

Scottish Detainee Visitors

Annual Report

2006

Chair's Report

In 2006, Scottish Detainee Visitors have continued to offer essential support to those held in Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre. Detention leaves people isolated from family and friends and vulnerable, with limited access to legal representation. SDV members work to support detainees both emotionally and practically, offering friendship and providing regular contact with people outside Dungavel.

A recent report on the treatment of asylum seekers, by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, contained valuable recommendations about detention, which closely relate to the experience and work of SDV:

- *The Government should follow its own stated policy and stop detaining victims of torture, pregnant women and people with serious physical and mental health conditions;*
- *An end to the detention of children and failing that, stronger safeguards to protect their rights;*
- *Detention should only be at the end of the process and should not be prolonged – a maximum of 28 days;*
- *All asylum seekers should be provided with written information about the reasons for their detention;*
- *Movements around the detention estate should be minimised.¹*

Over the past year SDV has supported many detainees for lengthy periods, in some cases beyond a year. A minority of these detainees have been fortunate enough to obtain bail – an area where SDV is keen to develop its support. Detainees who have been detained for such lengthy periods are often left in a state of limbo, lacking information about their future, especially in cases where travel to their home country is not possible. SDV has seen a number of families, detained as a result of dawn raids in Glasgow, and other vulnerable individuals such as pregnant women and those with difficult health conditions. SDV works hard to provide the particular support these detainees require. However, we strongly hope that over the coming year the joint committee's recommendations will be heeded by the government.

Within SDV, we have continued to expand and have welcomed a number of new visiting members with particular expertise and linguistic skills. Our coordinator, Kate Alexander, continues her excellent work. We are very pleased that with the support of Lloyds TSB she is now working 2 days a week. To Kate and all of the SDV members for their commitment to supporting detainees in such a range of ways, and for their fundraising efforts to allow the work of SDV to continue, thank you.

Moya Flynn
Chair, SDV

¹ Joint Committee on Human Rights Tenth Report, April 2007.

Coordinator's Report

2006 has been another busy year for SDV. The political environment remains hostile to asylum seekers, refugees and other people with immigration issues. However, in Scotland, it has been a year that has seen asylum seekers, their friends, neighbours and supporters increasingly joining together to campaign against destitution, detention and deportation. Against this background, SDV has continued to support detainees in Dungavel, visiting twice weekly and offering practical and emotional support both during and outside these visits.

In 2006 we elected a new chair and committee and welcomed and trained 13 new visitors. We developed the skills and knowledge of the organisation through regular training, including two all-day training sessions. These were very well attended by our visitors, despite being held on Saturdays – a strong indication of the commitment of our visiting team!

During 2006, SDV looked at how we could best support our visitors in what can sometimes be a stressful role. We consulted visitors on the purpose and structure of our regular support meetings and, as a result of their feedback, altered the timing, frequency and structure of the meetings.

We continued to stage our popular and successful fundraising concerts and they continued to be a good way of raising both money and awareness. Other fundraising

activities included a successful 7 a side football tournament – the World without Borders Cup, sponsored events and providing staff for Workers' Beer Company events.

We continued to work with other organisations providing support to detainees and asylum seekers. This has included receiving referrals from a range of organisations such as Positive Action in Housing, Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, the Unity Centre and other visitor groups. We also provided information and assistance to others, for example we provided information to Positive Action in Housing on moves around the detention estate to feed into a submission to the Scottish Parliament cross party group on refugees and asylum seekers.

The work we do brings us into contact with some remarkable people. We are able to keep in contact with the few who are bailed or given leave to remain. Others are moved to other removal centres making it difficult for us to keep in contact, and still more are removed from the country. I'd like to take this opportunity to remember all the people we visited in 2006 and to thank our committed team - visitors, members and committee - for all their hard work.

Kate Alexander
Coordinator, SDV

What did SDV do in 2006?

