



Home Office

Detention Services Order 06/2018

Accommodation: Lighting, Heating and Ventilation

March 2026



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Document Details

Process: To provide guidance on the minimum requirements for rooms used as sleeping accommodation, removal from association, temporary confinement and application of special control or restraint in Immigration Removal Centres, residential STHFs and the Pre-Departure Accommodation (PDA) and their certification.

Implementation Date: December 2018 (reissued March 2026)

Review Date: March 2028

Version: 3.0

Contains Mandatory Instructions

For Action: Detention and Escorting (Compliance) and supplier staff in immigration removal centres (IRC), Gatwick pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (STHF).

For Information: Detention Engagement Team

Owner: Frances Hardy, Corporate Operations and Oversight Team

Contact Point: Shadia Ali, Corporate Operations and Oversight Team

Processes Affected: Accommodation standards

Assumptions: N/A

Notes: The minimum accommodation standards in this DSO were determined in consultation with expert independent contractors and industry guidelines.

Instruction

Introduction

1. This DSO sets out the measurable standards for the certification of rooms that can be applied consistently across immigration removal centres (IRC), pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (STHF).
2. References to “centre” in this document cover IRCs, residential STHFs and PDA. ‘IRC centre manager’ refers to the supplier’s Centre Manager.
3. References to the ‘Home Office Contract Monitor’ refers to the Contract Monitor at Escorting Contract Monitoring Team (ECMT) and/or the local Home Office Contract Monitor at an IRC.
4. The minimum standards for accommodation assume the normal usage of non-smoking residential rooms below their maximum certified capacity.

Purpose

5. The purpose of this instruction is to ensure that all accommodation provided at IRCs and STHFs is compliant with Rule 15 of the Detention Centre Rules 2001, Rule 13 of the Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018 and published Operating Standards.

Policy

6. Rule 15 (1) of the Detention Centre Rules 2001 states that the Secretary of State must “satisfy himself that in every detention centre sufficient accommodation is provided for all detained persons” and provides that no room in an IRC shall be used as sleeping accommodation unless the Secretary of State (in practice the local Home Office Contract Monitor) has certified that:
 - its size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings are adequate for health
 - it has adequate storage facilities (consistent with the interests of security and safety and it allows a detained individual to communicate with an officer at any time.
7. All accommodation used for removal from association and temporary confinement must be certified in writing by the DS Manager (Grade 7) as “adequate for health” in line with DC Rule 15(3) or “adequate for health and safety” in line with STHF Rule 13(3). Specifically, it must have size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings adequate for the maintenance of health, and there must be provision for the person to communicate at any time with an officer (see DSO 02/2017: [Removal from association and temporary confinement](#))

8. The Detention Services operating standards manual on accommodation minimum auditable requirements states that lighting, heating and ventilation must be to the standards described in this order.
9. Rule 13 of the Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018 provides that no room in a residential STHF must be used as sleeping accommodation unless the Secretary of State (in practice the Home Office Contract Monitor) has certified that:
 - its size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings are adequate for health
 - it has adequate storage facilities (subject to the security of the STHF and the safety of detained individuals and other persons);
 - it allows detained individuals to communicate with staff at any time.
10. Any room in a residential STHF that is used for the purposes of removal from association (under Rule 35 of the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules) or temporary confinement (under Rule 37 of the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules) must be similarly certified that its size, lighting, heating, ventilation and fittings are adequate for health and safety and it allows detained individuals to communicate with staff at any time.
11. Certificates must specify the maximum number of detained persons who may be accommodated in any particular room.
12. Rule 13 of the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules 2018 does not apply to non-residential STHFs (holding rooms).

Operating Standards for Immigration Removal Centres

13. When determining the minimum standards for lighting, heating and ventilation, the following professional guidelines were consulted:
 - CIBSE Lighting Guide 9 for communal residential buildings
 - CIBSE Guide B for Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
 - CIBSE Guide G for Public Health
 - Health and Safety Executive (HSE.GOV) guidance for Ventilation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
14. Further information may be obtained from the Detention Services Operating Standards on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/detention-services-operating-standards-manual>.

Audit Requirements

15. Supplier Centre Managers must ensure that each residential room used to accommodate detained individuals has appropriate heating, lighting and ventilation and is of adequate size for the number of detained individuals it is approved for.

16. Each new room built within a centre, as well as any work that structurally changes its function for the purposes of Rules 15, 40, 42 and 43 of the Detention Centre Rules and Rules 13, 35 and 37 of the Short-Term Holding Facility Rules, must be commissioned or audited by a specialist contractor to ensure compliance with Building Regulations and relevant CIBSE Guides.
17. Any alterations, modifications or replacements to any room that may impact the specifications of heating, lighting and ventilation, or that alter the operational or baseline capacity of the room must be certified by the Home Office Contract Monitor.
18. If there are no planned changes to any of the services, such as lighting, ventilation, heating, air conditioning, plumbing, or operational capacity, auditing and re-certification of all rooms in every centre is required every 5 years.
19. The supplier Centre Manager must ensure that all certificates are kept up to date and that the condition of detained individuals' accommodation is checked on a regular basis. Accommodation that is failing to meet the required standard must be taken out of use immediately. Copies of all the certification documents must be retained by the supplier and Home Office Contract Monitor and be provided on request.

Room Certification

20. The Home Office Contract Monitor will only certify a room as sleeping accommodation or Rule 40/42 accommodation when he/she is satisfied that the requirements of Rule 15 of the DC Rules 2001 and STHF Rules 2018, have been met.
21. It is the supplier Centre Manager's responsibility to retain all certification documents and to provide evidence to the Home Office Contract Monitor that the minimum requirements are met. To assist the certification exercise suppliers should submit with their certification request:
 - The commissioning documents to any contractor undertaking building or renovation works.
 - Evidence the rooms submitted for certification have been audited in accordance with the standards contained in this order.

Operational Capacity

22. Accurate recording and reporting of the availability of accommodation is essential for population management purposes. All changes to accommodation must be agreed and approved by the supplier's Centre Manager and the Home Office Contract Monitor.
23. Supplier's Centre Managers are responsible for determining and approving operational capacity based on their knowledge of the centre regime and

infrastructure. A record must be maintained of the number of rooms available at the Centre using the following forms:

- Room Certificate (Annex A) – this is the room certificate required by Detention Centre Rule 15 and Short -Term Holding Facility Rule 13. It comprises of an itemised list of all accommodation certified for use, excluding any rooms used for Removal for Association, Temporary Confinement or application of Special Control and Restraint.
- Summary of Accommodation (Annex B) – this accompanies the room certificate and provides totals of certified accommodation down to individual unit or residential areas level.
- Maintenance of Security and Safety (Annex C) – this form lists all accommodation suitable for use under Rule 40, 42 of the Detention Centre Rules 2001 and Rules 35 and 37 of the Short-term Holding Facility Rules 2018.

The accommodation standards

Minimum room standards

24. When certifying the basic standard for the minimum amount of living space that a detained individual should be afforded in a room, consideration should be made of the requirements for a single-occupancy room and that of a double (or multiple) occupancy room.
25. Each room used for the confinement of detained individual must be of adequate size for the number of detained individuals it is approved for and must provide occupants with an effective means of communication with staff.
26. Each room must provide sufficient space for furniture and detained individual activities for every occupant. This includes (but is not limited to):
 - At least one single bed (or bunk bed)
 - Storage for personal possessions
 - A chair and use of a table
 - Circulation and movement
27. It is the responsibility of the centre supplier to ensure that appropriate measures have been taken to provide a basic level of decency of accommodation and which might reasonably be thought to meet the needs of a detained individual occupying a room.
28. The room certification inspection should aim to confirm that the services are in working condition. If necessary, supplementary measures should be in place and listed.

All accommodation must have heating, lighting and ventilation to the technical standards detailed below.

Lighting

29. According to CIBSE LG9 guidelines, for bedroom areas, artificial lighting must provide up to an average of 100 lux at bedhead. Should the room be provided with a desk, an additional 150 lux should be allowed, while all lamps need to have good colour rendering with a warm temperature of 2700 K or 3000 K; cool whites of 4000 K and above are not recommended in living areas. Curtain, blinds or other ways of providing for privacy at night can be installed so long as a security risk assessment considers whether they introduce ligature points to the room.

30. The principles for lighting bathrooms and toilets are the same whether they are individual or communal. Wiring regulations (BSI, 2008b) govern the type of lights used in wet areas while waterproof lights (IP44 or better) are required in areas near baths and showers. Any lighting directly above showers is recommended to be IP65 waterproof.
31. In line with CIBSE LG9, the suggested lux level for toilets and bathrooms is 100 lux and 150 lux accordingly.
32. The light levels may be verified by a handheld light meter. The meter must be set down; the measurer and their observer must stand aside while the temperature and the IP rating is normally specified by the lamp manufacturer and can be found on the according datasheets.

Lighting audit standard

33. As a minimum, when certifying or re-certifying a room, the Home Office Contract Monitor should be provided with evidence of the following checks to lighting were conducted by the centre supplier or expert contractor:
 - There is an approved light fitting installed, providing the room with the required lux level.
 - The diffuser is not damaged or defaced such that it would significantly reduce light output. Scratching of the diffuser will have little effect on light output and can be ignored. Painting over or sticking items to the diffuser will have a significant effect and the diffuser should be replaced if not possible to clean. Any diffuser with holes burnt through should be replaced before the room is certified for use.
 - The light fitting operates. Check that all lamps including the night-light can be switched-on and off.
 - Windows can be blocked to provide for privacy at night

Heating

34. According to CIBSE Guide B, rooms must be maintained at a minimum temperature of $20^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 1^{\circ}\text{C}$. The maximum temperature must not exceed 28°C . A maximum temperature design risk (failure rate) of 30 days in a 10 year period is acceptable. Where comfort conditioning using mechanical cooling is necessary, the summertime design temperature of $23^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$ must be used.

