

**scottishdetaineevisitors**

**Annual Report  
&  
Review of 2016**



## Chair's report

I joined SDV's management committee as Chair in August 2016. Having spent six years as a visitor, I had a good understanding of the organisation and was keen to be involved in a different way.

Less than a month into my new role the UK Government announced that Dungavel would close and be replaced by a short term holding facility (STHF) at Glasgow airport. The impact of this announcement is covered in this report.

It was clear that this announcement would not mean the end of detention in Scotland. People would still be detained, either at a new STHF or at one of the detention centres in England. Although we would be delighted not to have to exist, we knew that there would still be a role for SDV.

The uncertainty over the closure of Dungavel made it challenging for us to plan ahead and seek funding for our work. Despite this it has been an active year.

We continued to support people detained in Dungavel through our twice-weekly visits and monthly drop-in. The regularity of visits is one of our strengths. People detained in Dungavel know that we will be there every Monday and Thursday evening without fail.

Providing such a service means we have to regularly recruit volunteer visitors. In 2016 we welcomed nearly 30 new visitors. We were also lucky enough to retain many experienced visitors to help ease newer visitors into their roles.

In addition, we continued to provide new and additional volunteering roles. We plan to expand the voluntary roles in the future. We are keen to involve people from outside of Glasgow in our work. People all over Scotland are at risk of detention. Similarly, people all over Scotland are concerned about this risk, and we'd like to harness that interest.

In February 2016, we began our Life After Detention (LAD) project. The UK Government says that detention facilitates removal from the country but the majority of people leaving detention are released back into the community, having been traumatised by detention and often to a place they have not lived in before. LAD provides peer support, casework and creative activities for people in these circumstances.

Throughout the year, we also increased our awareness raising and policy work, much of it focussed on the future of Dungavel. We now know that Dungavel will stay open for the foreseeable future and our work to support people affected by detention and advocate for change in the system will continue.

I'd like to end by thanking the rest of the committee, our staff and volunteers for all their hard work. Most importantly, I'd like to take this opportunity to remember all the people we visited in Dungavel in 2016, all the people we worked with in LAD and the thousands of people whose lives were affected by immigration detention in 2016.

Katie, Hawkins

Chair, SDV

## Director's report

2016 was an interesting year for SDV. We expanded our policy, advocacy and awareness raising work, began our Life After Detention project, increased the volunteering roles we offer, recruited new volunteers and continued to support people in Dungavel through twice weekly visits and our monthly drop in. You can read about all these activities later in this report.

But in September 2016, we had the shock announcement from the Home Office that Dungavel was to close 'towards the end of 2017' and a new short term holding facility built at Glasgow airport. Some people might have expected SDV to be delighted at the prospective closure of Dungavel, but it was always clear that people living in our communities in Scotland would remain at risk of being detained indefinitely. The only question was where it would take place.

In November, the decision of Renfrewshire Council to refuse the Home Office's planning application for the new centre, did not end this uncertainty. The Home Office had a right of appeal and spent some time 'considering its position'. Ministerial statements seemed to suggest that other sites were being considered. It wasn't until February 2017 that we learned the plans for a new facility had been abandoned and that Dungavel would remain open.

This whole episode revealed a lot. Most positively, it showed that there is a great deal of opposition to immigration detention in Scotland. We were among many others arguing that the opening of this facility would result in worse outcomes for people at risk of detention in Scotland.

On the other hand, it revealed that the UK Government remains committed to the use of indefinite immigration detention. This is a commitment that is becoming ever harder to sustain. In 2015, the Detention Inquiry by UK parliamentarians concluded that the system was 'expensive, ineffective and unjust'. It called for a 28 day time limit on detention and a move to community based alternatives.

Since then, calls for reform have grown louder. The Shaw Review of 2016 echoed many of the inquiry's findings and called for reforms that would drastically reduce the use of detention. Organisations as diverse as HM Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland, Liberty and HM Inspectorate of Prisons have recognised the harm of indefinite detention and called for a time limit. At the same time, evidence is increasing that community based alternatives work: they're cheaper, more effective and more humane.

