

Bulletin 27 February 2009

SDV News and events

SDV Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 21 April, 6pm

The next AGM will be held on the above date at the Boiler House at the Hidden Gardens. It's important that all SDV members attend.

A new committee will be elected at the AGM so think about putting yourself forward as a committee member.

After 3 years, Michelle will be standing down as Treasurer at the next AGM. This means this role will need to be filled. The person does not need to have massive financial expertise. He or she would simply need to be numerate and Michelle would provide a handover to go through the procedures. If anyone is interested in this role, or knows anyone who might be, please contact Kate or a member of the committee.

Free funds

Check out easyfundraising for lots of new ways to raise funds for SDV for free. If we all did this, we could raise quite a bit of money. Find out more about easyfundraising for SDV using the link below:

<http://www.sdv.org.uk/id15.htm>

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Chief Inspector of Prisons Report of an unannounced follow-up inspection of Dungavel in October 2008.

This report, published Tuesday 24 February, notes that although Dungavel is the best detention centre the inspectors have visited, there were, however, some issues that needed attention, some of which were raised at the time of the last inspection. Handcuffing of detainees outside the centre for court or medical appointments, despite alleged risk assessment, effectively remained routine. The approach of the UK Border Agency to assertions that detainees were unfit for detention was inadequate, and indeed centre staff needed more training to recognise signs of previous trauma. More assistance was needed to ensure that the centre could meet its responsibilities under diversity legislation.

Above all, the length of detention, and the changed population, appeared to have increased the number and seriousness of incidents and assaults. Though the centre was handling this well, it pointed to the increased insecurity and frustration of many of the detainees.

The full report is available on the information page of the SDV website:

<http://www.sdv.org.uk/id3.html>

Parliamentary questions about detention

Deaths in detention

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people died while being held in an immigration removal centre in each of the last five years, broken down by cause of death.

Mr. Woolas: In the last five years there have been a total of seven deaths of detainees held in the UK Border Agency removal centres; there have been no deaths in 2009 to date.

Number of detainees

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) men, (b) women and (c) children are held in each immigration removal centre.

Mr. Woolas: As at 12 February 2009, there were 1,984 men, 295 women and 36 children detained in the UK Border Agency removal centres. The following table provides a breakdown of these figures by centre.

The figures given are based on management information, this information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols.

Removal centre	Men	Women	Children
Campsfield House	212	0	0
Colnbrook	299	0	0
Dover	305	0	0
Dungavel House	159	9	1
Harmondsworth	250	0	0
Haslar	152	0	0
Lindholme	121	0	0
Oakington	365	0	0
Tinsley House	110	5	1
Yarl's Wood	11	281	34

Detention Centres: Families

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many families have members currently held in different immigration removal centres.

Mr. Woolas: We do not hold the data requested centrally and it could be provided only by checking and cross-referencing each case file individually, which would be at disproportionate cost.

However, it is the UK Border Agency's policy to keep family members together wherever possible.

Sarah Teather: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many families have one or more of their members currently held in an immigration removal centre.

Mr. Woolas: As at 10 February 2008 there were 44 families detained in the UK Border Agency detention estate.

News from Avid

The latest edition of In Touch is attached at the end of this bulletin

Other news and events

Charity Bike Rides and Walks for the Charity of Your Choice (that would be SDV!)

Just bike and Just Walk are events organised by Across the Divide who specialise in charity challenges. Find more details at:

<http://www.just-bike.co.uk/charity-bike-ride/>

Anti-Deportation Workshop Saturday 14 March 2009 - 1:30-3:00 pm

Facilitator: Pol Yates: polyates@phonecoop.coop
Hosted by: Umoja Inc Women's Group
Venue: YWCA Glasgow,
3 Newton Terrace,
Sauchiehall Street,
Charing Cross,
Glasgow G3 7PJ

The aims of the workshop are to discuss:

1. Reasons to set up an anti-deportation campaign
2. How to set up an anti-deportation campaign (basics)
3. Empowering of asylum seekers

Enquiries/further information: Pol Yates: polyates@phonecoop.coop

DEC Gaza appeal

After an 18 month blockade of Gaza and three weeks of heavy shelling the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is now completely overwhelming.

Thousands of people are struggling to survive with many having lost their homes and most down to their last supplies of food and only limited amounts of fresh drinking water.

Click on the link below to donate:

www.dec.org.uk/item/200

AVID Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees

Patrons: Belinda Allan, Colin Firth, Lord David Ramsbotham, GCB, CBE and John Scampion, CBE
Registered Charity No. 1063784

in touch

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AVID contact details:

Address: PO Box 1496, Oxford OX4 9DY

AVID Chair (Sally Tarshish)

Tel: 01865 250690

st@aviddetention.org.uk

Vice Chair (Liz Cox)

Tel: 01483 417649

ec@aviddetention.org.uk

These 'aviddetention' addresses are automatically rerouted to the personal email addresses, inscapedgardens@btinternet.com and e.l.cox@btinternet.com. These continue to remain active as well.

