

Corporate Watch - UK Detention Centres Factsheet (Updated May 2018)

Around 2,500 people are locked up without trial or time limit in the Home Office's immigration detention centres at any moment. This factsheet gives an overview of the main sites, and identifies the main companies profiting from running them.

We publish this updated factsheet just as the [Home Office confirms](#)¹ that it has extended G4S' contract to run the Gatwick detention centres. After [secret filming](#)² gave a taste of the abuse meted out by G4S guards in Brook House, leading to increased media attention on detention, the government's response is to reward the company with two more years of detention profiteering.

But this is still not the whole story. Another two big detention contracts are also due to expire: Mitie's management of Campsfield near Oxford, and GEO's for Dungavel in Scotland. Yet there have been no tender announcements for either. Is the Home Office freezing all detention contracts, with their profiteers in place, waiting for public attention to blow over?

Other main changes since our last factsheet in 2016 are the closure of The Verne, and of the "family pre-departure" centre [Cedars](#)³. But children are still being locked up in a newly refurbished "[family unit](#)"⁴ in Tinsley House – the other centre run by G4S.

As of May 2018, the Home Office has [10 migration prisons](#)⁵:

- **Eight long-term "Immigration Removal Centres" (IRCs) where adults can be detained indefinitely.** These are: Colnbrook and Harmondsworth near Heathrow airport; Brook House and Tinsley House (including the "family unit") at Gatwick Airport; Campsfield House in Oxfordshire, Dungavel House in Lanarkshire (which is set to close), Morton Hall in Lincolnshire, and Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire.
- **Two stand-alone "residential short term holding facilities" (RSTHFs), where adults can be held for up to one week.** These are Larne House in Antrim and Pennine House at Manchester Airport. (NB. there is also another RSHTF within the Yarl's Wood complex.)
- **NB:** this list does not include another 30-plus "non-residential" holding centres where people are detained for short periods.

Recent changes:

- **G4S' contract to run Tinsley House and Brook House has been extended until 2020.** This news was [quietly reported](#)⁶ immediately after the May 2018 local elections. The G4S contract was due to expire at the end of April, and a [tender process](#)⁷ was started in November 2016. But this process was cancelled following media attention on abuse by G4S guards inside Brook House, which has led to an "[independent review](#)"⁸ of the centre now taking place. Instead the same company's [existing contract has been continued](#)⁹ for another two years. The tender is due to be relaunched later in 2018.
- **The Verne in Dorset [closed](#) in December 2017¹⁰.** The site is now being re-opened as a men's prison, which was also its previous role until 2014. This has reduced the UK's overall

immigration detention capacity by over 500 places. It follows the closure of two other IRCs, Haslar and Dover, in 2015.

- **Cedars “pre-departure” family accommodation closed in October 2016.** Families with children are now held in a refurbished “family unit” inside Tinsley House. Barnardo’s, the charity which ran “welfare services” at Cedars, [lobbied for](#)¹¹ the bigger children’s prison to stay open, but was [unsuccessful](#)¹² in this. G4S is now [fully responsible](#)¹³ for the family unit, including “welfare services”.
- Dungavel House in Scotland is [still open](#)¹⁴, despite its closure being previously announced in 2016. The government [had planned](#)¹⁵ to replace the IRC with a new “short term holding facility” near Glasgow Airport. But it failed to get planning permission for the new site, after a vigorous local campaign.
- [Mitie took over](#)¹⁶ the contract to run deportation “escorting”, from Capita subsidiary **Tascor**. This includes managing most of the Short Term Holding Facilities.

A few overall figures:

- Around [2,500 people](#)¹⁷ are held in immigration detention at any one time. 27,231 people were detained in 2017 altogether. The large majority (23,272) were men. These numbers also include some immigration detainees held in the general prison system: 407 at the end of December 2017.
- 13,173 people [were deported](#)¹⁸ (in Home Office speak: “removed”) from detention. Legally, detention centres are meant to be “removal centres”: i.e., they only hold people who are due to be deported. In practice, though, less than half are “removed”. The majority are bailed or released altogether.
- Detention numbers have fallen in the last two years, from a peak of 32,447 in 2015.¹⁹
- 44 children were detained in 2017; 20 of these were 11 or younger.²⁰ This is down from 163 in 2015 – though numbers might increase again now the new Tinsley House centre is open. Only 11 of these children were actually deported. The other 33 were put through the ordeal of imprisonment without any “departure” at the end of it.
- East Europeans are now top detention targets alongside South Asians. The top nationalities leaving detention (whether deported or released) in 2017 were Pakistan (2,565), Albania (2,288), India (2,252), Romania (1,879) and Bangladesh (1,385).²¹
- Most people are inside for less than one month: 63.4% in 2017, with 80% out by two months.²² These proportions are very similar every year going back to 2010: the Home Office has not succeeded in speeding up detention-deportation “turnover” time. 225 people leaving detention in 2017 were detained for over a year; one person had been in more than four years.