As we observed in our briefing paper on the planned closure of Dungavel, Scotland, with its devolved parliament, separate legal system and more progressive attitude to immigration would be the ideal place to pilot new approaches to working with people with immigration issues in the community. Making that case will be an important part of our work in the future and I look forward to working with Shirley, the management committee, volunteers and our Life After Detention Group to continue to make it.

Kate Alexander  
Director, SDV

## SDV's activities in 2016

### Supporting people in Dungavel

SDV supports people in Dungavel through our twice weekly visits and our monthly drop-in service. In 2016, we saw a total of 179 people. This was a smaller number than we usually see and reflects the fact that the population at Dungavel was very low throughout the whole year. For example, according to UK Government figures, at the end of March 2016, there were just 91 people in Dungavel, compared to 216 at the end of March 2015.

Evening visits take place every Monday and Thursday with up to five visitors driving together to Dungavel, an hour south of Glasgow. Each visit lasts for between an hour and an hour and a half and we see an average of seven people at each visit, but the average masks wide variations. In 2016, visitors saw between two and 14 people at visits so they have to be prepared for anything.

### Country of origin of people visited (top 10 countries)

	No	%
India	17	11%
Iran	14	9%
Nigeria	14	9%
Pakistan	13	9%
Iraq	8	5%
Bangladesh	6	4%
Syria	6	4%
Vietnam	6	4%
Egypt	5	3%
Zimbabwe	5	3%

In 2016, we visited people from 37 different countries. The highest numbers came from India, Iran and Nigeria but, as was the case in 2015, we saw people from all over the world, including several European countries.

We offer a range of practical support at visits including phone cards, emergency money for people we know are being moved from Dungavel and our information booklet. We also liaise with lawyers and other organisations on behalf of the people we visit. But equally important is the friendship and solidarity our visits offer. Here's what people in detention have told us a visit means to them:

*"It's good to talk to the visitors, especially when I am so far away from my family."*

*"It gave me the chance to share things that worried me, and to cry if I needed to."*

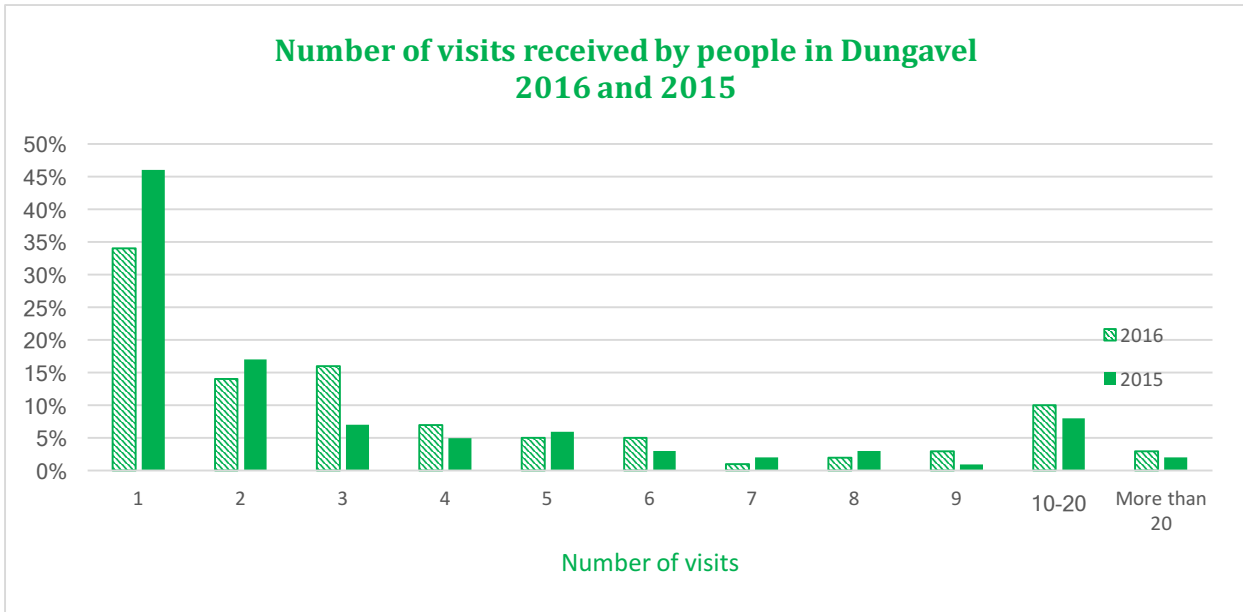
*"When I hear my name called – to receive a visitor – it's a cause for celebration!"*

