

IN THE BROOK HOUSE PUBLIC INQUIRY

CLOSING SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF SERCO LTD

Introduction

1. The purpose of these written submissions is to assist the Chair in identifying the regimes which are currently in force at the Brook House Detention Centre. This will demonstrate where improvements are in progress and where there may be scope for further improvement.
2. No regime for the care of residents in a Home Office (“HO”) detention centre is going to exist without a certain level of difficulty. The circumstances in which the detainees are held will always likely cause friction and a high level of anxiety amongst the residents. Caring for them is fraught with challenge. It is important to recognise that residents are required to be placed in a detained environment which unavoidably involves a degree of constraint. However, a key focus for Serco is to ensure that the environment is supportive and comfortable whilst remaining secure for the residents in our care. Serco has engaged in a huge amount of work to enhance the delivery of its programme in accordance with the HO contract at Brook House. There is always the need for continual improvement whilst realising that some factors are outside of Serco’s control. Higher standards can and will be achieved as Serco continues to strive to provide the best possible service. Serco has already incorporated into its operation the learning and findings stemming from the Stephen Shaw Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons dated January 2016, the Kate Lampard Independent Investigation into concerns about Yarl’s Wood Immigration Removal Centre dated January 2016 and, subsequently, the Kate Lampard Independent Investigation into concerns about Brook House Immigration Removal Centre dated November 2018.
3. Serco continues to engage with the HO in the consideration of service enhancements and, together with other stakeholders, looks to improve the user experience for residents. Serco will work with the HO to address any recommendations flowing from the Inquiry.

Serco is committed to reviewing the recommendations by the Inquiry to ascertain what can be implemented within the IRC estate most effectively, following discussions by the HO, conscious of the need to ensure parity across the IRC estate.

4. Serco wishes to underline the significant improvements which have been made to the operation to date and to set out the current position in relation to the important aspects of Brook House relevant to the Inquiry. This is done in an attempt to assist the Chair in arriving at suitable recommendations.

Current level of staffing

5. Serco is currently contracted to employ 409 DCOs and 60.8 Detention Operations Managers ('DOMS'). This is an increase of 200 DCOs and 20 DOMs respectively on the numbers in post at the time of Serco taking over the Gatwick contract.¹
6. Serco were awarded the contract for the operation of Gatwick IRCs in February 2020 following a public procurement process operated by the Crown Commercial Service. Serco commenced operation of the Centres on 21st May 2020.
7. In designing the new contract, the HO made significant changes to the specification of operational requirements, compared to those which were in place within previous contracts. These requirements were informed by recommendations from the Shaw, Lampard and related reports. Changes include significant increases to mandated staffing levels and roles and implementation of an extended core day. This reduces the amount of time that residents are locked in their rooms overnight and provides increased access to regime activities throughout the day. In addition to a significant increase in staffing levels, further measures include restrictions on working hours in order to prevent excessive working and fatigue, an increased focus on mentoring, supervision and staff support and, an increase in the level and visibility of management and leadership. In addition to these tangible measures, the contract requires Serco to work with the HO to develop a suite of tools to promote, measure and monitor a healthy culture, which are being delivered through its Positive Detention Culture Programme.

¹ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 12/20-25

8. New patterns of working were introduced in 2020 when Serco took over the running of the Gatwick IRCs, in line with the contract provisions. The patterns varied depending on the area and role. The shifts were worked out as an average of a 40-hour week in line with the requirements of the contract. This was reviewed and changed with the agreement of the HO and staff are much happier with the shift patterns currently in place as there are more rest days together which has provided more time to recuperate and rest thus providing a better and more sustainable work life balance.
9. From a recruitment perspective, Serco has a healthy pool of recruits coming through its staffing system. Serco acknowledges the fact that staff retention within Brook House is important and Serco has a robust recruitment and retention policy to ensure that staffing is maintained at the highest possible level. Numbers of staff have risen and salaries been increased in order to ensure that this is the case.²
10. There are currently no staff shortages. The Gatwick IRCs are now well managed by a motivated, committed Senior Management Team ("SMT") and staffed by officers who are properly trained, certified and behave in a professional manner.³
11. The SMT stations are located in the main body of the building and are accessible to staff at all times. Staff also regularly walk around the areas which increases visibility. Both of these factors provide a good level of oversight for the managers and enables them to be visible and accessible to both the residents and staff.⁴
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² [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 41/7-22

³ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 42/11-12

⁴ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 89/2-6

13. During Serco's tenure, the IMB have commented on an increased incidence of actual or threatened self-harm in the third quarter of 2020, which correlates with a higher concentration of removal flights in this period. It is recognised that the prospect of impending removal is a high stress trigger factor in relation to individual well-being and the risk of harm. Serco's approach in respect of assessing and supporting individual needs is cognisant of this and other relevant factors. Serco staff performed a good job and provided a high level of service keeping residents as safe as possible during the life of the removal policy.

