

BROOK HOUSE PUBLIC INQUIRY

CLOSING WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MR OWEN SYRED

Introduction

1. At the outset, Mr Syred would like to state that he has followed the evidence of the Inquiry closely and has been disgusted at the actions and attitudes of some staff, which demonstrated a lack of humanity towards the people in their care. He regrets not having done more to counteract these behaviours at the time and would like to commend the bravery and resilience of those formerly detained persons who have provided evidence to the Inquiry.
2. Mr Syred welcomes the Inquiry's scrutiny of the operation of the Brook House Immigration Removal Centre and is hopeful that the Inquiry's findings and recommendations will lead to significant improvement for those who are detained within IRCs like Brook House, and also for the people who work in these centres.
3. This closing statement is focused on issues that concern staff and management of Brook House which is where Mr Syred feels that he can add most value, and it will address 5 areas, as follows:
 - a. The failure of leadership
 - b. Recruitment, training and career development
 - c. The impact on staff working at Brook House
 - d. The need for balance
 - e. Suggested recommendations

Chapter 1. The failure of leadership

4. *"Senior managers are responsible and accountable for all that occurs within Brook House".¹*
5. The failure of leadership within Brook House Immigration Removal Centre ("the Centre") resulted in a vacuum of purpose, direction and values, and caused Detention Custody Officer ("DCO") and Detention Custody Manager ("DCM") staff to seek support and direction from each other. This in turn led to significant numbers of inexperienced, poorly trained and under resourced staff adopting directive, disengaged, and "laddish" behaviours that they saw role modelled by a number of assertive colleagues, at the expense of a more caring, empathetic, and professional approach.
6. This failure of leadership is examined in more detail under the following four sub-headings:
 - a. Failure to set direction and purpose and embed appropriate values
 - b. A toxic and chaotic senior management team ("SMT") culture
 - c. Failure to role model appropriate behaviours, a lack of visibility, and poor communication
 - d. Failure to challenge a known bullying culture

Failure to set direction and purpose and embed appropriate values

7. Within the First Witness Statement of Reverend Nathan Ward, it is noted that the Medway Improvement Board's Final Report of the Board's Advice to the Secretary of State for Justice dated 30 March 2016 cites a lack of clarity on the purpose of a Secure Training Centre.² The Executive Summary includes the following passages:

"v. The Board found that there was a lack of clarity on the purpose of an STC and that leadership within the STC has driven a culture that appears to be based on control and contract compliance rather than rehabilitation and safeguarding vulnerable young people..."

vi. The purpose of STCs needs to be more clearly articulated with a focus on prompting a nurturing and safe environment..."

vii. Current safeguarding measures are insufficient and outdated. There is too much emphasis on control and contract compliance and not enough on the best interests and mental wellbeing of the trainees..."

¹ First Witness Statement of Lee Hanford, Chief Operating Officer G4S Care and Rehabilitation Services: [CJS0074048_035/135](#)

² [DL0000141_0019/58](#)

x. ... *There is a lack of understanding of the causes and drivers of behaviour problems and too much focus on controlling behaviour rather than dealing with underlying vulnerabilities ... there needs to be a wider review of behaviour management policy and practice in STCs ... with a view to developing a coherent and consistent policy on risk, restraint and behaviour management ...*".³

8. In his Witness Statement, Reverend Ward expresses the view that the Board's findings are starkly similar to the issues at the Centre.⁴ Mr Syred agrees and would urge the Inquiry to consider making similar recommendations.
9. Mr Syred believes that the lack of clear direction from the SMT as to the purpose of an immigration removal centre ("IRC"), most particularly that it is not to operate as a punitive measure, is at the heart of the problem.
10. There is a very obvious tension within IRCs, and the Centre in particular, between the caring element of ensuring the welfare of detained persons and the reality of immigration detention, including the physical design of the Centre along the lines of a category B prison, the fact that detained persons are locked in their rooms for prolonged periods⁵, and the need, on occasion, to use force. Given the existence of these features, which are very obviously associated with the punitive regimes of prisons, it is essential that staff are educated and properly trained so that they are clear about the purpose of immigration detention, particularly that it is not punitive, and of the proper nature of their roles as DCOs and DCMs.
11. However, as a result of a failure of leadership there was an absence of clear and effective direction and messaging as to the purpose of the role of a DCO/DCM.⁶ Worse, some members of the SMT actively encouraged an approach modelled on the processes, procedures, and behaviours of prisons:

"A Home Office manager at the centre said: 'There is quite a lot of talk ... of managers, senior managers' previous experiences in prison ... so there seems to be a lot of reference to how they deal with [things] in

³ [INQ000010_0006](#)

⁴ First Witness Statement of Reverend Nathan Ward: [DL0000141_0019](#)

⁵ Over the relevant period it was for 11 hours each day, between 21:00 and 08:00, and is currently nine hours each day, between 22:00 and 07:00

⁶ In her First Witness Statement to the Inquiry, former DCO Shayne Munroe provided an illustration of the lack of clarity and leadership in engaging with detained persons: *"Throughout our training we were told that DCOs were expected to have conversations with the detainees, to learn about them and what they were going through, and to try to find out how to make their time at Brook House a little bit easier. In practice this was frowned upon and the way I interacted with detainees was always made out to be a problem"* ([INN000013_0014/42](#))

prisons, and I have said 'This isn't prison; this is a detention centre and things are different'; they don't seem able to take that on board'".⁷

12. In her Witness Statement, Michelle Brown, Head of Safeguarding and Head of Security over the relevant period, and a member of the SMT, makes much the same observation as follows:

"... I found Steve [Skitt] referred everything back to "HMP Birmingham" or the prison system and continuously used the terminology. It would be a regular occurrence whereby I would remind him that not all employees had worked in a prison nor had all Detainees served a custodial sentence".⁸

13. This tendency towards a "disciplined and regimented" approach was highlighted within the Verita Report, as follows:

"Our observations of and interactions with DCOs and DCMs led us to believe that there were a few high-profile DCMs and DCOs who demonstrated a particular degree of physical and social confidence and assertiveness. Their colleagues held them in high esteem, as did some members of the senior management who favoured a more disciplined and regimented approach to management. These DCOs and DCMs appeared to be valued for their operational competence and effectiveness, especially in dealing with challenging or threatening situations. At times, their behaviours and interactions could be characterised as 'laddish'. The dangers of an unchecked assertive, laddish culture were brought to life in some of the behaviours towards detainees shown in the Panorama film and by the evidence of one of the officers subject to disciplinary proceedings after the programme. He claimed that he had talked about assaulting a detainee in order to "fit in'".⁹

14. It is the belief of Mr Syred that over the relevant period the Centre suffered from a crisis of identity, running through the whole organisation from SMT down, between those who believed the Centre should be run as a prison, and those, like Mr Syred, who believed that their role and priority was to ensure the welfare of detained persons.

15. Evidence of this tension within the SMT can be found in the First Witness Statement of Jerry Petherick, the Managing Director of G4S Custodial and Detention Services

⁷ CJS005923_0068/7.13

⁸ INQ000164_0006/7

⁹ CJS005923_0028/1.131

between May 2008 and August 2019, who refers to differences of philosophy and approach within the SMT:

"... historical issues arising from time spent at other sites, differing managerial philosophies/approaches, and the inappropriate ambitions of some SMT members".¹⁰

16. The SMT bears a significant responsibility for failing to counter the prison approach, which was too engrained within SMT members such as Stephen Skitt, Julian Williams, and Ian Danskin. This filtered down through the whole organisation and resulted in the promotion of individuals who shared these values, contributing to the "Us and Them" culture. Attempts to lighten the prison style environment were opposed and the less austere atmosphere at Tinsley House was referred to by some senior managers as "Disney House".

17. In his First Witness Statement, Mr Syred refers to the preference of the Deputy Directors (who had responsibility for the operation of the Centre) for a prison style approach, as follows:

"Mr Skitt was wedded to the prison service way of doing things, which was not always appropriate within a detention centre setting where there is a need to be more flexible. Ian Danskin (Deputy Director) who was also ex-prison service, was similarly wedded to prison service procedures. This had a negative impact on life within the centre, for example they disparaged attempts to build positive relationships with detainees. Neither Deputy Director was approachable".¹¹

18. Reverend Nathan Ward, who was a member of the SMT between 2011 and 2014, describes Julian Williams, the Residential Manager, as follows:

"While I was at Gatwick IRCs, I had a particular issue with Residential Manager Juls Williams, who was in charge of all the residential staff and therefore responsible for setting the tone and attitude of the staff/detainee relationships. Juls didn't embody the values of respect and dignity; he would simply get the job done and was dedicated to making things happen, regardless of the human cost. He was surrounded by a number of staff for which I felt he was inappropriately close, such as Graham Purnell, Alan James, Anthony Morgan, David Aldis, Joe Marshall, Luke Hutchinson, Nathan Ring, Simon Brobyn and Stephen Marner. This group were protected and favoured by Juls Williams, and this dynamic is representative of the hierarchies that operated in Brook House amongst the staff, which fostered a sense of

¹⁰ [CJS0074047_0015/74](#)

¹¹ [INN000007_0025/102](#)

collusion and impunity. If you were in Juls Williams' inner circle, you knew that you would be protected".¹²

19. Julian Williams was a member of the SMT and held an influential position within the Centre, which he described within his Verita interview:

"I am the Residential Regimes Manager, and basically, I am responsible for the housing of 508 detainees, their accommodation, their needs in regard to toiletries, to clothing and stuff like that, and also looking after paid work, so obviously employment of detainees for undertaking paid work on the wings, where they are responsible for keeping the wings clean and keeping their rooms clean and all the rest of it. I have roughly around 60 staff working for me. I have six DCMs. I also am responsible for activities, where we provide the activities throughout the centre. We have two separate sessions there: one is the education and arts and craft, and the other one is where we do daily activities with detainees".¹³

20. The following comments made by Mr Williams in the course of his Verita interview, reveal his preference for a harsher prison style approach and are significant because of the influence he held within the Centre:

"Q - What do you attribute the staffing issues to? When did the rot set in on staff? You have been here a long time; has there even been a time when staffing hasn't been an issue?

A - What it is, to go back when we used to have a deputy by Ian Danskin, he was very straight down the road, so staff liked it. They get about on the wings, they wouldn't take any crap from the detainees or staff, he was the one who would grow the incentive scheme and all the rest of it, so a lot of staff liked it. When he left, and we had a gentleman called Duncan Partridge, he went for the more soft approach, and of course, the more soft approach wasn't working, so they started to lose confidence in that system.

Q - It sounded like Ben and Duncan probably weren't a great combination for that, because Ben came from a social care background, children - a very different kind of environment.

A - A totally different environment. I didn't have anything against Ben but, to me, he was a politician and that is how he spoke and portrayed himself, and Duncan, although [I] think he had previous experience as a residential manager in a prison before he went to the Home Office, to me, his whole approach changed the attitude of staff, which staff weren't happy about. Then I think he wanted to change hours and contracts and people were just thinking "Hang on a minute - you are

¹² [DL0000141_0059/168](#)

¹³ VER000232_0002/4

making it too easy for the detainees; what are you giving to the staff?". I think for years the staff felt left out, not noticed, not being heard, and everything was for the detainee. What probably happened or started it even more was when he had a mass exodus from Tinsley, which was over contracts, and I think that just started a roll".¹⁴

21. Statements made by Mr Williams that "they wouldn't take any crap from the detainees", and "making it too easy for the detainees", are particularly telling. Mr Williams makes a further comment in a similar vein at a later point in his interview in response to a question about whether Ian Danskin was respected:

"Yes, because he had prison, and they liked the way he worked. He was a no-nonsense guy".¹⁵

22. The confusion that the failure to provide proper direction and purpose caused amongst staff at the Centre was explained by a former DCO, Luke Instone-Brewer, in his oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"I'll be honest: you didn't know really what you were working for. Like, it's a category B prison, but it's an immigration centre. It's like, which one is it? As I said, some of the management were more towards the line of, like, a prison mentality and another one would be where it's more of a removal centre, and you're just, "Well, what's the consistent expectation that you have for your business?" I think that was a big issue as well: there was no consistent expectation of what they wanted their officers to be. Q. And how they wanted people to treat detainees as well? A. Absolutely".¹⁶

23. The risks of failing to provide clarity of purpose and of not embedding appropriate values were explained by Reverend Ward in his oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"So when people are trained in use of force, they're trained that it's to be used as a last resort. But if you only have three tools in your pocket, you're going to end up at the last tool very quickly, and, therefore, more emphasis is needed on preventative measures, and throughout my training and research into conflict management, that starts with the actual bricks and mortar itself. Then you need to look at the regime and making sure there's a purpose for the regime. Because all of these things prevent you ending up in that hostile, violent conflict. And then, again, people need to be trained in conflict management. The largest part of an ITC course, initial training course, is in fact C&R, which is the physical

¹⁴ VER000232_0012/186

¹⁵ VER000232_0029/470

¹⁶ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 17/14-25

application of force, where, actually, you would hope that the balance is more on communication skills and de-escalation".¹⁷

24. A shocking reflection of the Centres' identity crisis, and one which clearly demonstrates that over the relevant period the punitive/prison approach was in the ascendancy, is the fact that the penalty point provision within Schedule G of the contract between the Home Office and G4S provides for a fine of £30,000.00 in the event of an escape by a detained person, but only £10,000.00 should a detained person die while detained as a result of self-harm.¹⁸

25. Mr Syred suggests that a measure that would very visibly and effectively redress this skewed balance and reinforce the message that the purpose of IRCs is not punitive would be to cease the practice of locking detained persons in their rooms at night (currently for nine hours but over the relevant period it was for 11 hours). This recommendation is addressed more fully at a later stage within this statement.

A toxic and chaotic SMT culture

26. Mr Syred believes that Ben Saunders was out of his depth and did not command the respect of his SMT, in part due to his social care rather than prison background.

27. This view is supported by the statement made by Mr Petherick in the course of his interview with Verita on 13 December 2017, reflecting on the recruitment and appointment of Mr Saunders:

"I thought I was getting an experienced director, because he was Director of Medway Secure Training Centre. I was wrong in that. What I had was an experienced enactor of his then Managing Director's instructions, Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer. Let's put it this way, my philosophy is that it is a director's job to manage the centre. In the Children's Services world at that time that wasn't the philosophy, and so I didn't have what I was quite anticipating. I think that's life".¹⁹

28. In his interview with Verita on 27 November 2017, Lee Hanford (who acted as Interim Director of the Centre between 1 February to 30 June 2016, and again between 25 September 2017 to 24 September 2018) had the following exchanges and made the following statements in respect of the SMT:

"Relationships is an issue, and there is still a bit of a toxic mix here at the moment ... It's like Emmerdale".²⁰

¹⁷ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 169/24-170/15

¹⁸ [HOM000921](#)_0009

¹⁹ [VER000263](#)_0019/346

²⁰ [VER000266](#)_0015/196-198

"... it's never helpful, is it, if the top team can't get their act together. I think as a consequence of that, the number of grievances that are on there at the moment are quite toxic".²¹

"Q - I think there are a number of things that you have told us, and Michelle has hinted at, but you have some slightly dysfunctional behaviours at the top. I think, what I've been hearing is that their way of managing is a bit, go down and bark at people. People are saying people are bullied, and that means talking to them in an inappropriate way, isn't it? Instead of a mature management system, where we sit down and talk about things, we model behaviours, and all of that, what we have is not quite enough managers. When they come in they go in and bark at people, because that's all you have time for - coupled with people at the top of the shop who seem to be not talking to each other very well and actually they are bullying each other as well and talking to each other in an inappropriate manner. It doesn't seem to me you need a great leap of imagination to see that that's why people dealing with the detainees say to the detainees, pull yourself together, they don't have time to talk, they don't model, they don't repeat the sort of behaviour - does all of that make sense?

A - It does make sense".²²

29. Mr Hanford made similar statements in his oral evidence to the Inquiry, as follows:

"... the relationship that had broken down between Duncan and - Duncan Partridge and Ben Saunders, as I said, I was commissioned to investigate that, because Duncan Partridge had raised a grievance against Ben. There was clearly - that message had been dispersed across the centre. People knew there were two camps on site. And that wasn't - you know, that wasn't good role modelling from senior managers".²³

"... there was obviously an element of chaoticness amongst our senior management team".²⁴

30. Ben Saunders, Director of the Centre between 2012 and September 2017, made the following statements in his First Witness Statement:

²¹ VER000266_0017/238

²² VER000266_0019/257-258

²³ Lee Hanford [15 March 2022](#) 71/21-72/4

²⁴ Lee Hanford [15 March 2022](#) 71/2-4

"I believe managers in the SMT should have behaved more professionally and I accept I could have challenged this more however this should be viewed in the context of the legacy of Duncan Partridge and the grievance culture".²⁵

31. In his interview with Verita on 13 June 2018, Mr Saunders had the following exchanges and made the following statements in respect of the SMT:

"Q - It was quite an unstable team in the sense that I think 2013, 2015, 2016 three senior managers left their jobs after initiating grievance procedures, and then at the end of 2016 the Head of Security leaves following complaints by colleagues and staff that he had been bullying. It seems to us that there is quite a culture there of people not addressing problems, or addressing them in a particular way, which is to take out a grievance, and that's mirrored through the building, throughout the staffing. Does that ring true for you?

A - Yes. The history of the Senior Management Team was that three senior managers left in one go".²⁶

"Q – Can I just present something to you? You have a Senior Management Team who deal with each other by grievance. That is how they see it, the staff. There is some churn in the Senior Management Team. There is certainly some misbehaviour in the Senior Management Team, and then you have a group of DCMs who are quite operationally focused, don't really do people stuff very well, and can I add to that, that perhaps a not very present Senior Management Team. They are all quite busy, have quite a big agenda, a lot of people off, so they are filling gaps. Therefore, what staff and DCMs will tell us is that the staff don't see much of the Senior Management Team. Therefore, the Senior Management Team aren't modelling those behaviours that you are talking about, and the only behaviours they are modelling appears to be tearing each other's hair out. Does that sound fair?

