

# Healthcare in Yarl's Wood

## Westminster Hall Debate, Wednesday 6 January 2016 at 1630hrs

A debate on healthcare in Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre has been scheduled for Wednesday 6 January 2016. The Member in charge of the debate is Kate Osamor.

The proceedings of this debate may be watched on [parliamentlive.tv](http://parliamentlive.tv)

## 1. Background

[Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre](#) is a residential centre which predominantly houses adult women as well as adult family groups who are awaiting immigration clearance or removal from the United Kingdom. Built in 2001 and run by Group 4, in 2007 the management of Yarl's Wood was taken over by Serco.

[Healthcare within Yarl's Wood](#) was provided by Serco and is now run by [G4S Medical Services](#) who were awarded the healthcare contract on 1 September 2014. There are a range of healthcare professionals employed on site including doctors, nurses and a dental team. According to Serco, all residents are seen by a healthcare practitioner upon arrival to the centre to assess their physical and mental health needs. They are also offered an appointment with a GP. Serco say they work closely with the local NHS Trust in order to provide care which cannot be given at Yarl's Wood.

In March 2015, Channel 4 News carried out an [undercover investigation](#) into Yarl's Wood. This investigation uncovered allegations of mistreatment of residents by the centre's staff and suggestions of substandard healthcare provision, particularly for pregnant women. In response to the Channel 4 investigation, [Serco announced](#) that they had appointed the former barrister and director of the NHS, Kate Lampard, to conduct an independent review into Serco's work at Yarl's Wood.

Likewise, a [report by the Independent Monitoring Board](#) (IMB) was highly critical of the ongoing detention of pregnant women and of women with serious mental health problems. In their [2014 Annual Report](#), the IMB also reported, 'serious concerns about the Healthcare provision at Yarl's Wood. The department is under-staffed and lacked proper management for much of 2014. New commissioning arrangements and a change of Healthcare contractor on 1<sup>st</sup> September exacerbated the problems. GP hours have been cut and the counselling service withdrawn.' (paras 4.5-4.6)

Yarl's Wood was inspected by HMIP in 2015. In his [report](#), Nick Hardwick, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, said, 'Yarl's Wood has deteriorated since our last inspection and the needs of the women held have grown. In my view, decisive action is needed to ensure women are only detained as a last resort.' (p.7)

In February 2015, the Home Secretary announced that she had commissioned an [independent review](#) of the policies and procedures affecting the welfare of those held in immigration removal centres. This review, being conducted by Stephen Shaw, the former Prisons and Probations Ombudsman, is expected to be completed in the near future. It follows on from another Home Office commissioned review: the [Tavistock Institute's Review of Mental Health Issues in Immigration Removal Centres](#).

The National Audit Office is also carrying out an [investigation into Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre](#), due to report in the spring.

## 2. Useful Links and Further Information

House of Commons Library briefing, [\*Immigration Detention in the UK: an overview\*](#), 7294

House of Commons Library briefing, [\*Ending Child Immigration Detention\*](#), 5591

House of Commons Library briefing, [\*Immigration and Asylum: changes made by the Coalition Government 2010-2015\*](#), 5829

HM Inspectorate of Prisons, [\*Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre\*](#), August 2015  
[report of unannounced inspection and Service Improvement Plan]

Independent Monitoring Board, [\*Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre\*](#), Annual Report 2014

Care Quality Commission, [\*Yarl's Wood Immigration Detention Centre\*](#), CQC Profile

## 3. Parliamentary Business

### 3.1 Parliamentary Questions

#### Immigrants: Detainees [[HL4492](#)]

##### Asked on 10 December 2015 by Lord Roberts of Llandudno

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people are detained in each Immigration Detention Centre.

##### Answered on 21 December 2015 by Lord Bates

The table below provides the latest published information for people detained in the detention estate by centre as at 30 September 2015, the latest date for which published figures are available.

##### People in detention as at 30 September 2015, by place of detention.

Total	3,531
Brook House IRC	414
Campsfield House IRC	277
Colnbrook IRC	342
Dover IRC	249
Dungavel IRC	202
Harmondsworth IRC	601
Morton Hall IRC	386
The Verne IRC	509
Tinsley House IRC	112
Yarl's Wood IRC	386
Colnbrook STHF	21
Larne House STHF	6
Pennine House STHF	26
Cedars PDA	0

IRC = Immigration Removal Centre, STHF = Short Term Holding Facility, PDA = Pre Departure Accommodation.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics on the number of people detained in the United Kingdom for immigration purposes, within the Immigration Statistics release. Data relating to people in detention are available in tables dt\_01 to dt\_13\_q in Immigration Statistics: July – September 2015 on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/series/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>.

