

Home Office offers £260m to run Gatwick immigration detention centres

Bids sought after G4S contract was extended despite revelations of abuse at Brook House



Brook House Immigration Removal Centre. Photo: PA




By [Beckie Smith](#)

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The Home Office has invited outsourcing companies to bid for a contract worth up to £260m over 10 years to run two immigration detention centres, including the controversy-ridden Brook House.

The department is seeking a private contractor to oversee the detention of hundreds of people being held at the Brook House and Tinsley House immigration removal centres, both near Gatwick Airport.

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The eight-year contract will begin in May 2020, with an option to extend the contract for up to two years. The £260m figure reflects the total value of the contract including the “potential” two-year extension, the department said.

As well as managing accommodation facilities for nearly 700 detainees, the successful bidder will be required to provide related services including cleaning services, security guards, recreational and sport facilities, furniture and equipment, and landscaping and catering services.

The contracts are up for renewal as the outsourcing giant G4S’s existing contracts to manage the two facilities expire. G4S’s contract to manage Brook House had been due to expire in 2018 but was controversially extended for two years, despite revelations in a BBC investigation of abuse of detainees by staff in 2017.

In a tender process that opened last year, the Home Office had initially sought a contractor to run Campsfield House in Oxford and Dungavel House in South Lanarkshire as well as the two centres. However, it revised the tender in December, a month after announcing that Campsfield would close when its management contract with Mitie Care and Custody ended in May this year.

The closure was part of an effort to reduce the number of people being detained, then-immigration minister Caroline Nokes said at the time. The Home Office said the reforms stemmed from the second of two reviews on detainee welfare by former prisons watchdog Stephen Shaw, which found major flaws in the system.

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The Home Office has told outsourcers to submit their bids to run the two Gatwick centres by 9 October.

The department is also seeking a contractor to run a short-term holding facility at Harwich Port in Essex.



The contract, worth between £20,000 and £30,000, will be to provide staff to supervise detainees in a “holding room” at the port and escort them into custody or onto ships to be deported over a three-year period beginning in September.

The successful bidder will also maintain and clean the facility, feed detainees and issue detention paperwork.

The holding facility is currently manned by Border Force personnel, according to a document published alongside the contract notice.

Services will be provided on an “as-needed” basis and the provider will be paid according to the volume of services it provides, the notice said.

“Volumes are unpredictable as sometimes the facility can be used two or three times in one week and at other times not at all for several weeks in a row. In the last two years there have been approximately 40-50 instances of use of the facility. However, no minimum usage can be guaranteed,” the document says.

Abuse revelations

The contract to run Brook House and Tinsley House was first put out to tender in November 2016 but 18 months later, the Home Office said after “careful consideration of the bids”, it had decided to restart the process to “allow for the review of two significant [unfinished] reports on immigration detention before a new procurement begins”.

The Home Office said the revised tender process would take into account Shaw’s second detainee welfare review, which examined the progress the department had made on implementing the recommendations of first report in 2016.

It would also be influenced by a review by barrister Kate Lampard into the culture at Brook House, commissioned by G4S, the Home Office said. The review was published last year and examined factors affecting staff morale and behaviour, and attitudes to whistle-blowing.

The Lampard review was ordered after a 2017 BBC *Panorama* investigation that showed staff abusing and assaulting detainees at Brook House. Brook House's then director, Ben Saunders, resigned soon after the broadcast.

A National Audit Office report published last month found G4S made £14.3m profit running Brook House between 2012 and 2018.

Following the revelations, two former detainees brought a High Court case against G4S, and in June the judge in the case, Mrs Justice May, ordered a public inquiry into the abuse.

May said "the egregious nature of the breaches, the multiplicity and regularity of the abusive events and the openness of the activity within the units... were not isolated incidents of abuse."

Instead, she said they were "repeated events in front of others where the perpetrators were managers and trainers as well as ordinary officers".

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