A - Yes, I think there is a bit of fairness in that".²⁷

32. In oral evidence to the Inquiry, in response to a suggestion that there had been a failure of leadership, Mr Saunders stated:

"I think there were elements of the context of the team, some of the dynamics, that were challenging, and I found challenging. I found the situations with the grievances difficult, and at one point I felt that I was quite isolated in my role and I didn't trust people, and I think that was

²⁵ [KEN000001_0029/164](#)

²⁶ [VER000226_0012/154-155](#)

²⁷ [VER000226_0014/180-182](#)

the consequence of some of the behaviour from Duncan Partridge with the other members of the SMT, and I think, you know, when he left and Steve Skitt arrived, I think that was very helpful, but I think, with hindsight, I underestimated the lasting impact of that".²⁸

33. Mr Petherick refers within his First Witness Statement to tensions between Ben Saunders and the Deputy Director, Duncan Partridge, and to tensions within the SMT:

"I and some members of my central team spent some time and energy on working to resolve these issues, both through formal processes and informal guidance and coaching. Some issues were intractable, and were only resolved through some individuals leaving the establishment".²⁹

"I was concerned about the stability of the management team at Brook House due to the unusual number of grievances that had been submitted by SMT members. That was an indicator of an unsettled team, and I wanted to try and resolve the issues. When I raised these concerns with Mr Saunders, there was understandable disappointment, tinged with a degree of embarrassment that these matters had reached my level".³⁰

"We also reflected on whether he [Mr Saunders] was getting the support from SMT members that he could legitimately expect or whether some were seeking to undermine his role".³¹

34. Stephen Skitt, Deputy Director and Head of Brook House between August 2015 and July 2019, and someone who has worked in the custodial industry for over 30 years, commented in his Witness Statement that:

"In comparison to previous roles I have held, there are a couple of things that I noticed about Brook House. There was seemingly a long established grievance culture, and by this I mean that there seemed to be a culture of unhappy people who raised grievances as standard. In my 30 years working in other areas I had never really seen or dealt with so many grievances, and none were ever raised against myself. Here, I have had a couple against me which I have detailed below".³²

35. At later points in his Statement, Mr Skitt comments:

²⁸ Ben Saunders [22 March 2022](#) 108/15-25

²⁹ [CJS0074047_0014/71](#)

³⁰ [CJS0074047_0016/80](#)

³¹ [CJS0074047_0017/85](#)

³² [SER000455_0011/38](#)

"... the quality of leadership by Senior Managers at Brook House was probably not as good as it could have been ... particular members of staff were not team players. Because of this, looking at it as a team, I did not think it functioned as well as it could have done. Individuals acted as individuals and therefore did not work together as an SMT. I have worked with so many SMTs during my career and each one has had its strengths and weaknesses. I did find the SMT group different to other management groups I had worked with before. My personal opinion is that the challenges previously within the SMT before I joined still had an impact on how the SMT functioned during the Relevant Period".³³

"Personally, I did not feel that I could rely upon the other Senior Managers during the Relevant Period. This is mainly because I had not developed trust with them as you need in a professional relationship. I got on with them, but I had not developed trust in them. I always made sure I was doing my role without the need to have to rely on others. I of course knew there were difficulties within the SMT when I joined but it was a challenge I wanted to try and fix".³⁴

36. Mr Skitt made similar comments in the course of his Verita interview on 27 November 2017:

"When I came here the previous deputy director had just left, the senior management team, in my opinion, was quite dysfunctional and I also found quite insular. My understanding of that, and some of that I've picked up through managing certain people, it was quite a difficult period for all the senior management team, and there were a number of individuals that had gone through various processes, putting in grievances and all kinds of issues, and people had gone off sick. I found it strange".³⁵

37. Mr Skitt expanded upon this theme in his oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"I think it was a very challenging and difficult environment to work with. I found it personally difficult as well ... I'd be used to working within the team and, you know, I'd worked in teams previously at this level where, yeah, you had disagreements with people, you know, but, as a team, you worked together. So I think it did hinder the encompassing a team kind of working, in my opinion".³⁶

³³ [SER000455_0047/156](#)

³⁴ [SER000455_0048/161](#)

³⁵ VER000248_003/22

³⁶ Stephen Skitt [17 March 2022](#) 81/22-82/2

38. Michelle Brown makes the following observations in her Written Statement:

"I understand that Nathan Ward, Wayne Debnam, Stacie Dean and Katie Rix all left the business as they were unhappy about the working conditions at Gatwick IRC. Prior to their departure, I observed all of them go through periods of stress and/or absences working within the Senior Management Team. I am not aware of the in-depth details surrounding individual grievances but I can comment on the following –

Nathan Ward - Submitted a grievance and resigned.

Wayne Debnam - Was suspended, submitted a grievance against Ben Saunders and Duncan Partridge and resigned.

Stacie Dean - Was long term sick, submitted a grievance and resigned.

Zen Awan - Resigned as was unhappy about working conditions.

Katie Rix - Redeployed to another site within the business.

Duncan Partridge - Left the business following a grievance against Ben Saunders.

Neil Davies - Resigned with immediate effect following investigation into bullying.

... The environment was hostile and awkward and there was a clear lack of trust within the SMT".³⁷

"I would describe the culture amongst the SMT team as stressful, male orientated and untrusting. Every day at Gatwick was like spinning plates where priorities and focuses for the SMT changed hourly. I was the only consistent female Senior Manager at Gatwick (2011 - 2020) - other females like Stacie Dean, Dawn Walker and Sara Edwards did not remain in post long. Aside from Sarah Newland, the current Deputy Director under Serco, there is no female Senior Manager currently in post at Gatwick. There was a lack of trust amongst the team based on historical complaints not being dealt with effectively and in my opinion, there was a propensity to have open and difficult conversations or hold people accountable".³⁸

"There was clearly a grievance culture at Brook House which was demonstrated amongst the Senior Management Team alone - in which I can only make the following analogy to the Aesop's Tale –

A crab and his mother. "An old crab said to her son, "Why do you walks sideways like that, my son? You ought to walk straight" The young crab replied "Show me how, dear mother and I will follow your example" The

³⁷ INQ000164_0008/10

³⁸ INQ000164_0011/14

old crab tried and tried in vain and then saw how foolish she had been to find fault with her child"

As Senior Managers, I believe the culture of submitting grievances was led from the top and it soon became a common practise as a means to raise complaints as they were not effectively managed from the outset. I did raise concerns, both verbally and in writing but as mentioned above, I did not submit any official grievances during my entire time of employment until my resignation on the 20th November 2020. I believe that the grievance culture arose due to the above analogy (ie learnt behaviour/ role modelling) and employees feeling that concerns raised verbally were not taken seriously or resolved, leaving them nowhere else to go. In addition, employees often immediately defaulted to the grievance procedure without trying to resolve through other means".³⁹

39. In the course of her Verita interview on 27 November 2017, Ms Brown commented on the lack of stability and consistency within the SMT:

"... in the space of five years, if you look at going through, three centre directors, four deputies, and five heads of departments that is a fairly significant".⁴⁰

40. Finally under this sub-heading, the Verita Report had this to say about the Centre's SMT culture, with which Mr Syred is in agreement:

"Weak management has compounded the staffing problems. The senior management team has a history of dysfunctional and un-collegial behaviour. They have not been visible to staff. They have not adequately engaged with staff nor demonstrated an appreciation of their experience of working at Brook House and their concerns. Managers have tended to deal with shortcomings in performance in a heavy-handed, disciplinary and punitive way, rather than taking a more developmental and understanding approach".⁴¹

Failure to role model appropriate behaviours, a lack of visibility, and poor communication

41. It was striking the number of occasions that staff spoke about their empathy with detained persons when giving their oral evidence to the Inquiry (which Mr Syred believes is on the whole genuine) only to be confronted with recordings of their actions and statements which evidenced authoritarian, aggressive, abusive, or

³⁹ INQ000164_0011/15

⁴⁰ VER000225_0015/238

⁴¹ CJS005923_0252/15.7

uncaring behaviour. Some staff appeared visibly shocked while giving evidence at being confronted by their own behaviour.

42. Further, the Inquiry has heard a lot from staff witnesses about the fact that bad language was rife within the Centre (some continued to seek to justify the use of bad language whereas others had come to realise that whatever poor language and abuse they faced while working at Brook House, it was not acceptable to respond in kind).
43. These behaviours are inappropriate and unacceptable. However, given the inexperience of many of the staff, their lack of adequate training, and the absence of any effective role modelling of appropriate behaviours, it is not surprising that they behaved in this way and failed to appreciate the consequences and impact of their behaviours.
44. It was the job of the SMT to ensure that staff behaved professionally and compassionately, through training, messaging, monitoring, and role modelling, and in this regard, they failed.
45. The Centre does not have a particularly large workforce, and almost all staff are required to be physically present to carry out their work. It should not have been difficult to instil a positive supportive team ethos, and to communicate key messages, such as the purpose of immigration detention, the importance of freedom to speak out, and to create and reinforce positive shared values.
46. However, a lack of SMT presence and visibility meant that there was no meaningful role modelling of appropriate behaviours, and a failure to challenge and correct inappropriate behaviour. The lack of presence and visibility also meant that communication with staff was weak and ineffective.
47. In this regard, the investigation carried out by Verita in 2017 and 2018 made the following finding:

“Our interviews and conversations with staff and more junior managers suggested they did not see members of the senior management team out and about in Brook House regularly. They told us that the only time they saw most members of the senior management team was when they were performing their rota duty as duty director. The only regular forum at which staff at Brook House might otherwise have encountered a senior manager was the staff briefing held for 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning of each working day. We visited Brook House on many occasions over a number of months and did not see senior managers in

the centre for purposes other than accompanying official visitors or undertaking a specific duty".⁴²

48. An example of the approach that ought to have been adopted by the SMT, but sadly was not, is provided by Mr Petherick in the course of his oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"Q. If it came to your ears that a custody officer was referring to a detained person to his face or close enough for him to hear it as "dickhead" or telling him to "fuck off" or a "cunt" or any words like that. If that had come to your ears, what would you have done about it?

A. I would have addressed it immediately. I would have followed it up and, in all probability, by disciplinary action, because that is totally unacceptable to every bit of my being and other people's beings, and if I walked by it and didn't address it, then I would be condoning it. And so I can remember many occasions during my career when I have had very direct conversations with staff who have used inappropriate language or who have failed to address it. Sadly, I can only directly deal with what I hear, and you will know, and I will know, that most people will be aware if I was walking around and so forth, be it as a governor, an area manager, an MD. I would certainly address those issues directly and forcefully".⁴³

49. The consequences of the failure to address the normalisation of inappropriate language was explained by Professor Mary Bosworth in her oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"... it seems fairly clear from the evidence that this was not an environment where people were encouraged to report their concerns, and it seems to have been an environment where there was, you know, an extensive normalisation of inappropriate ways of talking about people and acting towards the detained population".⁴⁴

"A. I think it's obviously completely corrosive, and it was - you know, the widespread nature of those sorts of comments that are picked up on the undercover footage is genuinely shocking, and it was - it clearly was not being addressed by management and was widespread and, you know, I think played quite a large role in the physical manifestation.

Q. Do you think it contributes to the "us and them"?

A. Absolutely".⁴⁵

⁴² CJS005923_0007/1.18

⁴³ Jeremy Petherick [21 March 2022](#) 37/6-25

⁴⁴ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 81/11-17

⁴⁵ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 92/24-93/7

50. Reverend Ward described the Centre Director, Ben Saunders, as someone who was incompetent, turned a blind eye to abuse, and whose leadership and management style did not reflect good practices such as actively managing the Centre by being present on the floor and observing actions and inactions and interactions of members of staff.⁴⁶ Reverend Ward further stated:

"... poor attitudes and dysfunctional cultures were allowed to become established and left unchallenged by those in more senior positions. The Inquiry must look at those in leadership positions in G4S and the Home Office, with overall responsibility as well as those on the ground ... It was frustrating because the culture was accepted and entrenched and I saw no inclination by senior managers to do anything about it. There was also no apparent incentives placed on those above them from the Home Office or G4S to change the culture. The combination of a lack of strong, principled leadership and indifference meant there was no real counterbalance to all the factors that created this toxic environment and which lead to a culture of impunity and an accountability deficit ...".⁴⁷

51. Some of the worst misconduct identified by the Inquiry occurred on E-Wing, and in this regard Professor Bosworth made the following statement in her oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"...it seems to have been the case that, because of the nature of E wing in terms of where it's located in the facility, because the SMT were not as visible as officers wanted, that there was a sense that they were somehow out of sight and that therefore, you know, things could -- things grew there that perhaps weren't really controlled, and by that I mean, you know, the sort of authoritarian subculture".⁴⁸

52. In his oral evidence to the Inquiry, Mr Saunders was referred to a passage from the Verita Report⁴⁹, as follows:

"Q. "Many interviewees, including senior G4S managers, members of the Gatwick IRCs senior management team, and DCMs and DCOs, told us that the former director, had given the appearance of focusing above all on maintaining the good opinion and fulfilling the expectations of the Home Office and those he reported to in G4S. They suggested that this apparent focus on the concerns of those outside the organisation had

⁴⁶ [DL0000141_0017/52](#)

⁴⁷ [DL0000141_0062/175-176](#)

⁴⁸ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 63/16-23

⁴⁹ [CJS0073709_0067/7.6](#)

been at the expense of more active and visible management in Brook House, and in particular of engagement with managers and staff and everyday performance matters in the centre." Fair or Unfair?

A. I would accept that. I would have liked to have been more visible within the centre. But I also believe that a key element of my role was managing the stakeholders, the customer relationship reporting upwards within the organisation. So I think there is some fairness to the feedback, but I don't think it's the entire position".⁵⁰

53. There was then the following exchange with Mr Saunders regarding the cascading of appropriate messaging to staff:

"A. Well, I think what I did was reminded the SMT that, you know, they should be cascading through their departments the message of making sure that we are being professional in what we're doing, that we should be vigilant of staff and that we should be reporting practice that we are not completely happy with.

Q. Was that it?

A. Yes. Perhaps I could have done more, but that's – you know, that was the messaging I was giving.

Q. It depends on the way you run the place, but one might think of finding an opportunity to write a letter to all of your staff, all of the DCOs, all of the DCMs, or meet with clusters of them individually, tell them what the Medway report said and absolutely get across your point that this was never going to happen under Ben Saunders' watch. Did you do that?

A. No, I didn't do it to the extent you have described.

Q. How do you know your individual members cascaded down to their departments that kind of message? What confidence do you have that the message got through, if it was ever given?

A. Well, with the benefit of hindsight, and seeing the footage on Panorama, I'm not confident that was passed through".⁵¹

54. The Verita Report identifies the consequences of a failure by the SMT to role model appropriate behaviours and their lack of visibility, as follows:

"Whatever senior managers at Brook House may have believed about their own level of engagement with staff, staff clearly did not perceive senior managers as being either visible or approachable. The principle effects of this were that frontline managers and staff tended to rely on colleagues, especially the more assertive of them, for leadership,

⁵⁰ Ben Saunders [22 March 2022](#) 84/21-85/14

⁵¹ Ben Saunders [22 March 2022](#) 117/19-118/17

guidance and support; and did not feel able to raise issues and matters of concern with senior managers".⁵²

"We found a lack of visible and capable management and a sense among staff that managers were unapproachable, unsupportive and sometimes draconian. DCOs told us they did not feel managers valued them as colleagues or for their contribution to the work of the centre. This led to disaffection among staff and to their relying principally on each other for support and guidance. It had worked against the development of an open and learning culture. It had also presented opportunities for some stronger personalities to gain undue influence leading them sometimes to behave in inappropriate ways without being challenged, as the Panorama film showed".⁵³

"Nevertheless, we are concerned that the absence of strong and visible management arrangements, ensuring the modelling and reinforcement of the behaviours expected of staff; the lack of staff and the inexperience of many; and the assertive laddish culture among some DCMs and DCOs heightens the risk of inappropriate behaviour by staff".⁵⁴

55. Views, which were echoed by Professor Bosworth in her oral evidence to the Inquiry, as follows:

"There's a lot of criticism, and it seems evident, about a lack of visibility and seemingly also a lack of engagement by senior managers, so the sort of physical location of the managers away from where the action was, where the actual DCOs were working. And then there's a lot of evidence of poor communication among staff not just in terms of policy, but actually interpersonally poor communication, which had led to grievances".⁵⁵

56. It was also the case that there were no adequate mechanisms for feeding the views and experiences of DCOs and DCMs into the SMT, and worse, suggestions for improvement and expressions of concern were actively suppressed. An example of this within Mr Syred's First Witness Statement, that ironically occurred at a staff forum, concerns Mr Syred's attempt to discuss what he considered had been an unnecessary use of force to facilitate a transfer (which had caused injury to a detained person) and to suggest that in future, officers who may have a positive relationship with a detained person should be afforded an opportunity to explain and persuade the detained person to transfer without the need for use of

⁵² CJS005923_0008/1.19

⁵³ CJS005923_0009/1.24

⁵⁴ CJS005923_0222/13.39

⁵⁵ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 158/12-20

force (the same type of engagement that the Inquiry's expert witness, Jon Collier, advocated when giving oral evidence to the Inquiry). However, Mr Syred was told by Ian Danskin (the then Deputy Director and Head of Brook House), who was chairing the staff forum, "I know the incident you are talking about, we are not going to discuss that".⁵⁶

Failure to challenge a known bullying culture

57. An example of the ineffectiveness of the SMT in this regard is the failure to support Mr Syred when he reported the fact that he was being bullied, following his report of racist behaviour by a colleague.

