

## 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

92 (May 2011)

#### **AVID:**

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#### News from AVID

#### Updated AVID Handbook for Visitors, 2011

A completely revised and updated Handbook for Visitors will be available from the 28<sup>th</sup> June. The new edition includes updated law and policy advice as well as useful information for all visitors, whether visiting for the first time or those with more experience. For more information on how to access a copy, contact the office directly.

#### **AGM and launch of the 2011 Visitors Handbook:**

**28<sup>th</sup> June, Doughty Street Chambers**  
54 Doughty Street, London, WC1N 2LS

This year's AGM will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> June, at 6.30pm in Doughty Street Chambers in London. As well as launching the new handbook, the AGM will provide a chance to meet some potential new trustees and other members. As always, members are encouraged to attend as this is a good opportunity to hear more about AVID and to input into our work as a membership network.

#### Update on the Detention Estate

**IRC Morton Hall** opened on 16<sup>th</sup> May. It is located near Newark in Lincolnshire. It will hold 392 single male detainees.

AVID visited the facility before it opened. The site is extremely isolated, but can be accessed via Swinderby or Newark stations. Visitors arriving at Newark can access a free taxi service to and from the IRC, by booking this 24 hours in advance via the visitors centre. Detainees are arriving in groups of 6-10 as wing space becomes available - some of the wings are still being refurbished. As of last week there were 35 detainees. The IRC is running a detention duty advice surgeries scheme on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The full address, visiting hours and other information is available on the AVID website - follow the menu link: '*what is immigration detention*'.

**New escorting contract:** Reliance PLC have commenced their new contract with UKBA to deliver all escort services - including overseas escorts. The company are using new vehicles, all with CCTV installed. The vehicles no longer use 'metal cages' but have installed Perspex screens.

**Mitie Care and Custody** will take over the management of **Campsfield IRC** on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month. They have never managed an IRC before.

#### Tinsley House Telephone Pilot

Many of us were concerned by news from GDWG that a telephone pilot was underway in Tinsley House, which involves detainees having to surrender their own mobiles, and given a centre specific mobile tied to a particular provider (MICA, a subsidiary of GCC Ltd).

AVID and GDWG met with representatives of G4S and UKBA at Tinsley House recently to discuss the

pilot as part of an evaluation of the scheme, which commenced in February. G4S and UKBA have emphasised that, at this time, the pilot is a G4S scheme only and it is not the intention to roll this out any further at this stage. The 'evaluation' will consider detainees' feedback, commercial implications, and will include the letters and concerns raised by AVID, GDWG and the human rights organisation Liberty.

We have put forward a range of concerns under the following main themes:

- **COST** that the tariffs tied to the MICA/GCC system are higher than those used by detainees at the moment (many detainees use e.g. Lyca or Lebara systems). This will make it more difficult for vulnerable detainees to make calls to the outside world, including solicitors or visitors.
- **REMOVAL OF CHOICE:** linking the system to a particular provider removes detainees choice and thus limits their ability to access cheaper tariffs or particular packages that suit their needs
- **CENTRALISED CONTROL:** part of the rationale given for the new scheme is that it enables the IRC to shut down communications centrally in the event of a disturbance or riot for security/safety. The human rights organisation Liberty is concerned about whether this is lawful.

### News from Member Groups

#### **Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group visit Pease Pottage pre-departure accommodation**

*First Impressions  
by Nic Eadie (Director)*

"GDWG staff were shown around the new family pre-departure accommodation at Pease Pottage recently, by the UKBA Project Manager. We drove up the drive, through the gates, and into what is essentially a building site. The shell of the previous buildings are all there, but the builders were in the process of completely gutting them and renovating the whole site. We were told that there will be 11 flats, 2 of which are slightly AVID Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees | In Touch 92  
[www.aviddetention.org.uk](http://www.aviddetention.org.uk)

separate from the main block and can be used for any disruptive families. The gardens were fairly extensive, with a large lawn area and many tall trees.

We were shown the plans for the site, which will have a library, play rooms, gym, a shop, kitchens and servery, and a number of meeting rooms for Barnado's and UKBA to meet those held there. Each flat will have its own lounge and kitchen area, and families will either be able to cook their own meals with food taken from the main kitchens, or eat meals prepared for them. UKBA assured me that security on-site would be relatively discreet, and the perimeter fence would not be altered from what is currently there, i.e. low compared with IRCs, and with no barbed wire. The site security will be managed by G4S as an extension of their Tinsley/Brook House contract.

We were invited to come back at a later, as yet unspecified, date to see the centre once it has been finished. GDWG are exploring ways in which we may be able to visit and provide support to families held there, and have a meeting with Barnado's in June to discuss this."

