Staff culture in immigration detainee escorting

[redacted]
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

From April to August 2023, the detainee escorting staff survey (DESS) was made available online to all Mitie, Care & Custody staff employed on the immigration detainee escorting contract via a link on their work email. This online dissemination followed an earlier, in-person distribution of the paper survey at Manston Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF), and at Spectrum House and the Gatwick Vehicle Base, and an in-person testing of the online link at the Kent Intake Unit in February and March that year.

In total, 170 employees completed the survey. The return rate was 100% when the survey or the link was distributed in-person, suggesting that future iterations of the survey would be enhanced by direct engagement from a research team. Among the total, 162 people specified in which part of the contract they worked: 107 from in-country escorting (ICE) and 55 from overseas escorting (OSE). Those based at Manston were counted as part of ICE.

Participants included all ranks within the organisation, however those in management grades were over-represented. Thus, while a majority (62%) of respondents identified as a Detainee Custody Officer (DCO) or as a Senior Detainee Custody Officer (SDCO), this sum is an under-representation of S/DCOs in the total staff complement. Conversely, Detainee Custody Managers (DCOMS) were over-represented at 18.6% together with other mangers who made up nearly 1 in 10 (9.6%) of those who completed the survey. Such figures suggest greater efforts need to be made in the future to encourage frontline staff to participate.

Approximately 65% of the sample identified as male and 35% as female, while 89% recorded themselves as White and 11% as BAME – nearly all of whom listed their ethnic background as either Indian, Pakistani, or 'any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background'.

The survey is made up of five sections. Part 1 asks for background information. Part 2 canvasses views on working in detainee escorting. Part 3 includes questions about organisational climate. Part 4 is focused on wellbeing. In Part 5, participants are invited to respond to a small number of open-ended questions about the nature of their job. At the end of the survey, there is a space to make any additional comments to the research team. 63 respondents (37%) took the opportunity to write something here.

The survey questions were derived from qualitative research conducted by Mary Bosworth, with help from two research assistants -- Samuel Singler and Victoria Taylor. That research, which involved shadowing staff across the contract, began in July 2019 and continued, on and off, through the disruption of COVID until February 2023. The DESS also draws on other workplace culture surveys, including the Civil Service People Survey and questionnaires used with other employment groups elsewhere.[1] It uses some questions from social attitude surveys[2] and a measure of distress developed by Mary Bosworth and Alice Gerlach for use in immigration removal centres, as well as the *Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale* developed by Bride at al., 2003.[3]

This study of staff culture is the first independent academic piece of research of immigration detainee escorting staff and it is hoped that the survey will be added to and amended by subsequent projects. Together with the *Measure of the Quality of Life in Detention* (MQLD) and the survey on staff culture in detention also developed by Mary Bosworth[4], the DESS seeks to inform scholarly and operational understanding of the nature of border control, with a view to encouraging transparency and informed debate. Below we offer 12 recommendations to address the issues raised, focusing on staff training, monitoring, and support.

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[1] See for example: Spector, P.E. (1985) 'Measurement of Human Service Staff Satisfaction: Development of the job satisfaction survey', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *13*(6), pp. 693–713; Nanjundeswaraswamy TS, (2021) [redacted] 38(2), pp. 371-394.

[2] See for example: British Social Attitudes survey (Immigration, 31st edition) -
Ford, R. and Heath, A. (2014) *Immigration - A Nation divided? British Social Attitudes Survey*, *British Social Attitudes*. Available at: [redacted] (Accessed: 06 December 2023); ISSP (2022) *National Identity III Basic Questionnaire.* Available at: [redacted]; Ipsos (2022) *Attitudes towards Immigration*. Available at: [redacted]

[3] Bride, B.E., Robinson, M.M., Yegidis, B. and Figley, C.R., (2003). Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale. *Research on Social Work Practice*.

[4] See for example, Bosworth, M., and Gerlach, A. (2020). *Quality of Life in Detention: Results from MQLD questionnaire data collected in IRC Gatwick (Brook House and Tinsley House), IRC Heathrow (Colnbrook and Harmondsworth), Yarl's Wood IRC, Morton Hall IRC, and Dungavel IRC: July 4 – September 20, 2019.* Oxford: Centre for Criminology; Bosworth, M., Gerlach, A., and Aitken, D. (2016). *Understanding Staff Culture at IRC Heathrow*. Oxford: Centre for Criminology

Overview

The DESS seeks to understand the views and experiences of people employed on the immigration detainee escorting contract and to allow for comparison of perspectives among officers working in overseas escorting (OSE) with those employed in-country (ICE). It asks respondents their age, gender, ethnicity, and to self-identify in terms of their socio-economic class. The survey includes questions about educational qualifications and employment histories. Respondents are asked how long they have worked in detainee escorting and where they are based in their current role.

While there are commonalities among the responses, each of these parameters yielded some statistically significant differences. Some responses varied by gender, as women more often than men tended to believe that immigration increases crime rates. They were also more likely to report feeling emotionally affected by their job.

Other responses varied by ethnicity. Thus, participants from a BAME background tended to believe more than members of other ethnic groups that most detainees are truthful. Respondents from these specific groups were also more likely than their White colleagues to report issues with their own mental health and well-being, including symptoms of depression, nightmares, and secondary trauma symptoms such as avoidance behaviour and memory gaps. They were less likely to believe that Mitie encourages people to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk, less likely to feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among their colleagues, and more likely to believe that there is harassment or discrimination in their workplace. They are also more critical of their chances of promotion. Such matters invite additional scrutiny and form the basis of our first recommendation.

Recommendation 1: *Mitie develops its work around EDI, with particular attention to well-being and accountability. The challenge is that EDI can look like a 'tick box' exercise and so staff do not feel well-integrated. While recruitment of BAME staff can have some positive effects, that needs to be matched with other activities and practices to ensure full engagement and involvement of all colleagues. This work could be led by external providers but should be informed by Mitie personnel from all grades to take into account the specific nature of this job.*

The responses of staff also differed significantly with respect to age. Younger respondents of any ethnicity were more negative about the organisational climate than their older colleagues. They also reported less job satisfaction and had more issues concerning their mental well-being than the older population.

Recommendation 2: *Mitie creates a formal system of (paid) mentors for new starters from among existing staff, who would receive training and would help implement a structured set of goals and processes of reflection. This new mentor scheme should pay specific attention to issues of gender and ethnicity among the staff group.*

There was also a distinction in people's responses in terms of how long they had been employed as escorts. Those who had worked in the job longer than 5 years reported struggling significantly more with their mental health than those who had worked in the job less than 5 years. This group were also more negative about organisational culture and were

less satisfied with their job overall. Particularly in terms of mental health, there is an interesting parallel here between the responses from people who are detained; the longer someone is detained, the more distressed they become.[5]

Recommendation 3: *Mitie develops new mechanisms for monitoring the well-being of all staff. Possibilities could include a bi-annual 'check-in' with a line-manager, or, as in the prison service, the introduction of regular staff welfare weeks.*

Main findings

Use of force

The vast majority of those who completed the survey had never used force. They also did not think their colleagues should use force more often. Yet, there was a small group of women and men who used force frequently. Such data would presumably be apparent in the use of force (UoF) records held by Mitie and may be worth scrutinising, since that group appear to be an exception. Paying attention to prolific users of force might identify who is at risk of developing a similar use of force pattern. At the very least it might explain this discrepancy.

Recommendation 4: *Mitie commissions a piece of work focused on UoF to examine the situations in which force is used, prolific users' attitudes toward the use of force, and their rationale for using it.*

Attitudes towards immigration and asylum

The survey includes background questions that are designed to gauge staff views on the legal, social, and political context in which they work, i.e., their views about immigration and asylum. These questions attracted mixed results. While most officers generally agreed with the statement that 'Britain's cultural life is enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries', on many of the other measures, officers were more negative and suspicious of foreign nationals. Thus, a large majority (74%) believed that 'people who come to the UK in search of asylum should be detained'. Nearly half the sample agreed with the statement that 'there are too many immigrants in Britain' and 40% thought that 'immigration increases crime rates'.