The use of Brook House building as an IRC

14. There has been considerable investment in changing the physical appearance of Brook House. These include redecoration and refurbishment, the installation of biometric turnstiles, biometric multilingual kiosks and reconfiguration of offices and meeting spaces. Such measures have been intended to improve the environment for both residents and staff through improved aesthetics, comfort and accessibility.

Current staff employed by G4S during the Relevant Period

15. There were no outstanding disciplinary processes for staff at the time that Serco took over the Brook House contract and none currently in train. With regard to the evidence provided to the Inquiry by those members of its current staff who were employed by G4S during the relevant period, Serco believes that they demonstrated a degree of self-reflection and offered apologies to residents and the Inquiry. Where it may have been suggested that their self-reflection fell short of what was expected, the Chair is asked to view their responses in the context of the considerable pressures of the Inquiry environment and the detailed nature and structure of questioning which on occasion may not have provided sufficient time for appropriate and considered reflection and response. It is recognised that further reflection may be required and once recommendations from the Chair have been published, Serco intends to address the issues contained within the recommendations whilst reflecting on the evidence given during the course of the Inquiry. All have received training since their time with G4S. They have all been involved in the Positive Detention Culture Programme (see paragraph 35 below), leadership reviews and behavioural assessments with the Senior Management Team. They have also engaged with the multi-factor leadership questionnaire receiving appropriate feedback. This enables leaders to understand the approach and behaviours which are currently used, expand their knowledge

of a range of leadership behaviours and know when and how to apply them. This knowledge provides an objective foundation from which to identify opportunities and set goals to improve individual leadership effectiveness.

Regime activities

16. Serco's target operating model includes an increased access to regime activities (such as extended access to education facilities). However, the constraints of the pandemic have limited the extent to which communal activities can be enjoyed, with many activities needing to be re-located and/or restricted in their timings to allow the separation of residents on specific residential units, to prevent mixing of wing Covid-19 bubbles. In particular, the pandemic has by necessity reduced the opportunity for external bodies such as voluntary groups, like the Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group ('GDWG'), to attend the Centres. Serco welcome the opportunity for greater engagement with community-based and third sector agencies as restrictions decrease.

Improvement in the reporting of incidents at Brook House

17. Serco believes that it is building a culture where staff are prepared to report concerns. Unethical behaviour is not tolerated. Complaints are robustly investigated. The HO has complete oversight of all complaints made both those coming from staff and those coming from residents. This is encouraged by checks and measures in place to audit and review objective evidence in order to ensure the integrity of the reporting, including the involvement of the HO and IMB.⁵
18. There are currently weekly "Adults at Risk" meetings at Brook House attended by Serco management, the IMB, the HO and the healthcare providers.⁶

Transparency and monitoring of performance

19. Performance is monitored and reported through both on-site HO monitoring and self-reporting. Serco is required to report any failures under the KPI to the HO through the HO Contractual Monitoring Team, located on site. Data is provided by way of an agreed reporting structure, a balanced scorecard on a weekly and monthly basis and performance is also discussed at the Weekly Operations Review Meeting ('WORM') and the Monthly

⁵ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 147/7-14, 148/1-15

⁶ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 91/12-25

Operations Review Meeting ('MORM'). These meetings are attended by both Serco and HO Managers.⁷

20. There is complete transparency in relation to all "failures". There currently exists a positive culture of reporting failures in order to improve operational efficiency.⁸
21. Whether a performance failure is due to a failure to comply with any contractual obligation (such that it might amount to a KPI failure) is discussed at the WORM, looking at the incident and any relevant information. Mitigation forms part of the discussions and is based on two factors: (i) extraordinary situations outside of Serco's control that significantly impact the ability to deliver and (ii) where Serco have introduced new systems or processes that will stop the failure occurring again. Where mitigation is not accepted in relation to a KPI failure, a plan is also implemented in order to learn from the failure and implement any new procedures as required.
22. The HO Senior Manager on site determines whether the mitigation is accepted and whether or not a failure has occurred. This remains the same regardless of the nature of the failure. The reporting of KPI data is entirely transparent and Serco works in agreement with the HO at all times. Serco commences an investigation into the root cause of the failure, following which an action plan is formulated to avoid any reoccurrence. The action plan addresses the issues highlighted and is agreed with the HO.⁹

Current regime for dealing with UoF incidents

23. Use of Force training is provided by Serco trainers, who have been trained and accredited by HMPPS trainers. Guest speakers from within the IRCs also contribute to the course, including speakers from the Independent Monitoring Board ('IMB'), Healthcare and management.
24. The auditing of Use of Force footage and documents takes place within 24 hours after every incident or Use of Force. This is undertaken by a multidisciplinary team including the Use of Force coordinator, Instructor, Duty Director, Healthcare, IMB and HO. The

⁷ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 19/12-25, 20/1-7, 21/14-19

⁸ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 28/1-19

⁹ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 31/6-7, 20-25

type of material used for this audit would include reports, footage, statements, Body Worn Video and CCTV.

