

Independent investigation into concerns about Brook House immigration removal centre

A report for the divisional chief executive of G4S Care and Justice and the main board of
G4S plc

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14.37 Home Office managers in the service delivery team explained that they gathered information about G4S's performance of the contract and held them to account in a number of ways. They told us that members of the team were regularly out and about in Brook House, observing and discussing performance of different aspects of the contract, including tasting the food. A Home Office manager attends the centre director's daily meeting with his senior staff. A weekly meeting chaired by the Home Office's area manager for Gatwick IRCs with G4S senior managers considers operational performance matters. A monthly contract meeting with the G4S senior management team is chaired by the Home Office service delivery manager for Gatwick IRCs. It focuses on overall contract performance. Home Office managers told us they discussed the financial penalties G4S had incurred for failures in delivery under the contract and any possible mitigation. They said they asked the centre director and members of the senior management team to explain how they planned to address any failings under the contract.

14.38 The Home Office compliance manager (who reports to the Home Office area manager) told us in April 2018 that he had recently asked for detainee forum meetings to be reorganised so that detainees could voice any concerns to G4S managers and the Home Office about the way Brook House was run. The deputy director had handed responsibility for running detainee forums to the residential DCMs, but the forums had not been happening regularly. Furthermore, they had been held in rooms at the centre and they had sometimes been disrupted by uninvited detainees. The Home Office compliance manager had required the meetings to be held in the visits room weekly and for more senior G4S managers to attend.

14.39 The former director told us that Home Office managers he dealt with during his time running Brook House up to September 2017 had been primarily concerned with how G4S supported the immigration removal process. He said:

"Their primary focus was all about the removal process. ...of course they care about the welfare and at different degrees but yes, their primary focus was the removal process... We manage charters well, but if we didn't manage that well, then that would be a big issue for them..."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-into-the-welfare-in-detention-of-vulnerable-persons>

14.40 We interviewed the former Home Office contract manager who left at the end of 2017. He appeared to concede that during his time in the role, when there had not been a separate service delivery team, his priority and that of those he reported to had been with delivery of elements of the contract that supported the removals process, such as the requirements that detainees be presented within specified times for meetings with the Home Office and for legal hearings, for transfers and removals. He told us:

“If they needed to present a detainee ready for discharge for the escorting provider, the expectation was that detainee was ready to be handed over to the escorting provider. If they failed to do that it was a performance failure. Unless there was very good reason or mitigation presented it would be a financial penalty for them... There wasn’t a huge amount of performance measures compared to what was actually in the schedule D, the operational requirements. The concentration was focused on the ones that we could performance measure because they were deemed as the most important part of the contract. It was things like admitting somebody and discharging somebody, making sure that activities were open, making sure that the Welfare Service was there. It was making sure that cleaning was done every day and people were released within the four hours. So admission, discharge, and areas such-like that we concentrated on.”

“Immigration work always took priority because the focus was having people’s cases progressed to the end, whatever that may be - released or returned”.

14.41 The Home Office service delivery manager (who has overall responsibility for contract compliance and performance at Gatwick IRCs) also acknowledged that the Home Office had been more focused on those aspects of the contract with G4S that supported the delivery of immigration objectives. She told us:

“I think there is a real distinction between contact and doing contract and compliance activity and where we have a combined team, and there is so much drive on operational contact, we never got around to doing compliance work; that is the honest truth. It is always the kind of thing that ends up being left.”

14.42 Home Office managers also acknowledged that the Home Office monitoring of the performance of the contract at Brook House tended to be based on consideration of the individual elements of contract performance and compliance and that they had not taken

an approach that examined and questioned the wider concerns of the care and welfare of detainees, their quality of life and experience of being detained in Brook House.

14.43 The service delivery manager said:

“Activities is something that is only just emerging as a bit of an issue. I have seen in a couple of IMB reports, they do a weekly IMB inspection about aspects of activities not being on, so I have asked my team to do some work on that, but, for example, cleaning, catering, we are probably more advanced in our monitoring of those particular aspects than we have some of the stuff around reception. We have got quite involved in adults at risk, so I think we are probably more on point with those elements at the moment than we are with some of the regime aspects... historically, because where we only had a combined contract and compliance team there was no capacity to carry out compliance work outside of staffing levels which we monitored quite robustly. We didn’t really do any other compliance monitoring, so you only knew what you knew, because we didn’t have any capacity to go and find out anything.”

14.44 The Home Office compliance manager told us that the overall welfare of detainees and the quality of life of detainees was not a matter he was required to report on to his managers.

14.45 The service delivery manager told us that the Home Office was developing a framework based on identified thematic areas of risk to delivery of the contract and the information that will support the monitoring of the risks. She suggested that this would allow the Home Office to have a better grip on contract performance as a whole:

“...I have identified eight risk areas and bespoke compliance activity underneath each risk area, so if it was security I am not going to look at the whole of security because I don’t have the capacity to do it, but, I can focus on use of force, I can focus on searching, particularly around visitor searching. I have identified some thematic areas inside those risk areas, which I and the team will go off and focus [on]. Depending on the scale of the job, depending on how I divide up the work between the six EOs [executive officers], so I have eight risk areas, six EOs, so for example, [one member of the team] is doing vulnerability as well as welfare and regime, so he will be looking at that and he is developing his framework for that at

the moment, getting his head around contractually what they are required to deliver. He will be attending Adults at Risk meetings, because he is doing the vulnerability bit, and making sure they follow the Adults at Risk procedures. He will be doing that. Once we have that fully up and running we will then have the first feedback from the guys on what they have done in the last month.....Obviously G4S have a contract which requires them to self-audit, so they have identified the self-audit that will be relevant to the work they are doing so they can accompany the self-audits, just to make sure they are auditing themselves properly. All of that will start to feed into how we have discussions in the monthly meeting. I think we are on our way, but I wouldn't say we are where we need to be yet."

14.46 The Home Office on-site team enter the centre regularly and have regular contact with detainees, staff and managers. We believe they should take greater responsibility than they appear to have done in the past for monitoring the overall experience of detainees at Brook House and whether G4S is providing detainees with enough to occupy their time and are adequately ensuring the overall welfare of detainees.

G4S's own information gathering and assurance process

14.47 Senior managers in G4S's Custodial and Detention Services oversee and receive information about individual contracts principally via trading review meetings. The senior management team at each G4S-run prison or IRC makes a presentation on their performance against their key contractual performance indicators to senior managers of the sub-division. The managing director and chief operating officer of the sub-division have trading review meetings in turn with senior managers in the G4S Care and Custody division.

14.48 The [REDACTED], told us that each trading review meeting involved a prison or IRC management team preparing more than 100 slides of information. He told us the meetings used to be held monthly with each prison and IRC management team but since the beginning of 2018 organisations about which the sub-division managers had less concern had had trading reviews every two months. The [REDACTED] identified some of the limitations and shortcomings of the trading review process. He referred to the size of the information slide packs used, and the fact that trading review meetings often had to conclude before all relevant business had been covered. He also pointed out: