

BROOK HOUSE INQUIRY

First Witness Statement of Edmund Fiddy

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 05 July 2021 and a subsequent letter dated 12 January 2022 .

I, Edmund Fiddy, born [DPA] will say as follows:

Introduction

1. I have been asked to provide this statement in respect of my time as a Detainee Custody Officer (“DCO”) at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (“Brook House”) which was operated by G4S (“the company”).
2. I worked at Brook House between 2015 and 2017 but given the passage of time I have no documentary evidence to confirm the specific dates of my employment and I do not recall having completed an exit interview form.
3. That being said, I have no reason to question the dates provided to the Inquiry Legal Team by the company which I understand to record a start date of 27 April 2015 and a leaving date of 12 October 2017.
4. I left Brook House and the company because of the increased and constant stress of the job combined with the shift patterns, all of which began to impact upon my personal life and relationships so I decided that I needed both a career change and a change of location.
5. I am educated to A-level standard and also hold a Certificate in Mortgage Advice and Practice (CeMAP). When I left Brook House, I had a couple of different jobs as a customer relationship manager and a delivery driver before settling in my current role as a mortgage advisor.
6. Prior to working at Brook House, I worked as a project manager and had no previous experience of working in a custodial environment.
7. I applied for the role at Brook House because it looked like it could be a challenging but rewarding role. The salary was also more than my previous role.

8. The application process and the induction course did not really prepare me for the reality of working at Brook House.
9. As a DCO recruit I attended an eight week training course. From memory, the course provided a lot of information on the rules and general running of the centre but it lacked specific information with regards to how this would be put into practice in real life situations.
10. I recall us being shown photographs of Brook House which I found to be quite eye opening as I had never seen or been in a custody setting before.
11. Looking back, I feel as though we could have and should have been given more specific training on the day to day running of Brook House and would have benefited from real life case studies, particularly around de-escalation techniques and mental-health and wellbeing for both detainees and staff alike.
12. I do not recall any refresher type training after the induction although there were additional courses in relation to use of force which did involve annual refreshers. Activities officers were also offered the opportunity to undertake a gym instructor level 2 course which I did although due to persistent staff shortages I was not able to put my training into practice as much as I would have liked.
13. I did, however, always try to make time to show people how to use the gym equipment safely and effectively. I would regularly take detainees from Eden wing to the gym and would exercise with them which I felt helped to build a good rapport with the detainees.
14. So far as use of force was concerned, it was initially covered as part of the induction during which we were shown the basic holds and general positioning to be adopted in such situations.
15. I know that I did attend a number of refresher courses during my time at Brook House but I am unsure about the dates.
16. The training involved both classroom learning and a basic practical assessment in a room that I believe was supposed to simulate the environment of a cell /detainee's room.
17. I do also recall that there was 1 day of training provided in relation to personal protection which was basic and to be honest I can only really remember being taught defensive pushes. I believe that the person who led this training may have been from a prison background but I am not entirely sure.

18. As I am not an expert in personal protection or use of force, I am unable to comment upon what else we could have been taught in terms of techniques but I do feel as though more regular training should have been provided because I know that I and no doubt others often felt uncomfortable when it came to use of force and/or confrontation with detainees.
19. I do not recall ever being asked to attend an MMPR (Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint) course. I don't really know why this was not offered although it may have been because I was employed to deal with adults at Brook House and the focus of MMPR training , from what I understand, is the management of young people.
20. In terms of my role as a DCO, I felt that it was primarily to deal with the detainees on a day to day basis, assisting them with any issues where possible and ensuring their safety and the good order of the centre.
21. When I applied for the role, I was under the impression that detainees would be there for a relatively short period of time. Had I known that detainees could and indeed would be practically long-term in some cases then I doubt that I would have applied because I believe that I would have been more aware of the potential issues associated with a prison style environment such as violence, drugs and the like which are widely publicised in the news.
22. I have seen a copy of CJS004294 which is described as a job description for the DCO role but I must state that I have never seen this document before.
23. I feel that I treated detainees with dignity and respect. I always tried to build a rapport with them and show a level of understanding and empathy for the difficult situation they found themselves in.
24. The fact is that not all of the detainees were from similar backgrounds; there was a mix between convicted criminals, some for very serious crimes and individuals who had perhaps overstayed or applied for asylum. This meant that no two people were the same and I did my best to acknowledge the individual cases of those I dealt with.
25. There were on occasion language barriers between staff and detainees but very often there were other detainees who would assist with communication and there was also the option that people could use the interpreter telephone line.