*"I and my people enjoyed it as we chatted and danced in the visit room."*

*"This organisation is amazing. I can't remember the last time I was happy like that."*

In 2016, 48 per cent of the people we saw at evening visits in Dungavel were seen just once or twice, compared to 63 per cent in 2015. By contrast, 13 per cent of the people we saw were visited 10 or more times, compared to 10 per cent in 2015 (see chart).

Our drop-in service takes place monthly and is run by staff, supported by one or two volunteers. It provides an opportunity for us to meet people who have not been referred to us for visits. People can just drop in to speak to us. As it takes place in the visits room at Dungavel, before social visits and at the same time as legal visits, it also gives us the



opportunity to approach people while they wait to see their lawyers, and explain who we are and what we do. This kind of direct contact was the most common way people found out about the drop in. However, staff at Dungavel have also been very helpful in encouraging people to come to the drop in, with a quarter of the people we saw finding out about us from staff.

The drop-in is successful in introducing us to people very soon after they have been detained: in 2016, a quarter of the people we saw there had been in Dungavel for less than a week. Meeting people so soon after their detention enables us to ensure they understand that the legal system in Scotland is different from England, to ensure they have a solicitor and to refer them to other organisations that may be able to assist them. We can also refer them for evening visits. In 2016, the drop-in introduced us to 47 people who we would not have seen otherwise, and 20 of them went on to receive ongoing support at evening visits.

At our December drop in, staff at Dungavel agreed to provide us with a small buffet to share with the people who came to see us. Visitors are not allowed to bring food into the

visits room, so it was a pleasure to be able to do something as human as sharing a meal with people.

### Working with people after detention

In 2016, we began our Life After Detention project (LAD). Managed by our coordinator, Shirley, it grew from a participatory action research project we undertook in 2015, and from our understanding that, while the ongoing threat of detention looms large in the mind of anyone *at risk of detention* it is even more pertinent and feared by those who have already experienced it.

The solidarity and community of the LAD group is, therefore, an increasingly important part of our work. The group has a stable core of 10 people, who welcome new comers and occasional attenders – there can be up to 18 people at its regular Tuesday evening meeting.

*“I know people at LAD have suffered the same things as me - they can feel my pain and I can feel theirs. Our past is the same, and we can work on our futures together, as we support each other.”*

Since LAD started in February 2016 we have worked with 35 people (including eight women) of 13 nationalities - people from: Kurdistan, Iran, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Albania, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, Trinidad, Gambia, China and Albania.

The group decides together how the group should operate, and this is revised as new people arrive, or new ideas are generated.

The group is seen as:

- a safe space to meet others who have had similar experiences
- a place of solidarity and peer support
- a place to get help with referrals to other organisations
- enabling casework support
- providing opportunities for creativity – writing, photography, filmmaking, drawing
- a springboard from which to contribute to raising awareness of the issues around detention and advocating on alternatives to detention.

In addition to the group's regular Tuesday meetings we:

- meet regularly at one of our volunteer's houses for a shared meal - we take it in turns to cook, and have enjoyed Iranian, Zimbabwean, Scottish and Italian fare;
- go to the weekly Blether Friendship Club, where we meet people from all over Glasgow;
- attend Seeds of Thought writing workshops and open mic evenings;
- attend Scottish Writer's centre events
- visited the Edinburgh International Book Festival;

- had a writing workshop in Kelvingrove park and attended a bibliotherapy event in the Botanic Gardens.

We know from official figures that around three quarters of people leaving detention from Dungavel are released back into the community, many of them to Glasgow, so LAD will be a continuing part of what we do in 2017 and beyond.