Heating audit standard

35. When certifying or re-certifying a room, the Home Office Contract Monitor should be provided, as a minimum, with evidence that the following checks to heating were conducted by the centre supplier or expert contractor:
 - There is a heating system available in the room.

- The heat emitter (pipe coil [with or without shroud], radiator, radiant panel, mechanical heating through supply vents or under-floor heating) is clear from obstructions (but note that beds and lockers that have been fitted adjacent to radiator pipes can be disregarded) and;
- The heating system operates. Clearly this can only be physically checked during the 'heating season'. For inspections at other times of the year the Inspector should rely on records that the building's heating system operated during the previous heating season

Ventilation

36. All suppliers will continue to reference the relevant reports from the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), and the extant guidance available when updating their local policies
37. In line with CIBSE Guide B, rooms with no natural ventilation requiring mechanical supply and extract ventilation, the minimum fresh air rate must be 10 litres/second/person. For certification purposes, a competent person who is appointed by centre supplier must confirm the fresh air rate in accordance with CIBSE Guides and the Building Regulations Part F1 recommendations.
38. Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors will be made available in staff communal areas within the immigration removal estate (IRCs, residential and non-residential STHF) enabling staff to visibly identify poorly ventilated areas not meeting the baseline standard and take practical, immediate action to remedy this. Use of the CO₂ monitors should be in line with manufacturers guidance and in accordance with Government Health and Safety Executive guidance on ventilation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (see [ventilation of indoor spaces](#))
39. Following a visual inspection, there must not be an accumulation of moisture that could lead to mould growth or pollutants that could cause a health hazard.
40. All suppliers will undertake an evaluation of their ventilation systems with regards to the guidance set out in CIBSE Guide B and DSO (09/2021) Guidance for Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), Residential Short-Term Holding Facilities (RSTFs) and escorts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following assessment, suppliers will implement measures, with to the regard the guidance on ventilation and document the measures taken.

Ventilation audit standard

41. When certifying or re-certifying a room, the Home Office Contract Monitor should be provided, as a minimum, with evidence that the following checks to ventilation were conducted by the centre supplier or expert contractor:
- For a room with operable windows, that the windows open and close.

- For a room with fixed window ventilators check that the perforated grilles operate correctly between open and closed positions.
 - For a room with a separate ventilator through the wall, check that the perforated grille is clear and that, where fitted with an integral fan, that the fan operates.
 - For room with mechanical extract ventilation, the extract system is operating.
 - For rooms containing a WC cubicle, the WC area should have a separate extract located in the WC.
42. The supplier must conduct a visual inspection of the to confirm no signs of mould growth and dampness on walls and other surfaces – having taken into consideration whether the previous occupant had blocked air vents, or whether the room has been recently subjected to inundation, flooding etc
43. The supplier must ensure all audit completion and recommendations are acted upon, including any new or routine maintenance is delivered according to system requirements. The supplier should arrange for maintenance to be delivered by external ventilation system specialists every 5 years. If there is a change to the system specification, or technical usage, the supplier should consider whether it is necessary to require the subsequent maintenance to be delivered by external ventilation system specialists. The supplier must document any measures implemented following any maintenance.

Emergency Assistance

44. All detained individuals must have the means to summon assistance when necessary.
45. Where a call system is installed, the centre supplier or expert contractor 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.
46. The Home Office Contract Monitor must be satisfied that this alternative means of communication is adequate and effective.

Other services

47. Other services which may be found in some room, such as power supplies, TV or radio aerial outlets, showers, etc, do not form part of the room certification process.

Glossary

Lighting	A mechanism or device that emits light, to illuminate The unit for lighting is Lux
Heating	Equipment or device used to provide heat to a room or building
Ventilation	The provision of fresh air to a room or building
Air Conditioning	A system used for controlling humidity, ventilation, temperature to a building – typically to maintain a cool atmosphere in warm conditions
Operational Capacity	The maximum occupancy that a building can operate whilst delivering adequate and basic requirements
Baseline Capacity	This is the sum total of all certified accommodation in an establishment
CIBSE	Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers

Revision History

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
January 2017	J Domingos	Reformat	January 2019
December 2018	S Ali	An update to the minimum accommodation standards	December 2020
September 2022	A Dhariwal	An update to the ventilation requirements	September 2024
March 2026	S Patel	Paragraph 7 has been replaced to align with paragraph 40 of DSO 02 2017 to reflect current processes.	March 2028