



National Audit Office

Memorandum

for the House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

Home Office

The Home Office's management
of its contract with G4S to run
Brook House immigration
removal centre

JULY 2019

Home Office oversight of the contract

16 The behaviour of staff shown in *Panorama* came as a shock to G4S management and the Home Office. Although G4S had reported many of the specific incidents depicted, the contractual reporting did not communicate their severity. The undercover reporter had not used the whistleblowing mechanisms in place to report his concerns (paragraph 3.8).

17 Immediately after *Panorama*, the Home Office and G4S agreed an action plan for how G4S would improve its management of the centre. G4S and Home Office drew up the plan together and G4S formally proposed it in October 2017. Under the action plan, G4S dismissed staff, changed its initial training course, recruited extra staff, introduced body-worn cameras and reduced standard weekly hours for detainee custody officers from 46 to 40. It also commissioned the Kate Lampard review mentioned in paragraph 14 above. The Home Office did not formally serve G4S a 'rectification notice' (a notice requiring G4S to provide the action plan), meaning it would not have been able to terminate the contract had G4S not met the terms of its action plan. But the Home Office did closely monitor how G4S implemented the action plan. G4S presented its final report on its action plan to the Home Office in May 2018, and the last actions were implemented as part of the contract extension (paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12 and Figure 13).

18 The contract was due to end in May 2018, but the Home Office agreed to extend it to May 2020. The Home Office was due to award a new contract at the end of September 2017. But it decided to first pause and then cancel the procurement to take account of the then-emerging lessons. This meant extending G4S's contract two years beyond its allowable term, but enabled the Home Office to take account of lessons from the various reviews into Brook House in the design of the new contract (paragraphs 3.14 to 3.16).

19 Until 2018, the Home Office did not have the people in place to properly verify or validate G4S's reported level of performance. The on-site monitoring of G4S's contractual compliance was part of one executive officer's role (a junior civil servant), who sat in the detainee casework team and focused mainly on monitoring G4S's level of staffing. This was insufficient to enable the Home Office to properly examine G4S's self-reported performance, or challenge G4S on its management of the centre (paragraph 3.3).

20 Since *Panorama*, in line with wider improvements across government, the Home Office has increased the size and role of its contract monitoring team. In 2018, following an independent report by Stephen Shaw, the Home Office decided to strengthen the role of the on-site detainee engagement and casework team. It also decided, in line with a general strengthening of contract management across government and the National Audit Office's recommendations on contracting to strengthen its contract management role. It separated the contract management role from the team supporting detainee casework and increased the size of its on-site compliance team to six, led by a Grade 7 official (a civil service middle manager) (paragraphs 3.2 to 3.4 and Figure 12).