Recommendation 5: *Mitie develops its staff training to include more information about the Immigration and Asylum system, including the legal framework and the reasons why people come to the UK in search of sanctuary. This module could include basic information about the relationship between immigration and crime, which demonstrates quite clearly that immigrant communities are less engaged in crime than the UK-born population.*

Attitudes towards the detained population

Generally, respondents reported that they found it easy to build rapport with the people whom they detained. While some perceived detained women to be more difficult than men,

[5] Bosworth, M., and Gerlach, A. (2020).

they were in the minority. In line with their views about the relationship between immigration and crime, only a minority of respondents believed detainees were usually truthful. Almost one third believed many detainees were criminals. Such matters suggest there is a certain culture of disbelief among the staff group.

Recommendation 6: *Mitie works with DCOs to develop staff opportunities for interacting with detained people in their custody. As part of this strategy Mitie should actively seek out officers with proficiency in languages other than English to address communication barriers.*

Job satisfaction

While most officers were broadly satisfied with their job in terms of their workload, safety, and the physical work environment, many were dissatisfied with their pay and pessimistic about their chances for promotion. Nearly half the respondents expressed some concerns about whether they had sufficiently flexible work timings to accommodate their family needs. A similar proportion believed the company did not recognise their efforts at work, while more than a third (38%) could not imagine working for Mitie 'for many more years to come'. Among the 162 respondents who identified where they worked, ICE staff were less satisfied with their job than officers in OSE, particularly with their pay and regarding the amount of bureaucracy in their daily tasks.

Recommendation 7: *Mitie explores options for staff development particularly among ICE staff and consider the balance between their administrative duties and interactions with the detained population.*

Many officers felt that the public neither understand their role nor appreciated their efforts. Such views may have been compounded by a sense reported that officers are not able to speak about their work openly, even when they would like to do so.

Such negative views stand in some contrast to their own belief about their role, which most characterised as meaningful, important, and necessary. Most officers also believed that their job contributes to the UK becoming a better place. The contrast between their perceptions of their external legitimacy with their personal motivation is worth considering in more detail, as research with the police has identified the importance of internal and external legitimacy in ensuring staff well-being and appropriate behaviour at work.

Recommendation 8: *Mitie explores ways of engaging local communities, including those who offer support to detained people, to increase transparency about their work and to minimise the stigma associated with it. The qualitative portion of the research found that staff would also benefit from greater clarity about the limits placed on them by the Official Secrets Act.*

Organisational Culture

On a number of parameters, respondents seem to find the organisational culture of Mitie relatively positive, including management leadership style. Yet, more than one third reported harassment or discrimination in their workplace, and one in four officers claimed to have witnessed inappropriate behaviour towards detainees in their workplace.

Recommendation 9: *Mitie develops its whistleblowing system and reports regularly to all staff members on issues identified to encourage and support a culture of transparency and accountability. Staff should be given regular opportunities to report anonymously any concerns they have, either to an external, independent 'whistleblowing champion' or online via a regular anonymous questionnaire. Some of the allegations around harassment and bullying concerned perceptions of sexism and allegations of unfair treatment around race and ethnicity, which need particular attention. Recommendations 6 and 7 may help with allegations about inappropriate treatment of detained people by enabling staff to get to know those in their custody a little better than they currently do.*

There was also a general view that Mitie emphasises cost-cutting above all else, and that communications, particularly with the Home Office, are not good. Only a small majority of people considered their colleagues to be their close friends. More than half reported that there was too much bickering and fighting at work. Their widespread nature suggests a certain level of dissatisfaction among the staff group which could become a risk factor for the allegations of harassment and inappropriate treatment. OSE staff were particularly critical about such matters.

Recommendation 10: *Mitie implements 'softer' team building events to improve staff cohesion, communication, and morale. Given that OSE staff were more likely to report concerns about organisational culture, some of these events should focus on the OSE staff group specifically.*

Wellbeing and mental health

The survey included two separate scales on wellbeing: one concerned with secondary trauma, which had been designed by Bride et al. (2003) for social workers and other helping professionals, and another which has been designed for use in IRCs by Mary Bosworth and Alice Gerlach. On the measure of general mental health, respondents reported feeling low in energy, restless, and that everything was an effort. On both measures, respondents reported sleep problems -- both falling asleep and sleeping through the night. While our results show that the extent of secondary trauma stress (STS) generally stayed on relatively low levels, the fact that the vast majority of respondents did show at least minor symptoms of STS, and more than a third of them (38%) showed at least 10 symptoms, gives reason for concern. The most common symptoms included feeling discouraged about the future, being less active than usual, having difficulties concentrating, and being more easily annoyed.

Recommendation 11: *Mitie make secondary trauma counselling services available to existing staff and integrate training on and information about secondary trauma into initial staff training and refresher courses.*

Suicidal and self-harm ideation

One of the most worrying findings from the survey concerned the proportion of staff who reported thoughts of committing suicide or self-harm. While it is hard to know for sure how often people in the general population experience such feelings, academic studies estimate

the rate of suicidal thoughts in the general population to be around 5.4%, and for thoughts about self-harm around 6.4%.[6] By contrast, 12.35% of survey respondents recorded thoughts about ending their own life, while 7.2% reported having had thoughts about self-harm. These two findings suggest a level of vulnerability among some of the workforce that needs urgent attention.

Recommendation 12: *Mitie works with the Samaritans or similar organisations and experts to develop both a better mechanism of reporting concerns around mental health as well as support mechanisms. It is important to identify the triggers for these factors and offer appropriate support, either within Mitie or by collaboration with external organisations. Questions that need to be asked include: How do the demands of the role, the physical conditions of the work and (perceived) lack of internal management and colleague support contribute to mental ill health among staff? How can management and colleague support assist in ameliorating some of the difficulties people experience? This action would also be supported by Recommendation 11.*

Conclusion

Staff are crucial to any organisation. Yet, it is common for employees to feel overlooked and under-appreciated, as was reflected in both the qualitative as well as survey-based findings of this project. In immigration detainee escorting, particularly among the 'remote workforce' that makes up much of the overseas escorting team, such matters can be hard to catch. In the qualitative portions of this project, staff who spoke to Mary Bosworth were often rather dissatisfied. Many complained about a lack of engagement from senior Mitie staff, and the challenges they faced in delivering border control.

The comparative results of the survey urge us to draw our attention to certain ethnic groups as well as to specific age groups among the staff. BAME staff members struggled significantly more with various facets of their mental health than their White colleagues. This was also true for those who had worked in detainee escorting for more than 5 years, and among those who were younger than 50 years old. These same groups are also less satisfied with various aspects of Mitie's organisational culture. Improving staff wellbeing may, on these accounts, improve staff retention.

The research included the peaks of COVID and its aftermath, during which much of the system shrank, even as the numbers of people arriving in Dover in search of asylum grew rapidly. Such matters introduced new areas of concern and practice. As a form of employment, escorting often feels that it is under constant change, even as, for the most part, the day-to-day nature of the job itself is repetitive and, in its emphasis on paperwork and process, often rather distant from the people in custody.

The qualitative portion of the research documented officers following procedures, but rarely engaging interpersonally with detainees in any detail. In ICE facilities, there is nowhere private

[6] MacManus, S., Hassiotis, A., Jenkins, R., Dennis, M., Aznar, C., Appleby, L. (2016). 'Suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, and self-harm'. In McManus S., Bebbington P., Jenkins R., Brugha T. (Eds.). *Mental health and wellbeing in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014.* Leeds: NHS Digital.

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to have a conversation, and during boardings there seems to be little point, other than to ensure 'compliance'. Under these circumstances, although some officers presented their job in convivial terms, as one in which they enjoyed '*meeting new people every day'*, as many put it, others offered a more limited and pragmatic account: '*all I do is keep them fed and watered and do their paperwork'*, they said.

