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BROOK HOUSE IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE – SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS, BUT SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS REMAIN

Brook House was safer and more settled, said Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, publishing the report of an unannounced inspection of the removal centre near Gatwick. However, it needed to look at its use of separation, improve access to activities and better prepare detainees for removal or release.

Brook House holds over 400 male detainees, many of whom are ex-prisoners. At its first inspection in March 2010, inspectors found Brook House to be one of the least safe immigration detention centres ever visited. Staff lacked support and experience and the centre was struggling to achieve basic levels of security and decency. This inspection found detainees were safer, staff were more skilled and better supported by management and the centre provided a more settled environment. The greater confidence of staff underpinned much general progress.

Inspectors were pleased to find that:

- most detainees reported feeling far safer than at the last inspection;
- the number of assaults had reduced significantly, as had the use of force;
- arrangements to address bullying and violence were now more robust;
- self-harm procedures had improved;

- staff-detainee relationships had much improved; and
- detainees had good access to health care and services were generally good.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that:

- there was an excessive and often illegitimate use of the separation unit;
- the use of the stark separation cells for those in crisis was inappropriate;
- professional interpretation was used sparingly, despite situations where confidentiality and accuracy of interpretation were essential;
- education was minimal, despite the best efforts of the single tutor;
- there was no systematic consideration of detainees' needs prior to release or removal; and
- the appalling practice of taking 'reserve' detainees to fill spaces on escorted flights, with many returned, continued.

Nick Hardwick said:

“Managers and staff should be commended for bringing a level of stability to the centre, which is now a largely safe environment run by properly supported staff. However, Brook House continues to face a number of challenges and much more needs to be done, particularly in relation to separation, activities and preparation for release and removal. The centre had a tough start, but is now past that phase in its development. We expect it to have built on the firmer footing that it has now achieved by the time we return.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. A copy of the report can be found on the HM Inspectorate of Prisons website from 31 January 2012 at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/immigration-removal-centre-inspections/index.htm>
2. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is an independent inspectorate, inspecting places of detention to report on conditions and treatment, and promote positive outcomes for those detained and the public.
3. This unannounced full follow-up inspection was carried out from 12-23 September 2011.
4. Brook House is an immigration removal centre for adult male detainees. It is located near Gatwick airport and operated by G4S.
5. Please contact Jane Parsons in HMI Prisons Press Office on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 if you would like more information or to request an interview with Nick Hardwick.