25. The auditing is done in relation to every Use of Force, not just a sample. The audit process is overseen by a multidisciplinary team including IMB and the HO. By way of example, Serco shared their concerns and all relevant data that reflected the rise in self-harm and UoF in relation to residents who were placed at Brook House for the Esparto flights.
26. PPE is still routinely used for planned UoF incidents. The use of PPE enables the officers to control a situation more effectively by protecting employees and consequently residents. For example, where this is to take place in a resident's bedroom within which a weapon may be available to the resident then Serco has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to protect its employees from harm.¹⁰

Current training regime

27. Training was adapted during 2020 in order to incorporate Covid-19 control measures with approval from the HO. Training therefore currently takes place both on site and off site at a local hotel, and for the first 8 months of the contract from May 2020, it was based entirely at a local hotel to ensure Covid safety.
28. Serco, of its own initiative, is already exploring the introduction of an innovative training package developed to support empathy and how the staff deal with people in traumatic situations. This will be a unique training package designed specifically for the support of staff at the Gatwick IRC's. It will be rolled out at different points within the service career to see where it works best.
29. The Senior Leader Culture Development programme has focused on equipping senior leaders with the insight and tools to effectively co-design and role model positive detention culture practices. All of the SMT have undergone elements of this training. Recent courses have included:
 - i. Vision, Mission & Strategy for Positive Detention Culture, completed, March 2021
 - ii. 360° leadership assessment and development planning, March & April 2021
 - iii. Leading from Values to establish PDC, June, 2021

¹⁰ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 144/6-19

- iv. Adapting to Connect (Insights Discovery), November, 2021
 - v. Team Effectiveness for PDC, January 2022
30. The Detention Operational Manager Culture Development programme has included workshops which link positive detention culture with the Serco Management Development Portfolio to anchor positive cultural practice as a core principle in performance development. This has been rolled out to all DOMs. Recent courses have included:
- i. Positive Detention Culture and Operational Planning, May & June, 2021
 - ii. Team Effectiveness for PDC, July & August, 2021
 - iii. Excellence in Operational Leadership, October & November, 2021.
31. The One Team Culture Development programme 2022, has included workshops that bring operational and non-operational staff from both IRCs together in small multi-departmental groups. The sessions enable staff to understand one another's roles and co-create improved cultural practices & performance together. The workshops focus on three key areas for improvement identified in the 2021 PDC Health check diagnostic report - Improving work commitment through motivation & positive intent; Stepping into role authority by increasing confidence & competence to appropriately challenge others, and enhancing workplace relationships. There will be an ongoing and continuous programme of training and improvement.
32. PPG took over from G4S on 1 September 2021. The service is commissioned by NHS England and Serco. Since PPG's involvement there appears to have been additional benefits for residents. There have been more mental health nurses, a weekly psychiatric visit, additional registered nurses and other enhancements, such as podiatry. Dental services is part of the new PPG contract, not yet fully introduced, and is currently being discussed with the HO, PPG and NHS commissioners in order to provide and ensure adequate healthcare is provided.
33. The training provided by Serco now involves a focus on safeguarding mental health.¹¹

¹¹ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 44/2-19

34. There has also been an improvement on the level of supervision for the mental health care of staff.¹²

Cultural Change

35. The current Positive Detention Culture Programme is led by an external academic, Dr Victoria Lavis of The Appreciative Partnership and is also subject to a KPI relating to staffing, KPI 15. The programme focuses on supporting Serco to develop and maintain a positive detention culture within the IRC and is specifically designed to comply with HO contractual requirements. The programme assesses the culture and conduct within the IRC against specific criteria. This is designed to create healthy behaviours amongst staff by encouraging positive role modelling and effective leadership. Culture does not change overnight and therefore, Serco are delivering a comprehensive programme throughout Brook House in order to positively impact the culture from management down.¹³
36. Serco is committed to drive for even further cultural change. Serco's mission to deliver a safe and respectful community on behalf of the HO that positively engages detained persons/residents and prepares them for their onward journey. This is achieved through highly skilled, professionally compassionate staff and by working with its partners to achieve a positive detention culture.¹⁴
37. As the country heads towards a challenging economic climate and a difficult labour market, the HO will continue to look to Serco to provide an effective, highly professional and value for money service. Serco will continue to strengthen its positive relationship with the HO and meet the challenges that may be presented following the changes to government policy in respect of the HO.

¹² [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 109/12-19

¹³ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 48/1-6

¹⁴ [DAY 43 TRANSCRIPT – STEVE HEWER](#) 60/19-25, 61/1-12