

Report on an unannounced inspection of

# **Brook House Immigration Removal Centre**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

**31 October–11 November 2016**

# Introduction

Brook House is an immigration removal centre (IRC) situated near Gatwick Airport. Brook House and a neighbouring IRC, Tinsley House, are both operated by G4S and are collectively known as Gatwick IRC. At the time of this inspection, Tinsley House was closed for refurbishment and some of the detainees, and most of the staff, had been temporarily moved to Brook House. The last inspection was in May 2013. The centre holds adult male detainees, and at the time of this inspection there were just under 400 being held there.

As with all immigration removal centres, the major challenge for the staff was to manage the frustration felt by many of the detainees at the length of their detention and the uncertainty surrounding their future. We found that the average length of detention at Brook House had increased substantially from 28 days to 48 days. Surprisingly, there did not appear to have been any analysis or investigation as to why this had happened. In the absence of such analysis, it was hard to see how detention periods could be systematically reduced and the inevitably negative outcomes for detainees mitigated. As we point out in the section of this report dealing with casework, in addition to the overall concern about the length of detention, there were also some serious delays apparent in some individual cases.

Aside from the delays in casework, our major concern was about the physical environment in which detainees were held. The residential units very closely resembled the conditions found in prisons, and these were exacerbated by poor ventilation and unsatisfactory sanitary facilities.

This report makes a number of detailed recommendations about the treatment of detainees and the conditions in which they are held. I would add a cautionary note on an issue that is not the subject of a specific recommendation but has the potential to adversely affect the conditions in which some detainees are held: the proposal to bring into use the third bed which has been installed in 60 of the two-person cells. Many staff and detainees were of the view that this would lead to a decline in living standards. This is a view shared by inspectors.

Overall, this was an encouraging inspection. The centre had improved upon the standards we found at the last inspection, and on this occasion was assessed as 'reasonably good' in all four of our healthy establishment tests. This also marks excellent progress from the standards we were seeing at Brook House when it first opened. There is no doubt in my mind that the standards now being observed at the centre are the result of a great deal of hard work by the management and staff. They should be congratulated on their efforts and I hope are encouraged by this report to maintain and build upon the clear improvements they have made.

**Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM**  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

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## Appendix IV: Summary of detainee survey responses

A voluntary, confidential and anonymous survey of the detainee population was carried out for this inspection. The results of this survey formed part of the evidence base for the inspection.

### Sampling

The detainee survey was conducted on a representative sample of the population. Using a robust statistical formula provided by a government department statistician we calculated the sample size required to ensure that our survey findings reflected the experiences of the entire population of the centre<sup>19</sup>. Respondents were then randomly selected from a detainee population print-out using a stratified systematic sampling method.

### Distributing and collecting questionnaires

Every attempt was made to distribute the questionnaires to respondents individually. This gave researchers an opportunity to explain the purpose of the survey and to answer respondents' questions. We also stressed the voluntary nature of the survey and provided assurances about confidentiality and the independence of the Inspectorate. This information is also provided in writing on the front cover of the questionnaire.

Our questionnaire is available in a number of different languages and via a telephone interpretation service for respondents who do not read English. Respondents with literacy difficulties were offered the option of an interview.

Respondents were not asked to put their names on their questionnaire. In order to ensure confidentiality, respondents were asked to seal their completed questionnaire in the envelope provided and either hand it back to a member of the research team at a specified time or leave it in their room for collection.

Refusals were noted and no attempts were made to replace them.

### Survey response

At the time of the survey on 31 October 2016 the detainee population at Brook House IRC was 392. Using the method described above, questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 209 detainees.

We received a total of 159 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 76%. This included one questionnaire completed via interview. Nine respondents refused to complete a questionnaire and 41 questionnaires were not returned.

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<sup>19</sup> 95% confidence interval with a sampling error of 7%. The formula assumes a 75% response rate (65% in open establishments) and we routinely 'oversample' to ensure we achieve the minimum number of responses required.

<b>Q35</b>	<b>Can you normally get access to your property held by staff at the centre if you need to?</b>	
	Yes .....	72 (49%)
	No .....	30 (21%)
	Do not know .....	44 (30%)
<b>Q36</b>	<b>What is the food like here?</b>	
	Very good .....	12 (8%)
	Good .....	33 (22%)
	Neither .....	44 (30%)
	Bad .....	23 (16%)
	Very bad .....	35 (24%)
<b>Q37</b>	<b>Does the shop sell a wide enough range of goods to meet your needs?</b>	
	Have not bought anything yet .....	13 (9%)
	Yes .....	80 (54%)
	No .....	54 (37%)
<b>Q38</b>	<b>Do you feel that your religious beliefs are respected?</b>	
	Yes .....	117 (80%)
	No .....	13 (9%)
	Not applicable .....	16 (11%)
<b>Q39</b>	<b>Are you able to speak to a religious leader of your faith in private if you want to?</b>	
	Yes .....	74 (52%)
	No .....	19 (13%)
	Do not know/ Not applicable .....	48 (34%)
<b>Q40</b>	<b>How easy or difficult is it to get a complaint form?</b>	
	Very easy .....	18 (12%)
	Easy .....	50 (34%)
	Neither .....	15 (10%)
	Difficult .....	12 (8%)
	Very difficult .....	12 (8%)
	Do not know .....	39 (27%)
<b>Q41</b>	<b>Have you made a complaint since you have been at this centre?</b>	
	Yes .....	36 (24%)
	No .....	97 (66%)
	Do not know how to .....	15 (10%)
<b>Q42</b>	<b>If yes, do you feel complaints are sorted out fairly?</b>	
	Yes .....	6 (4%)
	No .....	25 (17%)
	Not made a complaint .....	112 (78%)

#### Section 7: Staff

<b>Q43</b>	<b>Do you have a member of staff at the centre that you can turn to for help if you have a problem?</b>	
	Yes .....	97 (66%)
	No .....	49 (34%)
<b>Q44</b>	<b>Do most staff at the centre treat you with respect?</b>	
	Yes .....	107 (77%)
	No .....	32 (23%)