This final aspect, which is perhaps hard to discern in the DESS survey, encapsulates the challenge of talking about staff culture. Much of immigration detainee escorting is logistical and paper based. Escort staff are working in sites hidden from public view, engaged in highly politicised and often contested activities around border control. Their role is to keep people in motion, detained for short periods of time, circulated in vans or on planes. Under these circumstances, the challenge is to avoid treating those people like packages.

[redacted] Oxford, December 2023.

Staff Culture

While it is still the case that most of the literature on immigration detention focuses on the experiences of people who are detained, there is a small but growing body of academic research on staff in immigration detention centres.[7] In the UK, the HM Inspectorate of Prisons now includes a staff survey in their inspections. There have also been official assessments of staff culture, in the 2016 and 2018 Shaw Reviews of the treatment of vulnerable people in detention,[8] and in the recent Brook House inquiry[9], all of which paid some, albeit limited, attention to detainee escorting staff.

Although it has become common to refer to 'staff culture' as an explanation for institutional practices and beliefs, this term of art has no universally accepted definition. As a result, there is no clear explanation of the circumstances under which certain practices or beliefs may become dominant, nor conversely, is there one of the conditions under which they may subside. Instead, as Stephen Shaw noted in 2018, staff culture is generally understood as "how organisations *do* things, and represents the values and beliefs that govern how individuals behave: most commonly described as 'how we do things around here'."[10]

In the academic literature on prison officers, which is more longstanding and developed than the field of study on immigration detention, researchers have found that multiple staff cultures co-exist in any institution, shaping and reflecting staff views of prisoners, care, authority, and decency.[11] Inevitably, prison officers find that some of their multiple tasks and responsibilities are in conflict, leaving them frustrated or unclear how to proceed. Evidence further suggests that BAME staff face particular challenges[12] while those in senior roles struggle to manage the prison service's heavy emphasis on targets.[13]

Immigration detention staff often express some uncertainty about their role and its effects. They tend to emphasis their interpersonal skills as their primary tool of managing those who are detained. Unlike prison work, there are few opportunities to build meaningful relationships with those in custody, in part because there is so much uncertainty about the duration of detention. As I wrote in my report for the Brook House inquiry, such matters mean that:

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[7] See, for example, Bosworth, M. (2019). 'Authority and Affect in Immigration Detention', *Punishment & Society*. 21(5): 542 – 559.

[8] Shaw, S. (2016). *Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons: A Report to the Home Office by Stephen Shaw*. London: HMSO, Cm 9186; Shaw, S. (2018). *Assessment of Government Progress in Implementing the Report on the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons: A Follow-Up Report to the Home Office by Stephen Shaw*. Cm 9661. London: HMSO.

[9] https://brookhouseinquiry.org.uk

[10] Shaw, S. (2018). *Assessment of Government Progress in Implementing the Report on the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons: A Follow-Up Report to the Home Office by Stephen Shaw*. Cm 9661. London: HMSO, p. 100.

[11] Tait, S. (2011). 'A Typology of Prison Officer Approaches to Care,' *European Journal of Criminology*. 8(6): 440 – 454. See also Crewe, B., et al. (2011), 'Staff culture, use of authority, and prisoner quality of life in public and private sector prisons', *Journal of Criminology*, 44(1): 94 – 115.

[12] Bhui, H., and Fossi, J. (2007). 'The experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Staff', in Bennett,J ., Crewe, B., and Wahidin, A. (Eds.). *Understanding Prison Staff*. Collumpton: Willan.

[13] Bennett, J. (2008). *The Working Lives of Prison Managers: Global Change, Local Culture and Individual Agency in the Late Modern Prison*. London: Palgrave.

> "in their day-to-day work, officers end up relying on other proxies, including race and national stereotypes, in making sense of detainees and their jobs.[14] When asked about their relationships with those who are detained, staff worry about the appropriate line between sympathy and empathy; how close should they get? This confusion is amplified by the secure environment, in which they are taught to think of the detained population as potential threats."

All these issues are relevant for understanding immigration detainee escorting.

Immigration detainee escorting

This project was the first academic study of immigration detainee escorting in the UK. Yet, there are similarities between escorting and the wider immigration detention system, not least in the private security companies that operate both systems. As in IRCs, there is a steep hierarchy among escorts, with a majority employed at the DCO level, managed by a smaller number of Detention Custody Officer Manager (DCOMs), who are in turn, line-managed by area managers and other members of the Senior Management Team (SMT). Escorting, like the longer-term immigration removal centres, is a fully outsourced business. There are a core group of officers who have worked across multiple contract holders.

For those employed in ICE, immigration detainee escorting is usually a local job. With some exceptions, people tend to live near the Short-Term Holding Facilities and Vehicle Bases in which they work. The appeal of their job often corresponds to this geographical proximity, particularly in sites located in parts of the country with low levels of employment. Staff also generally report favourably on their shift patterns.

OSE employees, by contrast, are a remote workforce. They only come together to complete specific tasks, and so have very little contact with their wider pool of colleagues. Their shift patterns and working conditions changed during the research period, in part due to the impact of COVID, but also following reforms introduced by Mitie. They now work to a 10-day availability pattern.

There is a common belief within the business that ICE and OSE staff vary in their attitudes and approaches. The survey confirmed some aspects of this view, but also found much commonality between the staff groups. Over the research period, it became clear that there is, in any case, considerable overlap between the two workforces, since people move from one part of the business to the other over the course of their career. External matters also bring people together. For example, as the numbers of people arriving in Dover in search of asylum grew over the research period, staff across the business were offered over-time. While it was initially assumed that local staff would be able to fill in the gaps, in fact, many OSE workers took up the opportunity to supplement their income. During COVID, when international borders closed, people were also deployed to other parts of the business.

[14] Bosworth, M. (2018). '"Working in this place turns you racist": Staff, Race and Belonging in Immigration Detention', in Bosworth, M., Parmar, A., and Vázquez, Y. (Eds) *Race, Migration and Criminal Justice: Enforcing the Boundaries of Belonging*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 214 – 228.

In the qualitative portion of the research project, more senior staff and those involved in planning often characterised ICE work as a logistics industry. While some DCOs used this terminology too, more commonly they spoke of the challenges of provide care and welfare to a distressed population. "*It's not a simple matter of collecting a package*," one employee at a Vehicle base pointed out. "*A package hasn't got to be looked at, observed, assessed, or searched. A package hasn't got to have a handover to say: 'this is a fragile package and therefore this is its medical needs, etcetera'*". Others also emphasised the security aspect of their role.

The effect of Dover, and later that, of the Rwanda plan, were evident in many conversations with ICE and OSE officers. Staff were often frustrated by the ongoing irregular arrivals. Many supported the government's increasingly harsh attempts to deter people crossing the channel in small boats, even as they expressed disbelief in their likelihood of success. Some were quietly concerned about questions of legality and ethics. Together these conversations revealed some fundamental confusion about the nature and impact of this role. While senior staff tended to gloss over such matters, it was clear that operational staff spent considerable time discussing them.

Some of these issues are evident in the survey. Others appear in the text boxes that staff completed where they were asked to characterise their role. Some officers struggled with the lack of clear messaging about what the job entails and what justifies it. As the Brook House Inquiry made clear, such matters can become a risk factor for inappropriate behaviour, and, therefore, need attention. Without a clear account of the reason and nature of their job, how are officers meant to assess its form or determine the legitimacy of their actions or those of their colleagues?

Discussion

In this section we provide more detail about the questions and responses, including some charts to show the distribution of people's answers.

Participant Characteristics

170 employees completed the DESS. Among that total, 162 people specified which part of the contract they worked for: 107 in ICE and 55 in OSE. Participants included all ranks within the organisation. While a majority (62%) of respondents identified as a Detainee Custody Officer (DCO) or as a Senior Detainee Custody Officer (SDCO), the numbers of Detainee Custody Managers (DCOMS) were over-represented at 18.6%, together with other mangers at 9.6%.