Private Contractors:

- With one exception, detention centres are run by private companies. The private managers and their IRCs are: [Mitie](#) (Colnbrook, Harmondsworth, Campsfield); [G4S](#) (Brook House, Tinsley House); [Serco](#) (Yarl’s Wood); [GEO](#) (Dungavel). Only Morton Hall is run by the state (Her Majesty’s Prison Service, HMPS).
- Mitie also runs the two stand-alone “Residential Short Term Holding Facilities” (RSHTFs). It also runs the large majority of over 30 non-residential SHTFs, where people are usually

(but not always) held for less than 24 hours. This is as part of the overall contract for “escorting and travel services”.

- Other private companies have contracts for healthcare services, cleaning, and more. Some of these are detailed below.
- **NB:** *the (heavily redacted) detention centre contracts can be downloaded [here from the Contractsfinder archive site](#).*

The government’s strategy?

- Overall, immigration detention places are reducing. At the same time, people are being concentrated in the main complexes around Gatwick and Heathrow airports, which have recently been slightly expanded. This trend is in evidence with The Verne’s closure, and the attempt to close Dungavel: the idea is to hold people arrested in the regions in short-term facilities, then move them to the main centres.
- It is in the Home Office’s interest to reduce detention numbers, as detention is expensive and budgets are tight. The aim, as ever, is to get people deported quicker, increasing detention turnover. Changes to appeals procedures and legal support make it harder for people to resist deportation, and so should speed up removals. Yet the figures still show little success in that. As mentioned above, the proportion of people still detained after one or two months hasn’t changed in eight years.
- Recent negative publicity around Brook House is putting some pressure on the system. So may the ongoing official [Shaw Review](#)²³ into immigration detention, which is due to produce a second [report](#)²⁴ this year. The Gatwick tender has been put on hold, and the existing contract extended, as the government hopes to ride out media attention. The same could happen with Mitie’s Campsfield contract, which is set to expire in 2019.

Detention Centre details

Heathrow centres:

- **Colnbrook IRC**

A4 Bath Road/Colnbrook by-pass, UB7 0FX

Capacity of 312 males and 27 females.²⁵

Opened in August 2004.

Colnbrook is a high security detention centre built to the same standards as a Category B prison.

Currently run by Mitie. The [contract](#)²⁶, which covers both Heathrow centres, runs from September 2014-22. The previous contractor was GEO.

Healthcare: Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL).²⁷

- **Harmondsworth IRC**

A4 Bath Road/Colnbrook by-pass, UB7 0FX

With a capacity of 726 male detainees, it is the largest UK detention centre.²⁸

The older part of the centre (359 beds) is “hostel type accommodation” with lower security; a newer part (367) is run on similar lines to a Category B prison.

Currently run by Mitie. The [contract](#)²⁹, which covers both Heathrow centres, runs from September 2014-22. The previous contractor was GEO.

Healthcare: Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL).³⁰

Gatwick centres:

- **Brook House IRC**

Perimeter Road South, Gatwick airport, RH6 0PQ

Opened 2009.

Current capacity of 508 male detainees – expanded by 60 places in 2017 by putting extra beds in existing rooms.³¹

Currently run by G4S. The [contract](#)³² for the management of the Gatwick detention centres began in May 2009 and was due to end in 2018, but has now been extended until May 2020.

Healthcare: G4S Medical.³³ Cleaning and catering are sub-contracted by G4S to Aramark.³⁴

Brook House was expanded in 2017 by 60 places. The £1.7 million construction contract for expansion of both Gatwick centres was awarded to Wates Construction.³⁵

- **Tinsley House IRC**

Perimeter Road South, Gatwick airport, RH6 0PQ.

Capacity of approximately 178 (after 2017 expansion)³⁶, including the “family unit” with 34 beds (8 suites).³⁷

Currently run by G4S. The contract for the management of the Gatwick detention centres began in May 2009 and was due to end in 2018, but has now been extended until May 2020.

Healthcare: G4S Medical.³⁸ Cleaning and catering are sub-contracted by G4S to Aramark.³⁹

Tinsley House was expanded by 40 places in 2017. The £1.7 million construction contract for expansion of both Gatwick centres was awarded to Wates Construction.⁴⁰

Elsewhere:

- **Campsfield House**

Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 1RE

Capacity of 282 male prisoners.⁴¹

Opened as an IRC in 1993, before that it was a young offenders’ prison.

Run by Mitie. The [contract](#)⁴² started in May 2011 and is due to run until June 2019, including a three year extension. However, as with the Gatwick contracts, the Home Office could put off procurement and extend the contract until bad press has “settled down”.

Health services run by Care UK.⁴³

- **Dungavel House**

Strathaven, South Lanarkshire, ML10 6RF

Capacity of 249: 235 male, 14 female.

Originally an aristocratic hunting lodge, later a prison, opened as an IRC in 2001.

