

When Brook House IRC was inspected by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in May/June this year, inspectors found that the centre was prison-like and 'unsuitable for holding immigration detainees.'

In the report released today, inspectors described that the inspection took place at a time when detained people were told they were to be removed to Rwanda. Inspectors revealed how difficult it was for people to access their legal rights and receive adequate information about the proposed removals.

Five people had been detained over two and a half years. Inspectors noted 'much of the frustration, anger and anxiety we found among detainees was due to delays in the Home Office processing cases and failing to provide sufficient information about progression or decisions' and that 'The Home Office will need to be more active, processing cases more quickly, keeping detainees informed and where possible releasing them into the community.' Long waits for travel documents were noted with one man having been held for 16 months with the Home Office having failed to secure an agreement from his home country to remove him and 22 people with 'bail in principle' stuck in detention.

Worryingly, of the 12 recommendations about key concerns made at the last inspection, only one was now found to have been achieved, three had been partially achieved and eight had not been achieved. At a time when Brook House is under the spotlight of the Public Inquiry into mistreatment of detained people in 2017, failings identified during evidence in the Public Inquiry continued. In particular, identification and management of risks on arrival was still judged to be not good enough by inspectors. As was described in the Public Inquiry, the Rule 35 report process was still not being used to its fullest extent to protect detained people who had conditions that might have been worsened by detention. In spite of the scrutiny in the Public Inquiry, nearly all Rule 35 reports related to potential victims of torture and very few were prepared for detained people with health problems or suicidal ideation.

In addition, in their survey, 28% of detained people said they had felt suicidal. Inspectors wrote

'The centre did not meet the needs of the high number of detainees with mental health problems.' And 'there was no psychological support for the high number of detainees with mental health needs, and it was worrying that the separation unit had been used to hold detainees with poor mental health.'

A third of people who were detained told inspectors they did not feel safe. This reflects the reality heard in the visitors' room. Visits are crucial and evidence in the report gives a picture of why they need to continue. The report shows that systemic failings revealed in the Public Inquiry still persist.

Link to report: <https://bit.ly/3dzwwJf>