

BROOK HOUSE INQUIRY

First Witness Statement of Ian Derek Castle

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 14 July 2021.

I, Ian Derek Castle, date of birth DPA of the Department for Education, FE Workforce Data Collection Policy Lead, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT will say as follows:

Introduction

1. In so far as the contents of this statement are within my own personal knowledge, they are true, otherwise they are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.
2. The answers provided below are to the best of my knowledge and recollection, with reference to the documents noted in the Rule 9 request and to a limited set of documents drawn to my attention by those advising me in the period provided for drafting this statement. Should the Inquiry wish me to consult any other documents, I would of course be able to do so if given sufficient time. As set out below, I ceased working for the Home Office in April 2021, and have no access to records relating to my time in Brook House. Where the Inquiry has requested that I provide specific examples or precise details I have done so to the best of my recollection.

Background

3. I was employed by the Home Office between June 2002 and April 2021, when I left to join the Department for Education on promotion to Grade 7 (assistant director).

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4. My initial posting was as an Immigration Officer at the South East Ports Surveillance Team based in Dover, and primarily my duties involved searching freight wagons for clandestine arrivals into the UK.
5. In 2004 I transferred to a team responsible for the administration of removal charter flights.
6. In 2005, after passing arrest training, I was initially posted to the Anti-Terrorist Liaison Unit at Buckingham Gate. My duties included the investigation of foreign nationals of interest to the security services. I led several arrest/detention operations across London. I then transferred to the Operation Trident team, which was a small joint police/immigration unit concerned in identifying, tracing and detaining drug dealers and men of violence, predominantly from the Afro-Caribbean community. I led operations across London, where large quantities of class A drugs, firearms, ammunition and cash was seized.
7. In 2014 I was posted to the Immigration Enforcement Criminal and Financial Investigation Team in Croydon. Following successfully passing Financial Investigation exams, I was responsible for the investigation of financial and money laundering crime linked with immigration OCGs.
8. Between 31 July 2017 and April 2021, I was employed as the Detention and Escorting Services (DES) Area Manager for the Gatwick IRCs, comprising Brook House, Tinsley House and the Pre-Departure Accommodation for families, and was responsible for a small team of HEOs and EOs. On a day-to-day basis, I was responsible for overseeing the team monitoring contract compliance by the service provider, initially G4S and subsequently Serco.
9. Since April 2021, I have been employed by the Department for Education as the policy lead for a major project, the Further Education Workforce Data Collection. This role involves policy oversight and coordination, Ministerial and stakeholder engagement, sector communications and delivery oversight. I manage a small team of SEOs and HEOs.

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Attendance at Brook House and my role at Brook House

10. When I began my job as Area Manager at Brook House, moves were afoot to change and expand the make-up of the team. As I understood, originally there was one small team who were responsible for both monitoring contract compliance and engagement with the men in our care, however the creation of two separate teams (compliance and engagement) had begun when I joined, and I was responsible for the compliance team. Although I cannot recall the exact make-up of the team at the time I joined, when I left this role in April 2021 it comprised seven Deputy Compliance Managers (EO grade) and three Compliance Managers (HEO grade).
11. Although my official start date was 31 July 2017, I had booked annual leave, so my first day of attendance at the Gatwick IRCs was 14 August 2017. I attended either Brook House or Tinsley House each day, Monday – Friday. Approximately once a week I would walk round both centres.
12. I do not recall receiving a formal job specification, and as I have now left the Home Office, I do not have access to the advert for the role which should give some detail on the requirements of the role. However, generally my duties were to lead a team who were to ensure compliance by G4S (at the time) with the contract to run the three centres at Gatwick.