26. Beyond speaking to detainees, I also often played pool with them which I believe helped build positive relationships. I arranged mini competitions too which also seemed to boost the morale of the detainees.
27. In addition to what may be called the normal day to day duties of a DCO, we were also involved with the ACDT process which required staff to observe the detainee who was subject to the ACDT and update the relevant paperwork.
28. Although the process required observations and logging the same, I did feel as though this was very much a management process as opposed to offering real help to the detainees and I would repeat my previous point that more could have been done to address mental health and wellbeing issues.
29. I have been asked about occasions when I was responsible for constant supervision of detainees. So far as I recall this was necessary for individuals with more complex needs and vulnerabilities such as those at risk of self-harm and/or suicide.
30. Constant supervision usually involved staff monitoring a detainee on a shift rotation, usually for a minimum period of one hour.
31. I would point out that some people did not like being subject to constant supervision and would be verbally abusive to staff for the duration of it.
32. Given that the individuals, more often than not, were at risk of self-harm, there were also associated risks with them potentially having concealed weapons such as razor blades which some would hide in their mouths, broken plastic pens or cigarette lighters, basically anything that they could fashion into a weapon to either self-harm or attack others.
33. I never worked as part of the welfare team and my only observation about it would be that it required more staffing resource because very often there were long queues for people to be seen and this led to agitation and frustration amongst the detainees which was perhaps understandable.
34. I do not recall any specific incentives being used to encourage positive behaviour amongst the detainees although we would, for obvious reasons encourage people to comply with the rules and regulations to make for a better environment for all detainees and staff alike.
35. I have been asked about my understanding of the process in place for preventing drugs from entering Brook House; I was not directly involved in any such process. So far as I can recall, it

- was the Assistant Custody Officers in the visitors centre who were responsible for searching those who came to visit their loved ones or friends.
36. DCOs would, I believe, monitor the cameras and the visits hall and presumably deal with any suspected incidents of drugs being brought in but I had no personal involvement in this.
37. Whatever the details of the specific policy or process for preventing drugs from entering Brook House, the reality is that it was not successful because there was a very evident drug problem, especially with so called “spice” which was worrying given how it effected detainees; it would basically make some people almost zombie like and it could also lead to fighting between detainees.
38. I was certainly never aware of any members of staff bringing drugs into Brook House.
39. I never worked within the security department, therefore I am unable to comment on the procedure for processing Time Served Foreign Nationals and carrying out risk assessments at Brook House.
40. I am aware of the fact that concerns have been raised as part of the Inquiry about racist attitudes and behaviours amongst staff but I did not witness or experience such attitudes or behaviours from any of the colleagues I worked with during my time at Brook House.
41. Similarly, I do not recall hearing or being made aware of anyone holding homophobic and/or misogynistic attitudes or behaviours. To be clear I do not believe that there is a place in the workplace or indeed wider society for such attitudes and I certainly do not hold any views like those described.
42. I do not recall any staff expressing feelings of being bullied by other staff or management but that is not to say that some may have felt that way.
43. Personally there were occasions when I felt as though I was bullied or treated unfairly by Jules Williams who was the Head of Residential Staff during the relevant period.
44. As I was relatively young when I started at Brook House, I recall that he would tell me to “toughen up” and he would often single me out for this in front of colleagues which left me feeling very upset on occasion.
45. I did not, however, feel able to speak out in such situations because it was obvious that the senior management team were all very friendly with one another and so I thought that if I raised an issue they had the power to either sack me or make my working life more difficult.

