



Home Office

Detention Services Order 04/2018

Management and Security of the Night State

November 2024



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Document Details

Process: To provide information regarding the consistent standards on the management and security of operating an immigration removal centre (IRC), residential short term holding facility (RSTHF) or the Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA) at night (referred to as the “night state” in this DSO).

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Contains Mandatory Instructions

For Action: For all Home Office staff and contracted service providers operating in immigration removal centres (IRCs), pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHFs).

For Information: Detention Engagement Teams (whilst this DSO incorporates mandatory actions for Home Office responsible caseworkers, this DSO is for information only).

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Processes Affected: This DSO outlines instructions to ensure the safe and secure operation of an IRC, PDA or RSTHF during the night state.

Assumptions: All staff will have the necessary knowledge to follow these instructions.

Notes: N/A

Instruction

Introduction

1. This Detention Services Order (DSO) provides instructions and operational guidance for all Home Office staff and contracted service providers operating in IRCs, PDA and RSTHFs, for the period in which detained individuals are limited to a residential area and/or their individual rooms overnight within the centre.
2. For the purpose of this guidance, “centre” refers to IRCs, residential STHFs and the Gatwick PDA.
3. This DSO does not apply in Residential Holding Rooms (RHRs) or non-residential short-term holding facilities.
4. Two different Home Office teams operate in IRCs:
 - Detention Services Compliance team (Compliance team)
 - Immigration Enforcement Detention Engagement team (DET)

The Compliance team are responsible for all on-site commercial and contract monitoring work. The DETs interact with detained individuals face-to-face within the IRCs on behalf of responsible officers. They focus on communicating and engaging with people detained at IRCs, helping them to understand their cases and detention.

There are no DETs at the Gatwick PDA or RSTHFs. Some of the functions which are the responsibility of the DET in IRCs, are instead carried out by the contracted service provider in RSTHFs and overseen by the International and Returns Services (IRS) Escorting Contract Monitoring Team (ECMT). In the Gatwick PDA, the role of detention engagement is covered by the local compliance team.

Purpose

5. The night state is defined as the period when detained individuals are limited to their rooms or their residential units during the night. The use of the night state creates a clearly defined day/night routine and offers detained individuals the opportunity to rest in a quiet and private space in contrast with the constructive activities available during the daytime. This DSO outlines the general principles of how the night state should be operated across the estate to ensure a consistent approach is taken.
6. During the night state, the normal expectation is that the movement of detained individuals will be restricted to residential rooms, units, or areas (depending on the physical constraints of the individual centre, such as access to sanitation facilities).

7. This instruction does not apply to operational circumstances where detained individuals need to be in their rooms such as safety/security reasons or roll-count.

Policy

8. Rule 3(1) of the [Detention Centre Rules 2001](#) (the DC Rules), states that the purpose of centres is to provide for the secure but humane accommodation of detained persons in a relaxed regime, with as much freedom of movement and association as possible, consistent with maintaining a safe and secure environment, and to encourage and assist detained persons to make the most productive use of their time, whilst respecting in particular their dignity and the right to individual expression. DC Rule 39(1) states that security shall be maintained in centres, but with no more restriction than is required for safe custody and well-ordered community life. Although the Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018 do not contain equivalent provisions, these principles also apply to detention there.
9. The night state does not affect a detained individual's right to access healthcare services. Both emergency and routine healthcare interventions, treatments or checks during the night state, must be conducted by either escorting detained individuals to the healthcare facilities or by healthcare staff attending the detained individual's room.
10. In line with DC Rule 15(2)(c) and the published [Detention Services Operating Standards](#), all rooms in centres used as sleeping accommodation must be individually certified in writing as allowing the detained individual to contact an officer at any time – see [DSO 04/2003 'Accommodation: Lighting, Heating and Ventilation'](#). Rule 13(2)(c) of the [Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018](#), similarly requires that all rooms used as sleeping accommodation in RSTHFs must also be individually certified in writing as allowing detained individuals to communicate with an officer at any time.

Local procedures and impact assessments

11. Each contracted service provider must have in place local Night Operating Procedures that clearly define and justify the timings for night state. The Night Operating Procedures must be agreed between the contracted service provider manager and the Home Office Compliance Team Service delivery manager (grade G7 or above), or the RSTHF contract monitoring senior manager, and be set out in the centre's Local Security Strategy or Security Standard Operating Procedures.
12. A summary of how the centre operates during the night, the availability of services and the expectations of a detained individual's behaviour during night state, must be included in the centre's induction literature and explained to all detained individuals during the supplier induction process.
13. The following must be considered when agreeing the local Night Operating Procedures:

