

Scottish Detainee Visitors

Annual Report

2005

Chair's Report

In 2005, Scottish Detainee Visitors' members have supported some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in Scotland. Detainees continue to be held in Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre for indefinite periods, far from friends and family, with limited access to legal representation.

"Amnesty International found that many people were detained far away from their families or friends, in often remote locations and in grim, prison-like establishments.

Those interviewed told Amnesty International that while in detention they felt abandoned and demoralized."¹

SDV members work to support detainees both emotionally and practically, through friendship and regular contact with people from outside Dungavel.

In 2005, there were several changes in Dungavel. The centre has expanded and now holds up to 194 detainees. Fewer families are detained and those who are detained remain in Dungavel for shorter periods of time. Detainees are spending less time in Dungavel, being moved frequently to other Immigration Removal Centres across the UK. SDV tries to minimise the disruption caused by these moves by ensuring that detainees are visited by other visiting groups. However, these moves often impede a detainee's case for asylum, disrupting

contact with their lawyer and preventing them from maintaining links with support networks.

Changes in immigration law have meant that asylum and immigration detainees are more readily detained in prisons and recent changes in the law surrounding detention in prisons have led to more detainees from Northern Ireland either being held in, or passing through, Dungavel.

In July, during the G8 summit meeting, the Home Office moved all the detainees in Dungavel to other UK detention centres. This was a challenge for visiting members as they tried to maintain contact with detainees, some of whom did not return to Dungavel, but continued to be detained in other centres.

Within SDV, we welcomed a number of new visiting members and, shortly before our last AGM, Kate Alexander came in to post as SDV coordinator. To Kate and all of the SDV members for their committed work, primarily in visiting, but also with fundraising through sponsored activities, gigs and donations, thank you.

Catrina Gibson
Chair, SDV

¹ Amnesty International: EUR 45/019/2005
Detention of people who have sought
asylum

Coordinator's Report

2005 was my first year as SDV's Coordinator and my second as a member of the organisation. It has been a busy year, characterised by a political environment increasingly hostile to asylum seekers, refugees and other people with immigration issues. 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.

It has been a year of change and growth for SDV. We recruited and trained 20 new visitors, bringing our current visiting membership up to 33.

We held two highly successful fundraising concerts in St Helen's Hall, Langside and made the most of our members' ingenuity through other informal fundraising.

We further developed our links with other organisations offering support to detainees and asylum seekers, allowing us to better support detainees. These include Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees, Positive Action in Housing, Medical Foundation Scotland, National Coalition of Anti Deportation Campaigns and the visitor groups at the other Immigration Removal Centres around the UK.

We improved the information we provide to visitors and detainees by producing a booklet of information for detainees.

The coming year provides us with an opportunity to build on these successes, to evolve to meet the challenges of the external environment and to continue to provide the best support to detainees.

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 2005 and to thank our committed team - visitors, members and committee - for all their hard work.

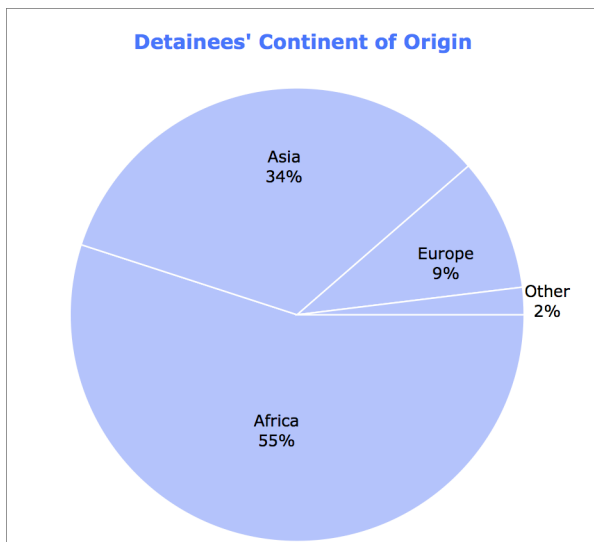
Kate Alexander
Coordinator, SDV

What did SDV do in 2005?

Visiting Detainees

SDV’s main aim is to alleviate feelings of isolation and disempowerment for people detained in Dungavel by visiting and offering support. SDV members have visited detainees in Dungavel twice a week since the centre opened, visiting a total of 146 people during 2005.

In 2005, SDV volunteers supported detainees from 39 different countries of whom 55% were from Africa, particularly Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo and 34% were from Asia, the majority from Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Of the detainees SDV volunteers visited, 84% were men and 16% were women. Throughout 2005 fewer families were detained in Dungavel and as a result, SDV supported fewer families. Only 5% of the detainees SDV visited in 2005 were detained

as part of a family, compared to almost a third in 2003 and a fifth in 2004.