46. Once I did try to raise my concerns with HR but they simply listened to what I had to say and did absolutely nothing about it which basically confirmed my suspicion that it was pointless to report it.
47. In terms of senior management, they were notoriously unavailable during a shift if they were asked to come on to the wing “floor”. They tended to stay in their office on the top floor and only came down to briefly review and sign ACDT forms which took about five minutes.
48. I believe that the lack of support from a senior level is something that would need to be addressed moving forward.
49. However, I should point out that my direct line manager, James Begg, was excellent. I felt as though he supported me and D wing generally although I do not recall any specific appraisal process or 1-1 supervision sessions.
50. The DCMs had a difficult job because they were effectively charged with ensuring that everything in the centre ran well. They had to deal with staff, equipment and the detainees, including leading on the management of any particularly challenging situations.
51. Although I am unable to recall any specific names or examples, I do remember that some DCMs did their job more effectively than others and there were occasions when perhaps some people were promoted to DCM because they got on well with senior management as opposed to necessarily being the right person for the job. Unfortunately I am unable to give any specific names.
52. So far as colleagues were concerned, I felt as though some were perhaps more reliable than others. I got on particularly well with Luke Instone-Brewer and Babatunde Fagbo as I tended to work the same shift patterns as them.
53. Staffing levels were an issue at Brook House. There were often times when there was only one or two staff on the wing. I recall more than one occasion when I had to unlock entire wings by myself in order to maintain the schedule, particularly around meal times.
54. There were also times when the gym, IT room, library or outside areas were opened up late due to staff being required in other parts of the centre.
55. There were many occasions when I had to go without a break as there simply were not enough staff to cover.

56. The impact of the staff shortages was that morale was very low and there was also a concern that if numbers were insufficient when the centre was operating relatively well, then how would we ever be able to cope in the event of a major incident or mass unrest from the detainees.
57. I recall that I voiced my concern about staffing levels during a main staff meeting which was held every six months or so and I was told by Michelle Brown that “we don’t have enough budget as it is expensive to train and bring in new staff”.
58. From memory, the activities centre should ideally have had three staff but there were many occasions when there was only two which meant that only the IT suite and library would be staffed.
59. Whilst I am not sure about the specific staff numbers in healthcare, I do recall that it was often difficult for detainees to access the care that they needed and there were always issues with dispensing medication which led to detainees becoming abusive and aggressive towards the nurses and healthcare staff.
60. I do not personally recall ever having any specific concerns about the effectiveness of the healthcare team when called upon in use of force incidents but equally I do not remember any specific examples of when this happened to be able to make any further comment.
61. I have been asked about staff from Tinsley House; whilst I cant comment on whether or not they were given any specific training for work at Brook House, I do recall getting the sense that they were used to a very different routine and regime which meant that it was more difficult for them at Brook House.
62. I never worked in reception and I was never involved in the induction process for detainees therefore I am unable to comment upon the relevant policies and procedures that may have been adopted.
63. I feel that the resources and activities available to detainees at Brook House was limited and the problem with staffing levels meant that this could not be addressed although we did our best with running pool, football and cricket competitions which the detainees enjoyed.
64. I believe that a larger gym with more modern facilities and equipment alongside more structured activities and increased use of the outdoor areas could have made for a happier environment for detainees and staff.
65. I have no recollection of the Rule 35 process, therefore I am unable to comment upon it.

66. I am aware that the Inquiry intends to look at a number of use of force incidents and I will address each of those that I have any recollection of below, however, in more general terms in the first instance, I would like to say that I preferred to try to build a good rapport with detainees and this in turn allowed me, and others, to use verbal de-escalation if a situation arose.
67. Beyond any that the Inquiry have highlighted to me, I am unable to say with certainty how many use of force incidents I was involved with. I am also unable to say how often use of force was deployed more generally at Brook House.
68. As stated, I preferred to work with and talk to detainees and just as I am unable to recall how often use of force/C&R techniques were used at Brook House, I also do not believe that I am qualified to comment upon how effective they were in general terms.
69. I do not remember having any specific training in relation to the welfare or mental health of those detained at Brook House.
70. There was an ACDT process used to monitor those for who concerns had been raised about their mental health and particularly those who may attempt self-harm or suicide. This involved monitoring the detainee and recording observations but as I have already stated, this felt very much like a process as opposed to offering real help although from memory, the detainees were encouraged to talk through any issues they had during ACDT review meetings.
71. As already mentioned, drugs were an issue at Brook House but I do not recall whether or not detainees were offered support to deal with any drug problems through a dedicated drug rehabilitation programme.
72. I recall that the chaplaincy service was available to all detainees and the chaplain would attend and try to engage with detainees. I do not remember ever being approached by the chaplain about any specific individuals.
73. Having been asked about what would happen if a detainee refused to eat, I can confirm that meals were monitored and a record made of any missed meals. To the best of my recollection, if a person missed three meals then it was looked at by management who could they choose to open an ACDT, if appropriate.
74. I did not work on reception for TSFNO individuals. As far as I am concerned all detainees were to be treated the same, regardless of whether or not they were a TSFNO.

