



Home Office

Detention Services Order 02/2016

Lesbian, gay and bisexual detained
individuals

March 2026



© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/detention-service-orders

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at DSOConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk

Contents

Contents	3
Document Details	4
Contains Mandatory Instructions	4
Instruction	5
Introduction	5
Purpose	5
Equality Act	5
Procedures	6
Same-sex couples	7
Data Protection Act	7
Self-audit	8
Support	8
Revision History	9

Document Details

Process: To provide instructions outlining the consistent standards for the treatment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual detained individuals in the immigration removal estate and under escort.

Publication Date: March 2026

Implementation Date: April 2016

Review Date: March 2028

Version: 1.1

Contains Mandatory Instructions

For Action: Home Office staff and contracted service providers (CSPs) operating in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs), Gatwick pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHFs).

For Information: Home Office responsible case-working teams.

Author and Unit: Sunil Patel, Detention Services

Owner: Michelle Smith, Head of Detention Operations

Contact Point: Detention Services Order Team: DSOConsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk

Processes Affected: This DSO sets out instructions to ensure that the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual detained individuals are consistently met in the Immigration Removal Estate and under escort.

Assumptions: All staff and CSPs will have the necessary knowledge to follow these procedures.

Notes: N/A

Instruction

Introduction

Purpose

1. This DSO provides guidance for all staff in Home Office immigration removal centres (IRC), pre-departure accommodation (PDA) and residential short-term holding facilities (RSTHF) and escorting staff, on managing lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) detained individuals to ensure equality of treatment. The DSO includes details of general requirements that apply to all individuals, in addition to LGB specific requirements. This DSO applies only to LGB detained individuals. It does not cover transgender individuals.
2. For this instruction, references to “centre” include IRCs, RSTHFs and Gatwick PDA. This DSO does not apply to non-residential STHF and Residential Holding Rooms (RHRs)

Two different Home Office teams operate in IRCs:

- Detention Services (DS) Compliance team (Compliance team)
- Immigration Enforcement Detention Engagement team (DET)

The Compliance team are responsible for all on-site commercial and contract monitoring work. The DETs interact with detained individuals face-to-face on behalf of responsible officers within the IRCs. They focus on communicating and engaging with people detained at IRCs, serving paperwork on behalf of responsible case-working teams and helping them to understand their cases and detention.

There are no DETs at RSTHFs, or the Gatwick PDA. Some of the functions which are the responsibility of the DET in IRCs, are instead carried out by the contracted service provider and overseen by the International and Returns Services (IRS) Escorting Operations (Escorting Ops) in RSTHFs. In the Gatwick PDA, the local Compliance Team undertakes detained individual engagement.

3. This DSO will ensure that all staff working in the Home Office detention estate who work with LGB detained individuals are aware of the actions required to ensure that their needs are identified and appropriately met.

Equality Act

4. Section 12 of the Equality Act 2010 identifies sexual orientation as a protected characteristic. Any direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is therefore unlawful and constitutes a breach of the Act.

Procedures

Centre environment

5. Centres should create a positive environment and encourage diversity, for example through education events, posters with positive depictions of different lifestyles and celebrations of this aspect of diversity. Centres should also take action to address negative attitudes and behaviours and to promote a safe environment for LGB detained individuals.
6. Detained individuals may choose to disclose their sexual orientation to Contract Service Provider (CSP)/ Healthcare staff, however, this is at the discretion of the individual. Both CSP/ Healthcare staff must provide opportunities (including in a discreet manner) at reception and induction, for individuals to safely disclose their sexual orientation and ensure that those who choose to disclose can easily access support and assistance. Staff must also ensure that clear information about how to disclose and access support is available to all detained individuals. This should include written guidance (e.g. induction materials and posters in communal areas) so that individuals who do not disclose at reception or induction are aware they can do so later and understand the process for accessing support. All information must be treated sensitively and in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.
7. If a detained individual discloses their sexual orientation to an onsite Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) staff member, the CSPs should be notified so that they can ensure clear information about how to access support is available. The onsite HOIE team should also update the notes section on Atlas to reflect the information the detained individual has disclosed.