In 2005, visitors visited individual detainees on fewer occasions and for shorter periods of time than in previous years. Reports from



detainees suggest that this is more likely to be the result of detainees frequently being moved around the detention estate rather than being detained for shorter periods. A large proportion (45%) of detainees received only one visit and only 5% received more than 10 visits. This short term contact with individual detainees adversely affects visitors’ ability to build up relationships and provide support.

"Thanks very much for your concern. It's really appreciated. Thank you for all your messages and assistance"

Detainee from Togo

Providing Information and Support to Detainees

The practical support SDV visitors provided reflects the needs of detainees. Whilst being detained, people in Dungavel suffer from physical isolation from their families and other support networks, and from legal advisers. In 2005, SDV visitors:

- Provided 247 phone-cards to detainees
- Contacted legal advisers and other organisations on behalf of detainees on 99 occasions.
- Provided toiletries and clothes for detainees.
- Located and returned personal possessions to detainees
- Provided emergency money totalling £240 to 12 detainees who were being removed.

Welcoming New Members

In order to maintain a diverse base of visitors, SDV regularly recruits new members. Twenty new members were recruited in 2005, bringing the total number of languages available to the organisation to 16. 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 six weeks, providing an opportunity to share information and concerns with other

members. SDV members are also offered the opportunity to attend further training events on topics such as the asylum process, mental health and visiting skills.

"I started visiting with SDV because I was interested in asylum seeker/refugee issues and wanted to do something to help their plight amidst these abhorrent government policies. Visiting can be quite surreal at times with experiences ranging from light hearted conversations to being quite emotional and challenging"

SDV Visitor

Raising Awareness

In 2005, SDV continued to develop our website, making more of the information we have about detention available to the public. This has been a valuable asset and has provided a contact point for the organisation, providing information on what we do and how people can support us.

In 2005, the SDV co-ordinator has produced a weekly bulletin for members, covering information on recent developments in asylum, immigration and detention and updates on developments within SDV.

What does SDV plan to do in 2006?

In order to provide appropriate information and support for detainees and SDV members, SDV will continue to develop links with other organisations supporting detainees, asylum seekers and refugees across Scotland and the rest of the UK. SDV will also maintain regular contact with Dungavel staff, in particular the Welfare Officer.

In addition to continuing the work we have carried out in 2005, following an

organisational development day with SDV members, key areas of work identified for 2006 are:

- Developing the visitor role
- Developing Friends of SDV

In working on these areas, SDV hope to encourage more people to be involved with the organisation and as such, in the lives of those detained in Dungavel.

Financial Accounts 1 January–31 December 2005

INCOME	2005	2004	EXPENDITURE	2005	2004
	£	£		£	£
Fundraising			SDV Expenditure		
Donations	1512	53	Staff Costs	6505	5846
SDV Music Nights	2150	-	Detainee items, phonecards & emergency payments	1146	2618*
Sponsored Events	905	1408	Visit travel expenses	1230	-
Gift Aid	634	-	Training/meeting costs	305	409
	5,201	1,461	Memberships / subscriptions	206	-
Grants			Insurance	595	566
Lloyds TSB	6649	6237	Fundraising Costs	861	-
Helen Tetlow	500	500	Other	5	188
Awards for All	2810	0	Total Expenditure	10,853	9,627
	9,959	6,737	Operating Surplus/Deficit	4,377	(1,377)
Bank Interest	70	52			
Total Income	15,230	8,250			

* Figure for 2004 combines expenditure on phonecards, items & emergency payments & visit travel expenses

Treasurer's Report

SDV implemented a sound fundraising strategy in 2005, almost doubling funds from sponsorship, events and charitable trusts. Through fundraising and a rigorous budgeting process, we have met our 2004 target of building a three month reserve of funds to cover running costs.

SDV members and friends were pro-active in raising funds through participation in a number of events held throughout 2005. Our volunteers and friends almost quadrupled funds raised through these activities and we thank all those who donated, sponsored and contributed to SDV in 2005.

Thanks go to the Scottish Refugee Council for their continued support in providing

office space, Lloyds TSB who have provided support towards staffing for a third year, the Helen Tetlow Memorial Fund for its grant to purchase phonecards for detainees and Awards for All, which assists us to provide training and support for our volunteers.

Special thanks go to those who have provided support through monthly donations. Fundraising will continue to be a key activity in 2006, and SDV aims to fundraise an average of £550 per month and to encourage support from those who are unable to visit detainees but who wish to contribute to our aims.

Michelle Opit
Treasurer, SDV