The survey produced a wide distribution of genders and ethnicities. 64.5% of the sample identified as male and 34.9% as female, while 89% recorded themselves as white and 11% as BAME. Most respondents (74.7%) described themselves as coming from a working-class background.

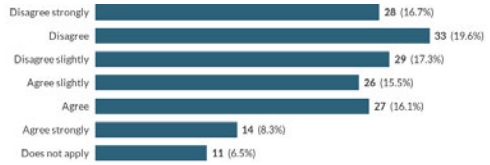
The mean (average) age of those who completed the survey was 45 years. The highest level of education most had attained was O levels/GCSE (27.3%), closely followed by A levels/college (23.6%); 6% of the sample reported no educational qualifications. The level of education among participants resembled that of their parents, most of whom achieved O levels/GCSE (36.4%) or A levels/college (13%) as their highest level of education, or had no educational qualifications (21.6%).

Before starting their job in detainee escorting, respondents had most commonly worked in hospitality, security, and/or sales. The mean length of time people had worked in immigration escorting was 6 years. However, that average was skewed by a small number of long-serving respondents. Most respondents had either spent 1-5 years on the job (33.3%) or under 1 year (29.8%). In other words, nearly two thirds of the sample had worked in escorting for 5 years or less.

Attitudes towards immigration and asylum

While a majority of the participants agreed with the statement that 'Britain's cultural life is enriched by migrants coming to live here from other countries' (71%), nearly half (48.5%) thought there were 'too many immigrants in Britain', and 40% believed that 'immigration increases crime rates'. Three quarters (74%) agreed with the statement that 'people who come to the UK in search of asylum should be detained'. These findings suggest that respondents had some concerns about the wider immigration and asylum system. To the extent that such views might shape their perceptions of the detained population, they should be addressed through training to clarify the asylum process and the evidence about the relationship between crime and immigration.

Immigration increases crime rates



There are too many immigrants in Britain

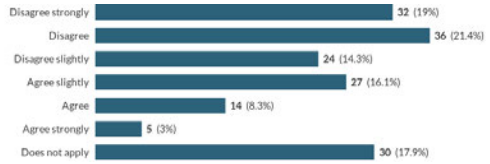


Attitudes towards the detained population

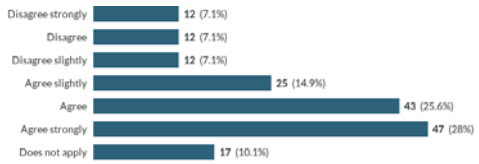
Nearly everyone (83%) reported that they found it easy to build rapport with detained people. Most also did not think that detainees with a criminal record should be treated differently from those without (70%).

On other parameters, however, respondents were a little more suspicious of those in their custody. Thus, while only some people agreed with the statement that 'detainees who self-harm only want attention' (11.3%), more than two-thirds of participants did not believe detainees were truthful (69%). Almost one third (32%) believed many detainees were criminals, and more than two thirds (68.5%) thought that detainees from some countries are harder to deal with than others. More than one in four (27.4%) also believed that female detainees were harder to manage than male detainees.

Female detainees are harder to manage than male

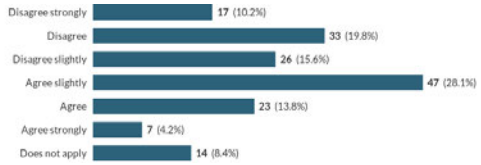


Detainees from some countries are harder to deal with than others

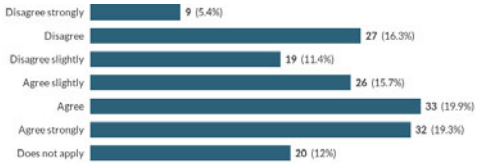


When asked to report on the emotional impact of their job, respondents were divided. Although they were evenly split about whether they 'feel bad' for detainees, two-thirds (66.9%) claimed that using force on detainees did not upset them.

I often feel bad for detainees in general



Using force on detainees doesn't upset me



These results suggest a certain culture of disbelief that may influence people's treatment of people in their custody.

Job satisfaction

In contrast to the one-to-one interviews with staff, in which officers often expressed quite negative views about their working lives, those who completed the DESS appeared to be broadly satisfied with their job in Mitie, as reflected in the following results:

The majority of respondents agreed that:

- they feel satisfied with their job (71%).
- they have opportunities to use their discretion at work (71%).
- they have opportunities to use their abilities at work (77%).
- they have a fixed and defined job responsibility and role (70%).
- the shift patterns help them manage their family life (79%).
- they are happy with their physical work environment (73%).

Most respondents (75%) also felt safe at work and did not feel overworked (65%).

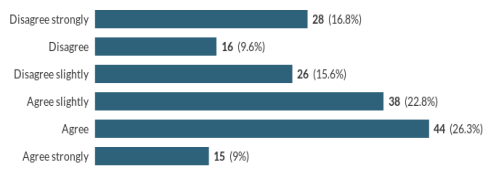
Nearly everyone (88%) inputted a reply to question 25, 'what is the best thing about your job?', with the most common response singling out "*the people that I work with*" and "*my team*". Others gave lengthier answers that ranged from perceptions of the security impact of their role "*knowing that a resident who maybe shouldn't be on the streets is being deported,"* to interpersonal interactions with those in custody. "*I absolutely love my role*," one respondent wrote in. "*Being able to interact with residents positively, with a smile, hopefully reassures them a little in the very difficult procedure that they find themselves in… I often feel like I have made a difference in someone's life and it's a very rewarding and humbling experience*." People commonly claimed to enjoy the variety of their working days. "*No two days are the same. Every job different."*

Within these headline findings however, there were some sizable groups of people who held different views. Thus, more than one in four (26%) of staff were dissatisfied with their job, and a similar number were not happy with their physical work environment. Nearly one third (29%) did not feel they could use their discretion at work and a similar proportion (30%) did not feel they had a fixed or defined job, responsibility, or role. More than one third (35%) of the respondents felt overworked.

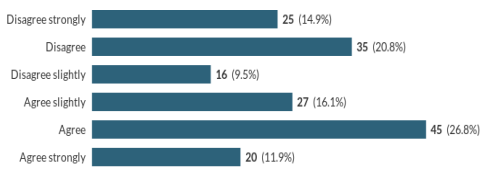
Nearly everyone (85%) wrote a response to Question 26, "What is the worst thing about your job?". Many raised single issues: "*pay*"; "*work place*"; "*report writing*"; "*long hours*"; "*staffing levels*." Others gave more complex accounts that tied multiple issues together: "*No progression, no proper recognition, too much sitting around and not enough rest time on jobs or NO REST AT ALL on most removals abroad*."

As the charts show below, a sizable proportion of staff were not satisfied with their chances for promotion (42%). There was also a large group who did not believe they would receive recognition from Mitie if they performed well in their role (45.2%); and who did not believe they were provided with flexible work timings to accommodate their family needs (42%).

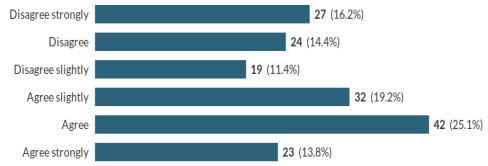
I am satisfied with my chances for promotion



I would receive recognition from Mitie if I performed well in my role



Flexible work timings are provided to accommodate my family needs



More than half of those who completed the survey (56%) claimed to have too much paperwork. A similar proportion (59%) did not believe they were paid a fair amount for the work they did. "*The amount of responsibility taken on by a DCO should be recognised financially*," one respondent wrote in. "*People come to work to earn a living and pay bills, reward schemes of a shiny badge is not going to keep the bailiff from your door*."