#### **Detention Action launch report on the Detained Fast Track**

Detention Action (formerly London Detainee Support Group) launched their latest report: 'Fast Track to Despair'. The report looks at the experiences of asylum seekers who are put on the UKBA detained fast track process. The report highlights that the system is dysfunctional, ineffective and can lead to a deprivation of liberty for weeks or months. You can access the report [here](#).

#### **Scottish Detainee Visitors AGM**

Tuesday 31st May, 6.30pm  
Quaker Meeting House,  
38 Elmbank Crescent,  
Glasgow  
G2 4PS

### HMIP report: Lindholme IRC

HMIP has produced its latest report on IRC Lindholme, near Doncaster. This IRC is run by the Prison Service and has come under severe criticism over many years for its 'prison like' conditions, as it operates in the shadow of the neighbouring prison. This report highlights that 'little substantive change' has been made. Key findings include:

- weaknesses in the arrangements to identify those who had been subject to torture
- there was little bullying, but violence reduction systems remained weak and levels of night-time supervision were still too low
- telephone translation remained under used
- the general quality of accommodation remained poor, with improvements largely on hold pending a decision on expansion plans for the IRC
- there had been little improvement in the preparation of detainees for release or removal
- there was still inadequate welfare officer provision and detainees still had no access to the internet or email.
- Diversity remained underdeveloped and faith services had suffered financial cutbacks

### Latest quarterly immigration statistics released

UKBA has published its latest migration statistics for the first quarter of 2011 (January- March). Key figures include:

- As at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2655 people were detained solely under immigration act powers
- 58% had claimed asylum at some point (asylum detainees)- 1,530 people
- 83% were held for less than 6 months (2215 people)
- 8% were held for between 6 months and one year (210 people)
- 9% were held for over a year (225 people)
- 6,875 people left detention in the period. 37% of detainees were released back into the community

You can access the full tables and summaries [here](#).

### BID and the Children's Society release new report on the detention of children

BID and TCS, partners in the Outcry Campaign to end child detention, have published a new report: '*Last Resort or First Resort? Immigration Detention of Children in the UK*'

The report is based on detailed research into the cases of 82 families with 143 children who were detained during 2009, and uses data from 82 clients' case files, interviews with 30 family members and 27 legal representatives, and full Home Office files for 10 families. [Download the report and executive summary here.](#)

### New research from The Children's Society

The Children's Society has also produced new research that stresses the crucial need to learn lessons from the past and apply these to the new detention arrangements in the pre-departure accommodation.

*'What have I done? The experiences of children and families in UK immigration detention'* examines the experiences of 32 families detained before the government's commitment to end child detention.

You can access the report [here](#).

## International Detention Coalition: First International Handbook on alternatives to detention

The International Detention Coalition has produced a handbook on alternatives to detention. The handbook identifies good practice from all over the world. It also introduces a model alternative: the 5 steps Community Assessment and Placement model.

The handbook is based on two years of research. The 5 steps Community Assessment and Placement model outlines mechanisms and examples from around the world that prevent unnecessary detention, enforce immigration law through mechanisms that do not rely heavily on detention and effectively support individuals in the community.

Alongside the handbook, the IDC has produced a range of resources for NGOs interested in advocacy. You can access the full range of resources, the handbook, and information on the model by visiting:

<http://idcoalition.org/cap/>

### Latest statistics on self harm in detention

*With thanks to Free Movement*

The latest statistics on self harm have been released via a Freedom of Information request submitted by 'Freemovement'. The figures are for between January and March 2011.

*Number of incidents of Self-Harm requiring medical attention:*

	JAN	FEB	MAR
Brook House	2	4	3
Campsfield	1	1	0
Colnbrook	1	2	0
Dover	8	6	4
Dungavel	0	0	0
Harmondsworth	0	13	1
Haslar	0	0	1
Lindholme	1	0	0
Tinsley	0	2	2
Yarl's Wood	0	0	0
Subtotal			52

*Number of individuals on ACDT - those that are being managed as having a risk of self harm:*

	JAN	FEB	MAR
Brook House	20	20	26
Campsfield	16	11	11
Colnbrook	25	20	26
Dover	8	9	4
Dungavel	8	8	14
Harmondsworth	24	30	31
Haslar	0	2	3
Lindholme	1	2	0
Tinsley	1	9	10
Yarl's Wood	12	23	29
Subtotal			403

## Parliamentary Questions

### Immigration Detention

*(Hansard: HL, 10 May 2011, cWA184)*

**Earl of Sandwich** asked how many individuals are currently held in immigration detention; from which countries they arrived; and what was (a) the cost, and (b) the average length of detention, for each of the past three years for which figures are available.