The Contract

13. My understanding of the contract between the Home Office and G4S was that, simply put, the Home Office would pay the service provider to detain immigration offenders in a safe and secure environment, and to provide support, activities and learning opportunities to the detainees during their stay at the Gatwick IRCs, in accordance with DSOs, DC Rules, Home Office policy and as stipulated in the contract itself.
14. As I recall, G4S were expected to self-report any failures and a member of the Home Office compliance team would meet with G4S representatives on a

weekly basis to discuss service levels and impose any performance measures according to the contract. I was responsible for overseeing the team monitoring contract compliance. In terms of how performance was measured, the Home Office team managed the service levels provided by G4S by comparison with the requirements of the contract and other detention legislation. Any failures were inputted into a spreadsheet and addressed during weekly meetings with G4S, and any mitigation which may have been put forward considered. Penalties for poor performance were applied as per the contractual obligations

15. I do recall thinking that there were areas of the contract which were important to me, but due to the time elapsed since the end of the G4S contract, but I cannot recall precisely what they were. Although the Inquiry has provided me with some extracts from the original contract, these have not been of any assistance in this regard. I would be happy to comment further if provided with more time and access to the full contract.
16. In late 2017/early 2018, a new method of measuring contract compliance was introduced by the Home Office, in that staff were given specific areas to monitor including reception/induction process, detainee welfare, catering/cleaning among others. The team met on a monthly basis to discuss any issues, particularly those that were not being addressed. Care and welfare was considered particularly important by the Home Office and Home Office staff attended weekly detainee welfare forums. I did not personally attend these meetings and do not recall being informed about their specific content, nor being made personally aware of any follow-up action.
17. I do not recall any specific requirement for the Home Office to report on the overall welfare of the detainees, and their quality of life at the centre.

Adults at Risk Policy and Rule 35 Process

18. In relation to the Adults at Risk policy during the relevant period, due to lack of time I was at Brook House within the relevant period, I feel unable to comment on how the policy protected detainees, the balance of risk against immigration

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factors or the impact that the policy had on the thresholds caseworkers worked to regarding detention, nor whether it was effectively operated at Brook House during that time. I do think that the policy was effectively operated subsequently, but as set out in the preceding part of this paragraph that is not a comparative comment based upon its previous operation, about which I had no knowledge and can make no comment.

19. Similarly, due to lack of time I was at Brook House within the relevant period, I feel unable to comment on the effective operation of the Rule 35 process at Brook House during that time. Any claims made by the detainees were dealt with by the Engagement team or caseworkers, however, if one of the team raised any Rule 35 claims during meetings with Compliance team officers, they would raise a concern with the relevant Engagement officer to escalate accordingly.

Detainee Forum Meetings

20. Due to the lack of time I was at Brook House during the relevant period, I cannot confirm whether detainee forums took place within the relevant period, however I do recall there were detainee forums taking place during my time at Brook House.

Complaints

21. As I recall, complaints on any matters could be submitted in a variety of ways, whether from detainees or others, either verbally to Home Office and/or G4S staff or in writing. There were complaint boxes on all the wings, and these were emptied daily by Home Office staff, then logged and assessed, again by Home Office staff. They were then passed to either the service provider, or if considered more serious, the Home Office PSU.
22. Although I received data on the number of complaints I had no involvement in the process itself, and therefore do not have any opinion on how the process might be improved. I do not recall receiving any complaints directly, nor being involved in any investigation. I do not recall being passed any complaints to

review or consider as part of my contract management functions although I may have been passed the outcome of certain complaints. I do recall discussing the outcome of complaints with G4S and any actions they were required to complete by the Home Office – for example staff training measures. Complaints regarding healthcare were dealt with directly by the G4S Healthcare team, and the Home Office had no involvement in that process.

Contact with Detained Persons

23. I do not recall having any contact with any detained person during the relevant period. After the relevant period, I recall that I did meet and speak with some of the men when I walked around the centre, and on a couple of occasions carried out Rule 40 (Removal from Association) reviews.

Culture

24. I have already mentioned, I was at Brook House during the relevant period for a short period, since then time has elapsed. Due to this, I am unable to offer a description of any identifiable culture at Brook House during that time. After the broadcast of the BBC Panorama programme, there seemed to be an impact on morale on staff, both Home Office and G4S. I heard stories of at least one member of G4S staff being verbally abused by members of the public when she went shopping after her shift, whilst in uniform.
25. I do not recall having any issues with how the values of G4S and/or the Home Office or their cultures impacted on the detainees, management of staff nor the protection of particularly vulnerable men.
26. My opinion of the leadership team at Brook House subsequent to the relevant period is generally positive. I always felt that the safety and welfare of the detainees was of the highest priority, and they seemed to believe in a culture of care.

