

succeeded by Philip Riley. Clare's first witness statement (para 11) helpfully summarises the broad scope of this side of my chain of command.

9. My core role here was to provide senior strategic oversight of our detention estate and escorting capacity, working with Ministers and IE Board colleagues (and particularly the Returns Director) to understand the policy context, future flows and changing risks so that we had the appropriate infrastructure to support the wider business. That involved significant reshaping of the estate over time to improve its quality and geographical fit, and close work with Commercial colleagues, and with external providers, to ensure that management contracts were let at the right times to secure continuity of service and maximise value for money, and (via Executive Oversight Boards and more informal contact) to maintain constructive, open relationships at senior level.
10. In parallel, I saw a key personal responsibility as taking full account of the controversial nature of immigration detention and the inherent challenges of a custodial environment by managing and responding to the high levels of political, media and legal scrutiny, working constructively with key partners such as Stephen Shaw, Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons ("**HMIP**") and the Independent Monitoring Boards' national leadership, and in particular by developing and championing what became the immigration detention reform programme under the purview of the Immigration Detention Reform and Improvement Board. To increase my operational awareness I visited the various Immigration Removal Centres ("**IRCs**") and residential short-term holding facilities (including the Brook House and Tinsley House IRCs on 24 May 2017), spoke at gatherings such as the Independent Monitoring Boards' annual national conference, took a regular weekly turn as the detention on-call lead dealing with urgent media enquiries and any critical incidents, and from time to time dipped into the weekly meeting of the IRC leads in DESD.
11. Working with Hugh Ind as the then Director General of IE, and with Clare Checksfield and her senior team, I was actively engaged in the Home Office's immediate and longer term response to the events at Brook House from 29 August 2017, when I returned from annual leave. Immediately, of course, there was close liaison with Ministers and senior officials to set out the Department's public response to the Panorama programme, and

to support my own staff at Brook House and more widely in DESD, who were shocked and upset by what had happened; but also work with the G4S leadership to emphasise the urgency of developing a robust action plan to stabilise the leadership at Brook House, deal with the relevant members of their staff, and make early improvements in staffing levels, training and other support. I was also clear with the G4S leadership how important it was for them to commission quickly an independent assessment of what had happened at Brook House and why, with robust terms of reference - the Verita report - and for it to be published in due course.

12. In Spring 2018 I advised Ministers on the complex decision to extend the existing G4S contract for a further two years so that the Department had sufficient time to develop and let a very different successor contract that could take full account of Stephen Shaw's second review, the Verita findings and the National Audit Office's ("NAO") review of the old contract, and liaised with the NAO to ensure that their review was as insightful as possible. Throughout this time I worked hard to ensure that the Department's own immediate action plan on Brook House was as sharp as possible and, more important in the longer term, that the detention reform programme more broadly incorporated relevant lessons for the estate as a whole and continued to be taken forward at pace.

Home Office witness statements

13. As requested by the Inquiry, I have reviewed and reflected on the following witness statements drawn to my attention, namely those by:
 - a. Ian Castle (INQ000056 and HOM0332049);
 - b. Michelle Smith (INQ000057 and HOM0332121);
 - c. Paul Gasson (HOM0332004 and HOM0332152);
 - d. Clare Checksfield (HOM0331981 and HOM0332139);
 - e. Alan Gibson (HOM0331980 and HOM0332133);
 - f. Philip Riley (HOM0332005 and HOM0332051);
 - g. Ian Cheeseman (HOM0332154);
 - h. Frances Hardy (HOM0332138);
 - i. Philip Schoenenberger (HOM0332132); and
 - j. Hugh Ind (HOM0332153).

14. My senior role in IE, as described earlier, means that I cannot comment in detail on the content of the statements provided by Ian Castle, Paul Gasson, Ian Cheeseman and Philip Schoenenberger, since these focus largely on working level practice at Brook House and in the detention estate more generally, or on basic policy formation. However, I see nothing in these that surprises me or with which I would instinctively disagree.
15. Subject to what follows I agree with, and on behalf of the Home Office endorse, the contents of the statements provided by Michelle Smith, Clare Checksfield, Alan Gibson, Philip Riley, Frances Hardy and Hugh Ind, since the overviews they provide are more directly familiar to me. I identify below key points from these statements that I believe would particularly inform the Inquiry's considerations, as well as providing some thoughts of my own.
16. I should start by saying that, as knowledge of the appalling and unacceptable events at Brook House crystallised in early September 2017, I of course shared the immediate emotions of shock and disgust reported by Hugh Ind (para 31), Alan Gibson (statement 1, para 70) and others. For my part these were rapidly succeeded by a determination, working closely with my own staff and G4S, to get to the heart of what had happened and why, and to take all immediate steps possible to put Brook House itself on a better footing; and, more strategically, to ensure that the lessons were fully integrated into the significant programme of policy and operational reform that the Home Office already had in hand in respect of immigration detention as a whole, adding sharpness and pace to that work. The four key reform priorities listed by Philip Riley (statement 1, para 5) go to the heart of this ambition.
17. I turn first to context. In my view Clare Checksfield (statement 1, paras 40-41, 44-45 and 75-77), and Philip Riley (statement 1, para 8) provide a good account of the circumstances and pressures at Brook House in the relevant period. The estate as a whole was pretty full at this time, and Brook House had recently had its bed numbers increased by 60; as an IRC with Category B physical security status Brook House's detainee population included a significant proportion of time-served Foreign National Offenders ("**FNOs**"), and the recent policy of reducing materially the number of FNOs