Published figures on people detained in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers include those held in short term holding facilities, pre departure accommodation and immigration removal centres. Figures exclude those held in police cells, Prison Service establishments, short term holding rooms at ports and airports (for less than 24 hours), and those recorded as detained under both criminal and immigration powers and their dependants.

### Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Alarms [[17458](#)]

**Asked on 24 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) average and (b) longest recorded waiting time was between a detainee at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre sounding the emergency alarm in their room and an officer arriving to assist them in each of the last three years.

**Answered on 2 December 2015 by James Brokenshire**

The information requested on waiting times is not collected centrally by either the Home Office or Serco so this information cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

### Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Hunger Strikes

[[16876](#)]

**Asked on 18 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women held in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre have refused to eat for one or more consecutive days in 2015.

**Answered on 2 December 2015 by James Brokenshire**

For the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015 provisional management information shows that 84 women were recorded as refusing food or fluid at Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre.

### Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Pregnant Women

[[16596](#)]

**Asked on 17 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what provisions are in place to safeguard the welfare of pregnant women in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre.

**Answered on 2 December 2015 by James Brokenshire**

Pregnant women are not normally detained. The only exceptions to this general rule are where removal is imminent and medical advice does not suggest the woman's baby is due before the expected removal date.

Fitness to travel by air is assessed on a case by case basis using guidance from the International Air Transportation Association (IATA). The guidance states that for a single, uncomplicated pregnancy, travel could be appropriate without a medical certificate up to 37 weeks.

Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre has a dedicated Care Suite that offers enhanced care to vulnerable and pregnant women, staffed by a dedicated female member of staff. Midwives from NHS Bedford Hospital Trust visit the centre once a week and the centre's GP or nurses can be accessed 7 days a week and can refer any specific concerns to the ante natal clinic, Early Pregnancy Unit in hospital or other appropriate service if necessary. The centre also has a Pregnancy Liaison Officer who provides a range of support and welfare services to pregnant detainees.

## Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Hunger Strikes

[\[16553\]](#)

**Asked on 17 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women detained in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre went on hunger strike in 2015.

**Answered on 2 December 2015 by James Brokenshire**

For the period 1 January 2015 to 30 June 2015 provisional management information shows that 84 women were recorded as refusing food or fluid at Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre (IRC).

## Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Hospitals [\[16551\]](#)

**Asked on 17 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women taken to hospital from Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre have been handcuffed in transit in each of the last six months.

**Answered on 2 December 2015 by James Brokenshire**

Provisional management information showing the number of women who have been handcuffed when taken to hospital from Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre over the requested period is detailed in the table below:

Month	Number of Handcuffed Hospital Moves
May	0
June	0
July	0
August	0
September	1
October	6

The increased figure in October 2015 was not due to any change in policy. These cases have been reviewed by the Home Office Use of Force Monitor to ensure that the use of handcuffs was appropriate. The review established that each case had been subject to an individual risk assessment, in accordance with standard policy, and that handcuffs were used on the basis of that outcome of that assessment.

## Immigration Detention of Pregnant Women

[\[HC Deb 26 November 2015 c1486\]](#)

**Mrs Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con):** What discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on immigration detention of pregnant women.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Karen Bradley):** Published Home Office policy states that pregnant women should not usually be detained unless there is a prospect of early safe removal. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary asked Stephen Shaw, the former prisons and probation ombudsman for England and Wales, to review the detention of vulnerable individuals. His report and the Government response will be published before the Immigration Bill completes its passage through Parliament.

**Mrs Spelman:** I welcome the Minister's statement. In 2014, 99 pregnant women were detained at Yarl's Wood, and I understand that there are some remaining cases. Will the Minister use her good offices to expedite those cases?

**Karen Bradley:** I will make sure that the Home Office looks carefully at all the cases my right hon. Friend has raised. I repeat that pregnant women should not routinely be detained. The Home Office is currently considering Stephen Shaw's review on detainee welfare, and we will publish his report before the Immigration Bill completes its passage.

**Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab):** I agree with the right hon. Member for Meriden (Mrs Spelman). This is a big problem, but it is about the providers. What discussions will the Minister have with Serco, Mitie, G4S and other providers about the detention of pregnant women?

**Karen Bradley:** The Home Office has regular discussions with all providers to make sure that appropriate treatment is given to all vulnerable people held in detention. I repeat that the Stephen Shaw review will be published shortly.

## Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Mental Health Services [[16875](#)]

**Asked on 18 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what proportion of detainees held in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre are receiving medication for mental health problems; and what proportion of those detainees have had their dosage increased since being held in detention.

**Answered on 25 November 2015 by Alistair Burt**

Information on the number of detainees who are prescribed a particular medicine or any changes in prescriptions is not collected centrally.

