

**Brook House Interview 13 Notes**  
**Edmund Fiddy (DCO) – 20 July 2017**

6 To anyone outside it is a prison, no matter what PC language you wanna use. Bars on the windows.

7 Safe? Major lack of staff last year and run the wing by myself. Contractually required staffing levels weren't being met: D wing 108 male Ds. C and A are 120. Since gone up. Sometimes it was dangerous.

8.30 I'm very good at having mental shower. I'm very good at not really thinking about this place, now.

I haven't personally seen stabbings and stuff like that. But I've seen a lot of assaults, blood, homemade weapons, vomit, faeces, bits and pieces like that. So yeah that sticks in your mind a little bit. I've had men opening veins up in front of me. All that sort of stuff. So I mean that's quite hard to see. But I'm quite good at not really thinking about it too much. I don't know why that is, I just always have been very good at it. But yeah, it was never an issue. Probably because of the team I was in, it was never an issue with them. I guess it's learned behaviour from them. I was never worried cos they're always 100% on what they knew, cos they had so much experience so they dealt with so much stuff. It was like second nature for them. I learned from them and it was fantastic. If I didn't have them on the wing, I would not be here, I don't think.

[Would you have left quite early on?]

Yeah I probably wouldn't have been able to deal with it. Cos it's very hard sometimes, especially if you've not seen it, like what people can do to themselves and to other people.

[Very gory, people's body in a mess. Quite distressing?]

Yeah. If you're squeamish it's probably not the best place to work. But yeah I've seen people really, really hurt themselves. I can't remember his name now, but there was a guy we took to hospital, really sliced open his chest and his arms. So much so that it was hard to push the two bits of skin back together. Anyway, so he had local anaesthetic, and they stitched him back up, and that night he came back on a constant watch or constant supervision, and he was attempting to rip his stitches out of his wounds, I guess. So, yeah, from a human perspective it's tricky. But I think the hard thing is, if you bring a camera in here, like Panorama or whatever, it takes snapshots of your day, I guess. And because you're working such long hours, there's times when officers will seem less human, they won't seem sympathetic or empathetic to distressing situations. And the hard thing is, if you haven't worked in this environment for however many hours – we do 7pm to 7am hours on night shift, for example, and by the end of that you're just so tired. And if it's been hard, every night you've been bombarded with incidents, it can be very...I dunno you just have to deal with it in a professional manner. You might not appear to be sympathetic but there are times when you just have to – it's very clinical, really, you just have to do what you have to do, there's no time as such for – I dunno it sounds very harsh. But, y'know, sometimes you have to do it.

10.30 On very severe self-harm. Came back and tried to reopen stitches.

If you bring a camera in, you know like Panorama, you can seem quite unsympathetic. It all sounds very clinical. It's a snapshot.

SMT have lost touch, they don't see and experience it every day. They have lots of experience in prisons and BH. Povey is great at staff welfare. Apart from that don't feel there are welfare checks. Wasn't supported.

15 on emotional demands. SMT aren't there for 13 hours getting verbal abuse, physical threats, self-harm. Seeing these situations...it'll take its toll after a while on family life. I know of officers who've broken up with other halves because it's just too much. Similar in prisons, probably worse.

Emotionally demanding? Yes. Need mental shower.

I've been highly stressed before to the point I thought I'd have to go off cos too few staff.

How many staff do you need? A couple of experienced staff, maybe a year in. Me and Luke, say, would be fine.

Experience is key, really. Cos it's the way you interact with the detainees, it's the way you get the detainees to work for you. Cos if you have the support of the detainees, then it's much easier to run the wing. The cleaners clean...it's a well-oiled machine if you have experience there. Used to play pool with them, have a laugh. Bang up at lunch time. Dunno when that changed.

Depends on the gangs you've got here, the friends they make. Nationalities have an impact.

18 Average working day? Now start at 8.15. Fairly relaxed morning. Open up gym, It suite and courtyard. IT, library and sports officers. In summer run sports competition.

19.30 Other than that I'm a dog's body. Go to E wing, escort, constant watch. Nice in a way, not stuck in one place. Cos it can be quite isolating mentally, feeling that you can't leave without putting extra pressure on your colleagues. Can see other staff, see how things are going.

20.30 On wings, average day, arrive at 7.45. Morning briefing not pleasant. Always negative exercise – what officers have done wrong or mistakes they've made. Never what went right. Puts dampener on morning. Always negative. If it's your third or fourth shift in a row, it's just another negative thing to add on top of your tiredness, stress...and you're waiting for the abuse to start.