75. I would, however, suggest that it would have been better to have TSFNO and non TSFNO detainees housed separately because they were quite different in their character and presentation.
76. There were often tensions between those who came from a prison background and also tensions between different nationalities and ethnic groups who did not like to mix which on occasion led to verbal and physical confrontations.
77. I do not ever remember having any concerns about how members of staff treated the detainees. As alluded to, there were tensions between detainees at times which resulted in verbal abuse, some of which may have been racist and also physical altercations but there are no specific incidents or individuals that stick in my mind.
78. There were complaint forms on every wing in a variety of languages to ensure that detainees could both access and understand them. I have no recollection of the actual process but can say that I was not involved in dealing with or resolving matters when a complaint was submitted.
79. In the event that there have been any complaints made against me or other members of staff I do not have an specific recollection of the process.
80. I have seen the Panorama programme featuring reporter, Callum Tulley.
81. I can confirm that I only worked with Callum occasionally. From memory, he was on the opposite shift pattern to me and the only time I can think that we would have worked together was on activities and when our shifts crossed over.
82. Having watched the programme, I do appear when speaking to Callum about a Romanian detainee who had self-harmed following an unsuccessful bail application. This is at approximately 36 mins :50secs into the programme.
83. I went on sick leave within a couple of days of the programme airing, therefore I am unable to comment upon the effect it had on detainees or staff. Given that I left Brook House not long after too, I am unaware of what, if any, changes were made at an operational or organisational level.
84. I was not involved with the detainee who said that they were underage.
85. I have been provided with a number of documents in relation to use of force incidents. So far as CJS005533 is concerned, having read the report it would appear as though I was working on Eden wing and asked to conduct a search of the detainee, the purpose of which would have been to ensure they were not in possession of any items which could cause harm.

86. Based on the report it would also appear as though I was not present at the time the force was initially used and given I have no specific memory of the incident, I am unable to provide any further comment.
87. I have reviewed CJS001619 in respect of an unplanned use of force on 03 June 2017 and I have also watched the associated footage. I have no recollection of the event but having reviewed the documents and footage, I believe that my actions were justified, reasonable and proportionate.
88. It is clear that the detainee was being aggressive and confrontational.
89. I have been asked to comment upon an unplanned use of force on 23 June 2017 as described in CJS005605. Unfortunately I have no recollection of the incident and I am unable to explain why there is no written account from me within the paperwork.
90. To the best of my knowledge and recollection, I would have completed a report each time I was involved in a use of force incident. If I was ever unsure as to whether or not I needed to complete a report, I would have checked with the on duty manager. I believe that the paperwork needed to be completed within a specified period of time but I do not remember how long this was. I am sorry that I cannot be of more assistance in relation to this incident.
91. I have reviewed the used of force documentation for 30 June 2017 in respect of D87; given the passage of time I do not remember the incident but having reviewed the material, I can confirm that I was a support officer.
92. I was asked to search the toilet area to ensure that it was clear of any items which may cause harm. I was also asked to remove the detainee's left trainer.
93. I have no further comments to make with regards to my involvement but I would suggest that the involvement of two teams would indicate that the detainee was deemed to pose a risk of violence. The actions of the staff shown on the footage appears to be reasonable and proportionate.
94. In relation to the information contained within CJS005609, again I have no detailed recollection of the incident.
95. It would seem as though there was an issue between some detainees and I was attempting to minimise the risk of injury to staff and detainees, in the first instance, the female staff who were regularly subject to verbal abuse and sexualised comments from detainees but equally I did not want a detainee to be attacked either.
96. I do not know why the body map document was not completed and this may simply be an error.