- The management and security of night state must balance the need to maintain safety and security with the dignity and welfare of detained individuals.
 - The duration of the night state, defined as the period when detained individuals are limited to their rooms or their residential units, during the night, which shall not exceed 9 hours. Depending on the layout of each centre, this must be the minimum time necessary to ensure the safety and security of detained individuals during the night and deliver a normal daily cycle in the centre. The duration of night state at each centre must also reflect the local assessments conducted as per paragraphs 11-14.
 - The earliest start and end times of night state.
14. The restrictions of night state could have a potential impact on several protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. An equalities assessment must be completed by a contracted service provider manager when developing or revising the centre's local Night Operating Procedures, and its findings must be approved by the local Home Office Compliance Team Service delivery manager, or RSTHF contract monitoring senior manager, when implemented or reviewed. This must include a consideration of any impact of the night state procedures on any protected characteristics¹, for example a detained individual's right to practice their religion whilst in detention. Any impact identified locally must be documented in the assessment, as well as any mitigating factors or reasonable adjustments adopted.
15. Reasonable adjustments that mitigate against any identified impact must be considered as part of the initial impact assessment on any of the protected characteristics. This should include:
- Where reasonable and appropriate, the location of a group of detained individuals in a residential area of the centre where the night state restrictions are better suited to their needs.
 - Consideration of extra support being provided to a group of detained individuals during night state, which may include increased monitoring during the night.
 - Consideration of room sharing arrangements in relation to a group of detained individuals that may benefit from either peer support or isolation during the night ([DSO 12/2012 Room Sharing Risk Assessment refers](#)).
 - Consideration of suitability of a group of detained individuals whose welfare, healthcare or support needs cannot be met by the local night state procedures – see [DSO 10/2024 Risk assessment and placement of individuals in the immigration removal estate](#).

¹ The Equality Act 2010 defines protected characteristics as: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race (includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality); religion or belief (includes lack of belief); sex; and sexual orientation.

16. The reasonable adjustments detailed at paragraph 15, must be considered towards mitigating impact against any protected characteristics of a defined group of detained individuals. Individual assessments of suitability and adjustments made to ensure the appropriate conditions of detention are covered at paragraph 18-19.
17. The Night Operating Procedures and Local Security Strategy, or Security Standard Operating Procedures, must cover specific night state contingencies for any appropriate incidents, such as escape, attempted escape, death in custody, fire, or any other contingency such as a loss of common services (water, electricity etc).

Safeguarding detained individuals during night state

18. The Night Operating Procedures must cover fully what arrangements must be in place for an effective handover of security and other information from staff on day shift to those on night shift. This should include arrangements for observing at-risk detained individuals such as:
 - Those on an open, post closure, or recently closed Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork (ACDT) (Assessment Care in Residence and Teamwork (ACRT) in the PDA). In accordance with [DSO 06/2008 - Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork \(ACDT\)](#), the local self-harm and suicide prevention policy statement must detail the protocols, actions or procedures needed to safeguard detained individuals managed under ACDT. These must include any additional safeguarding measures required during the night state.
 - Adults at Risk in detention. In accordance with [DSO 08/2016 – Management of Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention](#), a Vulnerable Adult Care Plan (VACP) must be considered for all detained individuals who have a condition that may affect their daily experience of detention. Where a detained individual requires additional support throughout the night, or reasonable individual adjustments to the night state procedures, such measures must be documented in the detained individuals VACP (for use in RSTHFs) and the local Compliance team, DET and responsible caseworker notified as detailed in DSO 08/2016.
 - Any other detained individuals on a higher than normal observation level for other reasons - such as being subject to Removal from Association, Temporary Confinement or for medication purposes, [as per DSO 02 2017 Removal from Association \(Detention Centre Rule 40\) and Temporary Confinement \(Detention Centre Rule 42\)](#). The Night Operating Procedures must also cover the provision of first aid during night state.
19. The Night Operating Procedures, local Security Strategy or Security Standard Operating Procedures must clearly state the local protocol that staff should follow if faced with a potentially life-threatening situation. Staff must have access to the local security protocols and be made aware of the implications of this for their role in maintaining security during the night state. All staff have a duty of care to detained

individuals, to themselves and to other staff. The preservation of life must take precedence and where there is, or appears to be, danger to life, then rooms may be unlocked without any further authority and an individual member of staff may assess the risks and enter the room on their own.