So yeah, do briefing. One guy gets breakfast trolley. Set servery up. Roll count hopefully correct. From initial unlock you can get serious abuse right from unlock. Depends what happened on nightshift. Maybe they removed someone or someone was playing their music too loud and it's your fault. You get abuse right from the get go.

22.45 What do people say? Get in your face. I'm gonna fuck you up. I've had death threats. I've had rape threats. Your family. Just nasty. A lot of the time racial. You're a racist cunt. I'm gonna fuck you up, I'm gonna get people to...just all this out of nowhere really. Just starting first job of the day.

23.30 There was a morning briefing where there was intel that they were gonna throw urine or faeces over officers in the morning. So just be careful. So we were all excited to open doors obviously. It's the threat. There are assaults and I have been assaulted personally. And it's just the constant threat that something might happen to you. No one wants to come here with knowledge they won't go home the same. To their girlfriend or whatever. It's constant, it's on your mind always. What happens if something goes wrong? And it goes wrong all the time.

24.30 Unlock arguments about eggs, about food...property, people asking for various things. If you can't help them, abuse cos you said no. Can't do what they wanted you to do. It's just a constant cycle of trying to keep the Ds happy and in humane conditions with duvets and clean materials and whatever. But I guess you're the authoritative figure and there's things you can't do that they want you to do. People that incite other Ds. Gonna have an argument, 3 or 4 get involved, maybe something you said the other day. They tell other Ds that officer's got a problem with me. Mates join in. Whole group of Ds honing in on an officer, usually new. They're testing you all the time to see how you'll react to see what your triggers are. Cos once they've got you, once they know you're gonna get angry, cos it's only natural that you have a

switch, they'll do it constantly. As soon as they see you angry, they'll usually leave you alone. Then at lunch time they'll start again. Winding up the screw.

27 There's the routine, and there's all the other additional stuff that goes with it.

Biggest issue? Big question. When we didn't have enough staff. There's so much to talk about. If I were still on wing more info. Lack of support. Luke cut with improvised weapons. I've been assaulted a couple of times. Not punched but shoved. I wouldn't say manhandled but along those sort of lines. No ramifications for people's actions. Don't seem to like putting people on block.

29 Guy said he was gonna rape me, nasty stuff, I thought he was in the block but then he was back. There's no basic. Incentive. Cos a lot of them come from prison that's what they know. Trying to steer clear from the prison system, I think it's a bit of a joke TBH. Staff being assaulted then one night in block.

We need to go to a more prison regime. It is a prison and it needs to be run as such. Prison constables have power of constables. If they get assaulted can have more time put on their sentence. Drugs. Phones. Doesn't seem to be "in the public's interest". Obviously they want to deport them. Some clearly involved in drugs yet released on bail or given temporary admission into UK. But then the fairly placid detainees that are fairly nice to you, they've been deported. So I don't quite understand that side. Obviously I'm not as informed, I'm just an officer. But that just seems wrong. Especially when you see their RAP sheet. I've taken some nasty individuals who have done some terrible things to be released and that's hard to know. I could bump into him where I live.

33 People like the IMB and different organisations like that believe they all should be released and they all should be treated the same as a non-criminal. It sounds really dodgy me saying it like this I guess. It's not that I don't want them to be treated as human, but I just think it's not really fair. We had a couple of protests here: inhumane conditions, shouldn't be locked up. But I honestly do not think they know what some of these people have done. And I'm talking paedophiles, I'm talking rapists, murderers. You know just consistently being a criminal for multiple years and they've served many, many years for their crimes. But often they're boasting about them in here, like that footballer.

If I write down half the stuff that I hear...It's just, it's not nice.

34.40 Do you think there are misconceptions about places like this? Yeah. In the news, HW have had a couple of deaths in custody and it's probably worse than in here, cleanliness wise. Just from what you see in the news. I've never been there. Obviously it's a different company.

There are misconceptions about people who have overstayed their visa. I've overstayed a visa in another country by accident. There's those sort of people. Then there's serial criminals. Serious criminals. I think there's a guy in here that spent 17 years in prison for murdering his wife. I mean, that's serious in my eyes. I think some people don't realise what they've done.

Are people naive? 100%. Don't see their RAP sheet. What was the initial question?