### Recruiting and supporting volunteers

Volunteers are at the heart of our work and we have between 40 and 50 volunteers at any one time. The largest number are volunteer visitors, each of whom visits people in Dungavel an average of twice a month. By maintaining a strong visiting team, we are able to ensure that we visit Dungavel twice a week throughout the year.

We restructured our induction training for visitors in 2016, making it more streamlined and allowing for greater discussion of the role of a visitor. In addition to discussing visiting, the training introduces prospective visitors to the policy environment in which detention operates, gives an overview of the asylum system, and introduces SDV's policies and procedures. We held two recruitment sessions in 2016, bringing nearly 30 new visitors into the organisation.

After training, new visitors meet with Shirley who is able to answer any questions and ensure people understand the role of a visitor and how SDV works. Soon after that, people can begin visiting.

All our visitors benefit from the support of their peers, but this is particularly important for new visitors. The hour-long drive to Dungavel gives new visitors the chance to ask



any questions, to voice any anxieties and to seek reassurance.

We also provide ongoing training for our visitors and in 2016, this took the form of a refresher session on being a visitor. At the session, we looked at our visiting practice, aired concerns and suggested improvements, which were implemented after the session.

In 2016, we continued to recruit volunteers to non-visiting roles and our country researchers, LAD volunteers and fundraisers all contributed much to the work of SDV.

### **Raising awareness of detention in Scotland and advocating for change**

As Kate noted in her director's report, 2016 was the year when it was announced that Dungavel would close and a new short term holding facility open at Glasgow airport.

We knew from the start that what the UK Government was proposing would result in worse outcomes for people in Scotland at risk of detention. Nevertheless, the announcement provided us with an opportunity to raise awareness about detention and to begin to reframe the debate about it in Scotland.

In the immediate aftermath of the announcement, we contributed to newspaper articles, and radio and television programmes, raising our concerns about the proposed new centre and the UK Government's continued use of indefinite immigration detention.

Our briefing on the announcement, which was updated regularly to take account of new information, was widely circulated to colleagues in the sector and to UK and Scottish Parliamentarians. In it, we outlined

the case for community based alternatives to detention and presented Scotland as the ideal place for the development of a new approach to working with people subject to immigration control in the community.

After Renfrewshire Council's refusal of planning permission for the new site, we worked with MPs on Parliamentary Questions to clarify the UK Government's intentions. We also used this period of uncertainty to work with colleagues at UNHCR, Detention Action and Detention Forum to plan a meeting at the Scottish Parliament to discuss the possibilities of developing community based alternatives in Scotland.

The meeting took place in early 2017 and was well attended by MSPs, their staff and representatives from a wide range of civil society organisations. It was opened, movingly, by our Life After Detention group, who shared some of their writing describing the impact detention has had on their lives. You can read what they said on the inside back cover of this report.

We continued to be active on social media and were active participants in #Unlocked16, the annual virtual 'tour' of detention coordinated by Detention Forum. The potential closure of Dungavel dominated SDV's contribution to the tour.

February 2017 brought the news that Dungavel would remain open and our priority is now to continue to make the case for the end of indefinite immigration detention and the use of community based alternatives. They are cheaper, more effective and, crucially, more humane.



## Treasurer's report

In 2016, we received the final tranche (£20,000) of a three year award from the Tudor Trust, and a £5,000 grant from the AB Charitable Trust, both of which were allocated to salaries. A further grant of £4,000 from the Endrick Trust also went towards our core costs in delivering our work.

A grant from the Trades House of Glasgow went towards our Life After Detention Group, the Jill Franklin Trust provided a contribution towards phone cards for people in detention and the Eleanor Rathbone Trust's grant went towards our volunteer training.

Elsewhere in this report we have noted the impact the UK Government's announcement that it intended to close Dungavel had on our work in 2016. The uncertainty also had an impact on our fundraising in the later part of the year. Whatever the shape of detention in Scotland, we knew there would be a continued role for SDV but we could not say with any certainty what that role would be. This made applying for funding challenging as many charitable trusts and foundations ask for detailed information on the activities to be funded, and this was something we were not in a position to provide.

