decline in our salmon stocks. Recent evidence has showed a significant reduction in returning adult salmon to the Severn, and levels are now below the set minimum conservation limits.

Following the introduction in 2019 of emergency regulations for salmon on the River Severn for both rod and net fisheries, the salmon stock is still in decline and fragile. Long lasting measures are now needed to provide greater protection to make sure those fisheries that continue to fish these stocks do so in a sustainable manner to support stock recovery as quickly as possible.

Chris continues:

We are not taking these steps lightly and understand the impact of the proposed byelaws may not be popular with some, but we believe we must act now, before it is too late.

The Environment Agency is encouraging all anglers to review the proposals and participate in the consultation and play a part in the recovery. The next generation should also be able to enjoy the benefits of sustainable salmon and sea trout fishing.

Reducing the taking of salmon is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger national programme to protect salmon stocks. Actions taken by the Environment Agency and its partners that contribute to protecting salmon stocks include removing barriers, improving water quality, minimising predation and implementing better agricultural practices and addressing

unsustainable water abstractions.

*With a review after 5 years.

Note to editors

- The Environment Agency is consulting on a River Severn Net Limitation Order and a proposed new and updated suite of byelaws to limit the exploitation of salmon by both rod and net fisheries in order to conserve salmon stocks and ensure the future sustainability of the Severn salmon fishery.
- You can view the consultation documents and respond [online](#).
- This consultation will be of interest to anyone who fishes for salmon and sea trout on the River Severn as well as those who are dependent upon salmon rod fishing to support or supplement their livelihood. This includes residents, businesses, recreational and commercial river users, charities, statutory organisations and members of the public.
- River Severn salmon populations have declined in recent years and are now falling below the Conservation Limit, the minimum target that is deemed necessary to sustain the populations at a sustainable level. Similar levels of declining salmon stock status have been observed on the River Usk and Wye. Salmon destined for these rivers are caught in the Severn estuary net fishery. All rivers are classified as being 'Probably At Risk'.
- In recent years Natural Resources Wales have introduced mandatory measures of 100% catch and release on all Welsh rivers. With further measures which include angling method restrictions to improve survival of rod caught salmon. There is also a prohibition of taking salmon from any net fisheries.
- The proposed new regulations are designed to protect salmon and sea trout stocks in the River Severn as well as those stocks on the River Usk and Wye which contribute adult salmon that support the Severn estuary net fishery. The proposed measures include: Severn Estuary and River Severn Salmon and Sea Trout Protection Byelaws 2021 and Environment Agency (Limitation of Severn Estuary Lave Net Fishing Licences in England) Order 2021.
- Responsible fishing provides a wonderful opportunity to connect with nature and feel the range of benefits doing so can bring. However, it is important to remember that if you decide to take up fishing, you must have a valid rod fishing licence and adhere to fishing byelaws and fishery rules.
- It's easy to buy a rod fishing licence [online](#).
- Rod fishing licence income is vital to the work of the Environment Agency to maintain, improve and develop fisheries. Revenue generated from rod fishing licence sales is reinvested to benefit angling, with work including tackling illegal fishing, protecting and restoring habitats for fish and improving facilities for anglers.