Room Sharing Risk Assessment (RSRA) (IRCs & Residential STHFs)

20. In accordance with [DSO 12/2012 Room Sharing Risk Assessment](#), the RSRA process is an essential tool to assist identifying risks to detained individuals when locked in a shared area. This area may be a room or a residential unit (where -detained individual movement is restricted to a corridor with communal sanitary facilities, for example).
21. Healthcare professionals in centres will complete a health screening process as part of reception procedures. Following this screening, a member of the healthcare team must complete the healthcare assessment part of the RSRA, recording any information gathered, either through observation or available in records (including medical records).
22. The local Night State Procedures must be considered when assessing the suitability of a detained individual sharing a room with another detained individual.
23. Where during the RSRA process, concerns are raised by contracted service provider or healthcare staff of a detained individual's suitability to cope with the local Night State Procedures, consideration must be given to a transfer request ([DSO 03/2016 Consideration of Detainee Placement in the Detention Estate](#) refers). In such cases, the detained individual's welfare must be managed by opening a VACP– see [DSO 08/2016 Management of Adults at Risk in Immigration Detention](#). Such concerns must be raised by contracted service provider staff with both local Home Office teams (where available at IRCs) and IRS (for RSTHFs) by completing a form IS 91 RA Part C.

Operational Instructions

Going into night state

24. The contracted service provider manager must ensure that the Local Security Strategy or Security Standard Operating Procedures contain clear guidance on the hand-over procedures that must take place before the centre can enter the night state. This should include:
 - A full roll check;
 - A documented briefing to the contracted service provider night staff of any ongoing or potential issues; and

- A documented briefing on detained individuals considered “at risk” who may require additional support or a higher than normal level of observation during the night;

During the night state

25. The local Night Operating Procedures must cover what security checks need to be carried out by night contracted service provider staff. These include roll checks and ensuring all doors, gates and room doors are secure.
26. As set out in [DSO 05/2015 ‘Reporting and communicating incidents out of hours’](#) the local DS Compliance Team on call officer must be on call throughout the night. They must be informed immediately of any serious event at the centre such as an emergency discharge to hospital or use of Rule 40/42 or 35/37, in accordance with [DSO 02/2017 ‘Removal from Association and Temporary Confinement’](#). The contracted service provider must complete an IS 91 RA Part C and share with DETs, who will send to the caseworker inbox when they arrive on duty the next working day.
27. The DETs have reviewed the process of uploading and sharing Part Cs. DET will upload to ATLAS and will contact DEPMU
28. There must be local arrangements set out in the local security protocols for the discharge and reception of detained individuals during the night.
29. On handover from the day shift, contracted service provider night staff must receive a clear briefing on any detained individuals who are identified as requiring a high level of individual observations. This may include detained individuals on an open or post closure ACDT plan, those considered a high security risk, for healthcare reasons, or the need for regular observations or consultations during the night. These actions must be recorded by contracted service provider staff in the relevant documentation such as an open ACDT plan or care plan. See paragraphs 18-19.
30. Staff should be aware of the local contingency plans which set out how to manage various types of incidents and are competent to carry out such plans, if required. Night staff must be fully briefed and trained in the establishment’s local incident contingency plans. This should cover the procedures for summoning assistance (from both internal and external sources), containment of the incident (where possible) and, in extreme circumstances, the evacuation of residential accommodation. The contracted service provider Duty Manager and the local Compliance Team on-call manager must be informed immediately if an incident occurs to comply with the establishment’s contingency plans.
31. Where a call system is installed, the contracted service provider must confirm that it is capable of attracting the attention of staff. Where an alternative means to summon assistance is relied upon, each room must provide detained individuals with an effective means of communication with staff. There must always be a staff presence in each

residential area or unit at all times, to ensure an appropriate and timely response in case of an emergency. Contracted service provider night managers must visit areas of the centre where night staff are based at least once a month, and such visits must be recorded in the detained individual's file and made available for audit by the local Home Office Compliance Team. Records are to be made only in cases where the visit involves a specific resident (e.g. CSU, ACDT, care plan, or welfare concern).

32. To maintain a safe and secure environment, the Night Operating Procedures must clearly state how many staff must be present before a detained individual's accommodation can be unlocked.

Coming out of night state

33. Contracted service providers must ensure that the Local Security Strategy, or Security Standard Operating Procedures, contains clear guidance on the hand-over procedures that must take place before the centre can come out of the night state. This should include:
- A full roll check;
 - A verbal briefing to the oncoming day staff of any ongoing or potential issues;
 - A verbal briefing on detained individuals considered "at risk" detailing their behaviour and any additional support that they received during the night; and
 - A complete log of any incidents that may have occurred ensuring that all hand-over paperwork is properly completed and signed for.

Self-Audit

34. An annual self-audit of this DSO is required by contracted service providers to ensure that the processes are being followed. This audit should be made available to the Home Office on request.
35. Compliance teams must also conduct annual audits against their respective responsibilities stated within this DSO for the same purpose.

Revision History

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
December 2018	Shadia Ali	General update	December 2020

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
November 2024	Akash Shourie	Updated to reflect: The roll out of Home Office teams and clarification of individual responsibilities; Minor updates to wording and standard changes; Addition of self-auditing requirements; Addition of IRC definition of the night state to ensure clarity.	November 2026