97. Dealing with the incident described in CJS005583, I was the support officer and my role was simply to be there and step in if another officer was injured or encountered a problem. A support officer would also usually have held a set of handcuffs to use, if necessary.
98. Although I do not recall the incident in any detail, based on the information in the report I have no concerns about the behaviour of those involved.
99. Although I have reviewed page 15 of TRN0000030, I have no memory of the conversation and no idea who was being discussed. I do know that I did not like it when detainees resisted or made a use of force situation more difficult because at the end of the day a quick and compliant interaction is in everyone's interest.
100. So far as page 16 of the same document is concerned, I am unable to confirm who was being discussed and therefore cant comment on whether pain compliance was used and, if so, why.
101. Having reviewed the documents in relation to complaints raised by D1538 and D87, I have no specific comments to make save for I cant remember the incident or the investigation but I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the report or findings.
102. I have read the documentation provided in relation to a Chinese detainee who had suffered burn injuries to his feet and legs, specifically TRN0000063 pages 17 to 18 and TRN0000031 pages 6 to 8. Unfortunately I do not remember seeking medical attention for this individual and so I am unable to comment on the response of the healthcare team.
103. I find the comments of Mr Tulley offensive and have no idea why he would say such a thing. I treated all detainees with dignity and respect. I tried to understand and empathise with their situation although I would take issue with anyone suggesting that staff should have sympathised with the situation of every detainee.
104. Asked why I discussed D1914's suicide attempt with Callum Tulley [Row 712], I can only assume that it was because he asked me what had happened which would have been a perfectly reasonable question to answer from a colleague.
105. In terms of my involvement with the case reviews for D812 as referenced in CJS0072781, CJS002882 pages 5, 7 and 11, I believe that I would have been asked to attend as part of the wider group of people involved in such meetings including management and nursing staff. I would have been there to listen to any concerns and contribute any comment I may have had, if any, as we collectively worked towards moving the detainee off the ACDT.

106. As I have already stated I was not given any mental health awareness training or advised how best to communicate and deal with people with mental health issues. On reflection, I am not really sure how effective the case reviews were and so can't offer any further comment.
107. I have already stated that drugs were a problem at Brook House. I do not know what I meant by the comment "It's not enough" [TRN0000023 pages 2 to 3] but I certainly was not trying to undermine the extent of the problem.
108. As I have alluded to above, so far as I was aware it would have been for the staff in the visitors centre to search those coming into the centre and then to monitor the visits for any attempts to pass contraband to detainees.
109. I do not recall any procedures for wing staff to specifically monitor detainees who were known users or drug dealers. There was a security team who monitored gang culture and violence but as I was not part of this I do not know the full extent of their remit and whether it included drugs.
110. As stated, I was not aware of any member of staff being involved in bringing drugs into Brook House. The comment, "Keith got offered two grand a day" [TRN0000023 pages 2 to 3], was in reference to a story that Keith had told me about being offered money when he used to work in a prison. I have no reason to believe that he or anyone else ever accepted such an offer whether at Brook House or anywhere else.
111. I have reviewed page 3 of TRN0000030. As I have explained previously my understanding was that a record was kept of those who had missed or refused a meal and if this happened three times it would be escalated and dealt with by management.
112. I have read page 5 of TRN0000031 in which I am said to have described someone as an "absolute poof... absolute poofster". I am shocked by this comment as it is not a word that I would ordinarily use, indeed I acknowledge it to be offensive. I do not remember saying it and can offer no justification for it.
113. I did not bring a hard drive in to Brook House and never feared being searched.
[TRN0000023 page 3]
114. I was aware that some people, including myself, did watch tv or films in the tv room or office on the rare occasion of having some downtime on a nightshift. This was common knowledge

amongst staff and management but given the staff shortages, it was not a very regular occurrence because there was generally always something to be doing in terms of work.

115. I have read CJS004941 and I do not remember if I was questioned by a manager about not challenging behaviour and issuing warnings.