58. Mr Syred talked about this incident in his oral evidence to the Inquiry, as follows:

"I spoke to Ben Saunders because I was having issues with colleagues who supported Sam Gurney, whereby I had Post-its left on my locker with racist comments and comments calling me a grass and I was informed I was being followed around on the CCTV footage and reports put in about me. And I approached Ben Saunders about it and I said I wasn't happy with this, and he said he would support me, but there was no real support, I wasn't informed of any new policy about race and diversity. I'd actually – you know, I became a race and diversity coordinator not long after that myself. ... One of them said – if I can say this, one of them said, "Nigger lover", one of them said "Grass". There was a poster in the wing office, C wing office, of staff members to identify, to detained guys, who we were, and someone had written across my face "Grass". So all of these I'd taken down and given to Ben Saunders and I said, "I'm not accepting this" and I actually went off with stress after, because I was being – I was being followed around, I was being undermined about stuff. You could tell the culture of, "Well, you've just grassed on an officer who was really good at C&R. He was one of the lads. You've just grassed him up and he's going to lose his job". Even the officer who was in the office at the time, he - for whatever reason, he didn't support what was said and he was closer to Sam Gurney than I was. He said he didn't hear anything. At the time - I didn't wear hearing aids at the time, so my hearing was quite good, so I didn't misunderstand it. It was said as clear as day".⁵⁷

"Q. What did he do, in fact, to support you?

A. I can't think of anything, really, that was done to support me. I was - I was made to feel that I was being watched, everything I did. I was being reported for things that I was supposed to be doing, and some staff who

⁵⁶ [INN000007_0038/158](#)

⁵⁷ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 116/22-118/9

were party - not - you know, party to the conversations, some of these staff were saying – warned me that there's a bit of a - there's a bit of a - what's the word? - campaign against me. I was marked. I was marked as an officer who you didn't speak to like that in front of".⁵⁸

59. Such an appalling example of the bullying of a member of staff who had sought to do the right thing by reporting racist behaviour ought to have resulted in an immediate, visible, and unequivocal response from the SMT, including:

- i. clear communication to the whole workforce that bullying behaviour of this nature is completely unacceptable;
- ii. instigation of an investigation to identify those responsible; and
- iii. a review of processes, procedures, and training so that the staff were in no doubt of their responsibility to call out inappropriate behaviour.

Instead, nothing was done other than the provision of hollow and meaningless expressions of support.

60. As is abundantly clear from the wealth of evidence before the Inquiry, the fact that inappropriate behaviour was not routinely challenged by the SMT and other managers, led to staff feeling empowered to behave inappropriately because they knew that there would be no consequences.

61. Reverend Ward has expressed similar views, as follows:

"I believe that staff on the ground are dissuaded to complain or use the whistle blowing strategy, due to a culture of fear that is instilled. Staff are worried about their safety and/or have a fear of being isolated and left alone on the wing. In the internal survey I completed in April 2013, someone stated, 'I feel that those who challenge management are excluded from progression'. This makes people feel as though they are unable to speak out against the dominant culture. I have witnessed staff who have spoken out being marginalised, in particular DCOs on the ground. The staff at Tinsley House as a whole were side-lined by not wanting to work at Brook House for fear of their safety".⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 121/1-11

⁵⁹ [DL0000141](#)_0105/303

Chapter 2. Recruitment, training and career development

62. The three issues of recruitment, training and career development are grouped within a single chapter because they are intrinsically linked and interdependent. If pay is poor with little prospect of career development, then recruiting organisations will struggle to attract and retain candidates of the necessary quality.
63. Similarly, if staff do not receive appropriate training to equip them for the significant demands of the role of DCO/DCM within an IRC, then they can become overwhelmed. At best, staff who find themselves in this situation will leave the Centre (placing further strain on staffing numbers, and on recruitment and training budgets and resources). At worst, they will remain in post, ill-equipped for the role, in circumstances detrimental to detained persons' and their own welfare.
64. There is an abundance of evidence within the Inquiry proceedings of a poor recruitment strategy, inadequate training and induction processes, and insufficient attention to the career development of staff (examples of which are included below). These issues represent a further significant failure of the Centre's SMT.

Recruitment

65. If staff are not interested and concerned at the conditions and circumstances in which people are detained, and do not have an interest and concern for the individuals that they are caring for, then they will not be motivated to do a good job. Motivational fit needs to become a central plank of the recruitment process and more emphasis should be placed on identifying people who will take pride in their roles.
66. Mr Syred experienced verbal abuse and was sworn at and assaulted on a number of occasions for relatively modest pay, but he was committed to the role of DCO because he enjoyed the work, particularly the interaction with detained persons, and he felt that he was making a difference. He is not alone in this view and with more effort a greater number of candidates with these values can be identified.
67. However, little effort was made by the Centre to target and identify candidates with the right motivation and potential. An illustration of this failure is the fact that assessment days for recruitment were often staffed by people such as Graham Purnell and Derek Murphy, both of whom face allegations of violent behaviour towards detained persons, and this is yet another example of the inappropriate emphasis and value placed on control and restraint and the dominant "macho" culture within the Centre.

68. The Inquiry has heard from large numbers of staff witnesses that the reality of the role was nothing like advertised and that the Initial Training Course ("ITC") failed to adequately prepare them, resulting in significant numbers of staff leaving soon after they commenced work, once reality dawned.
69. This flawed strategy, which failed to reach out to the right candidates and did not properly reflect the true nature of the role, resulted in very high staff attrition and a need for almost continual recruitment and ITCs, which was a significant waste of recruitment and training resource.
70. The following statements are representative of the views of staff:

"Q. You say, at paragraph 5 of your statement, that the recruitment process didn't prepare you for working at Brook House?

A. Absolutely not.

Q. What did you think the job was going to be like?

A. Truthfully, I don't know what I was expecting. From the interview process, I remember sitting in a room discussing a scenario that had no relevance to the job and, to be honest, I don't know what I was expecting to work in an environment like that".⁶⁰

"Q. One of the things you say in your statement is that you felt that the job description and the training weren't an accurate reflection of the role. You say that the job description implied a controlled environment and didn't reflect the challenges that you experienced when you were actually working there. What did you expect from the training and the application process?

A. I don't know what I expected, to be honest with you, but what we were told in the classroom in comparison to what was there was two completely different things".⁶¹

"Q. Do you think that your colleagues, as well, sort of thought that you'd been sold one thing and then walked into Brook House into another?

A. Definitely. Some people left before they even finished the training".⁶²

"Q. ... during your training, what were you expecting Brook House to be like?

A. I mean, nothing you can do can prepare you to work in an environment like that, I don't think. It's hard to say, really. I mean, doing theory work, like in classrooms, and stuff, it's nothing like what the centre's like, basically. I didn't know what to expect, to be fair, but it definitely

⁶⁰ Dan Small [28 February 2022](#) 107/21-108/5

⁶¹ Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 3/17-4/2

⁶² Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 4/12-16

wasn't that ... this wasn't what we were sold at the start ... They made it - obviously made it sound better, to get people in, which companies do do. But it was the complete opposite from what they were training us for".⁶³

"A. I mean, the staff come in, they just left straight away. The actual turnover of staff -

Q. Do you mean people would start and then they would leave pretty quickly?

A. Oh, yeah, within weeks.

Q. Is that, do you think, related to what you said at the beginning, about the training not really preparing -

A. Yeah, people would come in and be like, "Wow, this is not what I thought", and then they leave. The staff were coming through the door, but they were going out quicker than they were coming in".⁶⁴

"A. It wasn't very clear what the job description was, from what I remember. So it was only when I went in for training did I truly realise what I'd got myself into, and I think that was the same with quite a lot of other people because, on the first day, a couple of them dropped out.

Q. So you think that others also thought you were going to be stamping passports?

A. Probably, yeah - I wouldn't know if that was their intentions, but -

Q. So that must have come as a bit of a shock to you?

A. Oh, yeah, it was a shock to the system, certainly".⁶⁵

"Q. What was it about the recruitment process that you think didn't prepare you?

A. It didn't make clear the sort of environment that we would be going into. There was nothing specifically about we were going to be dealing with so many foreign national prisoners, ex-foreign national prisoners. There was nothing like that in the recruitment ...".⁶⁶

"I think that the environment came as quite a major shock to a lot of the new starters, and that retention was a problem for the company. I think, as well, that we - the DCOs were working a 46-hour week, and it just wasn't a very attractive proposition for a lot of people".⁶⁷

"I think everyone was frustrated. They'd run a training course, you'd have 20 new staff and, within a week, you've got three of them left because

⁶³ Daniel Lake [1 March 2022](#) 2/16-3/12

⁶⁴ Daniel Lake [1 March 2022](#) 13/6-16

⁶⁵ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 2/5-16

⁶⁶ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 57/11-17

⁶⁷ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 78/24-79/3

everyone, you know, dropped out, wasn't prepared for what the wings were really like, or - so people would put time and effort, especially some of the more experienced officers, which I became more and more reliant on less and less managers were about, I became more reliant on the experienced officers to run the wings when I couldn't be there. So, yeah, I think everyone was frustrated and they put the time and effort into training people and they wouldn't come back after their first leave, you know, their first week. They'd go off for a weekend break and you'd never see them again".⁶⁸

"It was only till the sort of training, it started to sort of come to light that that was going to be - but I know that some people on the assessment day, they - I saw them on the assessment day and they passed the first part but they never - you didn't see them for a while, so they would maybe do the training and you wouldn't see them again. ... There was two people on my course who just thought, basically, it was a security job, and it would just be opening and locking - unlocking doors. They got to realise that there was a lot of paperwork involved, and a lot of quite important paperwork involved, and I think one lady, she'd do her control and restraint training, I think she found it uncomfortable. So there was two people I know on my first course that didn't want to go forward with it, and obviously, on my first ITC, initial training course, there was officers that were coming in with torn shirts and sort of bloodied faces after they'd been involved in attacks and things like that. So it started to dawn on us a little bit what we were getting into. I was really nervous. I'd never worked in that sort of industry, and I was - I told the trainer, "I'm really nervous how I'll react to the violence and, you know, how am I going to cope?"⁶⁹

"A. Staff left pretty quick. Staff realised, "Actually, I don't want to be working in this environment. I don't want to be - this is not enough money for doing this type of work", and sometimes people would start the job and there would be ebbs and flows of when - like, the job situation. So people would come in there and it wasn't going to be a full-time career for them. It was just going to be a stopgap. Especially for younger officers, because it was very good money for younger officers. So it was a bit more of a stopgap. So people came in, and they'd just come and - I think the staff turnover sometimes it was more greater than the detainee turnover. You know, you could go on holiday for two weeks, come back and you don't even know these people.

Q. Why do you think there was such a high turnover of staff?

⁶⁸ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 143/14-144/2

⁶⁹ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 5/17-6/17

A. Job expectation. And also you can imagine – I was very new to it. You can imagine seeing someone self-harming, seeing distress, seeing fights, threats. It's not what people - you know, it's not what people want to do. It's not what they thought the job was going to be. So all the time I knew that the job description was never - was never portrayed as what it really was".⁷⁰

71. The Verita Report includes the following observations about the detrimental impact of poor staff retention on detained persons and staff, with which Mr Syred agrees:

"A failure to retain staff and low levels of staffing have been a problem at Brook House since at least the second half of 2016. The lack of staff and the high turnover of staff has had a detrimental effect on many aspects of life at Brook House, both for detainees and staff. The activities and entertainments programme has been severely curtailed, and detainees have been under-occupied and bored. Many staff have become disaffected and disengaged and feel insecure and unsafe. Weak management has compounded the staffing problems".⁷¹

Training

72. On any level, the role of a Wing DCO in safeguarding the welfare of approximately 100 detained persons (including taking account of physical and mental health issues, the ACDT process, drugs issues, and incidents of violence and bullying) is extremely challenging, and for staff to be able to perform the role properly, the breadth and quality of the training provided needs to be significantly improved.

73. Given the high level of incidents of self-harm and mental illness, it is a particularly shocking failure that more training and insight into mental health was not provided. Some staff told the Inquiry that they received no mental health training at all. Mr Syred believes that they are mistaken in this regard, albeit the mental health training that was provided was very limited. However, the fact that many staff do not recognise that they received any mental health training speaks volumes.

74. The following evidence was provided to the Inquiry in connection with mental health training and awareness:

"... I remember bringing up issues with the fact that we were working with people with mental illness and we're not mental health trained. So

⁷⁰ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 22/17-23/14

⁷¹ CJS005923_0033/1.155

we were going beyond the remit of what we were as carers, effectively".⁷²

With reference to E-Wing, "... I spent nine months there, it could be really hard to work in there. I don't think the staff were equipped, and I think - really and truly, I think the staff that worked there should have had extra training to work with mental health, work with drug issues, work with - just to try and understand. And maybe some more officers that were trained as ACDT assessors to work there, because, you know, I've worked -- when I worked down there, sometimes I could do three or four assessments in a day, because you were an assessor, but, you know, it was -- just more training, more -- and staff that were more understanding".⁷³

Regarding mental health awareness training and what it covered, "I don't know, because I never attended it. And I think it was only for an hour or two hours, if that. When you think about - some of the detainees that were held at Brook House ended up going to secure mental health provision. A one- or two-hour training session on mental health awareness is a bit like having to deal with open heart surgery after going on a St John's Ambulance first aid course...".⁷⁴

"Q. ... did you ever receive training to help people with mental health problems?

A. The only training we would receive is the signs and the symptoms sort of things, you know, pretty basic stuff.

Q. ... were you taught about what to do with someone who has PTSD, for example?

A. No".⁷⁵

"Q. Did you have any mental health training?

A. No, not that I can recall. I think I might have done, like, a one-day thing, but that -- I can't recall. Nothing more than that, though".⁷⁶

"Q. Did you have any mental health training when you were at Brook House?

A. I'm going to say no. There probably was something very small and insignificant, in my opinion, but I'm going to say no. No-one at Brook House is mentally - is mental health trained - the DCOs, managers, I've

⁷² Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 49/22-50/1

⁷³ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 60/4-16

⁷⁴ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 161/5-12

⁷⁵ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 16/15-22

⁷⁶ Stephen Dix [9 March 2022](#) 6/2-5

heard some of the evidence that's been given to the inquiry and I'm telling you now no-one is mental health trained".⁷⁷

“Q. ... Did you ever receive, or were you ever offered, training on mental health issues?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you feel that that left you prepared to deal with the mental health of detainees?

A. I wasn't prepared to deal with mental health".⁷⁸

“A. I don't recall any mental health training.

Q. Did you consider, then, that you and the DCOs you worked with were equipped to deal with mentally ill detainees?

A. No.

Q. Do you think that you and your colleagues could distinguish between someone who was being disruptive, you know, for another reason and someone who was being disruptive because they are mentally unwell?

A. I wouldn't know the difference as I'm not trained in it.

Q. What about someone who's showing signs and symptoms of some of the more complex conditions we get, like PTSD, for example, or trauma survivors?

A. I'm not trained in that either".⁷⁹

“A. I wasn't trained in any way, shape or form, mentally or medically, so I wouldn't know.

Q. You wouldn't know. The question I've asked others, I'll ask you: were you able to distinguish, in all the time you worked there, between someone who was genuinely unwell and somebody who, perhaps like this man might have been thought to be, genuinely just a drug user or a manipulator or a disrupter?

A. I wasn't trained medically or for mental awareness, so no".⁸⁰

“Q. Do you remember, was there any part of that training which talked about the particular things you might need to take into account if you were using force against someone with mental health problems?

A. No. There was no discussion about that.

Q. Was there any training at all on how to deal with detained people with mental health problems?

A. No.

⁷⁷ Yan Paschali [24 February 2022](#) 29/9-16

⁷⁸ Daniel Small [28 February 2022](#) 109/7-15

⁷⁹ Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 103/1-13

⁸⁰ Derek Murphy [2 March 2022](#) 20/12-21

Q. Did you have any idea, before you went into Brook House, of the number of people that would have mental health problems?

A. No.

Q. Did you feel adequately prepared to deal with that?

A. No".⁸¹

75. While mental health training is the most obvious training inadequacy, there was a general failure to equip staff to meet the complex needs of detained persons, including people who suffer from serious mental health issues, those who have experienced torture, persecution, and discrimination, and significant numbers of detained persons who are liable to behave aggressively and violently, or to self-harm.

76. Reverend Ward made the following observation about the inadequacy of the training in general:

"I would say that the training is woefully inadequate and the training was designed solely to meet the criteria set in the contract and actually wasn't done to ensure that we had educated and trained staff who are capable and competent to deal with the issues that they would face. ... So, firstly, I would say that it shouldn't be called "training". It's an education. And that, actually, they firstly need to understand their philosophical underpinning of the work they are going to do. Then they need to understand the theory base that's based on that philosophy. Once they have understood the theory it's only then that you start thinking through the practical application. The problem with only teaching technique is, when the technique fails, staff have nothing to fall back on".⁸²

77. Mr Syred suggests that training could be improved by including more scenario-based (role play) training, so that staff are confronted in group learning sessions with how and how not to behave in the difficult and challenging circumstances that they will inevitably encounter. In this regard he has been a little puzzled at some criticisms made of staff during Inquiry proceedings for comments they made while engaging in role play scenarios, because the whole point of roleplay training is for it to be as realistic as possible. The language used by detained persons could sometimes be threatening and abusive, and there is a need for this to be reflected in the training.

78. This is a view supported by the Inquiry's expert witness Jon Collier:

⁸¹ Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 7/18-8/14

⁸² Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 186/11-187/4

"My recommendation 6 covers scenario-based training. Any restraint system must include an element of reality and to try and replicate real scenarios. This is difficult against the wide range of possible situations, but at least some form of 'pressure testing' training would assist in giving staff a chance to understand what working at the centre can entail".⁸³

79. Mr Syred would also recommend that there should be an opportunity during the Initial Training Course for engagement between trainees and detained persons (perhaps former detained persons, if they would be willing to take part in such a programme) to better help trainees see detained persons as individuals, to gain a better insight into the impact of detention, and to establish and build empathy.

80. Mr Syred felt it necessary to undertake additional training at a 2-day course on immigration law delivered by Amnesty International to gain a better understanding of the legal issues involved in immigration, so that, as a DCO, he was better able to engage with detained persons who were subject to the legal process of removal or deportation.