It is essential that any person detained within the immigration detention estate receives medical attention appropriate to their clinical needs. Health professionals should assess and keep under review the medicines requirements for each individual to determine the best course of action for that patient, taking into account their views and preferences.

Health providers at Yarl's Wood have now established a Health and Wellbeing Group for detainees in recognition of the anxiety levels that many detainees exhibit when they arrive in the establishment. This group supports the detainees to feel less disempowered in their environment and, as such, can pre-empt the escalation of anxiety which when not acknowledged, can lead to more serious mental health presentations.

## Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre [[16500](#)]

**Asked on 16 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information she holds on the likely publication date for the independent review of Yarl's Wood, commissioned by Serco.

**Answered on 24 November 2015 by James Brokenshire**

Serco intend to publish the main findings of the report by the end of the year.

## Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Self-harm [[16438](#)]

**Asked on 16 November 2015 by Kate Osamor**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of women detained in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre in the last year have (a) attempted to or (b) inflicted harm upon themselves.

**Answered on 24 November 2015 by James Brokenshire**

Published statistics for the period July 2014 to June 2015 show that 1,501 women entered Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre as the first place of detention. Provisional management information for the same time period shows that there were 54 incidents of self-harm requiring medical treatment at Yarl's Wood that involved women.

These numbers do not necessarily equate to the number of detainees requiring medical treatment. An individual may have received medical treatment on more than one occasion, therefore a maximum of 54 women could have received medical treatment for self harm, the equivalent of 3.6% of the total female population that entered Yarl's Wood for the specified period.

## 3.2 Early Day Motion

### [\[EDM 130\]](#) Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre

Session: 2015-16, 15 June 2015

Primary Sponsor: Kate Osamor, Signatures: 51

That this House notes the work of and problems in Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, and especially the poor treatment of women detainees by Serco; is concerned that despite this, Serco's contract has been renewed; calls on the Home Secretary to reassess the entire detention process so that radical changes to the current system can be made; and urges an end to the practice of indefinite detention immediately.

## 3.3 Debates

### Backbench Business: Immigration Detention

On 10 September 2015, a backbench business debate was held on the motion:

That this House supports the recommendations of the report of the Joint Inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration, The Use of Immigration Detention in the United Kingdom; has considered the case for reform of immigration detention; and calls on the Government to respond positively to those recommendations.

Many Members' contributions in this debate concerned Yarl's Wood and the detention of women and children at the centre, with some Members calling for Yarl's Wood to be closed. The full text of this debate may be read in Hansard at [HC Deb 15 Sept 2015 c559](#).

### Adjournment Debate: Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre

On 10 February 2010, Alistair Burt led an adjournment debate on Yarl's Wood. This debate took place a week after a protest begun at the centre over conditions and the asylum process.

The full text of this debate may be read in Hansard at [HC Deb 10 Feb 2010 c1006](#).

## 4. Media Articles

The following is a selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate. Please note the Library is not responsible for the views expressed in, or the accuracy of, external content.

**IB Times, 17 December 2015**

[International Migrants Day: 'Yarl's Wood was like being tortured for a second time'](#)

**Independent, 1 December 2015**

[The stories of women I met at Yarl's Wood show how British detention laws remain the most barbaric in the EU](#)

**Telegraph, 11 September 2015**

[MPs: 'The UK needs to drastically change the way it detains immigrants'](#)

**Telegraph, 4 September 2015**

[Inside Yarl's Wood: 'My disabled wife was forced to crawl on the floor to get food'](#)

**Telegraph, 20 August 2015**

[Inside the UK's worst detention centre: 'Hell must be better than that place'](#)

**Channel 4 News, 12 August 2015**

[Yarl's Wood detention centre becomes 'a national concern'](#)

**Telegraph, 12 August 2015**

[Inside the UK's worst detention centre: 'Ten weeks of hell for fleeing forced marriage'](#)

**ITV News, 12 August 2015**

[Yarl's Wood immigration detention centre 'a national concern', says prisons watchdog](#)

**Independent, 12 August 2015**

[Yarl's Wood conditions and treatment deteriorated significantly since 2013](#)

**BBC News, 3 July 2015**

[Yarl's Wood self-harm: Medical charity concerned over incidents](#)

**Mirror, 3 July 2015**

[Yarl's Wood detainees regularly self harming to the point of needing medical attention](#)

**BBC News, 10 June 2015**

[Yarl's Wood: Pregnant and vulnerable women 'wrongly detained'](#)

**Guardian, 9 June 2015**

[Yarl's Wood holding vulnerable women for too long, say monitors](#)

**Guardian 30 March 2015**

[End the detention of pregnant women at Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre](#)

**Guardian, 3 March 2015**

[Locking up immigrants diminishes us all](#)

**Channel 4 News, 2 March 2015**

[Yarl's Wood: undercover in the secretive immigration centre](#)