In terms of the purpose of their role and its recognition, nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents did not believe that the public appreciated the work they did. "*For £11 an hour would you be willing to enter a room filled with aggressive people in order to help a single individual? It's worth considering*", one person wrote on the survey. "*We do this all the time and are still viewed as the bad guy in many sections of the media.*"

Most staff (70%) simply did not think the public understood their role. A significant proportion (41%) reported that they would like to talk openly about their work, but they cannot. Such findings raise important questions about 'external legitimacy' and public trust as well as staff self-legitimacy, all of which have been shown to be important factors in determining the effect as well as the nature of police work, staff performance, and well-being.[15] These issues should be addressed by community engagement and by strategies to make the nature of the role more transparent.

Organisational Culture

Staff were generally positive about Mitie's organisational culture, with a majority of respondents agreeing that:

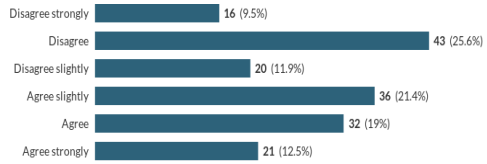
- Mitie is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace (81%).
- Mitie encourages people to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk (79%).
- They feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among their colleagues (82%).
- They do not find it hard to engage with the banter and conversation among their colleagues (88%).
- Their manager is competent in their work (84%).
- Their manager's decisions are based on facts, not personal prejudice (81%).
- Their manager treats them with respect (88%).
- Their manager treats them fairly (93.4%).

[15] Jackson, J., Bradford B., and Stanko, E., Hohl, K. (2011). *Just Authority? Public Trust and Police Legitimacy*. Collumpton: Willan Publishing.

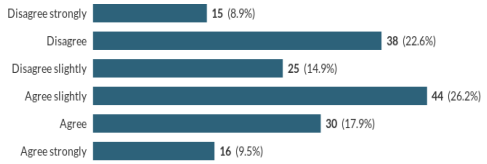
While these figures suggest a good work climate, there were some aspects on which staff were more divided. For example, more than one third of people reported a lack of camaraderie among their colleagues (38%). Staff also tended to agree with the statement that 'there is too much bickering and fighting at work' (53%). Fewer than half of the sample (46.4%) considered their colleagues 'to be their close friends'.

Some of the findings about organisational culture raise issues about staff retention, mirroring concerns expressed by officers in the qualitative portions of the project. For example, 38% - more than a third – could not imagine working for Mitie for many more years to come. The same proportion felt emotionally affected by their job, which could make it harder for them to stay in the job. Just over half of the respondents believed that Mitie defined success as 'keeping costs low' (52%). There was also evidence of concern about communications with the Home Office (49%) and within Mitie (52%). Half the sample did not believe that people who break rules at work face consequences (50.4%)

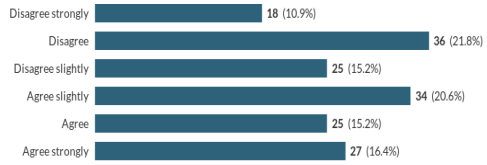
There is too much bickering and fighting at work



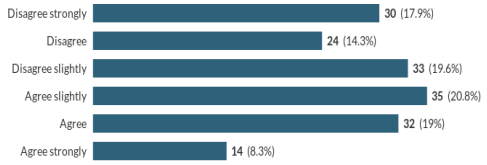
I consider my colleagues my close friends



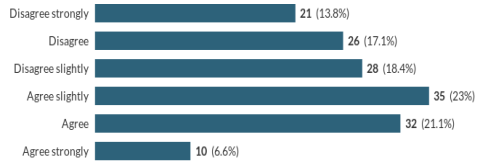
Mitie defines success as keeping costs low



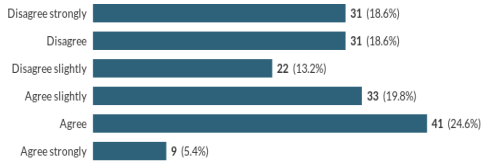
Communications are good within Mitie



Communications are good with the Home Office



People who break rules at work face consequences



Most concerningly, more than one third (37%) of staff reporting harassment or discrimination in their workplace, and one in four (25%) officers claiming to have witnessed inappropriate behaviour towards detainees in their workplace. Given the gravity of these issues, we urge the company to focus on them both to address morale and to ensure that any harassment or ill treatment is reported and addressed.

<u>General wellbeing and mental health</u>

The measures about mental wellbeing and secondary trauma mostly yielded relatively positive outcomes, as the following results show:

- 67.5% of staff reported that they still enjoy the things they used to enjoy *most or all of the time.*
- Most respondents can laugh and see the funny side of things *most or all the time (87%).*
- The majority of respondents (63%) do *not* cry easier than they used to.
- The majority of respondents (67.5%) *never* get sudden feelings of panic, while 25% does get them *some of the time.*
- The majority of respondents (63%) never have bad dreams, while 25% have them at least *some of the time.*
- Most participants (64%) feel as hungry as they always have *some or most of the time.*
- Most respondents (81%)care about their appearance most or *all the time.*
- Most respondents (72%) feel happy *most or all of the time.*
- The majority of respondents (59%) *never* feel lonely, while 33% do feel lonely *some of the time.*

However, there are some aspects that require particular – and in the case of suicidal thoughts and thoughts about self-harm, urgent – attention.

7.2 % of those who completed the survey thought about self-harm *some or most of the time*



12.6% had suicidal thoughts some, most, or all the time, with almost 11% who thought about ending their life at least *some of the time*



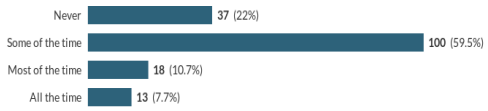
These figures are well above the rates of suicidal thoughts (5.4%) and thoughts about self-harm (6.4%) documented in the general population in the UK.[16] These findings require urgent attention and invite further exploration of the factors causing and contributing to thoughts of suicide and self-harm, in order to prevent them.

Other issues that respondents commonly struggled with included:

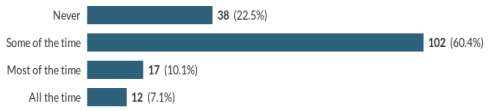
- Feeling low in energy and slowed down at least *some of the time* (77.9%).
- Feeling restless at least *some of the time* (77.6%).
- Difficulties falling asleep at least *some of the time* (67.4%).
- Waking up a lot during the night at least *some of the time* (75.2%).
- Feeling that everything is an effort at least *some of the time* (58%).

[16] Macmanus, S., et al, 2016.

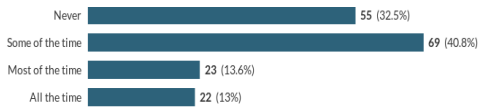
I feel low in energy, slowed down



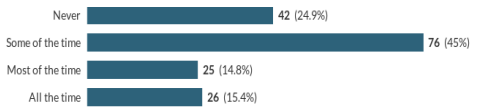
I feel restless



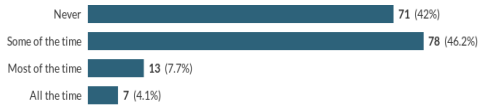
I have difficulties falling asleep



I wake up a lot during the night



Everything is an effort



Secondary Trauma

Most respondents (81.3%) show minor symptoms of secondary trauma stress (STS), based on the results the measure yielded, while 14.5% of respondents showed no STS. However, 4.2% of respondents reported higher levels of STS, with 3.6% showing symptoms of mild and 0.6% of severe STS. More than a third (38%) of all respondents reported suffering from at least 10 symptoms of STS. The most common symptoms fell into two areas: *Avoidance* (feeling emotionally numb, being less active than usual) and *Arousal* (difficulties with sleep, having difficulties concentrating, and being easily annoyed). However, as the following results indicate, the distribution of symptoms was not uniform:

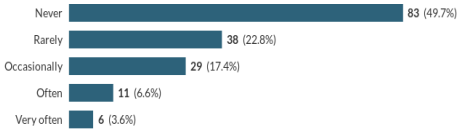
- 73.5% of staff *never or rarely* felt emotionally numb.
- The majority of respondents (77%) *never* felt their heart starting to pound when they thought about their work with detainees.
- The majority of respondents (82%) *never* felt like they relived the trauma(s) experienced by the detainees.
- 63% reported that they *never* or rarely had trouble sleeping, while for 20% this was the case *occasionally*, and for 17.4% this was the case *often or very often.*
- The majority of respondents (75%) *never* find reminders of their work with detainees upsetting.
- The majority of respondents (80%) *never or rarely* had little interest in being around others.
- The majority of respondents (73%) *never* felt jumpy.
- The majority of respondents (64%) *never* thought about their work with detainees when they didn't intend to, while for 33% this was the case *rarely or occasionally.*
- The majority of respondents (82%) *never* avoided people, places or things that reminded them of their work with detainees.
- The majority of respondents (89%) *never* had disturbing dreams about their work with detainees.