81. As a result of this sort of interest and commitment, Mr Syred was able to assist a detained person in the following circumstances:

"I remember one distinct guy who came in, he was from Namibia ... I'd gone down to E wing to do the rounds with the duty director, and this guy had tried to self-strangulate. He'd come in - I was told to work with him to do an assessment on him. So I did the assessment and he didn't want to talk at first. It took quite a while to draw out his issue. His issue was due to his sexuality - I'm not going to go into it too much - and the fact that he was - he'd come to the UK to claim asylum. But because he didn't know how the asylum system worked, I was - and I was - you know, I spoke to the Home Office, and I was going to help him to sort out his asylum claim. There's a request form, a Home Office request form, that they would write out to formally claim asylum. So I said to this guy, "What is your issue?" He said, "I don't think they believed me at the airport". So I spent a whole day going through his paperwork. It took me half a day to draw out - to talk to him, for him to open up to me. You know, there is a distrust of authority. So I spoke to him. He seemed to calm down quite a bit and he felt more relaxed to tell me ... I said, "Is it okay to go through your paperwork?" So I went through his paperwork and I found two letters from his country, basically official letters, stating "You are an abomination. We don't want you in this country". So I said to him, "Well, sorry, but that's probably the best evidence of asylum I've probably seen in the years I've been working here"". ⁸⁴

⁸³ [INQ000158_0037/14.5](#)

⁸⁴ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 39/22-41/1

82. It is accepted that it is not the role of IRC staff to advise detained persons about the merits of their claims. However, given that large numbers of detained persons actively appeal and challenge their immigration decisions while detained and that this is often their primary concern and biggest cause of stress and anxiety, there is a need for better training on the basic principles of immigration law and procedure so that DCOs and DCMs can meaningfully and effectively engage with detained persons.
83. The training provided to staff is also largely based on the National Offender Management Service training, which is designed for prisons and not IRCs. The rules governing the running of a prison and an IRC are very different and there are a number of other factors that make the role of a prison officer and that of a DCO and DCM different, including uncertainty around the length of detention, managing mixed populations of people convicted of serious criminal offences with overstayers with no previous experience of detention, and freedom of association and movement (at least during the day), which requires a different set of skills to manage without the tools that exist in prisons, such as incentives for good behaviour.
84. A striking example of the lack of IRC specific training is the fact that Mr Syred was never trained in the operation of rule 35⁸⁵, which represents a significant failure given the importance of this provision (as emphasised during the course of the Inquiry hearings). It was only when Mr Syred started working in welfare (several years after he commenced work at the Centre) that he learned about the requirements and significance of the rule.

Career development

85. There needs to be an opportunity to develop and progress within the DCO grade so that the Centre can build a reservoir of experienced and committed practitioners as well as managers. Mr Syred had no ambition to become a DCM and instead wanted to carry on and develop his role as a Welfare Officer, and to continue to engage with and assist detained persons on a daily basis. However, seeking promotion to DCM was the only way for him and others to achieve career progression. Mr Syred believes that the introduction of a Senior DCO role to allow for career progression, development, and job satisfaction, would greatly improve staff retention and improve standards within IRCs.
86. The lack of financial remuneration for experience and commitment to the role also needs to be addressed. As a 10-year served DCO, Mr Syred was earning the same salary as a new recruit with no experience. This was understandably a source of

⁸⁵ [INN000007_0037/154](#)

frustration and needs to be addressed to retain people with the right skills and experience.

87. Mr Syred also found that too often staff would undertake the role of DCO as a stop gap while looking for something else, content to do the bare minimum because they had no interest in progressing a career at the Centre.

88. This lack of career structure and issues around remuneration were recognised by the Inquiry's expert witness, Professor Bosworth, in her evidence to the Inquiry:

"... this is a difficult, challenging job which is designed to be performed by people who are paid poorly and who are asked to do very long shifts and who don't have much of an opportunity to imagine themselves in a different role within the establishment because there is no clear career structure other than for the small handful who might move into the DCM role. I think all of that, again, it stops it being a kind of aspirational career path because it's actually not a very good job".⁸⁶

89. In her recommendations to the Inquiry, Professor Bosworth cited the need for:

*"(h) clearer and more developed career pathway to close the gap between DCOs and more senior colleagues.
(i) more varied and more regular additional training to professionalise the DCO role".⁸⁷*

Recommendation for recruitment, training and career development

90. In the view of Mr Syred, the Centre's strategy for recruitment, training and career development requires a complete overhaul, with an emphasis on the following issues:

- a. Pay, conditions and career development opportunities - to attract and retain quality DCO and DCM staff with the right mix of skills, experience, and potential.
- b. Honest and accurate advertising - so that candidates are attracted for the right reasons and to avoid wasting resources recruiting and training candidates who leave once they realise the realities of the role.
- c. A more robust assessment process, both during selection and throughout the probationary period, to ensure that the right candidates are in post. In particular, the probationary period should be meaningfully assessed – not just time served.

⁸⁶ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 155/13-22

⁸⁷ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 162/13-16

- d. The engagement of staff with a range of skills in addition to control and restraint. It is acknowledged that within a custodial setting there is a need for staff who are trained and able to execute control and restraint techniques. However, an equal emphasis should be placed on staff with strong people skills, for example specialist counselling and negotiation skills, so that any exercise of use of force truly becomes a last resort.
- e. A significantly improved and more comprehensive training programme, to include more emphasis on:
 - i. people skills and coping mechanisms - so that staff can meaningfully engage with detained persons, understand and appreciate the impact of their own behaviours, and be equipped to cope with the very challenging environment of an IRC.
 - ii. immigration law, processes and procedures - so that staff properly understand the purpose of immigration detention and can better relate to the circumstances in which detained persons find themselves.
 - iii. mental health training - so that staff can recognise the signs of mental illness and understand how to respond appropriately.
 - iv. more scenario-based (role-play) training.
 - v. building empathy with detained persons, perhaps by means of presentations from formerly detained persons.
- f. DCOs and DCMs should be recognised as a specialist profession (not the 'cheap cousin' of prison officers), with a recognised qualification, tailored to IRCs, that is mandatory for those seeking to work in IRCs. This would provide staff with a sense of pride, and professional duty.

91. These recommendations are reproduced in the final chapter of this written statement for ease of reference.

Chapter 3. The impact on staff working at Brook House

92. Mr Syred has been clear that he welcomes this Inquiry, and the scrutiny it brings to the care and treatment provided to detained persons at the Centre. He recognises the experiences that the Inquiry has heard from detained persons, and he acknowledges that the detrimental impact on them is at the centre of the Inquiry's investigation. However, it is important to Mr Syred that the Inquiry also recognises the substantial volume of evidence before it about the damaging impact that day-to-day life at the Centre had on the members of staff who worked there, including Mr Syred.
93. Almost universally the staff witnesses who gave evidence to the Inquiry spoke about the impact that working at the Centre had on them personally. They highlighted the daily pressure inherent in the role of a DCO or DCM, and the frustration at not being able to help and support detained persons in the way they would like - or that detained persons needed - because of a lack of time and a lack of staffing. Understaffing was an issue raised by almost every DCO and DCM witness who worked at the Centre.
94. Witnesses spoke of regular exposure to distressing scenes of self-harm by residents and the effects of drug misuse. Violent, abusive, and aggressive behaviour from detained persons was commonplace and had a significant impact on the behaviour of staff. Some officers' behaviour changed while working at the Centre in order to try to manage these stresses or in an attempt to fit in and conform to the behaviours and language going on around them.
95. A number of staff witnesses reported an adverse impact on their mental health. Troublingly, the Inquiry has also heard about the lack of any meaningful assistance from the Centre's SMT when staff sought to access support.
96. These points echo Mr Syred's experience. The impact on staff is examined in more detail under the headings set out below, and it is evident throughout that there is a close connection between the welfare of staff and their ability to provide care and support to detained persons:
- a. The pressure of the DCO role
 - b. The impact of staffing
 - c. Frustrations for staff and for detained persons
 - d. Violent, aggressive, and threatening behaviour
 - e. The impact on staff of self-harm and other harm to detained persons
 - f. Staff mental health and behavioural changes
 - g. Lack of support for staff

The pressure of the DCO role

97. Working on the wings was high pressured. Mr Syred has told the Inquiry that DCOs were “bombarded with requests for the simplest things. Even the [detained] guys on the wing ... they could see that you were under pressure”.⁸⁸ The requests were:

*“requests for everything. Because when you work on the wing, it could be anything from toilet paper, shampoo, filling out request forms, filling out a form to go to property; a multitude of things on the wing that, you know, they will come to you first. Most of the [detained] guys, if they saw that you were responsive to them, they would go to you”.*⁸⁹

98. Mr Syred's experience was very much that those officers who tried to help detained persons and to do their best, were often the ones who became overwhelmed with queries and requests from detained persons.⁹⁰ The wing officer role was different to other departments because DCOs were with detained persons all day, and it was a very busy role.⁹¹

99. Many witnesses spoke of the long hours and shift patterns. Mr Syred explained to the Inquiry that officers would normally work three days in a row and have two days off. He needed to leave home by 06:45 to start work at 07:30 and (assuming all went smoothly during the day) he would leave Brook House at about 21:30 in the evening.⁹² These hours had a significant impact on staff and their family life. Mr Syred told the Inquiry:

*“By the time you finished, quarter past, half past 9, the whole evening is gone anyway. So if you have a family, you won't see your kids for about three days, effectively. ... you just felt tired as well. It's a long day. ... the shift patterns were - they just made people tired. If you're tired, you get grouchy, like everyone - you know? It was not - it's not good practice to have staff feeling like they've got no work/life balance and just tired all the time”.*⁹³

100. In his evidence to the Inquiry, Stephen Loughton, who has worked at the Centre since 2009 (as a DCO, then a DCM, and he is currently the Assistant Director with Serco) made a similar point:

“They felt under pressure. I mean, back in those days, there was - the staffing levels were a lot lower than they are now, so everyone had a bit

⁸⁸ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 8/23-9/2

⁸⁹ Owen [7 December 2021](#) 9/11-18

⁹⁰ [INN000007_0014/63](#)

⁹¹ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 25/20-25

⁹² [INN000007_0005/20](#)

⁹³ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 37/14-38/10

of a - you're spending 13-and-a-half-hour shifts. It's a lot of time to spend with the same people every day, day in, day out. So people were low, the morale was low, but the staff at the time did an amazing job for what they were doing and the resources they had to them".⁹⁴

101. In his First Witness Statement, Daniel Small, an Activities Officer at the Centre between November 2015 and December 2017, put it this way:

"At the end of each shift I was physically and emotionally exhausted. It was only after leaving Brook House that I became aware of the physical and emotional toll working there had taken on me".⁹⁵

The impact of staffing

102. Low staffing was an issue that contributed significantly to the pressure put on staff, the feeling of being overwhelmed, and low staff morale. This point was made by Mr Syred and many staff witnesses who gave evidence. Callum Tulley told the Inquiry that there were *"acute staff shortages at Brook House. It was one of the biggest problems there".⁹⁶* Stephen Loughton described staffing levels as *"borderline dangerous ... [to] staff and residents".⁹⁷*

103. Mr Syred recalled a time when he contacted the control room indicating that he should not be unlocking detained persons from their rooms in the morning because he was alone on the wing:

"...before – unlock at 8 o'clock in the morning, I actually contacted control, "I'm on my own here. I shouldn't be unlocking". They said, "Well, you've got to". I said, "Well, I'm not happy to unlock on my own". ... You just know you're going to get 130 people coming to you for help. And it's not safe. It's not safe to do that".⁹⁸

104. One officer told the Inquiry that *"everyone knew"* they were short staffed, and that overtime was available every day, but offering overtime meant that *"people were just burning out".⁹⁹* Another DCO believed management became aware of the drop in morale amongst staff: *"it was impossible not to become aware. Because the amount of staffing that left, or were off because of stress, you'd have to be blind not to be aware of it".¹⁰⁰* Daniel Small was asked by the Inquiry about the difference it would have made if DCOs had more time. He said:

⁹⁴ Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 83/7-15

⁹⁵ [BDP000003_0003/7](#)

⁹⁶ Callum Tulley [9 March 2022](#) 149/10-12

⁹⁷ Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 76/1-3

⁹⁸ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 11/13-20

⁹⁹ Shane Farrell [8 March 2022](#) 83/17-22

¹⁰⁰ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 14/14-17

*"I believe DCOs wouldn't be so stretched and stressed; morale wouldn't be so low; activities could open up on time; detained persons wouldn't be as frustrated, waiting outside the IT room, waiting outside the gym, coming back to the wing saying, "We need an officer to open up this"".*¹⁰¹

105. Stephen Webb wrote in his First Witness Statement that the "low staffing levels were the main contributor to the stress experienced by staff" and led to officers feeling "constantly on edge and alert".¹⁰² When giving oral evidence, he told the Inquiry about the challenges he faced as a DCM trying to staff the wings and the impact that this had on detained persons:

*"Staff were on the wings for probably 11 and a half - well, 12 and a half hours, especially the wing staff that come under me. You should have had a quota of staff four to five on a wing. We ended up sometimes with two. I struggled to get them on lunch breaks, because I didn't have enough staff to cover them for lunch breaks. I don't remember ever having a lunch break when I was there. My days ended up being 16, 17 hours long. And I know it affected the DCOs a lot, because they couldn't get breaks, they couldn't even get outside to see, you know, in the courtyard. Sometimes I couldn't open the courtyards because I just didn't have enough staff. So we couldn't get, you know, sports going. You know, and that obviously - the more frustrated the detainees got, the more angry they got, and they took it all out on the officers".*¹⁰³

106. Dr Dominic Aitken, who conducted research at the Centre over the course of a month in 2017, told the Inquiry about the concerns staff had around staffing:

*"They were generally aware, as staff were at all times, that at any given moment things could kick off and things could suddenly go wrong very quickly. So they would be concerned, for example, if they found someone who was attempting suicide or if a fight broke out or somebody had overdosed on drugs or something like that. If they were alone, as a member of staff, they would really struggle to cope with that because they would then need to attend to an individual person or a small number of people, but that would then leave the remainder of the wing unattended".*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Daniel Small [28 February 2022](#) 122/24-123/4

¹⁰² [MIL000003_0008/45](#)

¹⁰³ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 139/23-140/14

¹⁰⁴ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 65/1-12

107. Reverend Ward, when asked about the impact that low staffing had on the staff working at Brook House, said:

"So it's demoralising. As soon as you would walk into the building and collect your keys and radios, you would know that you were understaffed that day. Two of the primal fears of staff are being left alone, being isolated, and being attacked, and where you are placed in a position where there is lower staff than you expect, or indeed need, then actually your fears are raised, and what that does in turn is that changes your natural responses to how you actually engage with the people in your care. Actually, you become more cautious and, as it's well documented, you move very quickly into a "fight or flight" mode of working, and that was apparent, especially when there was low staff".¹⁰⁵

Frustrations for staff and for detained persons

108. Mr Syred spoke of the frustration that staff experienced when they were unable to help detained persons because they were under too much pressure, or they were severely understaffed. When they were dealing with day-to-day requests and someone was in trouble or distressed, he didn't have time to go and patrol the wing:¹⁰⁶

"You need to go out around the wing to see - just to put your head - knock on the door, poke your head in the door, "Is everyone all right?", just to see what's going on. There may be bullying incidences, there may be drugs going on, there may be someone self-harming. If you were just stuck in the office, you wouldn't see any of that. ... I felt guilty that I couldn't get around. I felt that I was constrained to be in the office, on the wing office. I just felt I couldn't perform what a DCO job is, and it was to get amongst the detainees and not just, you know, detach yourself. That's what I was taught in my initial training course. And that's what I wanted to do. I didn't want to be stuck in an office".¹⁰⁷

109. In his First Witness Statement Mr Syred wrote:

"Staff felt overwhelmed. You couldn't do your job properly, and you couldn't give individual attention to detainees. You felt undervalued, and that management were not listening. You would finish a shift absolutely worn out and grateful that you were still alive...".¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 153/16-154/5

¹⁰⁶ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 17/15-20

¹⁰⁷ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 19/3-21

¹⁰⁸ [INN000007](#)_0033/136

110. Mr Syred was concerned about the build-up of these issues on detained persons. He told the Inquiry:

"if you're tired, if you're overworked, you just felt - you just felt like you couldn't help - you didn't have the time. Because people - the guys in there - sorry, detained guys in there, they - their issues could be so different and complex. Some of them might be easy, you could sort it out in minutes, but some of the guys, their issues - it could be - it could take ages, take all day. I've spent a whole day just helping one guy, you know".¹⁰⁹

111. Professor Bosworth made a similar point in her evidence to the Inquiry. She noted that detained persons were:

"people with a lot of complex needs, and, again, they're needs that the officers can't necessarily respond to. I mean, the officers could respond to them in terms of, you know, having conversations and directing them to the medical care that's available and trying to sort of be with them as people, but, you know, the rate of officers relative to the number of people in a detention centre at any one time basically means that they don't really have that much time to actually have conversations with people".¹¹⁰

112. Later in her evidence, she highlighted the impact that this had on staff at the Centre:

"they're [detained persons] a complex population who have a lot of difficult needs which the officers have almost no tools to actually meet And so I think, on that level, separating yourself emotionally from that is, presumably, the very easiest way to manage it. You know, if you went in to work every single day and were confronted with people who were making demands that you couldn't resolve, if you cared about each and every one of them, you would - you know, you would feel very, very distressed".¹¹¹

113. Reverend Ward wrote in his First Witness Statement about this same point; that staff were feeling unable or powerless to assist detained persons, or to alleviate the distress they were experiencing, which was demoralising for staff and resulted in their disengagement.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 38/24-39/7

¹¹⁰ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 48/7-17

¹¹¹ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 45/20-46/4

¹¹² [DL0000141](#)_0050/145

114. Related to the frustration felt by staff, was the frustration felt by detained persons. One officer told the Inquiry that DCOs were worried about being unable to help detained persons because there was only one or two of them on the wing:

"you can only spread yourself so thin, and it just made things harder because, you know, you'd just be trying to fight fires - not literally, but just to try and help everyone, and it was really hard, and I appreciate that it wasn't the detainees' fault, and it was - you know, they were getting annoyed by it, understandably. ... If I couldn't help, you know, tensions would build because you might not be able to help someone ...".¹¹³

115. In his First Witness Statement to the Inquiry, Stephen Webb (a DCM at the Centre from 2016 until he was suspended following the Panorama programme) wrote:

"There was no time to carry out all of the duties and give proper care. That frustrated detainees and in some instances contributed to aggression".¹¹⁴

116. Mr Webb outlined further challenges for detained persons in his oral evidence to the Inquiry as follows:

"Some of them were - it was a mighty shock, you know, they'd been picked up and they've basically been put in prison with no open windows, very small courtyards, and it's all new and they may not be even able to speak the language. So it's extremely hard to get information through to them, and then you get the ones which come from all the prisons and they're in a gang environment anyway, and - it was extremely difficult to manage and some, you know, brave officers got hurt, I think".¹¹⁵

117. Mr Syred believes that the lack of information provided to detained persons about the status of their immigration cases was a significant source of frustration and distress for residents and was compounded by the fact that they had no indication as to the likely duration of their detention. This contributed to acts of aggression and violence amongst the resident population.