Staff responsibilities

8. All detained individuals must be made aware, both during the CSP induction and through information displayed around the centre, that discrimination in any form, including homophobia or biphobia, will not be tolerated.
9. The CSP must ensure all centres have a lesbian, gay and bisexual policy in place. This policy must set out how the centre will prevent, identify, and respond to discrimination, bullying, or harassment related to sexual orientation, including homophobia and biphobia.
10. The policy must include:
 - clear reporting routes for detained individuals who experience or witness such behaviour;
 - measures to protect individuals from victimisation or retaliation;

- staff responsibilities for monitoring, challenging, and recording homophobic or biphobic behaviour; and
 - arrangements for training staff and raising awareness among detained individuals.
11. Detained individuals must be made aware of the complaints system and have had explained to them how to raise a formal complaint if they are subject to, or witness, homophobic bullying/harassment (see DSO 03/2015 [Handling complaints in immigration removal centres](#)). Detained individuals should also be encouraged to raise concerns about homophobic comments or behaviour towards themselves or others with any member of the CSP staff, Healthcare team, or safeguarding leads.
 12. CSP staff must inform detained individuals of the role and availability of the welfare officer (or designated LGB lead) should they want to seek any advice or assistance. Reassurance should be given that it is safe to advise staff that they are LGB and can safely share any concerns such as reporting bullying or harassment.
 13. CSP welfare/support services should provide tailored LGB support on request (i.e. not unfairly discriminate against LGB individuals either directly or indirectly). This may include provision of internet access in the welfare office to provide privacy for those looking up LGB support organisations. Detained individuals must be given the opportunity to request such support in private. Welfare / support staff should also take steps to engage with LGB support organisations.

Risk assessment and equality monitoring

14. CSP staff must consider risks to LGB individuals as part of standard risk assessment processes, including the Room Sharing Risk Assessment (see DSO 12/2012 [Room sharing risk assessment \(RSRA\)](#)). Any risks associated with the management of LGB individuals within a centre must be identified and managed appropriately, in the same way as risks relating to any other detained individual.
15. CSP staff must have measures in place to prevent and respond to homophobic harassment, including ensuring that relevant centre-wide strategies, such as violence reduction strategies, adequately address homophobic behaviour.
16. CSP staff must inform detained individuals that the onsite healthcare team can offer specific support if requested, which may include health advice and information.
17. CSPs, healthcare and compliance staff must undertake any mandatory equality and diversity training, to equip them with the skills to sensitively manage LGB issues (see DSO 02/2018 [Detainee Custody Officer and Detainee Custody Officer \(Escort\) Certification](#) for more information).
18. As set out in paras 7-8, CSPs are required to conduct regular equality monitoring and trend analysis for individuals with protected characteristics. As part of this analysis, CSPs must monitor service equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals,

including access to services, treatment by staff and other detained individuals, and outcomes. The findings must be used to inform, review, and where necessary update local processes, procedures, and service delivery, to ensure that LGB individuals are not subject to disadvantage or discrimination.

Same-sex couples

19. A same-sex couple should be treated the same as a heterosexual couple as set out in DSO 01/2014 [Families in immigration removal centres](#).
20. Detained individuals have the right to enter a marriage or civil partnership. Instructions should be followed from DSO 06/2015 [Marriage or civil partnership in detention](#).

Data Protection Act

21. The UK GDPR and DPA 2018 set out the circumstances in which personal data must be processed (including whether it can be shared with other organisations). Information about an individual's sexual orientation is considered special category data under UK GDPR and the DPA.
22. CSP staff must only collect, record, use, or share this information where it is necessary for a legitimate operational purpose, such as safeguarding, risk management, or equality monitoring, and where doing so is lawful under data protection legislation.
23. Only the minimum information necessary must be processed, and it must be treated as confidential, stored securely, and accessed only by staff who need it for their role.
24. Staff must not collect or use information about sexual orientation routinely or unnecessarily and must ensure it is not disclosed in a way that could expose an individual to discrimination or harm.
25. Home Office and CSP staff must follow relevant data protection and confidentiality guidance when processing this information.

Support

26. CSP Welfare/support services must keep an up-to-date list of LGB support organisations and telephone numbers that detained individuals can seek further help, advice and support from. The following web pages can be accessed via the centre's internet suite:

- Rainbow Migration: <https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/>

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: [The UN Refugee Agency | UNHCR UK](#)

Self-audit

27. CSPs are required to undertake an annual self-audit of this DSO to ensure that processes are being followed. This audit should be made available to the Home Office on request.

Revision History

Review date	Reviewed by	Review outcome	Next review
March 2026	Sunil Patel	Updated to reflect: Removal of annual self-audit line Terminology changes from 'centre supplier' to 'Contracted Service Provider' (CSP) Support details updated	March 2028