- The majority of respondents (83%) *never* wanted to avoid working with some detainees.
- The majority of respondents (87%) *never* or rarely expected something bad to happen.
- The majority of respondents (79%) *never* noticed gaps in their memory about their work with detainees.

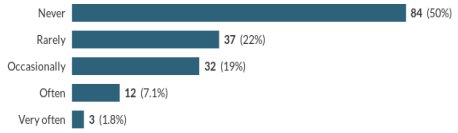
As with the results from the measure about general mental wellbeing, respondents commonly reported sleep problems. Other symptoms experienced by staff included:

- feeling discouraged about the future (40.2% rarely or occasionally, 10.2% often or very often).
- being less active than usual (41% rarely or occasionally, 8.9% often or very often).
- being easily annoyed (41.3% rarely or occasionally, 7.2% often or very often).

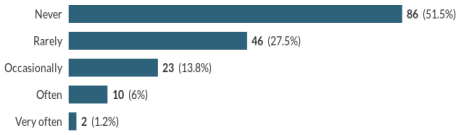
I felt discouraged about the future



I felt less active than usual



I was easily annoyed



A greater focus on staff well-being would assist in addressing and reducing secondary trauma, while greater understanding of the nature of STS and its risks might also help staff take up assistance they need.

Comparisons

In this part of the report, we identify some specific areas where different groups of people stood out in their responses. To identify statistically significant differences between various sociodemographic groups among respondents, the *Mann-Whitney U test* and *Kruskal-Wallis test* were used. Participants who gave no answer were excluded from the analysis.

The comparisons include those between ICE and OSE, gender, age (≤ 50 years or > 50 years), ethnicity (BAME and White staff), and length of time spent on the job (< 5 years or ≥ 5 years). Only differences that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) are reported.

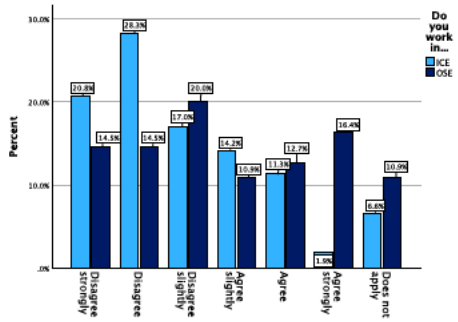
ICE and OSE

There is a widely held view in the business that ICE and OSE staff are culturally distinct in their views and practices. In fact, for the most part, both staff groups agreed on most measured. Below, we list those areas where the survey did find some differences and consider their implications.

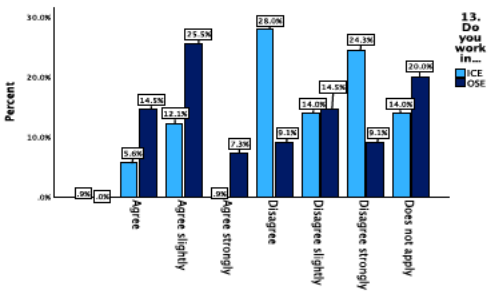
<u>Attitudes towards immigration, asylum, and detainees</u>

Regarding attitudes towards immigration, asylum, and detainees, there was some evidence of differences in their views. A higher percentage of OSE compared to ICE staff believed that people who come to the UK in search of asylum should be detained. OSE staff were also more likely than their ICE colleagues to believe that many detainees are criminals. Despite internal statistics showing that they would encounter very few detained women in their role, OSE staff were more likely to believe that women detainees were harder to manage than male detainees. They were also more likely to consider that some nationalities were harder to control than others. These differences are important, as they are likely to shape the kind of interactions staff have with detained people. They should be addressed in training.

Many detainees are criminals



Female detainees are harder to manage than male detainees

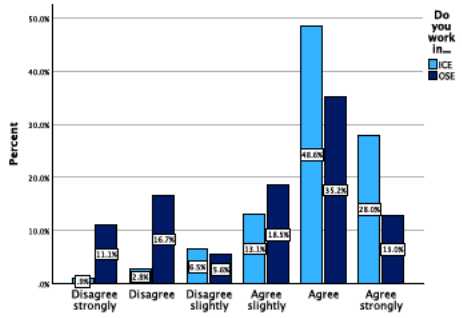


<u>Organisational Climate</u>

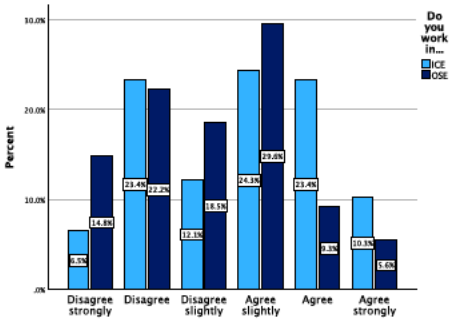
Generally, ICE staff seemed to have a more positive perception of the organisational climate, particularly regarding work climate, their perceived level of autonomy, and the ability to raise issues at work. OSE were less likely than ICE staff to feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among their colleagues. They were also less likely to consider their colleagues to

be their close friends. Relatedly, OSE staff were more likely to report that they found it hard to engage with the banter and conversation among their colleagues. They were more likely than ICE staff to believe that Mitie defines success as keeping costs low, and less likely to think they had opportunities to use their discretion at work. These findings are unlikely to be surprising, however they invite some work around building trust with the OSE workforce and improving their connection to their colleagues.

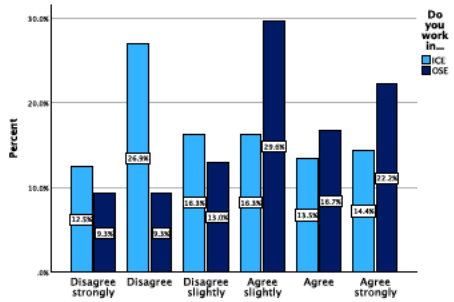
I feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among my colleagues



I consider my colleagues to be my close friends



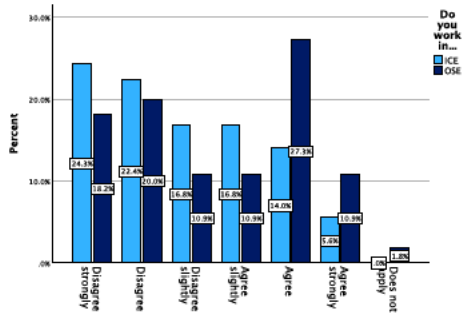
Mitie defines success as keeping costs low



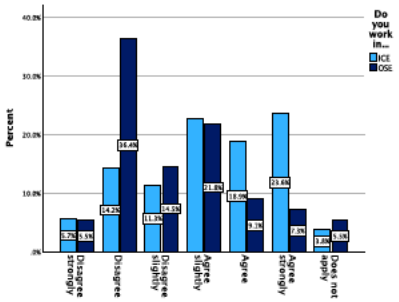
Job Satisfaction

As opposed to organisational climate, on this parameter it was ICE staff who seemed to be generally less satisfied with their job than OSE staff. Perhaps reflecting recent changes to their contract, OSE staff were more likely to believe they were paid a fair amount for the work they do, compared with their ICE colleagues. They were also less likely to believe they had too much paperwork.