Run by GEO. The [contract](#)⁴⁴ began in 2011 and is supposed to expire by [September 2019](#)⁴⁵ at the latest after a maximum of three annual extensions. However, as with the Gatwick contracts it is could be that the Home Office will now put off a new tender and instead grant an exceptional further extension.

Healthcare provided by NHS Lanarkshire.

- **Morton Hall**

Swinderby, Lincolnshire, LN6 9PT

Capacity of 392 males.

Opened as an IRC in 2011, previously various other kinds of prison for men, women and youth since 1958.

Run by Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS).

"Facilities Management", which includes responsibility for works, maintenance and stores, has been contracted out to Amey PLC since June 2015. Healthcare is by Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust. Education services are provided by Lincoln College. A charity called [Children's Links](#) runs the visitor centre.⁴⁶

- **Yarl's Wood**

Twinwoods Business Park, Thurleigh Road, Milton Ernest, Bedford MK44 1FD

Purpose built as an IRC, opened in 2001.

Average occupancy 349, women and adult families. There is also a "residential short term holding facility" where 38 males can be held for up to a week.⁴⁷

Run by Serco ([contract](#)⁴⁸ 2014-2023).

Healthcare is run by G4S.⁴⁹

Residential Short Term Holding Facilities (RSTHFs)

In these short-term detention centres, adults can be held for up to one week: seven days if removal directions issued, otherwise five days. Technically, there are three such facilities: one for male prisoners, which is part of the Yarl's Wood IRC complex; and the two stand-alone facilities described below.

- **Larne House**

2 Hope Street, Larne, Antrim, BT40 1UR

Formerly a police station cellblock.

Capacity of 19, male and female.

Run by Mitie.

Pennine House

Room 1506-1510, Terminal 2, Manchester Airport, M90 4AG

Capacity of 32, male and female.

Run by Mitie.

NB: confusingly, these two RSTHFs are also on the Home Office's list of "IRCs" on its website.

Short Term Holding Facilities (STHFs) / "holding rooms"

There are also over 30 other "short term holding facilities". These are, on the whole, small complexes of cells, either at ports or at reporting centres (where asylum seekers and other migrants have to "sign on" at regular intervals). People are usually held for less than 24 hours; however, large numbers have been [kept for several days](#)⁵⁰ in the busy holding centres at Dover and Folkestone ports.

Three are in France: at Calais port, Coquelles (by the Eurotunnel), and Dunkerque.

The Mitie contract covers the majority of holding centres. However the STHFs at Calais, Coquelles, Dunkerques, Cardiff, Bristol and Longport Freight Shed (Folkestone) are under separate arrangements. The UK centres are (or [were in 2015](#)) run directly by the Home Office.⁵¹ The French centres are now run under a separate Calais security contract, held by a French company called [Eamus Cork Security](#).⁵²

1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/future-management-of-the-gatwick-immigration-removal-centres>
2 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/g4s_brook_house_immigration_removal_centre_undercover
3 <https://network23.org/barnardosout/shut-cedars/>
4 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/feb/09/g4s-welfare-support-families-children-deportation-gatwick>
5 <https://www.gov.uk/immigration-removal-centre/overview>
6 <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/articles/news/home-office-shelves-plans-new-contract-award-gatwick-immigration-removal-centres>
7 <http://ted.europa.eu/TED/notice/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:404486-2016:TEXT:EN:HTML>
8 <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/home-affairs/Correspondence-17-19/Brook-House-Independent-Investigation.pdf>
9 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/future-management-of-the-gatwick-immigration-removal-centres>
10 <https://detentionaction.org.uk/verne-closes-shaw-looms>
11 http://www.barnardos.org.uk/cedars_report_2015.pdf
12 https://www.barnardos.org.uk/news/Barnardos-statement-on-Cedars-accommodation/press_releases.htm?ref=117378
13 <http://www.righttoremain.org.uk/blog/g4s-to-provide-child-and-family-welfare-services-at-new-detention-unit/>
14 <http://unlocked.org.uk/blog/visiting-dungavel-for-another-year/>
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16 <https://corporatwatch.org/mitie-wins-deportation-escorting-contract/>
17 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2017/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned#detention>
18 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681703/detention-oct-dec-2017-tables.ods see table dt_05
19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2017/how-many-people-are-detained-or-returned#detention>
20 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/681703/detention-oct-dec-2017-tables.ods see sheet dt_09
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23 <https://detentionaction.org.uk/category/shaw-review>
24 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/14/uk-must-reduce-detention-shaw-immigration-report>
25 <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2018/04/Heathrow-IRC-2017-AR.pdf>
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35 <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/0a595539-b76e-4296-8987-6ac7233bc2d7>
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37 <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2017/06/TINSLEY-HOUSE-2016-1.pdf>
38 <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2017/06/TINSLEY-HOUSE-2016-1.pdf>
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- 52 <https://calaisresearch.noblogs.org/contractors/>