

Gatwick immigration detention centre closed due to staff Covid cases

Serco-run Brook House has been shut and some detainees moved to another centre, Home Office says

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📷 Brook House immigration removal centre, near Gatwick airport, is now operated by Serco. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Nadeem Badshah

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An immigration detention centre has been temporarily closed after several members of staff tested positive for coronavirus.

The [Home Office](#) said Brook House, near Gatwick airport in West Sussex, has been shut for 10 days. It said a “very small number” of detainees had been moved to Colnbrook immigration removal centre near Heathrow.

Everyone being held at detention centres is being seen by a nurse and offered a Covid test, while face masks are provided; these are mandatory for all staff, it said.

The department would not confirm how many staff and detainees have been affected but insisted it was a “very small number”.

Last month the Guardian revealed that [three wings at Brook House were in lockdown](#) after an outbreak of Covid-19. There were understood to be 17 confirmed cases at the immigration removal centre.

A notice from the Home Office contractor [Serco](#), which runs the centre, was pushed under detainees’ cell doors confirming the news. The notice, seen by the Guardian, encouraged detainees to stay in their room.

Serco [took over operations at Brook House](#) from another outsourcing multinational, G4S, in May 2020.

In 2017, the BBC’s Panorama programme [broadcast undercover footage](#) showing [alleged assaults, humiliation and verbal abuse of detainees](#) by officers at the facility. Fourteen members of G4S staff [were dismissed or resigned](#) after the broadcast, and the Home Office asked the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman to carry out an investigation. The inquiry was delayed pending legal action.

In 2019, inspectors found there was “no culture of abuse” among current staff at Brook House. However, their findings said a series of improvements needed to be made.

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