**Earl Attlee:** *"The requested items of information are unavailable. However the latest published figures show that as at 31 December 2010 2,525 people were detained in immigration removal centres solely under Immigration Act powers. It is not possible to say which countries they arrived from. The average direct cost of holding someone in an immigration removal centre for 2010-11 was **£105 per day**. Rather than calculate the average statistic for time spent in detention, the Home Office presents the data as ranges because this is a more informative overview and is not subject to distortions by a small number of cases with large values. The table below shows the length of detention of persons detained solely under Immigration Act powers at immigration removal centres as at the last snapshot date in each of the past three years.*

**Persons in detention in the United Kingdom solely under Immigration Act powers, by length of detention** <sup>(1)(2)</sup>

Length of detention <sup>(3)(4)</sup>	As at 27 December 2008	As at 31 December 2009	As at 31 December 2010
7 days or less	205	180	215
8 to 14 days	195	160	185
15 to 28 days	270	395	370
29 days to less than 2 months	475	510	555
2 months to less than 3 months	245	300	260
3 months to less than 4 months	165	230	200
4 months to less than 6 months	240	280	220
6 months to less than 1 year	295	325	265
1 year or more	150	210	255
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,250</b>	<b>2,595</b>	<b>2,525</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Figures rounded to the nearest 5 (- = 0, = 1 or 2), may not sum to the totals shown because of independent rounding and exclude persons detained in police cells, Prison Service establishments and those detained under both criminal and immigration powers and their dependants.

<sup>(2)</sup> Figures include dependants.

<sup>(3)</sup> Relates to most recent period of sole detention. The period of detention starts when a person first enters the UK Border Agency estate. If the person is then moved from a removal centre to a police cell or Prison Service establishment. This period of stay will be included if the detention is solely under Immigration Act powers.

<sup>(4)</sup> 2 months is defined as 61 days; 4 months is defined as 122 days; 6 months is defined as 182 days.

<sup>(M)</sup> Management information.

**Immigration Detainees**

(Hansard: HL, 19 May 2011, cWA362)

Baroness Stern asked what progress has been made on the proposed independent oversight of

the removal of detainees from the United Kingdom on chartered flights.

**The response from the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Browning):**

*The UKBA is committed to ensuring that returns from the UK comply with European obligations. To fulfil the requirement for forced return monitoring on all joint EU charter flights, the UK Border Agency has undertaken to work in partnership with the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), an independent voluntary organisation. The IMB has already carried out monitoring of removals up to and including the point of boarding an aircraft and has an established presence in immigration removal centres. The IMB conducted monitoring on board a joint EU charter flight on 2 March, observing the complete return process from pre-departure to arrival and reception in the country of return. UK Border Agency officials are working closely with the IMB to develop a working proposal around future monitoring.*

**Law and Policy**

**UKBA failing to collect data on LGBT asylum claims, despite court ruling**

An article in *The Guardian* this month revealed that the UKBA is not collecting data on the number of people who apply for asylum and are subsequently refused on the basis of their sexual orientation. The government cannot give numbers of gay and lesbian asylum seekers who are deported to countries where they may face persecution. This is despite a court ruling that the UK should not deport LGBT asylum seekers to places where they face persecution on the basis of their sexuality. There is therefore no way of finding out if this ruling is being followed.

According to *The Guardian*, a UKBA spokesperson gave the following response:

*"The UK Border Agency does not currently record separate statistics on the grounds on which individuals claim asylum. We are, however, reviewing how data on sexual orientation cases can be recorded more effectively and whether any resulting data can be published."*

## Events

### **Justice for All Public Rally Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 12pm, outside Supreme Court, Parliament Square, London**

The government plans to cut legal aid and advice to hundreds and thousands of vulnerable people. To help stand up for justice, attend this event and hear from a range of inspiring speakers from across the community and voluntary sector and politicians.

There are also more ideas for taking action for justice coming soon at <http://www.justice-for-all.org.uk/Take-part>

### **Migrant Voice and Churches Refugee Network Annual Conference, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

This event will take place at St James Piccadilly, 197 Piccadilly, London W1J 9LL, at 10.30am. The conference is being held jointly by these two organizations and is a great opportunity to share work and meet others similarly concerns with the realities of asylum seekers' and refugees' lives in the UK today. The theme for this year is **human rights** with its historical roots in theology and philosophy, and its current political practice. The event will include workshops from leading experts in the field on asylum practices and a photo exhibition by Migrant Voice.

For more info contact Anne Stoltenberg at [anne@migrantvoice.org](mailto:anne@migrantvoice.org)

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