27. I do not recall any instances where someone raised concerns about the treatment of detainees, nor of any occasions of racist, homophobic or misogynistic behaviour, nor do I recall any instances where staff (either G4S or Home Office) may have brought in drugs.

28. I also do not recall experiencing any instances of bullying by G4S staff, but there have been a couple of occasions where Home Office staff have made complaints against other Home Office staff, where they considered themselves to have been bullied. The first time was in (I think) 2018, and was solved by mediation. I am not sure of the outcome of the second occasion, but I am aware that both members of staff are still working at Brook House.

Oversight, monitoring and outside involvement

29. Regarding the HMIP inspection of Brook House in November 2016, and subsequent recommendations, I do not recall seeing this document during my time at Brook House, although it is possible that I may have done. Any action plan/list of recommendations would have been created by other staff within DES. I do not remember what any of the outcomes were, and so I am unable to offer an opinion (I am however happy to consider the report if this would be of assistance to the Inquiry).

30. I do not recall seeing any specific complaints relating to relating to victimisation from staff from detained persons, although it is possible that some may have been submitted.

31. The IMB's role, as I understand it, is to ensure that detainees are treated fairly and humanely. I had regular interaction with the Chair of the Brook House IMB, where we discussed issues within the Centre and what options were available (i.e. to resolve issues which had been identified) where possible. On occasion I attended their monthly meetings to discuss matters. At this stage I am not able to recall specific examples of the contents of such discussions.

32. The Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group are another volunteer organisation who are concerned with the welfare of the men at the Gatwick IRCs. I had a few telephone calls from the Chair (plus a handful of emails) where we discussed specific concerns about particular individuals. I do not recall whether or not I followed up specific concerns, but in general my practice would have been to advise G4S of the situation regarding the individual concerned.
33. I am not familiar with Medical Justice, and do not recall having any dealings with them. I am aware that Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) provide legal advice to those in immigration detention, but I do not recall having any dealings with them.
34. Whilst I did receive a few calls and emails from the Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group in relation to individuals about whom they had concerns (to the best of my recollection these largely related to specific detainees with actual or suspected mental health issues), these did not lead me to question the standard of care these individuals were receiving. Due to data protection concerns I did not feel it appropriate to discuss specific individuals with the Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group, but I would have taken their concerns on board and ensured that the issues raised by them were drawn to the attention of relevant staff (if they were not already, it is my recollection that most, if not all of the reports received concerned individuals who were already "on the radar" of relevant staff).

Training

35. I do not recall any specific contract management training on taking up this post, which I believe would have been extremely useful in order to be fully conversant with the expectations of the role. I did have some generic training including 'Keeping Children Safe' among other courses, and in 2019 I attended a PRINCE2 training course.

Relationship with G4S staff

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36. As far as my working relationship with G4S staff is concerned, this was always positive, meaningful and professional. I had no problem with discussing issues with their management team. I would often walk around the centre with at least one member of their SMT and stop to talk with DCOs to get their views on how the centre was 'feeling'.

Staffing

37. I have no doubt that had G4S employed more staff, there would have been fewer incidents within the centre. With more staff, you can offer more variety with activities, which would help with overcoming the boredom that affects men in detention. I did not raise these thoughts with my line management chain as I was under the impression that increasing staffing levels was not an option available to us.

38. I believe (as you might expect) that staffing levels were dictated by the costs, but also recall that staffing numbers were increased following the Panorama broadcast but cannot recall exactly by how many and when exactly this happened.

39. I do not recall any issues being raised by Home Office or G4S staff regarding the levels of staff.

40. I cannot comment on the levels of healthcare staff as this was not in my remit. I cannot recall whether there were any issues concerning the number of Activity staff.