I feel like I am paid a fair amount for the work I do



I have too much paperwork



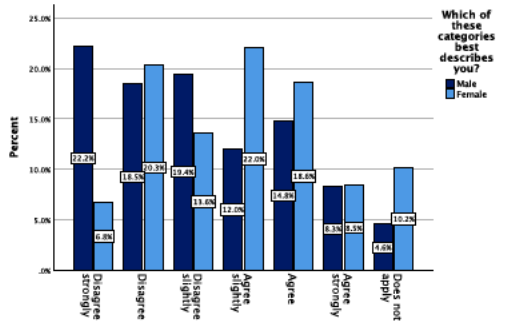
Key diversity comparisons

Gender

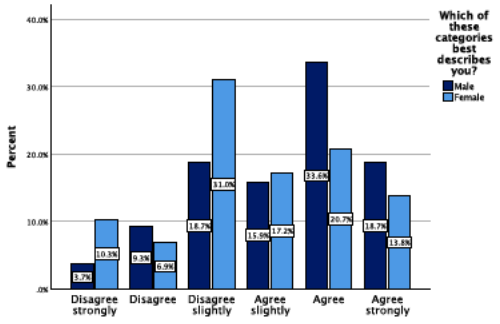
Women and men agreed on most issues. The exceptions centred on their views about the relationship between immigration and crime, in which a higher proportion of female compared to male participants believed that immigration increases crime rates.

Somewhat predictably there was also a distinction in responses about emotional impact and engagement. A higher proportion of female respondents thus strongly agreed that they find it easy to build rapport with detainees. A higher percentage of female participants also felt emotionally affected by their job than male participants.

Immigration increases crime rates



I don't feel emotionally affected by my job



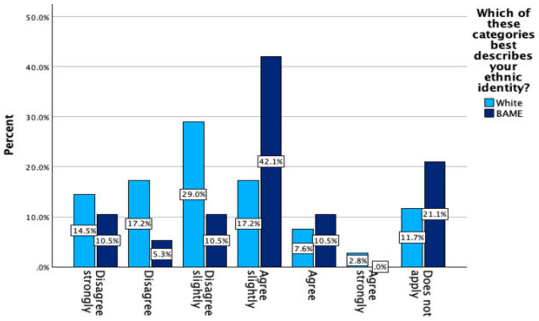
Ethnicity

Unlike gender, there were numerous survey questions on which respondents from a BAME background differed to White respondents. The findings below suggest that more work is needed to incorporate BAME staff and to ensure their wellbeing and retention. They also reveal important differences in attitudes towards the detained population which could be built on to address the culture of disbelief that is evident elsewhere.

<u>Attitudes towards immigration, asylum, and detainees</u>

- White respondents were more likely than BAME respondents to disagree that their colleagues are too reluctant to use force on detainees, while more BAME participants claimed the statement does not apply to them.
- Participants from a BAME background were more likely than White participants to believe that most detainees are truthful.
- White Participants were more likely than BAME participants to disagree that detainees from some countries are harder to deal with than others, while more participants from a BAME background thought this item does not apply to them.
- Participants from a BAME background were more likely than White participants to believe that female detainees are harder to manage than male detainees.

In my experience most detainees are truthful



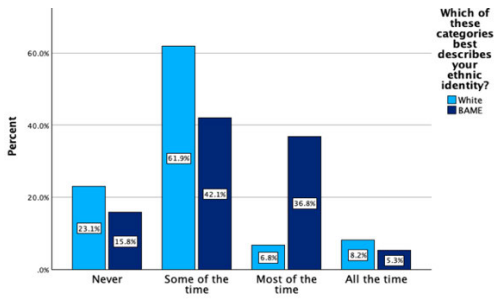
Wellbeing and mental Health

This section raises matters of significant concern as it shows that participants from a BAME background seem to be more vulnerable and struggle with more aspects of their mental health than White respondents. The reasons for these results should be explored further.

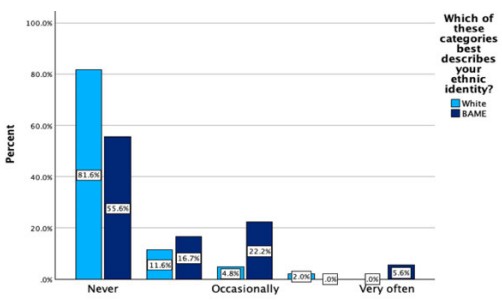
The following aspects showed statistically significant differences between ethnic groups:

- A higher proportion of participants from a BAME background felt low in energy and slowed down *most of the time*, while for most White participants, this was only the case *some of the time*.
- A higher proportion of participants from a BAME background report that they could 'never laugh and see the funny side of things.'
- More BAME staff members compared to White respondents report that they 'cry more easily than they used to'
- A higher proportion of BAME staff have bad dreams *most of the time* compared to White participants. They are also more likely to have disturbing dreams particularly about their work with detainees.
- Participants from a BAME background are more likely to relive the trauma(s) experienced by detainees *occasionally* or *very often*.
- BAME respondents are more likely to feel upset by reminders of their work with detainees compared to White respondents.
- A higher proportion of BAME participants want to avoid working with detainees, compared to White staff members.
- More BAME staff than White participants noticed gaps about their work with detainees.

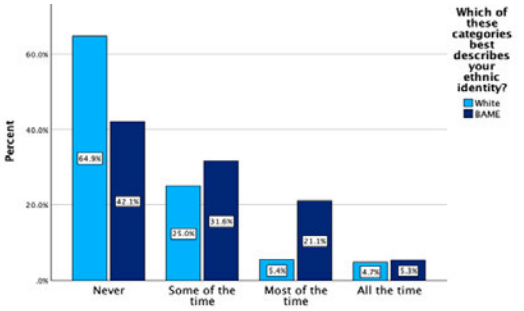
I feel low in energy, slowed down



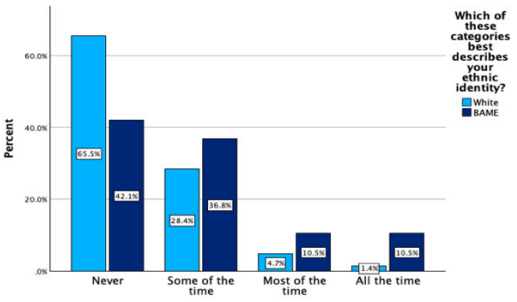
I noticed gaps in my memory about my work with detainees



I have bad dreams.



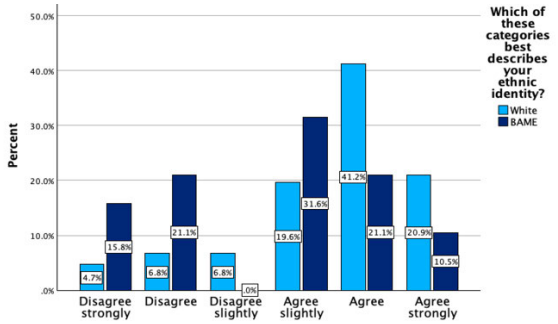
I am crying easier than I used to



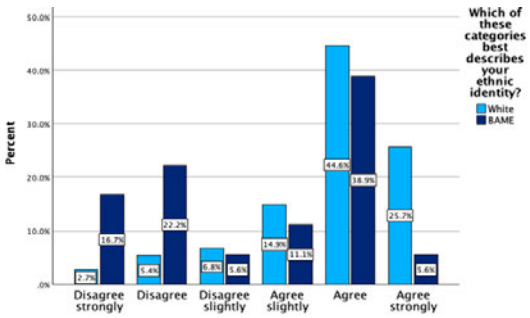
Organisational Climate

Findings indicate that staff from a BAME background do not feel as positive about Mitie's organisational culture as staff with White ethnicities. Specifically, our results suggest that BAME staff members do not necessarily believe that Mitie encourages people to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk and they do not feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among their colleagues. They are also more likely to believe that there is harassment or discrimination in their workplace.