116. I do not remember the conversation with Callum Tulley on 25 April 2017, therefore I am unable to confirm exactly what we were talking about.[TRN0000019 page 8]

117. I would, however, point out that there was a general reluctance, indeed fear, about issuing warnings because of the potential consequences from the effected detainee who could become angry and abusive. A warning had the potential to escalate rather than de-escalate a situation.

118. I do not remember the incident with D1978 [Observation Records at Document CJS003671 pages 4 to 5] but so far as the comment about “putting that shit up there”, I can only assume that I meant recording the details of any abuse I received so that management would see it, not that it actually did any good as management didn’t seem to care about the constant verbal abuse that staff received.

119. I have been presented with a list of names of staff from Brook House, some of whom I remember; I have done my best to pass comment in relation to each of them.

- a. Nathan Rigg- I did not work with him and saw him only rarely.
- b. Steve Webb- he was my line manager for a few months and seemed to have a good and professional relationship with staff and detainees from what I witnessed.
- c. Chris Donnelly- I did not work with him. I believe that he was Oscar 1 and managed the centre. He seemed to be very experienced and I never witnessed anything that caused me concern.
- d. Kalvin Sanders- I do not know who this is.
- e. Derek Murphy- I did not work with him.
- f. John Connolly- although I did not work with him, I remember that he was the use of force instructor which was the only interaction I had with him, during which he did not say or do anything to concern me.
- g. Dave Webb- I only worked with him very occasionally and he never gave me cause for concern.

- h. Clayton Fraser- I spoke to him on a limited number of occasions and never heard him say anything offensive or derogatory. He seemed to have a good relationship with staff and detainees.
 - i. Charles Frances- I worked with him a number of times on E wing and he seemed to be good at his job. He got on well with the detainees and helped those under his care; he also appeared to be good verbal de-escalation.
 - j. Aaron Stokes- I am sorry but I do not remember this person.
 - k. Mark Earl- again I am sorry but I do not remember this person.
 - l. Slim Bassoud- I think he worked in visits but I have no specific memory of him.
 - m. Sean Sayers- I do not remember this person.
 - n. Ryan Bromley- I worked with him a handful of times when he was a residential officer; he seemed to be a hard worker with a good approach to his job and the detainees.
 - o. Daniel Small- he worked on the opposite shift pattern to me in activities but on the occasions when our paths crossed he struck me as helpful and worked well with the detainees. I remember that he would organise the legal aid solicitors for the detainees and also helped manage the culture kitchen. I never had any cause for concern.
 - p. Yan Paschali- I only worked with him once or twice. I recall that he shadowed on D wing for a couple of day before moving to E wing, I think. I don't remember witnessing or hearing anything of concern.
 - q. Daniel Lake- he also worked on the opposite shift pattern to me and so I rarely saw him.
 - r. Babatunde Fagbo- an experienced officer who I worked with quite a bit. I never witnessed him do or say anything offensive or derogatory to detainees or other staff. I believe he was the victim of quite awful racist abuse from detainees who would refer to his skin colour by calling him Uncle Tom and coconut amongst other offensive racial slurs. I remember too that even detainees who were also African would call him a "traitor" which was upsetting to hear as he was a good man and a hard worker.
 - s. Shane Munro- I never worked with her.
 - t. Nurse Jo Buss- I do not recall ever having worked with her.
120. From a personal point of view, I did not always feel safe working at Brook House. I felt particularly vulnerable during the times when I had to unlock an entire wing by myself. There was

constant abuse from detainees including threats of violence and if even one detainee had chosen to act on the threats during this time then I do not even want to contemplate how bad it could have been.

121. I would suggest that staffing levels ought to have been significantly higher.
122. I would also suggest that there should have been more and better training to prepare staff for life at Brook House by reference to real life examples.
123. I think that staff should have been given training in how to deal with and communicate with those suffering from mental health issues. I would go one step further and also suggest that detainees and staff should have been given access to a mental health support team.
124. Although I never had any dealings with the Home Office, I think that their policies and procedures, particularly in respect of the turnaround times in immigration cases needs to be reviewed and I would also say that TSFNOs should not be detained alongside non TSFNOs.

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.

Name	Edmund Fiddy
Signature	Signature
Date	09/02/2022