36.15 Biggest issue?

Morale is low. Not paid enough for some of the things we have to do. In LIDL, paid 10 pound an hour. We have to get hands on, C&R, we have to assault people, which is effectively what it is. I don't come to work wanting to "wrap someone up" as they call it, y'know, C&R the person onto the van. And I get paid practically the same money. And there's risk. I mean, people have been injured here. Seriously injured doing routine C&R. People have improvised weapons and stuff like that. Again there's no support after you've done C&R you have to say on camera

before I have no injuries at present. It's only a select few managers here that make the difference between people staying and leaving.

38.10 But yeah it's things like that, when people believe that G4S don't care about what happens to us. I know they've redesigned contract so we get less injury on duty pay. Was 2 years, then 6 months, down more. It's such high risk here. That's why people are leaving: far less risk and far less stress, and companies that actually value their employees more. And that's why they're leaving.

My friend Luke is leaving. I'll be more wary now. I trust him 100%. He'll be replaced by someone straight out of uni or school. That's morale, too. Just don't feel valued.

39.45 Do you think staff here have a professional identity? No. Prison officers have badges and pride, hierarchy. In prison by now I'd be a senior officer. More proud to be there, feel valued, pay reflects that. Nothing like that here. Obviously a private company, they're out to make money. That's their sole aim I guess. But that's a big problem for people that actually work at the lowest level of the company. It's not like they don't have the money for it. I don't know. I'm sure it's not as easy as that.

Do you feel loyal to your employer or identify with G4S? No, I'm just seen as a body. I'd be loyal in sense of a contract here with terms and conditions. Loyal to that, wouldn't lie re: holidays. But if I got offered a job today, I wouldn't think twice about leaving. There's nothing to keep me here. There's no career progression really. There's a big, if your face fits, situation. It's not great news; really. Budgets I guess, resources, staffing. Morale is a big problem.

42.30 Has that always been a problem or is it worse recently? Got rapidly worse. Even brand new staff are leaving after 2 weeks. Hardest thing is mentally. Physically it can be demanding.

44 Ask about gender: something detainees do and it is strongly related to culture. Not respecting women.

Gender, race and age intersect. Respect. Some just want to cause trouble.

46.30 Staff speaking different languages. It's good having different people around, especially people who speak Arabic. It's really helpful sometimes. And Polish.

Babatunde from Nigeria got called Mr Tom and coconut and Bounty. Highly racial remarks, a fucking sell-out, traitor to his own nationality. I don't know, maybe it's jealousy that he's got the right to remain or that he lives in the UK. I don't know. Then you get the other extreme. Because he's from Africa he commands respect from the majority. It can change every day depending on who's here. Next question?

48 Healthcare? Don't think they're adequately knowledgeable. Don't seem well rehearsed. Used to be a fantastic nurse. Air of competence and experience. There's always problems with healthcare but then there's always problems with everything, whether it's wrong or right.

49 Relationship with Home Office? Don't see it much. Used to call down to wing and say can you tell him his thing is cancelled or can you get various bits and pieces. I guess we are working for them but it does feel like we're pieces to use, like bodies.

E.g. bearer of bad news, say that his flight has been cancelled when he's told you how excited he is to go back to India. So I'd refuse. I'm the one who's telling him so I'm the one who is gonna be the fixation for his arguments. That officer told me I'm not going and it all comes back to me when really it's the HO. Had protests about HO before, Albanian protests. They create problems for us and some Ds think we're the ones detaining them whereas really we're not. But we have to deal with the ramifications of everything the HO says to them. Good news, bad news, everything.

51.15 Quote about refused bail so chop up, cut themselves, ligatures whatever. Might be aggressive. Ask for ID card. Go fuck yourself. Obviously it's a difficult situation for a lot of them. Some have been here 40 years, longer than I've been alive. So yes it's difficult. I wouldn't recommend working here, put it like that.

52 very vivid description of self harm and C&R.

'Go back to the beginning when you said about things that stick in my mind. There was a spontaneous C&R, it was a Nigerian charter, and it was on A wing. They called all available officers at lock up at dinner time. And it was a very large, muscular Nigerian male who didn't wanna go back. I've never seen so many deep cuts on a torso in my life. Anyway, we sort of had to jump in. He was bleeding everywhere, all over the wing. I don't know how he got out of his room but he did. And I ended up I guess taking control of his head. He had razor blades in his mouth, he had razor blades in his boxers, and he was trying to get the razor blades in his teeth to cut his shoulders and try and cut me. I had no PPE [personal protective equipment] cos it was spontaneous. [...]