118. Lee Hanford held a similar view¹¹⁶, and Ben Saunders highlighted that Home Office staff would not walk around the Centre because they would be stopped

¹¹³ Edmund Fiddy [7 March 2022](#) 158/23-159/17

¹¹⁴ [MIL000003_0008/43](#)

¹¹⁵ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 138/23-139/7

¹¹⁶ [CJS0074048_0022/85](#)

by detained persons: *"fundamentally the biggest issue detained persons had was with the Home Office as they wanted to know progress with their case"*.¹¹⁷

119. Dr Aitkin recognised the problems created for staff by having Home Office caseworkers who were located offsite:

"It meant that the members of staff who dealt with detainees on a daily basis didn't really know a great deal about their case, they were often having to relay bad news to detainees and so sort of clearing up a mess that had been made by someone else outside of the centre. And it also meant that a lot of key information was just not shared. So staff were uncertain about lots of things, detainees were uncertain about lots of things and, unsurprisingly, there was a lot of frustration about that".¹¹⁸

120. Members of staff often told Dr Aitkin about how long someone had been detained and expressed sympathy for the fact that they had been detained for a very long time and the unfairness of the situation.¹¹⁹ He told the Inquiry:

"There were some individual detainees who I knew had been detained for a long time and whose behaviour was undoubtedly quite difficult for staff to deal with because they were acutely frustrated and angry about how long it was taking for them to be released or removed and there didn't seem to be very much progress on their case. So there were some cases where that was manifested in the behaviour of the detained people".¹²⁰

121. Similar points were made by Professor Bosworth, who highlighted the enormous amount of anxiety caused by the lack of a time limit for people who are detained.¹²¹ She told the Inquiry:

"... the lack of clarity about the duration of detention has been shown by, you know, a lot of evidence to be a defining characteristic of these places and to contribute to a lot of the difficulties for the detained population. It is very closely connected to the detained population's anxiety and distress and mental health problems. ... I think it affects staff because it makes their role a little bit unclear. ... If you don't know how long somebody is there for, it is hard to motivate yourself to sort of invest in them as a person, because they might be gone tomorrow, so, you

¹¹⁷ [KEN000001_0047/273](#)

¹¹⁸ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 66/4-17

¹¹⁹ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 69/2-21

¹²⁰ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 70/1-8

¹²¹ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 15/7-12

know, why bother? It also, I think, raises questions about the purpose of your job".¹²²

122. Mr Syred firmly believes that there should be better and more frequent communication from the Home Office on the status of detained persons' immigration cases. Detained persons feel in limbo, and if their cases were processed more quickly, and they were updated more regularly on progress, this would significantly reduce their anxiety (and any related behavioural issues). It is Mr Syred's view also, that Home Office caseworkers should be educated on the practical impact of casework delays on detained persons, who remain in detention pending the resolution of their case.

Violent, aggressive, and threatening behaviour from detained persons

123. The level of violence, aggression, and threats that staff faced at Brook House is incomparable to the vast majority of work environments. This behaviour came as a complete shock to new staff joining Brook House. Mr Syred told the Inquiry:

"It was never mentioned about the hostility, the violence, the amount of officers that were being injured and basically the threats that you would be facing".¹²³

124. Mr Syred estimates that it was only about 5% of detained persons who were violent and disruptive, but it had a significant impact on the staff and on other detained persons within the Centre. Mr Syred was assaulted on a number of occasions, notwithstanding his efforts to be supportive and caring to all detained persons who he worked with. He mentioned in his First Witness Statement about an occasion when he had a chair thrown at him by a detained person¹²⁴, another incident when his arm, spine and shoulder were injured because a detained person ran at him headfirst¹²⁵, and a time when a detained person punched him, and he suffered a glancing blow.¹²⁶

125. Many other staff witnesses reported that abuse and violence towards officers and managers were a regular occurrence¹²⁷, and included assaults, spitting, kicking and punching.¹²⁸ For example, one officer suffered a concussion when he was hit on the back of the head while trying to assist a detained person who appeared to be having an epileptic fit in the courtyard¹²⁹; another officer was cut

¹²² Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 39/7-23

¹²³ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 5/15-17

¹²⁴ [INN000007_0014/59](#)

¹²⁵ [INN000007_0039/161](#)

¹²⁶ [INN000007_0039/162](#)

¹²⁷ Ryan Bromley [7 March 2022](#) 133/25-134/1

¹²⁸ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 62/16-20

¹²⁹ [SER000434_0040/164-166](#)

four times on his wrist with a plastic knife during an altercation between two detained persons¹³⁰; in separate incidents, an officer was bitten on the shoulder¹³¹ and struck in the face with a clenched fist by a detained person who had been violent towards other residents and two female officers¹³²; and another officer required hospital treatment after he suffered an injury to his arm and chest when he was attacked by a resident using a broken snooker cue.¹³³

126. The constant threat of physical violence had a profound impact on staff and Dr Aitken referred to *"a kind of heightened suspicion or vigilance about the entire detainee population"*. It was a volatile environment and things could change rapidly:

*"I remember one member of staff saying to me, 'Things can go wrong here very quickly' and that laconic observation captured what a lot of staff felt".*¹³⁴

127. Outside of physical violence, staff regularly endured abusive and aggressive behaviour and threats of harm. It was noted by one former officer and manager that this level of threat was not reflected on Panorama, but the Centre was *"a lot more ... intimidating and sort of an aggressive environment, quite pressurised and tense"*.¹³⁵

128. In his evidence to the Inquiry, Steve Loughton described the challenging environment at the Centre and the kinds of threats that officers received:

*"On a daily basis, you would get abused, threatened, your family would be threatened. It wasn't nice. But then - I've had it myself. You know, someone could come in there, they're not happy, a resident could be not happy. They would abuse me, they would threaten to do things to my wife, they'd threaten to do things to my kids, threaten - say they're going to do awful things to my parents. An hour later, once they'd calmed down, staff would then - we'd sit down with these people and help them. It's very frustrating. Everyone is human beings and, to take that abuse, it's not nice. It's not nice. That's what it was like. And this is regular".*¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 31/7-10; this witness resigned his role at Brook House due to it being unsafe and being attacked (57/18-19).

¹³¹ [INN000024_0011/36](#)

¹³² [INN000024_0027/102](#)

¹³³ [INN000012_0015/61](#)

¹³⁴ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 81/20-25

¹³⁵ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 15/19-16/13

¹³⁶ Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 137/13-138/1

129. Former DCO and DCM, Darren Tomsett, who worked at the Centre for three years from 2015 to 2018, gave a similar account:

*"There were verbal threats to mine and my family's lives, that detainees would find out where I lived, or they would get people on the outside to find me. ... I was threatened and verbally abused almost every day ... Often a detainee would come to me later in the day and apologise for their behaviour. I saw the frustration on their part and would accept an apology".*¹³⁷

130. Another officer, Babatunde Fagbo, who worked at the Centre from 2009 until 2017, faced relentless racist abuse from detained persons:

*"[Babs] was - unfortunately, he was provoked, and he was provoked racially. A lot of times he was called a "coconut", he was called a "traitor", he was called a "Magnum", obviously the N word and everything. But he was provoked. And the company, they didn't have any - I would advocate they ask them, what is their policy and procedure to officers that are racially abused by detainees? Because they don't have one".*¹³⁸

131. Mr Fagbo was suspended and dismissed from his role because he told a detainee to "go fuck yourself". Mr Syred comments on this in his First Witness Statement as follows:

*"My view of the process is that it didn't always take account of the reality of daily life on the Wings. I accept that there is an obligation on staff to behave professionally but I don't think that those responsible for adjudicating complaints were always aware of the considerable verbal and sometimes physical abuse to which officers were subject, and that under pressure, officers can sometimes act out of character, for example ... the comments of Babatunde Fagbo mentioned here".*¹³⁹

132. In his First Witness Statement to the Inquiry, Stephen Webb expressed the view that the "incidents portrayed in the Panorama programme are a product of the relentless stress and horrors officers had to deal with on a daily basis".¹⁴⁰ He elaborated on the 'horrors' in his oral evidence to the Inquiry, as follows:

"The "horrors", as in being told, "You're going to get shanked if you come up here", "You're going to get the kettle", which is mainly, if you are

¹³⁷ [INN000024_0005/16](#)

¹³⁸ Luke Instone-Brewer [8 March 2022](#) 38/18-39/1

¹³⁹ [INN000007_0051/204](#)

¹⁴⁰ [MIL000003_004/21](#)

walking along the wings and you're looking in the rooms, you could always tell the room of a foreign national offender. It would be a half - there would be a kettle half full of water open, with an open bag of sugar, because if you do anything wrong, that sugar is going in the kettle and that kettle is going over you".¹⁴¹

133. Mr Webb observed the impact of this behaviour on staff and the increased nervousness that this level of aggression and threat caused:

"you could walk onto a wing and you could sense staff were nervous, so I would always try and reassure them with a little bit of humour, I suppose, just to make sure, "Look, it's all right, I'm here". I think staff are more nervous because you don't know what's going to happen that day, so I think that did affect the culture, but I never saw anything bad. But I think people were very nervous because it was getting a very violent place. Threats were being made. And the threats got worse. It didn't particularly worry me, because threatened, you know, "I'm going to stab you", and all this, but I imagine, if you were slightly smaller or more timid, having someone come up to you that's 6-foot, you know, "I'm going to shank you next time you come up here", I imagine that would affect you, yeah".¹⁴²

134. Mr Syred's view, which has been noted by others, is that often officers who tried to follow the centre rules faced greater levels of aggression and abusive behaviour from detained persons.

135. John Connolly, a former control and restraint trainer, told the Inquiry that when officers 'turned a blind eye' to the rules, it often led to altercations with those officers who enforced them.¹⁴³ Darren Tomsett reflected on the level of abuse and threats that he received from detained persons and commented that he was "probably getting more than [his] fair share" because:

"... I wanted to follow the centre rules and stand there and - you know, if you're controlling the door, for example, if you're not allowed to come onto the wing, trying to maintain that control and security for the wing and for the detainees that are on there, so I just found that I was sort of consistently dealing with a lot of confrontation and verbal abuse and intimidation sort of on a - almost a daily basis".¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 148/6-14

¹⁴² Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 142/17-143/7

¹⁴³ John Connolly [2 March 2022](#) 169/10-170/9

¹⁴⁴ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 10/10-11/1

136. For a similar reason, his adherence to the Centre rules, Mr Tomsett believed that he was the subject of many complaints from detained persons.¹⁴⁵ In his evidence to the Inquiry, he stressed the importance of taking a stand against abusive and aggressive behaviour and showing other detained persons that an officer was willing to deal with a situation, to do their job, and to protect others.¹⁴⁶

137. In his interview with Verita, Julian Williams said that the officers who took a stand, who followed the rules and did not give in to detained persons for an easy life, were the officers who got abuse.¹⁴⁷

The impact on staff of self-harm and other harm to detained persons

138. DCOs and DCMs were regularly exposed to serious incidents of self-harm, which added to the pressures and stresses they faced every day and undoubtedly affected their mental state. An outline of the distressing incidents that officers were exposed to was highlighted by Reverend Ward in his evidence to the Inquiry:

"I've witnessed people who have sewed their lips together, I've witnessed people who have been on what's called dirty protest. Now, that isn't something someone with good, sound mental health does. I've witnessed people on food and fluid refusals. I've witnessed people seriously self-harm. I've witnessed people attempting suicide. I've witnessed people crying, showing me the scars of torture whilst holding letters from the Home Office denying their claims of torture. I've commanded incidents where people have stood on the wrong side of the railings with a ligature around their neck on the phone to their 9-year-old son saying goodbye. Those are just a snapshot of the things that I have personally witnessed".¹⁴⁸

139. Reverend Ward went on to tell the Inquiry of the trauma he experienced because of the system operating at the Centre and these kinds of incidents of self-harm:

"I found it traumatic that I found myself in an environment where people's liberty was taken from them without any end. That, in itself, for me is traumatic. I found it traumatic when I responded to a bell within a cell and opened the flap and the person had placed a plastic bag over their head in an attempt to suffocate themselves. I found it traumatic when people were self-harming. I found it traumatic when people were

¹⁴⁵ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 45/12-18

¹⁴⁶ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 8/9-19; Luke Instone-Brewer made a similar comment: *"It's not that I wanted detainees to be punished, I wanted detainees to be protected against those that were being disruptive"* ([8 March 2022](#) 8/19-21)

¹⁴⁷ VER00232_0005

¹⁴⁸ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 141/2-15

placing ligatures around their neck. I found it traumatic when they were showing me scars of torture and letters. I found it traumatic when people were telling me that they were homosexual and the Home Office had said to them, well, they didn't need to state their homosexuality when they returned to their home country. These things, individually and collective, were traumatic. It's traumatic seeing visits where detainees are holding their children and not being able to see them".¹⁴⁹

140. Mr Syred, who was an ACDT assessor, highlighted that not all staff were 'cut out' for undertaking these assessments and reviews, as often it could be distressing for the staff:

"... if someone is telling you some of the worst things that could have happened to them, that could trigger things in people's own personal life, officers, and it may be a bit distressing".¹⁵⁰

141. Mr Syred himself has been deeply impacted by the harrowing stories and accounts he has heard from detained persons, and the consequences of immigration removal. In 2019, a number of Iranian detained persons were brought into the Centre at a time when the UK had issued a warning that UK residents should not travel to Iran. Two of the men spoke to Mr Syred about being tortured, which was disturbing to listen to. Mr Syred provided them with support as part of his role in the welfare team. Another man was 64 years old and had family in the UK. When his flight was leaving, Mr Syred asked him "what do you think will happen to you", and he replied, "I know that I will be killed". Mr Syred subsequently found out that he had been shot on his return to Iran.

142. These kinds of incidents left a lasting impact on staff and unsurprisingly contributed to the deterioration in mental health that was reported by so many staff witnesses.

Staff mental health and behavioural changes

143. As a consequence of his time working at Brook House, Mr Syred has been diagnosed with complex PTSD, anxiety, depression and hyperarousal. He feels constantly on guard because of the need to have been hypervigilant when on shift at the Centre. Two years on from stopping work, he is continuing to manage the impact on his mental health.

144. Regrettably, Mr Syred is not alone in experiencing mental health issues as a result of working at the Centre, and the Inquiry has heard evidence from a number

¹⁴⁹ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 159/19-160/12

¹⁵⁰ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 89/3-8

of other staff witnesses who have openly acknowledged the struggles they have had, or are having, with their mental health.

145. Reverend Ward has been diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety disorder and insomnia from the trauma he witnessed and experienced working for G4S.¹⁵¹ He told the Inquiry:

"When we hear stories -- and I've spoken to many staff who have to stop on their journey to work and be sick on the side of the road because they cannot face what might happen during the shift. That is the impact that this has on staff working there".¹⁵²

146. Stephen Webb found working at Brook House difficult, he suffered quite strongly from a deterioration in his mental health, and he experienced severe mental health issues. He has put in enormous effort to forget his time at Brook House.¹⁵³ He believed that other DCMs and DCOs also suffered a deterioration in their mental health whilst working at the Centre. He attributed this to the introduction of foreign national offenders, who could be extremely violent, and staff were not trained to deal with them. As a result, *"more people were suffering from stress and mental health issues"*.¹⁵⁴

147. Derek Murphy, a former DCO and DCM who faces allegations of mistreatment of detained persons, told the Inquiry that he used *"a lot of alcohol and prescribed drugs to get over [his] PTSD and [his] anxiety"*.¹⁵⁵ Yan Paschali, another DCO facing allegations of mistreatment and violence against detained persons, left G4S because he couldn't handle the stress and it affected his mental health.¹⁵⁶ An Activities Officer, Daniel Small told the Inquiry:

"I was absolutely relieved when I finally left and realised how horrific and - it changed me as a person, working there, and I'm glad I did leave".¹⁵⁷

148. Darren Tomsett, an officer who experienced verbal abuse and threats almost every day, described the impact on him as follows:

"... it just sort of chips away at you every day, doesn't it, and eventually you just get to the point where, you know, you don't want to continue working there anymore. It's sort of a very different environment to working at Brook House as opposed to working in a job elsewhere, so,

¹⁵¹ [DL0000141_042/125](#)

¹⁵² Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 168/18-22

¹⁵³ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 139/19-140/21; [MIL0000003_0002/5](#)

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 136/8-137/3

¹⁵⁵ Derek Murphy [2 March 2022](#) 111/25-112/3

¹⁵⁶ [IPA000001_0001/4](#)

¹⁵⁷ Daniel Small [28 February 2022](#) 127/24-128/2

yeah, just -- it just chips away at you, just takes a little bit away from you each time, and then eventually I, yeah, got to the point where I decided to leave".¹⁵⁸

149. Edmund Fiddy, an officer who worked at the Centre for two years from 2015 to 2017, talked about wanting to leave Brook House but not seeing a way out mentally. It was hard for him to think about his future and what he wanted to do with his life because he was so tired:

"... it was always abuse ... it was really hard to focus on myself ... [I was] mentally drained all the time ... The shifts were 13 hours or so and -- well, you wouldn't really get a break. It was relentless".¹⁵⁹

150. Babatunde Fagbo told the Inquiry that every day he came to work, it was a struggle, and it affected all the officers:

"I mean, I, as a person, I had to ask for a transfer from the wings to work somewhere else because it was getting to a stage where I'm getting ready for work and I'm feeling anxious. I told management that -- in my statement, I said, "I need to come off the wings"".¹⁶⁰

151. Professor Bosworth explained the nature of secondary trauma, which happens when someone is often confronted with the trauma of others:

"... if you are a detainee custody officer and you are hearing a lot from the people in your care about their experiences, you know, in their -- if they're asylum seekers, for instance, or if they had PTSD or if you are dealing with a lot of distress, you are ultimately affected by that distress".¹⁶¹

152. Dr Brodie Paterson, who was instructed by Medical Justice to provide his opinion to the Inquiry on (amongst other matters) institutional culture at Brook House, made the following comments regarding staff's mental health and behavioural change:

"92. The symptoms of compassion fatigue mirror elements of burnout including detachment, but their root cause is the continuous contact with victims of trauma where the worker is required to exhibit empathy to the distress underlying its behaviour manifestations e.g. in self-harm while feeling powerless to prevent it (Harris & Griffin, 2015). The person's

¹⁵⁸ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 71/18-72/1

¹⁵⁹ Edmund Fiddy [7 March 2022](#) 143/22-144/23

¹⁶⁰ Babatunde Fagbo [4 March 2022](#) 61/14-20

¹⁶¹ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 25/1-15

capacity to sustain empathy in response to overwhelming insatiable demand may over time simply become exhausted (Figley 1995).