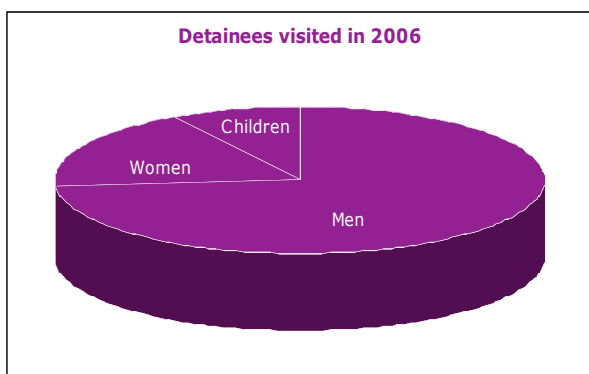
Visiting Detainees

SDV's main aim is to alleviate feelings of isolation and disempowerment for people detained in Dungavel by visiting and offering support. Because of the isolated location of Dungavel, SDV relies on members' own cars to travel to Dungavel in groups of up to five, twice a week.

"I have been locked up now for a year and I am not a criminal. I have no indication of what is to happen to me and when. Where are my human rights?"

Male detainee from Liberia

In 2006, SDV made 100 visits to the Centre, visiting a total of 212 detainees, compared to 146 in 2005. The average number of detainees seen on each visit was six but the number varied from two to 15.



As in previous years, the majority of the people we visited were single men (70 per cent). However, 2006 saw our visitors once again visiting children in Dungavel. In 2005 we received a number of referrals of families

with children but by the time our visitors arrived, the family had been moved. In 2006, by contrast, we saw a total of 18 children detained as part of their family, some for periods of several weeks.

In 2006, SDV visitors supported detainees from 45 different countries. The countries producing the highest number of detainees were Pakistan and Turkey (19 detainees). Eritrea produced the next largest number of detainees (18, compared to just one in 2005). Nigeria, Somalia and Afghanistan also produced 10 or more detainees during the year.



For the second year in a row the proportion of detainees we saw for just one visit rose, from 45 per cent in 2005 to 52 per cent in 2006. The rise this year is partly a result of seeing more families, most of whom we saw for just one visit.

However, it is also because detainees continue to be moved frequently around the detention estate, leading to the disruption of

both social and legal support networks. This short term contact with individual detainees adversely affects visitors' ability to build up relationships and provide support.

In a small number of cases we are able to build a strong relationship with individual detainees who remain in Dungavel for long periods of time. Four per cent of the people SDV supported in 2006 were visited 10 or more times and one person received 24 visits between May and December.

"I started visiting with SDV because the existence of asylum seekers was hidden from people like me. I've always thought that people who have faced completely different challenges from me are the most interesting. Since starting to visit detainees in Dungavel, I haven't been disappointed – all the people I have met are inspirational."

SDV Visitor

Providing Information and Support to Detainees

The practical support SDV visitors provide reflects the needs of detainees. Whilst being detained, people in Dungavel suffer from isolation from their families and other support networks, and from legal advisers.

In 2006 visitors:

- Provided 300 phone cards to detainees
- Contacted legal advisers and other organisations on behalf of detainees on 117 occasions.

- Provided magazines, information and papers to 60 detainees.
- Provided toiletries and clothes for detainees.
- Located and returned personal possessions to detainees
- Provided emergency money totalling £360 to 18 detainees who were being removed.

Developing Skills and Knowledge

In order to maintain a diverse base of visitors, SDV regularly recruits new members. In 2006 we concentrated on increasing the number of languages available to the organisation. Our membership now includes speakers of Farsi, Arabic and Mandarin. We have been aware for some time that Chinese detainees can be amongst the most isolated of all and the recruitment of a Mandarin speaker will enable us to provide support to them where necessary.

"Volunteering with SDV has increased my awareness of asylum issues and keeps me in touch with the reality of asylum seekers' situations and experiences, which are often not portrayed accurately in the media"

SDV Visitor

All new SDV visiting members attend an initial induction training session covering issues surrounding visiting Dungavel and are supported by more experienced visitors.

Support meetings are held every two months and during 2006 we invited speakers from a range of different organisations such as the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, Red Cross Tracing and Message Service, Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees and Positive Action in Housing to discuss their work with visitors. Support meetings also provide an opportunity to share information and concerns with other members.

In 2006 we held two day-long training sessions for visitors, one in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and the other with the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees. Both sessions gave

visitors the opportunity to update their knowledge of asylum and immigration legislation. They also provided an opportunity to refresh visitors' knowledge of SDV policy and procedures and to discuss the future of the organisation.

"This morning I was finally granted bail and want you to share my joy and to thank you for everything you did for me during my eight months detention in Dungavel."