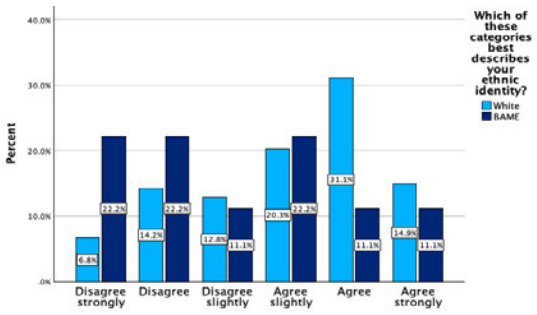
Mitie encourages people to speak up when they identify a serious policy or delivery risk



I feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour among my colleagues



There is no harassment or discrimination in my workplace

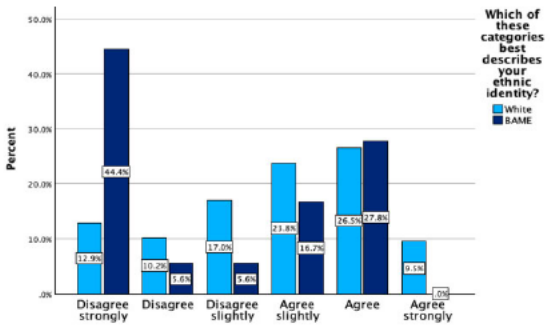


Job Satisfaction

Regarding job satisfaction, there are two facets on which BAME and White participants differ. On the one hand, a higher percentage of participants from a BAME background compared to White participants slightly agree that the public understands the work they do. On the other,

a much higher proportion of BAME staff compared to White respondents are dissatisfied with their chances for promotion.

I am satisfied with my chances for promotion



Age and Length of time in the Job

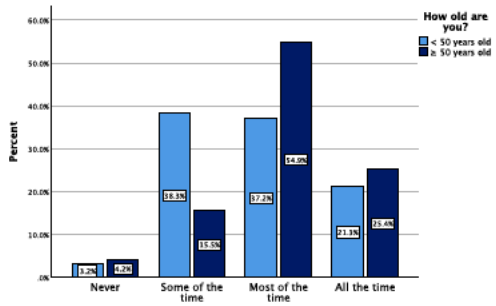
We found a number of statistically significant differences which suggest that younger members of staff are both more vulnerable than older members of staff and less satisfied with their job. Such matters have operational implications while others may affect recruitment.

Regarding length of time in the job, the statistical comparisons yielded a clear pattern, in which those who had worked in escorting for more than 5 years answered more negatively than those who had been employed in this sector for 5 or less years. In interviews and in the free-text section of the survey, staff could be blunt. "*Mitie are solely focused on recruitment of new people rather than retain the existing members of staff*," one person wrote, expressing a widely held belief. "*Mitie need to reward experienced member of staff*", another noted. "*You get paid exactly the same for 10 years of service as when you start on your first day of training*."

<u>Wellbeing and mental health</u>

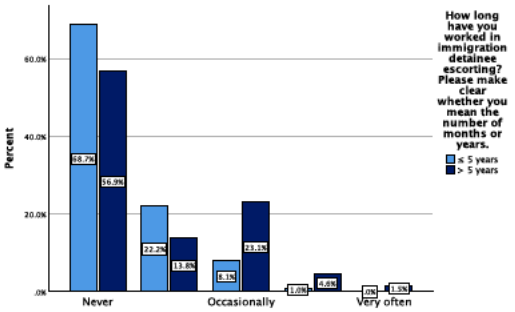
Younger participants (under 50 years old) struggle with more aspects of their mental health than older respondents (above than 50 years old), particularly regarding their mood (joy, happiness, being able to laugh) and self-care (appearance).

I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy



On the scales measuring distress, those who had worked in escorting for more than 5 years reported worse outcomes than those who had been employed for less time, especially regarding mood, sleep, fatigue, feelings of panic. Longer-serving staff were also more likely to experience a variety of secondary trauma symptoms.

I thought about my work with detainees when I didn't intend to

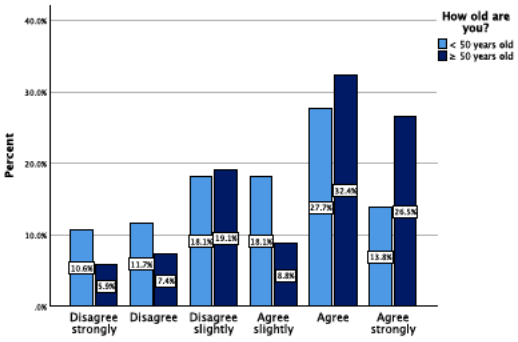


Organisational Climate and Job Satisfaction

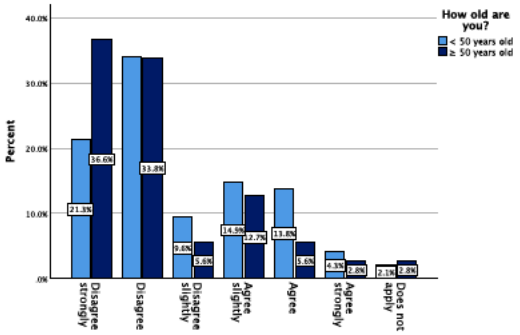
The younger population (under 50 years old) are generally more negative about the organisational climate than the older population of respondents, for example regarding communication, chances for promotion, and use of their skills. This might become problematic if Mitie wants to retain their staff. The reasons for younger members of staff to feel more negative about the organisational culture should be investigated.

A higher percentage of under 50-year-old respondents do not believe that communications are good with the Home Office. They tend to disagree with the statement that they are 'satisfied with their chances for promotion', are less sure that they 'can imagine working for Mitie for many more years to come,' and more likely to 'feel their job is meaningless.'

I can imagine working for Mitie for many more years to come

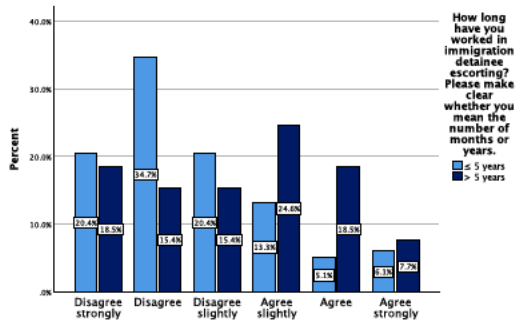


I sometimes feel my job is meaningless



Staff who worked for longer than 5 years on the job had more negative views on the organisational climate than those who had worked for a shorter period of time in the job, particularly with regard to feeling overworked, their perceived chances of promotion, diversity and inclusivity, and their perceived ability to speak up. Overall, they were generally less satisfied with their job.

I am overworked



Conclusion

While there are a number of positive findings from the survey which indicate that some of the work by Mitie, Care & Custody around workplace culture is bearing fruit, there are some areas of concern.

The disproportionate number of staff who have indicated suicidal ideation and thoughts of self-harm needs particularly urgent attention, as do the findings about allegations of harassment and bullying, and of inappropriate treatment of detainees.

Evidence from immigration detention, that was published as part of the Shaw review in 2016 made it very clear that any period of immigration detention adversely affects the mental health of those who are detained, and that the longer that someone is detained, the worse the outcome will be. That review also indicated that specific groups are more vulnerable to adverse mental health outcomes. While that report focused on detained people, the DESS suggests that there is a similar issue with respect to staff.

When staff feel vulnerable, and un-supported, illegitimate actions can flourish. The reported levels of inappropriate treatment of detainees and difficulties among colleagues are a warning sign which should be taken seriously.

The different opinions and additional vulnerabilities reported by BAME staff were also striking. Free text comments on the surveys revealed additional resentments, with some White officers reporting a sense of persecution, and other respondents explicitly mentioned racism and sexism at work. Mitie has been addressing such matters, but this survey suggests there is still more work to be done. Some of that work could be done in training, while other parts would benefit from liaison with external organisations and individuals. We hope the DESS can contribute to that development.