93. Exposure of staff to distressed, dysregulated self-harming, suicidal or violent behaviour (including involvement in restraint, seclusion, and compulsory medication) may result in trauma for all those directly involved or vicariously exposed including staff (Bonner et al. 2002). The likelihood of developing a mental health condition is increased by repeated exposure. Trauma may not always result but exposure to, or involvement in such events will often generate very strong feelings typically characterised by fear, anger, and frustration (Maier 1999). Even if appropriately acknowledged and proactively managed via organisational debrief and clinical supervision, the power of these feelings of staff is such that they may struggle to maintain positive relationships and empathy with detainees (Blumenthal 2010). As (Bloom 2006a:13) suggests, "The negative effects associated with exposure to violence are so noxious that the individual cannot contain them without resorting to protective defences that are often destructive". As described eloquently in the evidence given by Owen Syred¹⁶² "at the point of dehumanisation, you're in the slippery slope to despair".

94. Such despair and helplessness may turn all to readily into anger, frustration to aggression, and fear into resentment. ...".¹⁶³

153. There is a substantial volume of evidence before the Inquiry that the challenging factors outlined above – the pressures of the job, low-staffing, frustration for officers and for detained persons, the regular violence and threats, and dealing with self-harm and trauma – altered staff's behaviour and language at work. This led to some staff behaving out of character, or hiding their lack of confidence with bravado in order to fit in. In his First Witness Statement, Mr Syred commented on:

"... the tendency for compassionate and kind individuals to behave negatively towards detainees, out of character, potentially because of a desire to fit in with the prevailing culture at the centre. There are several examples of this type of behaviour in the Panorama Documentary".¹⁶⁴

154. Mr Syred believes that this kind of behaviour was an attempt by some staff to cover-up their inability to control the more violent residents:

¹⁶² The correct reference is Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 168/2-4

¹⁶³ [BHM000045_002/92-94](#)

¹⁶⁴ [INN000007_060/229](#)

*"if you see an officer or you see a DCM talk disrespectfully, physically -- or just that disdain in their face, if you saw that, it would be practising that".*¹⁶⁵

155. Mr Syred admits that he was scared when he first started in the role, and he is sure that other officers were too. Some sought to counterbalance their insecurities by joining the cliches and groups that existed amongst staff at the Centre, but this meant that their *"behaviour would be dictated by how they would fit in"*.¹⁶⁶

156. Many other officers have made this same point, about 'fitting in', to the Inquiry. Daniel Small spoke about feeling a pressure to conform to the type of behaviour that was exhibited by more senior officers, such as swearing, being macho, getting on with the job, and *"not to show any perceived weakness"*.¹⁶⁷

157. Clayton Fraser, a DCO at Tinsley House who worked at Brook House from time to time, was asked by the Inquiry about the stories that another officer (Yan Paschali) had told about working in a prison, and about Mr Fraser's conversations on this topic with Callum Tulley. Mr Fraser told the Inquiry that he was *"just playing along, to make it sound interesting. ... that's the truth"*.¹⁶⁸

158. Calvin Sanders' account to the Inquiry on this point was particularly compelling:

*"what the truth is, you know, the comments I made to the DCOs were just my attempts trying to fit in. ... Being new there, obviously, you know, I was just trying to sort of fabricate some story in which, you know, it would make me seem more interesting to them, you know? ... what I said wasn't even true. You know, I didn't do anything. You know, it was just like -- it's a lie that I made up just to try and get people to like me, you know? I understand it's a mistake now, but what's done is done. I can't change that."*¹⁶⁹

159. Mr Sanders went on to say in his evidence that he made out to his colleagues that he had hurt a detained person, but that he made it up to try and fit in. He was clear that he had no intention of hurting the detained person (*"I would never hurt him"*).¹⁷⁰ Mr Sanders agreed with the proposition, put clearly by Counsel to the Inquiry, that Brook House was *"a brutal and dehumanising place for everyone involved, including staff members like [him]"*.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 99/9-18

¹⁶⁶ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 97/21-98/3

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Small [28 February 2022](#) 119/25-120/14

¹⁶⁸ Clayton Fraser [28 February 2022](#) 97/16-19

¹⁶⁹ Calvin Sanders [4 March 2022](#) 124/20-125/15

¹⁷⁰ Calvin Sanders [4 March 2022](#) 131/1-6

¹⁷¹ Calvin Sanders [4 March 2022](#) 126/19-137/1

160. Ryan Harkness, who continues to work at Brook House as a DCM, made the following observations about Mr Sanders:

"I felt he was a bit of a chameleon and said what he felt he needed to say to fit in. In my opinion it is unlikely that what he said happened in Panorama actually happened. He talks of banging someone's head against a window, I don't think he would have been capable of that. He was not in my experience a violent guy or built for violence".¹⁷²

161. Darren Tomsett spoke about the impact of threatening and abusive behaviour, and his regret around some of his own comments to detained persons:

"... I totally regret those comments that I made on that day, totally regret them. Sometimes you just get so frustrated and so stressed out, you know, even first -- like, as soon as you walk into the building, and maybe I'd had a bad shift before that and I'd come in, or maybe I'd had a bad night, but I totally regret saying that and I wish I hadn't said those comments. ... when you just got so stressed and you just got so sort of anxious and being under pressure, I think -- you know, with your frustrations, I think it just ends up sort of spilling out of you."¹⁷³

162. Mr Tomsett went on to say:

... sometimes you just become so stressed and frustrated that you maybe end up just losing your patience with it all; you know? And you're sort of dealing with the verbal abuse and some of the intimidation and the threats every day, it just sort of gets on top of you and you just have a -- begin to have a -- you know, you've had enough of it".¹⁷⁴

163. Charles Francis, who started work at the Centre in 2011, referred to a "culture of inappropriate banter" that was often used as a coping mechanism for the stresses of working life at the centre. In his First Witness Statement he said:

"Sometimes, the banter and words used would be insensitive. I believe that this was a way of coping with the level of responsibility, and the often violent, aggressive or troubling things with which we regularly dealt. That behaviour and the culture it created I believe reflected that we were not properly trained to deal with those situations and how to respond to them".¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² [SER000440_0028/96\(d\)](#)

¹⁷³ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 27/21-28/9

¹⁷⁴ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 32/11-19

¹⁷⁵ [HOW000001_0008/12.i.b.ii-iii](#)

164. Aaron Stokes, an officer who joined the Centre in early 2017, spoke about the lack of support for staff after witnessing acts of self-harm and the impact it had on him. No-one asked him if he was okay.¹⁷⁶ He described himself as “numb” to seeing blood and self-harm, but *“it still rattles in my brain, even till now. ... it does sit heavy until you talk about it”*.¹⁷⁷ In response to dealing with repeated attempts at self-harm, and the inappropriate comments he made, he said:

“I just snapped mentally. I'd just had enough of all the pressure and everything and, yeah, my human side came out and I just cracked, basically”.¹⁷⁸

165. Professor Bosworth helpfully explained to the Inquiry the nature and effects of secondary trauma, things like dehumanisation, aggression, losing control of your own emotions¹⁷⁹:

“I think the main way in which officers respond to the challenges of their job is to create an emotional barrier, an emotional distance, between themselves and the detained population, and I think that this ends up leading them -- or the danger is, it ends up leading them towards not really appreciating the difficulties that the detained population are actually facing, and seeing that when people are angry or distressed or frustrated, they see that as just them being difficult rather than them actually being people in need and in crisis. ... I think the emotional toll of working in this environment is quite high and particularly, you know, with these long shifts and all the rest of it. So desensitisation is, in a way, an inevitable consequence of the nature of the institution”.¹⁸⁰

166. Professor Cornelius Katona gave a statement to the Inquiry where he made the same observation. As a consultant psychiatrist he was focusing on the care and treatment of detained persons with serious mental health disorders, but he spoke also about the significant impact on staff of detainees' traumatic experiences, and 'vicarious traumatising' or 'secondary traumatic stress'.

“This could have a significant emotional impact on staff, who might deal with it maladaptively – either by being completely withdrawn and avoidant or by being over-involved and over-identify with the experiences of the detainee”.¹⁸¹

167. This was the case for healthcare staff, but Professor Katona's view was that:

¹⁷⁶ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 197/16-20

¹⁷⁷ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 199/1-5

¹⁷⁸ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 200/12-15

¹⁷⁹ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 25/1-15

¹⁸⁰ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 42/21-43/17

¹⁸¹ [BHM000030_0053/125](#)

"... non-clinical staff are particularly vulnerable to withdrawing and avoiding contact and involvement with detainees. ... They are more likely to misperceive (and therefore mismanage) symptoms of mental disorder as behaviour or non-compliance issue. They may not be able to deal appropriately with the complex and challenging presentation of detainees with serious mental health disorders ...".¹⁸²

168. Professor Katona considered the evidence before the Inquiry, including evidence provided by Mr Syred, and he concluded that:

"... the environment and conditions arising from high levels of mental disorder amongst the detained population at Brook House led to profound withdrawal and disassociation from the welfare of detainees and significantly contributed to a process of dehumanisation, 'othering' and even institutional racial discrimination based on an 'us and them' mentality".¹⁸³

169. Dr Paterson's view was that the fact that such a culture had been allowed to develop at Brook House suggested that:

"there have been serious failures to adequately support the staff who may be involved in the care and support of individuals who may self-harm or attempt to complete suicide".¹⁸⁴

Lack of support for staff

170. Mr Syred was diagnosed with PTSD after he was assaulted outside of work. When he returned to work, he was given the impression by senior managers that he needed to 'man up'.

171. In early 2020, Mr Syred was put on long-term sick leave after he exacerbated an injury during C&R refresher training. During this period, he was given details for Serco's staff assistance service, but he was informed that Serco did not offer any support for staff suffering from PTSD, and that he should contact the NHS. When he attended a welfare meeting with the new assistant director at Serco in April 2021, Mr Syred raised the fact that he was experiencing mental health issues and that he had concerns about the impact of the DCO role on his mental health; however, the assistant director did not want to discuss the issues with him at all.

¹⁸² [BHM000030_0053/126](#)

¹⁸³ [BHM000030_0053/127](#)

¹⁸⁴ [BHM000045_0022/95](#)

172. Mr Syred finds the level of support offered to staff for mental health issues to be grossly deficient. It is shocking to him that Serco (and G4S before them) do not provide support for staff's mental health given the area of work in which they operate. The evidence before the Inquiry demonstrates a clear connection between the welfare and care of staff, and the care and treatment of detained persons¹⁸⁵, yet there appears to have been no effort to recognise the pressure and stress on staff and the profound impact that working at the Centre had on them.

173. Mr Syred feels that staff were not understood. He recalls a time when a female officer was awarded Officer of the Month, after she returned to work the day after she was punched in the face by a detained person. However, two weeks later she went on sick leave for around six months. Mr Syred believes that officers were made to feel like violent behaviour was part of the job, but staff did not go to work to be verbally abused or beaten up.

174. The Inquiry has heard evidence from a number of officers who felt they were struggling in the role and sought support from the management to little or no avail. Edmund Fiddy told the Inquiry that he needed more assistance, but he was confronted with a 'macho culture':

"it felt like it was assumed, you're the officer, you know, you have to just get on with it and deal with things that personally I needed more help with, you know, mentally, and it was just a "Get on, do it", and, yeah, like, the staff, if there was an incident or something, you would have to crack on and do it, and then try and make sure everything else is maintained and running and it's just, "Deal with it", basically, which I assume is like a macho thing to say and do".¹⁸⁶

175. Aaron Stokes requested a transfer to Tinsley House because of the level of stress he was experiencing at Brook House, but this was refused:

"I went to him [Stephen Skitt] saying, basically, I couldn't really handle the stresses anymore and I needed a new environment to see if I could take me away from my current situation and see if that would benefit me at all in the long run. ... But then, after that, yeah, I didn't really hear much back, to be honest with you. ... It took a while. I got the request back saying that it was denied, basically, in short".¹⁸⁷

176. Mr Stokes went through what he believed were the "correct channels" to ask for help which "from a personal point of view, is quite hard to do". He spoke to

¹⁸⁵ [DL0000141_0042/124](#): Nathan Ward states: "We must not under-estimate the link between detainee well-being and staff well-being".

¹⁸⁶ Edmund Fiddy [7 March 2022](#) 156/6-19

¹⁸⁷ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 171/11-25

Stephen Skitt and Ben Saunders, people he believed could help him and had the power to do something, but they didn't:

"So I felt abandoned, really. So I didn't feel I could -- if he's not going to take me seriously, then no-one would. So I kept it to myself".¹⁸⁸

177. Mr Stokes had hoped or expected that by raising the difficulties he was facing with the management of Brook House that he would have more support from them, but nothing came of it. He was not offered any time off and his role was unchanged:

"... they could see me, I came to them struggling, I was hoping they could've provided more. As in, they did recommend me to a healthcare professional, which is okay, but I needed help at that point in time, and, from my belief, I believe they failed in that completely. ... I had an interview with [Ben Saunders]. We talked through it and then, basically, other than being referred to healthcare, nothing more came of it, so that was the end of it. ... nothing really changed, to be honest with you, other than referral to mental health care, which sort of -- to me, at the time, felt like a lack of interest, really, that they wanted me to be someone else's problem. That's how I felt at the time".¹⁸⁹

178. This demonstrates an unacceptable lack of support from the SMT to those members of staff who asked for help. More broadly, there was no organised training or support for staff to learn how to manage the challenges and stresses they were facing. Reverend Ward highlighted this lack of training to the Inquiry:

"I'm not sure what training is actually available to help people deal with the horrific incidents which took place and, to say that there was a staff support line with telephone counselling, pales into insignificance, I would suggest, when you're having to deal with that, where, in other contexts, such as social work, you would have the clinical supervision to help you unpack that and work with that in a more positive way".¹⁹⁰

179. Professor Bosworth recommended investment into second trauma counselling for DCOs, to try to give officers tools for acknowledging that they are feeling distressed themselves because they are hearing about other people's distress and give them tools for recognising it and for recognising the effects of secondary trauma.¹⁹¹ Mr Syred supports this approach.

¹⁸⁸ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 202/25-203/16

¹⁸⁹ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 172/10-174/1

¹⁹⁰ Nathan Ward [7 December 2021](#) 160/16-25

¹⁹¹ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 87/24-88/9

Chapter 4. The need for balance

180. Mr Syred's main aim as a core participant has been to tell the Inquiry what the conditions and culture at the Centre were really like from his perspective, as an experienced detention custody officer.
181. While the Panorama documentary highlighted the problems at Brook House, Mr Syred believes that it "*was not a fair representation of the centre*".¹⁹² It is also the case that the Inquiry has concentrated on the worst of Brook House, but there was another side, which was not shown in Panorama or drawn out in the Inquiry's hearings.
182. In Mr Syred's experience, there were many excellent officers who were doing their best to support detained persons. Often those who tried hardest to be available to detained persons and to support them, were the ones who became overwhelmed and burned out because they assumed a level of responsibility that others did not.
183. Without in any way excusing the shocking and unacceptable behaviours shown on Panorama and discussed in evidence at the Inquiry, Mr Syred believes it was a minority of staff who resorted to such disparaging comments or abusive and antagonistic behaviour towards detained persons. It was not commonplace. Most of the time, Mr Syred felt that staff and residents worked well with each other, and, on the whole, staff treated detained persons with care, dignity and compassion.
184. It is important to Mr Syred that the Inquiry has a balanced view of what Brook House was like. The issues he has raised in previous chapters of this statement – the leadership failings, the problems around recruitment, training and career development, and the impact on staff working at Brook House – are central to the Inquiry's task of examining the care and treatment provided to detained persons. Mr Syred invites the Inquiry to also recognise the many positive interactions that took place between staff and detained persons.
185. The need for balance is examined in more detail under the following headings:
- a. Panorama was not representative of daily life at Brook House
 - b. Only a minority of officers and managers behaved badly
 - c. Evidence of staff acting out of character
 - d. The need for care in assessing allegations
 - e. Improvements made since 2009

¹⁹² [INN000007_0052/211](#)

Panorama was not representative of daily life at Brook House

186. Mr Syred's evidence to the Inquiry was that the Panorama programme was not how the Centre really was:

*"In one respect, I was shocked and not shocked, probably disgusted, but, also, I felt it wasn't totally representative of how Brook House was. So it was snapshots put together, but I remember being at Brook House where it wasn't always like that. Day-to-day, it wasn't ...".*¹⁹³

187. The sentiment expressed here, of feeling shocked, was echoed by a significant number of staff witnesses, and many officers and managers told the Inquiry that they had never witnessed behaviour like that at the Centre.¹⁹⁴

188. Christopher Donnelly, who has been employed at Brook House since 2008 and continues to work there with Serco as a Detention Operations Manager, told the Inquiry:

*"What I have said is how I genuinely feel about Brook House and the environment that we worked in. What was shown on Panorama is not something that I witnessed in my time at Brook House".*¹⁹⁵

189. Mr Donnelly accepted that Callum Tulley had not "made it all up", but he expressed the view, which he said was shared by staff members, that "they didn't recognise it as the place where they worked", and for him, it was "completely unrecognisable".¹⁹⁶

190. David Webb (who had worked as a DCO from 2014 to 2018 and who qualified as a Use of Force instructor) gave similar evidence to the Inquiry:

*"My experience, and I can only speak of my experience, with the staff that I worked with, I've never witnessed any of that, is the honest answer. I have never witnessed anything like that before, until the Panorama programme came out, obviously, and then I saw it. And my initial thought was that it was unacceptable ... I had never come across that before".*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 4/8-13

¹⁹⁴ Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 16/21-17/1; Babatunde Fagbo [4 March 2022](#) 104/17-19; Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 138/14-15; Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 14/14-15/18; Edmund Fiddy [7 March 2022](#) 144/2-3; Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 210/24-25; James Begg INN000027_0020/56; see also CJS005923_0215/13.10-13.15

¹⁹⁵ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 66/10-13

¹⁹⁶ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 84/4-12; 87/6-8

¹⁹⁷ David Webb [3 March 2022](#) 115/7-12; 116/13-14

191. Later in his evidence Mr Webb bemoaned on the fact that the Panorama footage was not more balanced:

"You did only see the worst, if you like, of Brook House. But what he didn't do is show all the good work that some of the staff do, which was a shame, that it wasn't a more balanced -- I'm not saying it was perfect or, you know -- but there was a lot of staff did some very good work as well and, unfortunately, none of that was shown. ... I've seen some people calm people down really well when they have been up in the air. We have had people come in with sort of medical issues, and, you know, people have really, really helped them and done as much as they can. So there's been some good work as well, but it's just a shame it wasn't as nicely balanced".¹⁹⁸

192. Stephen Webb, a DCM, pointed out that Panorama did not show the back story to all of the things that went on¹⁹⁹, and Aaron Stokes told the Inquiry:

"I wish that [Callum Tulley] would have showed more surroundings instead of the bits that he's just shown you. I wish you'd got a whole picture of the environment of Brook House, instead of just the little bits that he showed you".²⁰⁰

193. It is significant that so many witnesses have said that the Centre was not like it was shown on Panorama. A number of witnesses have said that generally everyone got on well with detained persons and there was a good rapport between officers and residents.²⁰¹ There is clearly a broader picture of what day-to-day life at the Centre was like, which has not been captured on the video footage or explored in any depth within the Inquiry proceedings.