Use of Force

41. I do not recall seeing any use of force episodes during my time in the centre.

42. Control and restraint, or use of force, was something that we did specifically look at once we changed the Home Office team's working methods around – we did dip sample use of force reports, but I cannot recall whether any specific issues were raised.

43. I don't recall being advised of occasions of excessive use of force, and as I did not see any use of force (in real time or via video footage) I cannot comment on whether it was excessive. In my view use of force should be a last resort, and, if I recall correctly, that was how the centre was run. I cannot provide a blanket opinion on the appropriateness or effectiveness of control and restraint, as each situation is totally different – you can have a different reaction from the same person on three different occasions. Sometimes control and restraint is needed as a last resort to stop a person hurting themselves or someone else, for example.
44. Staff were trained to use communication and de-escalation first. That is the most important alternative approach. I am not sure what other alternative techniques and approaches the Inquiry has in mind: as an arrest trained enforcement Immigration Officer, I had access to batons and handcuffs, which are not available to DCOs.

Time served foreign national offenders (TSFNOs)

45. Regarding TSFNOs at Brook House, in my opinion Brook House should be used solely for TSFNOs, because the physical environment of Brook House may be less suitable for immigration offenders who are normally unused to detention. I cannot be certain that all feel the same, and do not recall any specific difficulties caused by co-location during my time at Brook House, but I would guess that other detained persons might sometimes feel intimidated by the prison-like environment of Brook House and the behaviour of those coming from the prison estate who have already adjusted and are used to the unique atmosphere of IRCs like Brook House.

Abuse of detained persons

46. I do not have any specific examples of abuse (verbal or physical) of detainees (either individually or collectively) at Brook House, by staff or other detainees, nor any specific cases I was made aware of. Of course, sometimes there were occasional fights or incidents between detainees, but I had no particular concerns about individuals or groups being abused.

The Panorama Programme

47. I can confirm that I had never heard of Callum Tully prior to the broadcast of the BBC Panorama programme, nor did I appear in it. During my time at Brook House, I did not have any reason to think that the behaviour that the programme showed had or was continuing.
48. In my view, the broadcast had a largely negative impact on staff morale at Brook House. I have already mentioned one incident where a G4S DCO was verbally abused while off duty.
49. The men detained in the centre were aware that the programme was being broadcast and I would imagine many of them watched it, but I cannot comment on what sort of impact it might have had on them.
50. Following the broadcast of the BBC Panorama programme, an action plan was put in place with numerous improvements and changes successfully implemented. Due to the passing of time, I cannot recall exact details but I would be happy to provide further evidence if provided with the relevant documents or given further time to research the matter.

Specific Individuals

51. Of the list of individuals I have been asked to comment on, I only recall meeting the nurse Jo Buss, on one specific occasion, although there may well have been other times. From what I remember, I met her at Tinsley House, and we possibly discussed the welfare of one particular individual. I can confirm that I did not hear her use any form of negative language, nor witness her being physically or verbally abusive in any way towards anyone.

Suggestions for Improvements

52. I have a few suggestions for improvements at Brook House. This is based on what I knew of Brook House when I was last working there. Firstly, I would like to see more staff on duty, during both day and night state, than when I was

working there. This would lead to a safer environment, with more staff available during an incident to ensure that the 'normal' running of the centre is not compromised. I would also like to see a complete re-decoration of the centre, including some form of carpeting and a breaking up of the paint scheme. I would like to see an improvement in the quality of the food available to the men. Finally, I think some more unusual activities can be introduced – using dog visitors or other animals can be extremely useful for reducing anxiety.

53. I am asked to comment on the perception of some witnesses that G4S prioritised the costs of care of detained persons. To the extent that this was an issue my view was then (and is now) that this was an issue with the way that the contract was structured, rather than an issue with G4S's "priorities". For example, I recall thinking (although I cannot recall specifics) that certain things which did not attract a contractual penalty should have done, and that the contract focused heavily on some things (in terms of the level of penalties) and less heavily on others. These were issues which were addressed in the new contract.

Statement of Truth	
I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.	
I am content for this witness statement to form part of the evidence before the Brook House Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.	
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Signature	Signature
Date	04/11/2021

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