'So, yeah, we just had to grab him. I know a couple of officers had to change, cos they were just so tired. And the blood. Blood is so slippery it's unreal. And I was scared. I was scared. Cos he had blades in his mouth. I had to physically hold his head and he was very muscular. [How many other officers were there with you?] Loads. [Was this recently?] No, it was a little while ago now.

'But, yeah, I just remember all the blood. I had all blood on my arms, just blood was everywhere, on my shoes. And we handed him over to TASCOR, the escort agent, to go on his Nigerian flight. They said they were gonna take him regardless and that riled him up even more, but we handed him over. And, yeah, I had blood all on me. Yeah, I won't ever forget that. Cos you never know what some of these people have. Hepatitis or some of these guys have HIV. So, yeah, again that's a worry, that's a stress on your mind. But yeah you're expected to just do it without stopping and thinking, "Actually, what could go wrong here?" But there's been various situations like that.'

55 Removal can be a highly volatile time. Very provoking. Constant cycle of stress. Need mental shower. Then washed. Done C&Rs right at start of the day. Walk in, see your name on the board and you think, It's gonna be a fantastic day today.

Lack of support. Nice to talk to you about it. I never speak to anyone outside of here about this place, ever.

You'll find a lot of people here don't talk about it. Play golf with colleague and he can't talk about anything else.

Horrible situation about a colleague breaking down. Very detailed. For a job, and that's what it is, a job to get you through, for a job to do that to you...

1.08 [What's important for me to understand?] Most of them are here for a reason. Most of them will say they're not. Most of them are criminals and some of them have done really vile acts to people. They're not all as innocent as they say they are. Don't get me wrong there are some, but you've really gotta know who you're dealing with here. ... A detention centre sounds nice. Oh, detention, oh you've overstayed your visa. That's what people say to me. Overstayed visas and stuff like that. There's not enough information about some of the people that actually live here. And a lot of people that ask me don't know how many people get deported from here. There's a lot of people getting deported and that's never really advertised as such in the media. It's always "they all come over here..."

1.10 Very close quarters. Showers, blood...

It's kinda like you're a parent, really. Not that I'm a parent. A lot of these detainees don't act their age. Whether it's a front I dunno. Some of them are very desperate individuals, which is upsetting to see. Especially on the wing, you're in charge of where they live, their shampoo, their shower, their toothbrush, their toilet roll, their towels. ... It's kind of like hospitality I guess. But you're kind of looking after their wellbeing. It's kinda like a guardian position I guess. I guess we are here to look after their welfare. But on the wings especially, you're seeing them every day. Some of them you get to know really well. Cleaner on D wing, **DX** Moroccan, great cleaner. Lots of respect. Used to run all the cleaning. So passionate. I knew loads about him, his family, what he used to do. When he left I was on annual leave so I was a bit saddened that I couldn't say goodbye. I guess he's part of the furniture. Especially with long term detainees. Such a good rapport with them cos you've basically lived with them for 2 years...But you have to be very careful with those Ds that you don't get conditioned. It's a very fine line, being professional and friendly but you also have to lay down the rules. So it can be a bit on tender hooks sometimes.

## Part 2

6 min 40 Good staff? Respectful regardless of who it is. Have to be able to eliminate that hostility, perhaps, especially after you know what certain people have done. You have to just not really alter your mindset for doing your job, which can be quite hard, especially when person X has done very nasty things and he's verbally abusing you. It's very hard to remain professional and remain unanimous. You have to have a lot of self-control, that makes a good officer. Self-control to be able to not rise to people's constant games.

7.45 Access to rap sheet etc. Do you look that up? I wouldn't go and look at it, but it's on our DAT system so people. Alterations on there. So if someone verbally abusing you you can write it on his observations. On his observations would be things he's done since he came into the centre. Inducted in, given a tour, he was rude to an officer. Usually have his prison files, they write all that in. I guessed you do look when it's there but I wouldn't go seek it out. I mean sometimes it's good, especially for new staff, cos sometimes they don't realise they can be heavily manipulated by these people. I mean they might seem really nice, seem really nice guys. I've thought that, and then you come in next week and it turns out he's causing all sorts and it turns out he's a rapist, for example. Or a paedophile or a murderer or whatever. In a way it's nice to know, especially if he's a hostage taker or prone to self-harm, it's quite useful to know, he's readily abusive to staff. It's nice to know for a bit of a heads up. I know they don't usually put things about HIV on there which scares me a little, cos I would like to know.