194. Professor Bosworth, in providing the Inquiry with her expert opinion on staff culture, acknowledged that the footage captured by Callum Tulley did not show the everyday at Brook House:

"all staff, even those presumably who have been caught on film, and in this instance doing terrible things, all staff sometimes don't do terrible things and so sometimes are -- you know, do recognise the person

¹⁹⁸ David Webb [3 March 2022](#) 188/20-189/14

¹⁹⁹ Stephen Webb [8 March 2022](#) 149/12-14

²⁰⁰ Aaron Stokes [9 March 2022](#) 211/12-16

²⁰¹ [INN000013_0003/11](#), Shayne Munroe wrote in her statement: "I did not pick up on any foul attitudes towards detainees at any point while working at Brook House. Generally, everyone got on well with the detainees and there was a good rapport between the officers and the detainees. Detainees knew which officers they related to best and tended to avoid anyone they did not like or get on with. ... Generally, staff and detainees got on well. I never saw staff members inflicting violence on detainees or heard them talking about wanting to inflict violence".

before them as being very distressed. So I don't think it is an all or nothing thing. ... one of the issues about this inquiry is, because so much of it rests on this undercover footage which was being taken for an important reason, we don't see very much of the other sort of everyday stuff".²⁰²

195. Later in her evidence, Professor Bosworth cautioned against relying too heavily on the footage:

"... again, here we do need to be a little bit careful about the footage, because the footage suggests that Brook House was always like that, that there were always these crises and always this control and restraint. But I'm sure -- well, I would imagine that, even in the relevant period, it wasn't like that all of the time. Certainly, when I spend time in IRCs, I don't, that often, witness that sort of behaviour".²⁰³

196. The Inquiry has not seen footage of officers and detained persons chatting together, sharing a joke, playing pool, or drinking coffee. These were everyday occurrences at the Centre, not just for Mr Syred but for other officers. Mr Syred told the Inquiry:

"When you worked on a wing with guys, you got to know them, they got to know you. It felt like you were almost like a community. Believe it or not ... I've had some very funny times ... joking and laughing together".²⁰⁴

197. A number of officers and managers have outlined to the Inquiry the efforts they made to build relationships with detained persons and to look after their needs. For example, Shayne Munroe's approach was as follows:

"I used cultural similarities and differences to build rapport with all detainees and I would always ask where they were from, what it was like there and how long they had been in the UK. I would show an interest in their home countries and what life was like there and their lives here. I would also play pool with the detainees which they seemed to enjoy. I found this was a good approach to building trust and rapport with everybody. ... For those whose first language was not English, I would ask them to teach me some basic words in their native language".²⁰⁵

²⁰² Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 52/3-15

²⁰³ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 71/16-25

²⁰⁴ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 15/6-11

²⁰⁵ [INN000013](#) 0012/37-39

198. Mr Syred invites the Chair to acknowledge the limits of the video footage and recognise that a full picture of life at Brook House was not shown in the Panorama programme.

Only a minority of officers and managers behaved badly

199. Mr Syred's experience was that some staff were "*brilliant*"²⁰⁶ and had "*massive compassion*".²⁰⁷ He told the Inquiry:

*"you had certain staff members that were dedicated to the job, DCOs that were dedicated to the job, they were good at their job, and I'm not just talking about older ones, I'm talking about the ones, you know, the experienced -- some of the younger guys, it wasn't all -- some of the younger guys and girls, they were sort of very quite committed".*²⁰⁸

200. The Inquiry has heard evidence from a number of other witnesses, including members of the SMT, commending the behaviour and commitment of most of the staff who worked at Brook House. Stephen Loughton told the Inquiry that staff did "*an amazing job for what they were doing and the resources they had to them*".²⁰⁹ Christopher Donnelly believed that the vast majority of staff were "*ordinary, decent people in a very challenging situation*".²¹⁰ Stephen Skitt said:

*"... we worked in a very challenging environment, you know, and I have to say, you know, the staff, you know, did an outstanding, excellent job every day that they come in. We do know that there are a few exceptions to that, but – you know, but on the whole, the staff group, I thought, were great, were fantastic".*²¹¹

201. In her First Witness Statement to the Inquiry, Michelle Brown wrote:

*"Whilst I acknowledge shocking behaviour in the Panorama broadcast ... I witnessed extraordinary acts of bravery and compassion from the DCO and DCM group. They worked in extremely difficult circumstances. I believe issues such as pay rises overlooked for years impacted on their motivation. From my perception, DCOs did not feel supported from their DCMs - who were focussed on managing the operation as opposed to managing people".*²¹²

²⁰⁶ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 10/13-15

²⁰⁷ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 92/8-9

²⁰⁸ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 24/13-19

²⁰⁹ Stephen Loughton [1 March 2022](#) 83/13-15

²¹⁰ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 62/23-64/14

²¹¹ Stephen Skitt [17 March 2022](#) 87/23-88/4

²¹² INQ000164_0011/14

202. Lee Hanford was clear with the Inquiry that when he was acting as Director of Brook House in 2016 the behaviours of staff and their relationships with detained persons were excellent:

"When I was there in 2016, what I observed was a very professional staff group. ... when I looked at the HMIP report, which was published in January 2017, that confirmed my views as well: the staff were doing an excellent job in very difficult circumstances in Brook House. We understand there are a very small minority who have engaged in the way they have ... But the behaviours I have seen generally and the relationships I've seen between staff and detainees was excellent at Brook House. ... But I do -- I really relate what I said to -- a few moments ago: the behaviours you see from the majority of staff, their relationships with detainees, were excellent".²¹³

203. Ben Saunders shared a similar view:

"... there were a huge amount of very positive, very good staff who worked there, who did a fabulous job in the face of some very challenging circumstances and challenging detained persons who were also in a challenging position and sometimes very desperate. I think the vast majority of people in Brook House did a fabulous job, did it with integrity, genuine care for those people detained there, and enabled them to have the best, you know, care during their stay".²¹⁴

204. When Professor Bosworth gave her evidence, she highlighted that the Inquiry was concentrating on particular individuals who had clearly done things that they shouldn't have; however:

"... there are some officers who appear concerned in the footage. ... people looking for dictionaries, people being worried about the old man who was locked up and worried about the young man who was locked up. I mean, it's not a totally empathy-free institution".²¹⁵

205. Professor Bosworth was asked about the views expressed by Dr Paterson that "[t]he problem is not one of bad apples, it is of a rotten barrel ...".²¹⁶ In her reply, she cautioned the Inquiry to keep in mind that not all officers behaved badly. She replied:

²¹³ Lee Hanford [15 March 2022](#) 75/7-76/22

²¹⁴ Ben Saunders [22 March 2022](#) 107/17-108/1

²¹⁵ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 26/15-23

²¹⁶ [BHM000045_0022/97](#)

"... we need to be careful to remember that not everybody acted in a way that this group of staff that we are talking about did ... there were people, you know, like Owen Syred in welfare. ... I think it's not helpful to think about bad apples, because I think if you think about bad apples, then you would simply say, "Well, we'll get in some new people and then we wouldn't have any problems", and that's clearly not the case. But I suppose, to maintain the metaphor, even if there is a rotten barrel, there are still some people who act with good intentions and who try and help and make a difference and that's all I'm trying to keep in mind".²¹⁷

206. In conducting their independent investigation into concerns at Brook House, Verita spoke to a number of detained persons in two focus groups. Those detained persons did not suggest that there were significant or widespread problems with poor or abusive behaviour by staff. The Verita team also spoke with detained persons who they met informally while walking around the centre, and most said they had no cause to complain about how staff treated them.²¹⁸

207. Dr Aitken told Verita, when he was interviewed as part of their investigation, that he never witnessed abusive behaviour by staff and had heard few complaints about staff from detained persons.²¹⁹ In his evidence to the Inquiry, Dr Aitken described the lengths that some staff would go to assist detained persons who were in crisis:

"... I probably did observe one or two cases where staff were spending an awful lot of time with someone. It may not have been during a formal ACDT process but someone who was on an open ACDT form and would be spending an awful lot of time with them patiently discussing their problems and trying to calm them down and trying to reassure them in various ways. So I sometimes -- occasionally would have directly seen it".²²⁰

208. The Inquiry has heard evidence of officers seeking to support detained persons by helping them with forms and documents needed for immigration cases and assisting them with access to legal representatives and charities. One DCO told the Inquiry that officers would speak to detained persons and reassure them; he would let the detained person know that he was there to assist them in getting their immigration cases sorted, for example in speaking to the Home Office or filling out forms on the wing.²²¹

²¹⁷ Mary Bosworth [29 March 2022](#) 74/14-75/24

²¹⁸ CJS005923_0213/13.1-13.6

²¹⁹ CJS005923_0217/13.19

²²⁰ Dominic Aitken [8 December 2021](#) 84/22-85/7

²²¹ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 12/5-18

209. Mr Syred can recall numerous examples of caring and supportive behaviour by staff, such as:

- a. Niki Madgewick, a welfare officer colleague, arranging for a detained person's dog to be cared for by a canine charity;
- b. James Begg (Safer Custody Manager) providing detained persons with his phone number so they could contact him 24/7 if they had thoughts of self-harm;
- c. Ramon Giraldo, a highly respected and well-liked colleague, working tirelessly to provide activities for detained persons with the limited resources available to him;
- d. Michelle Brown attending Surrey Hospital Accident & Emergency with an Egyptian national who required specialist treatment for mental health issues, and staying at the hospital all night to support him; and
- e. Mr Syred's colleagues in the welfare team, who all went the extra mile on a daily basis.

210. In relation to the behaviour of staff, the Verita report reached the following conclusions:

"Staff at Brook House must deal with some demanding and challenging detainees. They often must respond to or witness frightening, threatening and distressing events. We saw many staff dealing with detainees with tact, compassion and good humour. We did not see any member of staff behave inappropriately or make inappropriate or disrespectful comments. Detainees we talked to and other witnesses did not suggest a significant or widespread problem with poor or abusive behaviours by staff. Nevertheless, a small number of people we interviewed suggested that some DCOs and DCMs sometimes exhibited inappropriate attitudes and behaviour".²²²

Evidence of staff acting out of character

211. The previous chapter, addressing the impact on staff, highlights the substantial evidence before the Inquiry that the challenges and pressures of the job, and the environment at Brook House, altered the behaviour of some staff and on occasion led to them acting out of character.

212. There are many officers who Mr Syred believes were caring individuals, who were shown in the BBC recordings or in evidence before the Inquiry as behaving inappropriately. Mr Syred has known some of these officers and managers for years and witnessed them trying to do their best on a daily basis.

²²² CJS005923_0253/15.10

213. Many other witnesses to the Inquiry have commented positively on some members of staff who were shown to make inappropriate comments on the Panorama programme, some of whom were dismissed from their roles as a consequence.

Clayton Fraser

214. In his First Witness Statement to the Inquiry, Mr Syred described Mr Fraser as a *"kind individual ... who in my experience was always willing to talk with and help detainees, and he is shown on the Panorama programme behaving out of character"*.²²³ Mr Syred elaborated in his oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"someone like Clayton, who I've always witnessed being quite caring, considerate, to me that was quite really out of character. But I do believe that was probably more just to fit in, just to be accepted, and it's a very common thing".²²⁴

215. Shayne Munroe, an officer who called out unacceptable behaviours amongst staff, expressed a similar view commenting that Mr Fraser *"got on well with detainees and was quite gentle with them and had a caring personality"*.²²⁵ Mr Fraser was described by one of the mental health nurses as *"a caring member of staff, I had no concerns about him"*²²⁶, and another officer commented as follows:

"Clayton not only had a very good rapport with detainees, but he was very good at deescalating situations because he was very soft spoken. I did not have any issues with his attitude and behaviour, and I never witnessed any racists or derogatory comments from him".²²⁷

Stephen Webb

216. Mr Syred commented on Mr Webb in his First Witness Statement and wrote:

"I only ever had positive views about him. I was shocked to see his behaviour in the documentary ... He had commented to me about the pressures of the role and the person depicted on the Panorama documentary was not the person I knew. I thought that he was big hearted and compassionate individual, and the actions shown on the Panorama documentary were out of character".²²⁸

²²³ [INN000007_0034/142](#)

²²⁴ Owen Syred [7 December 2021](#) 103/24-104/3

²²⁵ [INN000013_0053/166\(h\)](#)

²²⁶ [DWF000003_0019/143\(g\)](#)

²²⁷ [INN000014_0025/85\(h\)](#)

²²⁸ [INN000007_0055/220\(b\)](#)

217. Shayne Munroe wrote:

"Our working relationship was excellent, and we got on very well. Steve was a very fair and understanding individual and did what he could to help both staff and detainees. I had no concerns about his personal views or behaviours and never witnessed him make any derogatory, offensive or insensitive remarks about detained persons. If anything, he was a popular DCM with detainees".²²⁹

218. Mr Webb was described by another DCM as "very helpful and polite to detainees".²³⁰

Charles Francis

219. Mr Syred worked with Mr Francis quite often and wrote in his First Witness Statement that he "found [Mr Francis] to be a good officer who was supportive of detainees". Mr Syred noted that Mr Francis would have been particularly exposed to detained persons who suffered from serious mental health issues, and he received a nasty bite from a detained person in early 2017.²³¹

220. Again, Ms Munroe's comments echoed Mr Syred's:

"I worked with Charles a handful of times on E-wing and our working relationship was good and we got on well. He was always staffed on E-wing and seemed to be the perfect DCO for that wing. From what I saw, Charles demonstrated a caring personality and got on very well with detainees on the wing. He was experienced and knew what to do to ensure that the wing ran smoothly. I had no concerns about Charles' personal views or behaviours and never witnessed any incidents of verbal or physical abuse. If anything, Charles was very good at being able to diffuse situations. I was shocked by his comments on the Panorama programme because I never witnessed any comments like that from him".²³²

221. Karen Churcher, a registered mental health nurse at Brook House, commented that Mr Francis "went out of his way to get medical appointments for detainees".²³³ Another officer, Ben Shadbolt, wrote that "Charles was a good officer and would always help out the residents that needed help. He had a good rapport with the

²²⁹ [INN000013_0052/166\(b\)](#)

²³⁰ [SER000444_0016/89\(b\)](#)

²³¹ [INN000007_0057/220\(i\)](#)

²³² [INN000013_0053/166\(i\)](#)

²³³ [DWF000003_0019/143\(h\)](#)

residents too".²³⁴ Ryan Harkness, who was a DCO at Brook House in 2017 and still works there as a DCM described Mr Francis *"like everybody's grandad – he listened to problems, was very laid back and had time for everybody. He was not at all violent"*.²³⁵ Others described Mr Francis as helpful and very caring²³⁶ and *"polite, friendly and professional with detainees"*.²³⁷

Babatunde Fagbo

222. Ms Munroe described Mr Fagbo as *"a very welcoming and supportive colleague"*:

"Babatunde was a very popular DCO amongst detainees and he got along very well with them. He was always in a good mood and would have positive banter with everyone. Babatunde was a well-respected DCO. I think this was because of the way he engaged with detainees and was always willing to offer a helping hand".²³⁸

223. David Aldis, who continues to work at Brook House as a DCM, described Mr Fagbo as *"hard working, good at his job and was good at engaging with residents ... He would help residents when needed"*.²³⁹ Other officers commented that Mr Fagbo had *"a great rapport with most detainees"*²⁴⁰ and that *"he was a competent and reliable DCO"*.²⁴¹

The need for care in assessing allegations

224. Mr Syred recognises the extremely distressing experiences that many detained persons have gone through. He commends the bravery and resilience of those formerly detained persons who have provided evidence to the Inquiry. However, not all allegations made by detained persons are accurate, and the Inquiry has received evidence which demonstrates that some of the allegations or complaints made by detained persons lack credibility and are unreliable. A careful examination of all available facts is crucial when assessing these allegations, as illustrated by a small number of examples below.

