

Bulletin 27 March 2009

SDV News and events

A job you might be interested in – Coordinator of SDV

SDV is recruiting for a new coordinator. Details of the position are on the website. Please let anyone you think might be interested know about the job.

<http://www.sdv.org.uk/id17.html>

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.

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

Immigration, asylum and detention news

Asylum seekers in developed countries continue to increase: UNHCR

The United States continued to be the main country of destination for asylum seekers of all nationalities in 2008, with an estimated 49,000 new asylum claims, accounting for 13 percent of all applications in industrialized countries.

After the United States, the main countries of destination for asylum seekers in 2008 were Canada (36,900), France (35,200), Italy (31,200) and Britain (30,500).

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-03/25/content_11066811.htm

News from AVID

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

Other news and events

A job you might be interested in: NCADC Nationally-based Campaign Co-ordinator Salary: £26,000pa initially

A worker is required by the NCADC to help the organisation achieve its aims of assisting people facing removal/deportation. The successful candidate will be based at their home so location is not important, there will be some travelling around the country. He or she will undergo enhanced CRB checks and ideally have relevant experience in most or all of the following areas:

- Campaigning against deportation
- Delivering training
- Voluntary sector/community group activities;
- Promoting and facilitating co-operation and the exchange of information between campaigning groups
- Research and communication on areas relevant to immigration, migration and deportation

Ideally, candidates should be able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the issues involved, and a passion to help our organisation move towards its goals.

Further information about us and our objectives, together with details of this role and information on how to apply are on our website:

<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/Newszine104/Advert.html>

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/>

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:

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Vice Chair (Liz Cox)

Tel: 01483 417649

ec@aviddetention.org.uk

News from AVID

No date has yet been set for the AGM but it will be in early summer. We hope to have the new AVID Director/Coordinator in post by then.

Coordinators Conference

If you have not already let Liz Cox know if you are coming to the Conference on 3rd and 4th June in Birmingham, could you please do so by the end of the month as we need to confirm places at the Conference Centre.

News from the Groups

Haslar and **GDWG** both have recently appointed members of staff and they have written of their initial experiences in their new jobs.

Louise Peim, new Brook House Project Worker.

'I began working for Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) in January this year. I came from a job working with young unaccompanied minors who either had refugee status or were seeking asylum in the UK. I was a Personal Adviser for Pathways to Independence, a service provider based in Brighton from 2005-2007.

Whilst I had some knowledge of immigration detention in the UK, I was keen to find out more. Having researched GDWG & the detention system as a whole, I was convinced

that I wanted to work in a support role for vulnerable people in detention.

Since working with GDWG, I have learnt a lot about the detention system & the many flaws & inconsistencies that comprise the system as a whole, but particularly about the arbitrary use of detention.

I have been troubled & saddened whilst visiting people held at Tinsley House, particularly women & children. But there have been some really positive experiences too and I have been told some incredible stories of people's experiences. I am extremely heartened by the commitment & time given by people in voluntary roles & have particularly enjoyed meeting a wide range of people through this work. Brook House will hold a further 430 male detainees – and should be open by the time you read this!



Anne Dickinson, new Coordinator at Haslar

'I have been asked to introduce myself and give some of my first impressions. So, here goes. I have worked mostly in overseas aid, which has given me personal experience of the conditions our clients come from. Through backpacking and exploring I've ended up being a migrant worker in foreign kitchens and fields and was almost deported from Australia for working on a tourist visa. I was given a choice – deportation in handcuffs and a criminal record or leave voluntarily. I took the latter option. I was much more fortunate than many of our clients. I had nothing to fear in leaving. I've also seen the inside of refugee camps and the reality of poverty and conflict.

Initially, I was not particularly taken aback by Haslar having seen and heard far worse. I have long ago shed any illusions about so-

called British "fair-play". Yet, what did shock me was meeting people in Haslar who have been in the UK since they were children or even born here and the consequent tearing apart of families. Recently, I had a tour of Haslar beyond the visiting room. This really rammed things home. The gates, the fences, the barbed wire and the very limited movement reminded me of being in Palestine/Israel. I left with a feeling of restraint, constraint and a very heavy heart'.

I am sure that Haslar as well as AVID will have been sorry to see **Michael Woolley** step down as Coordinator at Haslar. He was an AVID Trustee, the Secretary of Avid for a period as well AVID's first web master. We hope he enjoys his new position as Deputy Mayor of Chichester.

Scottish Detainee Visitors

Kate Alexander will be leaving the SDV in the near future.

Zimbabwe Cases

Case Resolution Directorate say that they are treating Zimbabwe cases as a priority. Cases are being reviewed in the light of the decision in the case of *RN*. They may have up to 10,000 cases awaiting decision. The new guidance is on the UKBA website

Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill

This was published and received its First Reading on 14 January and Second Reading on 11th February. Much of it concerns Customs functions, citizenship and naturalisation. Part 3 may provide the opportunity for some improvement on the automatic deportation powers introduced in the 2007 Act. Part 4 includes provisions on Judicial Review.

Let them Work Campaign

The Refugee Council is urging everyone who is concerned about refused asylum seekers and destitution to contact their MP and urge them to sign up to the campaign pledge. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/campaigning/let-themwork/write_to_your_mp

Does Every Child matter; Children Seeking Asylum in Britain by Refugee and Migrant Justice (formerly Refugee Legal Centre) March 2009

This paper challenges the effectiveness of the UK Border Agency's code of Practice for the Treatment of Children brought in this January

2009. It claims to be the first comprehensive review since the new Code was introduced and highlights the culture of disbelief, disputed age assessments and most importantly the failure of UKBA to produce statistics on the numbers of children detained, on the outcome of age disputes and the number of appeals. The government has promised new guidance in the current Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill but what is required is also a commitment to implement the guidance. The full document can be read at

http://refugee_migrant_justice.org.uk

Medical Justice

' Persecution Suffered by Women'

Monday 6th April 2009 - 7pm

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
Thornhaugh Street
Russell Square
London, WC1H 0XG.

Kindly hosted by the SOAS Detainee Support Group.

BID

BID have updated their briefing papers on - children and immigration detention - access to bail - the detained fast track.

All three briefings provide summarised information on research and policy developments and are available from BID's website www.biduk.org and can be downloaded by anyone who is interested.

Medical Health in Detention

The Home office cannot say how many detainees were mentally ill when detained or how many have become mentally ill while in detention, because "there is no single definition of mental illness and the term can cover mild mental disorders such as anxiety and depression and more serious psychotic disorders." (answer to Lord Hylton's PQ)

But they can say that there were 340 individuals on Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork (i.e. some form of self-harm / suicide watch) and 38 incidents of "Self-Harm requiring medical treatment" during Q4 of 2008. (Home Office Statistics)
Liz Cox
24.3.09