Male detainee from Eritrea

What does SDV plan to do in 2007?

In 2007 SDV has been successful in securing additional funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation, which will allow us to increase our coordinator's hours from 10 to 14 per week. This will allow the organisation to:

- Continue to provide twice-weekly visits to Dungavel – the core of our work
- Continue to recruit new visitors, especially those with language skills and particular knowledge appropriate to the experience of detainees
- Provide skills and knowledge training to our members
- Develop a network of non-visiting members, who may offer other forms of support
- Raise awareness of SDV through our website and regular events.
- Develop our network of existing links with other organisations in particular areas, for example, in the development of a proposed Bail Circle.

Financial Accounts 1 January–31 December 2006

INCOME	2006	2005	EXPENDITURE	2006	2005
	£	£		£	£
Fundraising			SDV Expenditure		
Donations	843	1141 *	Staff Costs	6320	6314 *
Fundraising	2537	3424 *	Detainee items, phone cards & emergency payments	1569	1151 *
Gift Aid	947	634	Visit travel expenses	1595	1296 *
Total Fundraising	4327	5199	Training/meeting costs	747	305
Grants			Memberships / subscriptions	403	206
Lloyds TSB	6000	6649	Insurance	573	595
Allen Lane	5000	-	Fundraising Costs	816	861
Helen Tetlow	-	500	Publicity	470	245 *
Awards for All	-	2810	Other	135	5
Total Grants	11,000	9,959	Total Expenditure	12,628	10,978*
Bank Interest	106	70 *	Operating Surplus/Deficit	2,699	4,180
Total Income	15,327	15,158			

* indicates figures have been adjusted.

Treasurer's Report

In 2006 we maintained the previous year's income. 72 per cent of all our income was from grants and 22 per cent from our own fundraising activities. We have retained a three month reserve of funds to cover running costs.

SDV members and friends were again pro-active in raising funds through participation in a number of events throughout 2006, and we thank all those who donated, sponsored and contributed to SDV in 2006.

We were successful in attracting a further three years' grant funding from Lloyds TSB and thanks go to them for their continued support. A three year grant was also awarded by Allen Lane, which together with

the Lloyds TSB fund has secured the employment of our volunteer coordinator. The Scottish Refugee Council has continued to provide SDV with office space and supplies and we thank them for their ongoing support.

Special thanks also go to those who have provided support through regular monthly donations.

We will continue to develop a regular fundraising programme, which is essential if we are to increase the level and types of support we give detainees in 2007 and beyond

Michelle Opit
Treasurer, SDV

Thanks

SDV Coordinator

Kate Alexander

SDV Committee

Mary Kate Dickie

Moya Flynn (Chair)

Catriona Gibson
(Secretary)

Nicola Howard

Sophie Kavoukis

Michael O'Hagan (Vice
Chair)

Michelle Opit
(Treasurer)

Other SDV Members

Cathy Armstrong

Shamim Arshad

Harry Balch

David Bond

Edward Bonn

Ross Burnside

Victoria Broadley

John Collins

Martin Deane

Kate Denyer

Nikki Diab

Donald Dickie

Corrina Elder

Catrin Evans

Andrew Feely

Caroline Foster

Beth Fouracre

Carly Fraser

Cash Gormley

Joanne Grant

Claire Green

Elaine Hill

Alex Jackson

Karen Leaney

Cynthia Liang

Mary Luck

Anna Mack

Alistair Malloy

Siobhan McFadden

Dermot McGonigle

Andrew McInally

Kirsty McInnes

Nicola McLelland

Belle McMahan

Linda McMahan

Maura Isabella McNulty

Noel Milligan

Ahmed Moaref

Peter Moore

Jennifer Moyes

Charity Mutebwa

Judith Nelson

Annie Page

Frances Page

Jillian Page

Milena Pike

David Polfreman

Beth Scrimshaw

Nicola Simpson

Rachel Simpson

Alan Slater

Jessie Sohal-Burnside

Anne Strange

Alison Swinfen

Thom Walker

Conor Watson

Clare Whiteford

Louise Whyte

Johanna Young

SDV Funders

Allen Lane Foundation

Lloyds TSB Foundation
for Scotland

Scottish Refugee
Council

And

The many people who
donated, sponsored,
bought tickets to gigs
and set up monthly
standing orders in
2006.