# Manston migrant centre sacks 29 staff for drug use in sharp year-on-year rise



A total of 29 staff members at the Manston migrant processing centre in Kent have been dismissed following positive drug tests, marking a significant increase from previous years. This data was revealed through freedom of information requests obtained by The Guardian, illustrating a sixfold rise in dismissals over the last year. In 2023, the Home Office reported that five or fewer staff were sacked for drug-related reasons.

Located near Ramsgate, the Manston site processes thousands of asylum seekers who arrive in the UK via small boats across the English Channel. Many of these individuals arrive in a state of distress and vulnerability. According to the Home Office, more than 2,000 staff, contractors, and sub-contractors are employed at the site over the course of a year. However, it remains unclear how many of these are detention custody officers directly responsible for the care of new arrivals. Typically, several hundred staff are on duty during any given shift.

Under the current procedures, any worker who tests positive for illegal drugs is suspended pending a disciplinary investigation. Individuals found to have used drugs have the right to appeal their dismissal and request independent testing of their samples.

Andy Baxter, assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers’ Association, which represents staff at Manston, emphasised the importance of addressing drug use within the workplace, advocating for occupational support for those found to be using drugs.

The issue of drug use among staff at Manston is not new. In November 2022, The Guardian reported allegations of staff attempting to sell drugs to asylum seekers, alongside reports of some staff using drugs while on duty. At that time, a Home Office spokesperson stated that individuals involved in such misconduct would be promptly removed from the site and that the department was committed to maintaining high standards of behaviour among its employees. Notably, no sacking related to drug use occurred at Manston in 2022.

The facility has faced various challenges, including severe overcrowding in late 2022, when it housed more than 4,000 individuals—well above its capacity of 1,600. This led to unsanitary conditions and subsequent outbreaks of diphtheria and scabies, resulting in at least one death linked to the illness. An independent inquiry into the conditions at Manston during that period is currently underway.

Emma Ginn, director of the charity Medical Justice, which supports individuals in immigration detention, expressed concern over the high rate of drug use among staff entrusted with the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable asylum seekers.

In response to the increasing issues at the facility, a Home Office spokesperson stated that the agency maintains a zero-tolerance policy regarding illegal drug use, reaffirming its commitment to the care of individuals in transit through Manston.

Separately, the Home Office confirmed that a recent incident involved a man attempting to take his own life at the facility—an unusual occurrence given that new arrivals typically pass through the centre within a matter of hours. In connection with this matter, a spokesperson reiterated the department's obligation to care for individuals detained across its immigration estate.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/feb/06/manston-health-concerns-home-diptheria-outbreak> - This piece discusses health concerns raised about Manston, including warnings about infection control measures and the risk of diphtheria outbreaks.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/27/home-office-records-only-one-case-of-diphtheria-at-manston-despite-50-reported> - This article reveals discrepancies in reporting diphtheria cases at Manston, with only one case recorded by the Home Office despite 50 reported cases.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/27/manston-migrant-centre-in-kent-catastrophically-overcrowded-union-says> - This report highlights the severe overcrowding at Manston, with the facility designed for 1,600 people but accommodating 4,000, leading to inhumane conditions.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/25/inside-story-of-manston-detention-centre> - This article provides an inside look at Manston, detailing overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and the challenges faced by asylum seekers and staff.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/nov/23/revealed-home-office-completely-lost-grip-at-notorious-manston-asylum-centre> - This piece reveals the Home Office's loss of control at Manston, with asylum seekers detained beyond the 24-hour limit and conditions deteriorating.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/05/uk-migrant-centre-manston-staff-sacked-failed-drug-tests> - Please view link - unable to able to access data