225. The Inquiry has considered evidence from D390 in support of D1851's civil claim for unlawful detention. In his statement to the High Court, D390 referred to his removal from Brook House and wrote, *"the guards proceeded to hit me with their*

²³⁴ [SER000441_0036/256.9](#)

²³⁵ [SER000440_0029/96\(i\)](#)

²³⁶ [INQ000181_0027/126\(i\)](#)

²³⁷ [SER000444_0017/89\(i\)](#)

²³⁸ [INN000013_0055/166\(r\)](#)

²³⁹ [INQ000181_0028/126\(r\)](#)

²⁴⁰ [INN000014_0026/85\(r\)](#)

²⁴¹ [INN000012_0032/124\(r\)](#)

batons and their shields".²⁴² The video footage available to the Inquiry²⁴³ demonstrated that this was not the case. Jon Collier considered this allegation in his supplemental statement to the Inquiry and wrote:

"No evidence is available to support this claim and the use of batons are not permitted for planned interventions within any custodial setting. The use of a shield was temporary after staff made contact, after which the shield was removed".²⁴⁴

226. Shayne Munroe was involved in an exchange with D119 in the D-wing office which ultimately led to her dismissal. She was subject to complaints by both D119, and another detainee who he was friendly with, D720. D720 claimed that he witnessed the exchange between Ms Munroe and D119, and that Ms Munroe was antagonising D119.²⁴⁵ In fact, D720 was not present during the incident, and in his interview as part of the complaint investigation, he acknowledged to Michelle Brown that he didn't really see anything because his room was on the first floor.²⁴⁶ Ms Munroe addressed this incident in her oral evidence to the Inquiry:

"Q. ... [D720] alleges that you said, "Look at this waste, man, and hit me, go on, hit me"?"

A. I would never encourage someone to hit me and, as I said, he wasn't there. No-one bothered to check CCTV to corroborate that.

Q. ... do you have any feelings or views as to why D720 would sort of say that he was there and say that he witnessed those things?

A. To give his friend – put back-up to his friend's story, basically.

Q. D720 and D119 were good friends?

A. Yes".²⁴⁷

227. Stephen Webb was named within a complaint made by D687 that included an allegation that officers used excessive force on 13 May 2017 to prevent D687 from committing suicide. In his interview with the PSU on 8 January 2018, D687 said that DCM Webb was "definitely involved ... I could guarantee you a hundred and ten percent that Steve was there ... when I did get up I remember seeing Steve ...".²⁴⁸ However, Mr Webb was not rostered to work on 13 May 2017, CCTV footage from outside the room showed that he was not in the area of the incident with D687 and none of the officers involved in the use of force said that Mr Webb was present.²⁴⁹

²⁴² [DL0000095](#)_0002/7

²⁴³ BwC footage – UOF 137.12(2) [00:00-02:00]

²⁴⁴ [INQ000158](#)_0045/18.4

²⁴⁵ CJS005888_0004

²⁴⁶ CJS005874_0001

²⁴⁷ Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 51/2-14

²⁴⁸ HOM002725_0013/6.1.28

²⁴⁹ HOM002725_0040/7.5.10

228. D1538 complained that he was subject to an unprovoked attack by officers in the IT suite on 3 June 2017, however, CCTV showed that D1538's account of what happened was unreliable and that the use of force was not unprovoked as D1538 had approached the officer in an aggressive manner and appeared to grab the officer by the back of the neck.²⁵⁰

229. D1538 also alleged that DCO Darren Tomsett told him he "looked gay" on 28 June when he was trying to enter C wing. D1538 alleged that he had no clothing only t-shirts and boxers. Mr Tomsett had refused D1538 entry to C wing as he was not a resident of that wing, and D1538 became verbally abusive resulting in Mr Tomsett issuing him with a warning.²⁵¹ The evidence available to the PSU investigation into D1538's complaints confirmed that D1538 had been issued with destitute clothing on arrival at Brook House, and CCTV showed him wearing calve length legwear and having other items of clothing in his room.²⁵² Mr Tomsett was asked by the Inquiry to speculate on the reasons why D1538 would make such an allegation against him, and he replied that *"maybe he was making it up because I wouldn't let him access onto the wing"*.²⁵³

230. Another complaint was made against Mr Tomsett by D1399 alleging that Mr Tomsett became aggressive when asked for a curtain. This was explored with Mr Tomsett in his oral evidence to the Inquiry.²⁵⁴ However, the documents available to the Inquiry (which were not raised with Mr Tomsett in his evidence) confirm that D1399 later apologised to Mr Tomsett about how he had spoken to him, and this apology was witnessed by another officer.²⁵⁵

231. Mr Tomsett was called 'racist' by a number of detained persons and in his evidence to the Inquiry he reflected on these allegations:

"Sometimes they would just say it to me because they didn't like what I would have said to them; ie, if I said to them they weren't allowed to come onto the wing, for example, because that was quite a common thing, eventually they'd get tired of, you know, sort of keep asking you and, eventually, at some point, at some times, you can accused of being racist because you wouldn't let them come onto the wing.

Q. And you don't consider yourself to be racist at all?

*A. No".*²⁵⁶

²⁵⁰ CJS003348_0020/7.3.4

²⁵¹ CJS001403_0032

²⁵² CJS003348_0022/7.3.13

²⁵³ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 59/24-60/13

²⁵⁴ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 64/16-22

²⁵⁵ CJS001480_0004

²⁵⁶ Darren Tomsett [7 March 2022](#) 63/9-23

232. Grace Sihlali was a member of the healthcare team and was herself the recipient of racist abuse from detained persons. During a complaint investigation, she told the investigating officer that:

"they use the word for effect. If staff say no then the detainee calls them racist. This word is used to get what they want. Young officers would often give what the person wanted so they are not called racist".²⁵⁷

233. Shayne Munroe was asked by the Inquiry whether she was aware of Mr Tomsett treating detained persons badly and she replied:

"Q. ... I've never seen him treat people badly. It may be his approach and how he spoke to them might have been a bit more abrupt. They might not have liked it as much. But, personally, I didn't see a problem with how he dealt with detainees when I worked with him.

Q. You didn't have any concerns about his behaviour?

A. No".²⁵⁸

Improvements made since 2009

234. Mr Syred would also ask the Inquiry to take account of the fact that there have been significant improvements in the conditions at Brook House between 2009, when Mr Syred first joined, and the relevant period in 2017, so that recommendations can be made for the future having regard to relevant past developments. In his First Witness Statement Mr Syred states:

"When Brook House first opened in 2009 it was a dreadful place, 90% of the detainees were foreign national criminals and it was infested with drugs. There were also problems with prostitution, bullying, and gambling... It was a very menacing atmosphere which you could cut with a knife".²⁵⁹

235. Christopher Donnelly, who started as a DCM at Brook House shortly after it opened highlighted that detained people were much more familiar with the regime of a prison or a detention centre than the staff and initially, they *"did find it quite difficult to find the right level of care"*.²⁶⁰ David Aldis started at Brook House as a DCO in 2009, and he made a similar comment in his statement.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ [HOM002748](#)_0032/7.4.8

²⁵⁸ Shayne Munroe [4 March 2022](#) 23/5-21

²⁵⁹ [INN000007](#)_0004/15

²⁶⁰ Christopher Donnelly [23 February 2022](#) 56/16-19

²⁶¹ [INQ000181](#)_0007/27: "The start was hard work due to the fact there were no experienced staff with knowledge of how to run a centre".

236. Some of the factors that Mr Syred believes contributed to the problems in the first few years were the fact that the overwhelming majority of residents were time served prisoners, the failure to allow the centre time to bed in (almost immediately it was opened it was filled with residents), an even less experienced workforce than in 2017, less recreational activities and the fact that all wings were open to each other, which caused considerable disruption and violence, theft and security issues for staff.

237. The atmosphere changed completely from 2009 to 2017. The main reason that conditions and behaviour improved, was because staff were able to build positive relationships with detained persons, and Mr Syred suggests that a continued focus in this area will lead to further improvements.

Chapter 5. Suggested recommendations

Public sector management of IRCs

238. As set out in his oral closing statement Mr Syred believes that a state-run immigration detention service will better ensure the welfare of people within immigration detention.

239. In Mr Syred's view, the role of a DCO and DCM is far too important to be left to private companies whose priorities are to profit and shareholders. Mr Syred also has concerns about the need of any private company to protect their corporate image and the disincentive this brings (conscious or not) to expose poor practices and areas of concern by thorough investigation and external reporting, so that issues can be addressed and improved.

240. In Mr Syred's experience staff rarely have loyalty to private companies but will be motivated to do their best and take pride in what they do, if they feel they are able to have a positive impact on the circumstances of detained persons and their families, and they are able to positively influence management of the Centre. This, he feels, can be best achieved within the public, rather than private, sector.

Clarification of the purpose of an IRC

241. As set out at paragraphs 7 to 11 of this statement, there is a need for the purpose of an IRC and immigration detention to be clarified by the SMT, in particular that it is not a punitive measure, so that DCO and DCM staff have clear direction as to the proper nature of their roles and to help prevent the types of inappropriate behaviours evidenced in the Inquiry proceedings.

Ending the practice of locking detained persons in their rooms

242. As touched upon at paragraphs 10 and 25 of this statement, the practice of locking detained persons in their rooms for lengthy periods (11 hours over the relevant period, and more recently for periods of nine hours) is punitive, unnecessary for the purpose of immigration detention, has a significant adverse impact on the welfare of detained persons, and has the effect of reinforcing undesirable authoritarian staff behaviours.

243. One only has to imagine how it would feel to be locked in a room for such a long period of time each day to begin to appreciate the levels of anxiety the practice causes. The fears of detained persons about being locked up at night were very obvious to Mr Syred. Staff would spend considerable time in the evenings persuading people to be locked up together with a stranger, and when detained persons refused, they would be taken to the Care and Separation Unit.

244. For people who have difficulty sleeping, which is very common in those who are experiencing stress and anxiety, it would be far better for them to have access to communal areas and to be able to undertake an activity rather than lying in bed with negative thought patterns. Staffing levels would need to increase but not significantly, and the additional cost would be a small price to pay for a significant improvement to the wellbeing of those in immigration detention.
245. The need for lock-up in the evenings and during the night is driven by financial considerations (because it allows reduced staffing at night) and not because of any reason connected to the purpose of immigration detention. In these circumstances and given the very considerable detrimental impact on the welfare of detained persons, this practice should cease.
246. Evidence in support of Mr Syred's position can be found within the written statement of Reverend Ward:

"108. When the detainees were not free to associate, they were locked in their cells from 9pm until 8am. There were also two roll-calls during the day. It was a system designed so that G4S could save costs by running a more skeleton staffing roster in the evening and morning hours and had little to do with welfare of detainees.

109. It was clear to me that locking detainees down into their cells for excessive and prolonged periods of time enforced the prison like environment and was damaging to mental health. The evening lock-in was always a pinch point of the operational day and from my experience people were generally distressed at the fact they had to face another night behind a locked door. On many occasions, we were not able to get detainees into their cells by 9pm. People understandably did not want to go behind the doors so early and for a prolonged period of time. I witnessed use of force and physical restraint during the locking-down of detainees to force them back into their cells, as if staff were herding animals. Negotiation strategies should have been employed and not physical force and restraint.

110. I raised concerns around the cell size, cleanliness and ventilation not meeting the required standards. The cramped cells with lack of adequate ventilation and detainees being locked in throughout the night with the smell of the toilet and potentially the TV being played all night, created tension and had a real effect on detainees' mental health. I recall a number of complaints from detainees where their cellmate would watch pornography throughout the night and they would be subjected to viewing this despite their objection. Detainees would present as distressed and disturbed by being locked in these

conditions. I can also recall many staff members complaining about morning unlock, when they entered detainee cells, because of the smell that resulted from locking detainees in all night, where they would be permitted to smoke, where there was an open toilet and where the cell lacked adequate ventilation".²⁶²

247. Concerns at the practice were also raised in the 2018 follow up report of Stephen Shaw to the Home Office, "Assessment of government progress in implementing the report on the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons", in which the following findings and recommendations were made:

"2.79 In many IRCs, I felt the regimes were unnecessarily restrictive, with extended night-time periods when detainees were locked in their units or - where there were toilets within rooms - locked in the rooms themselves. In some centres, I was disappointed to learn that the lock-down period had been extended, presumably due to staffing requirements. In this respect, Campsfield and Tinsley House demonstrated best practice: the rooms themselves were not locked and detainees retained access at all times to showers and toilets in their units. Moreover, at Campsfield the units were not locked overnight until 23:00. This is far more decent than the situation in other IRCs, and the proportion of FNOs at Campsfield shows that it is possible to manage diverse populations within relatively open conditions.

Recommendation 9: Detainees should have improved access to facilities on their units at night, and night-time lock-in periods should begin as late as possible".²⁶³

248. In addition, the report on an unannounced inspection of Brook House by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons ("HMIP") between 31 October and 11 November 2016 made the following similar findings and recommendations:

"1.40 The centre had many physical security features of a category B prison. Detainees were held in cells on traditional prison landings and wings.

1.41 Some elements of procedural security remained disproportionate to the risks of the population. Detainees were locked in their cells from 9pm to Barn and again for two half-hour roll calls during the day. More detainees than at the last inspection were former prisoners (45% compared to 5%) and a number felt that their new status as detainees was not sufficiently acknowledged. In our survey, one detainee

²⁶² [DL0000141](#)_0036-37/108-110

²⁶³ HOM032600_0033

commented, 'Closing and opening time should be changed because we are not prisoners, we are just detained ... I am feeling like a prisoner without crime...'

Recommendations

1.48 All security procedures should be proportionate to a detainee population and based on individual risk assessments.

1.49 Detainees should not be locked in cells and should be allowed free movement around the centre until later in the evening".²⁶⁴

249. Mr Syred would urge the Inquiry to go further than the recommendations made by Stephen Shaw and HMIP, particularly given the absence of any justification connected to the purpose of immigration detention, and to recommend that steps are taken to ensure that people within immigration detention are not locked within their rooms, save where the individual circumstances of a detained person require it, either for their own or another person's protection and welfare.

250. In Mr Syred's view, there is no reason that detained persons could not be provided with their own room key, with Wing Officers being able to access rooms that are locked from within when necessary. This is a practice adopted in other countries, notably Norway, and the current low numbers of people within immigration detention would be an ideal time to trial it in the UK.

Better communication and updates about the progress of immigration decisions, appeals, and challenges

251. Mr Syred highlights this issue within his First Witness Statement, as follows:

"One improvement that I would suggest is better communication by the Home Office because the detainees often felt in limbo. If their cases were processed quicker and they were updated more regularly on progress this would reduce their anxiety. Home Office caseworkers could also be educated about the practical impact of casework delays on the people who were being detained pending their outcome. When I was seconded to the Home Office, I would tell Home Office colleagues of the negative impact of delays on the detainees, which Home Office caseworkers wouldn't always appreciate, especially if they hadn't seen for themselves the impact this had on the detainees".²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ HMIP000647_0024-25

²⁶⁵ [INN000007](#)_0046/185

252. The stress and anxiety of appealing and challenging Home Office decisions, exacerbated by delays in the process and difficulties obtaining progress updates, is a significant cause of concern for detained persons, as recognised by both the Centre Director over the relevant period, Ben Saunders, and the Interim Director, Lee Hanford:

"Fundamentally the biggest issue detained persons had was with the Home Office as they wanted to know progress with their case".²⁶⁶

"The design of Brook House was aimed at short-term detention. This aim was most certainly not fulfilled. In my personal opinion, the delay in resolving their cases, particularly for those who were detained for considerable periods, meant that many became frustrated".²⁶⁷

253. Any efficiency and communication improvements that can be made in this regard will significantly improve the wellbeing of many detained persons.

Recruitment, training and career development

254. In the view of Mr Syred, the Centre's strategy for recruitment, training and career development requires a complete overall, with an emphasis on the following issues:

- a. Pay, conditions and career development opportunities – to attract and retain quality DCO and DCM staff with the right mix of skills, experience and potential.
- b. Honest and accurate advertising – so that candidates are attracted for the right reasons and to avoid wasting resources recruiting and training candidates who leave once they realise the realities of the role.
- c. A more robust assessment process, both during selection and throughout the probationary period, to ensure that the right candidates are in post. In particular, the probationary period should be meaningfully assessed – not just time served.
- d. The engagement of staff with a range of skills in addition to control and restraint. It is acknowledged that within a custodial setting there is a need for staff who are trained and able to execute control and restraint techniques. However, an equal emphasis should be placed on staff with strong people skills, for example specialist counselling and negotiation skills, so that any exercise of use of force truly becomes a last resort.
- e. A significantly improved and more comprehensive training programme, to include more emphasis on:

²⁶⁶ [KEN000001_0047/273](#)

²⁶⁷ [CJS0074048_0022/85](#)

- i. people skills and coping mechanisms – so that staff can meaningfully engage with detained persons, understand and appreciate the impact of their own behaviours, and be equipped to cope with the very challenging environment of an IRC.
 - ii. immigration law, processes and procedures – so that staff properly understand the purpose of immigration detention and can better relate to the circumstances in which detained persons find themselves.
 - iii. mental health training – so that staff can recognise the signs of mental illness and understand how to respond appropriately.
 - iv. more scenario-based (role-play) training.
 - v. building empathy with detained persons, perhaps by means of presentations from formerly detained persons.
- f. DCOs and DCMs should be recognised as a specialist profession (not the cheap cousin of prison officers), with a recognised qualification, tailored to IRCs, that is mandatory for those seeking to work in IRCs. This would provide staff with a sense of pride, and professional duty.

Improved welfare services for staff

255. Having regard to the difficulties experienced by staff in accessing counselling and support, as set out at paragraphs 170 to 179 above, Mr Syred believes that a much greater level of assistance should be offered to staff in terms of welfare services and support for their mental health.

256. He supports bespoke training for staff to help them cope with the challenges and trauma they will face on a regular basis and/or counselling, such as secondary trauma counselling, as suggested by Professor Bosworth, to provide officers with tools for acknowledging their own feelings of distress.



Innovo Law
2 May 2022