News from AVID

AVID Trustees are delighted to announce that they have been successful in a bid for funding that will enable AVID to recruit a new full time Director. The new funding, plus the funding earmarked for a short term project worker to work with foreign nationals held post sentence in mainstream prisons has been put together and will, we hope, attract a strong candidate. Here is the text of the advertisement that has gone out to the press this week.

Director

Up to £35,000 depending on experience

AVID is looking for a new Director to lead our small, dynamic national charity with a well established reputation in the immigration field.

We believe that people held in administrative detention under Immigration Acts – including those held in Immigration Removal Centres, Holding Centres and main stream prisons - are entitled to the same basic human rights that citizens enjoy. We aim to achieve this through voicing the concerns of detainees,

our member groups and the nationwide network of visitors.

You will help make this possible by taking the lead in developing our network of members as well as advocating for changes in immigration detention policy and practice, including a reduction in the use of immigration detention. This will involve training and support for volunteer visitor groups and working with partner organisations to influence statutory bodies. You will require experience of motivating volunteers, an understanding of immigration law and policy, a proven ability to influence Government policy and practice and a knowledge and commitment to human rights and equal opportunities. Excellent communication, organisational and administration skills will also be key.

Applications must be in by 19th March with interviews on 26th March. The job will be full time for three years subject to funding and be based in London/South East.

Please pass this information on to anyone who might be interested. Sally can provide more details (st@aviddetention.org.uk) and the application forms are available to download from the website, www.aviddetention.org.uk

News from the Groups

GDWG have recruited a full time Detainee Support Worker for Brook House, the new high security IRC at Gatwick. Her name is Louise Peim.

Nic and others from GDWG have had the chance to look round Brook House. Their overall impression was that it was a fairly foreboding facility, looking pretty much identical to a prison. The opening date (to be confirmed) is the middle of March.

LDSG have now set up a DETAINED LIVES WEBSITE at www.detainedlives.org following the publication of the 'Detained Lives' report in January. The full report can be downloaded from the website. On Sunday 28th February LDSG will be taking part in the Convention on Modern Liberty (www.modernliberty.net)

Still Human, Still Here

www.stillhuman.org.uk

Still Human, Still Here is campaigning to end the destitution of refused asylum seekers and is asking for support. Check out the website if you would like to get involved. The campaign reports that The Joint Committee on Human Rights is reviewing the Health Bill and its compatibility with the UK's human rights obligations, including the duty in the NHS Constitution on healthcare staff not to discriminate and to adhere to equality and human rights legislation

Mackenzie Friend Training 2009

There will be two Mackenzie training sessions this year, one in London as usual and one, by general request, in Manchester.

16 May 09 - Manchester

4 July 09 - Ebury St, London

Contact Lillian by email on Admin@z2korg for more details and to register for a place.

Judicial Review.

From 30 January the UKBA changed its policy. It will no longer automatically suspend removal directions when a Judicial Review is lodged. In detained cases, where a further Judicial Review is lodged within 3 months of a judge refusing permission for a JR, "on the same or virtually identical" grounds to those raised before, or on grounds "that could reasonably have been raised previously at the judicial review", removal will not automatically be suspended. The representative will need to obtain an injunction to prevent removal taking place.

Ongoing Timetable for Simplification.

The draft Immigration Simplification Bill is now expected to be available in October. There may be consultations on asylum support and regulation of immigration advice earlier in the year. This may lead to a Bill in the first session following an election.

On-line Medical Justice handbook for visiting independent doctors (updated)

<http://www.medicaljustice.org.uk/content/view/325/51/>

This handbook has been compiled by Dr Jonathan Fluxman, Dr Emily Spry, and Dr Fred Martineau, with contributions from a number of Medical Justice volunteer doctors

experienced at visiting patients in detention and writing Medico-Legal Reports.

UKBA's Code of Practice for keeping children safe from harm (in force from January 09)

Judith Dennis, Unaccompanied Children's Policy Adviser for the Refugee Council commented on the above 'new' policy that was mentioned in last month's 'In Touch'

"We have concerns about gaps in the code of practice: firstly, children whose age is disputed are not mentioned. We believe this is the most serious threat to keeping children safe from harm in the immigration system at the moment, because UKBA treats many children as adults because they don't believe their age. We urge the government to look again at this as a matter of urgency. Secondly, it does not change government policy of detaining children. This should never happen, under any circumstances. And thirdly, children who are removed from the UK to so-called 'safe' third countries are also left out of the code of practice - returning children to countries where there is no guarantee that they will be cared for appropriately has serious safety implications for the children who are removed.

Rape and sexual violence among refugee women in the UK.

The Refugee Council has just launched (Feb 09) two reports containing new evidence of rape and sexual violence among refugee women in the UK. These can be downloaded from the website http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/position/2009/vulnerable_women/

1. [Vulnerable women - literature review](#)
Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women Affected by Rape or Sexual Violence: a Literature Review [February 2009]
2. [Vulnerable women - good practice guide](#)
The Vulnerable Women's Project Good Practice Guide: Assisting Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women affected by Rape or Sexual Violence [February 2009]

Liz Cox
24.2.09