Nevertheless, a fundraising drive towards the end of the year brought us £10,000 of unrestricted funds from small trusts and

foundations. This, coupled with informal fundraising in the form of sponsored events entered by our supporters, collections, our regular appeal to trades union branches and an increased number of regular donors meant that we ended the year having reached 95 per cent of our funding target.

We also managed our expenditure well, despite increased staff and office rent costs compared to last year. We ended the year in a healthy position, with a small surplus and a balance of £44,000.

The end of year had not brought the end of uncertainty regarding the future of detention in Scotland. However, we were fortunate in the early part of 2017 to be awarded two years' continuation funding from the Tudor Trust, who recognised the difficulties this uncertainty created for us. This put us in a much stronger position to fundraise for the rest of 2017.

I'd like to end by thanking all of our funders in 2017. In particular, I'd like to thank all those individuals who sponsored, organised collections, made regular donations and encouraged others to do so. Your support is very much appreciated.

Monish Bhatia  
Treasurer, SDV

## Summary financial accounts

### Receipts and payments account 1 January 2016 –31 December 2016

	2016		2015	
	£	£	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>				
<i>Restricted</i>				
Tudor Trust	20,000		25,000	
AB Charitable Trust	5,000		-	
Endrick Trust	4,000		-	
Jill Franklin Trust	2,000		-	
Trades House of Glasgow	1,700		-	
Eleanor Rathbone Trust	2,000		-	
Allen Lane Foundation	-		3,000	
BEMIS Year of Food and Drink	-		510	
VAF	-		10,000	
<i>Total restricted receipts</i>		<u>34,700</u>		<u>38,510</u>
<i>Unrestricted</i>				
Trust funding awards under £5,000	10,000		-	
Donations, Gift Aid and other income	8,817		12,035	
<i>Total unrestricted receipts</i>		<u>18,817</u>		<u>12,035</u>
<b>Total receipts</b>		<u>53,517</u>		<u>50,545</u>
<b>Payments</b>				
<i>Restricted</i>				
Staff costs	(29,000)		(27,733)	
Support for people in detention	(2,000)		-	
LAD	(631)		-	
Volunteer training	(2,000)		-	
BEMIS event	-		(403)	
<i>Total restricted payments</i>		<u>(33,631)</u>		<u>(28,136)</u>
<i>Unrestricted</i>				
Staff costs	(6,869)		(380)	
Support for people in detention	(1,247)		(3,340)	
Volunteer travel, training and support	(4,518)		(7,076)	
Committee training and expenses	(1,176)		(722)	
Memberships	(175)		(350)	
Fundraising, admin, website & insurance costs	(567)		(1,506)	
Office rent	(3,125)		(1,400)	
<i>Total unrestricted payments</i>		<u>(17,677)</u>		<u>(14,774)</u>
<b>Total payments</b>		<u>(51,308)</u>		<u>(42,901)</u>
<b>Surplus/ Deficit for year</b>		<u>2,209</u>		<u>7,635</u>

## Because of detention

Because of detention I have lost my way forever

Because of detention I experienced fear, disrespect, feeling absolutely hopeless, pressure, sadness, sickness and some kind of disability that I never had felt in all my life

Because of detention I was always waiting, waiting, waiting...

Because in detention male officers came and looked at us at night, I can't sleep, I'm scared

Because of detention my future is broken

Because of detention my family is broken. My relationship didn't survive and now I only see my son twice a month

Because of detention I am a nervous wreck, terrified of the authorities.

Because of detention my life changed. Not knowing when I would get out took away my mental health, my confidence, my hope

Because of detention I lost all my belongings, including the only photos I had of my late father

Because of detention, I am sick; really really sick. I am not who I was three years ago.

Because of detention I was constantly reminded of the torture in prison in my own country

Because of detention I can't sleep for a week before signing at the Home Office in Glasgow

Because of detention I am always terrified of being detained again

I am **Aliya**, and I was detained for 24 hours

I am **Pablo** and I was detained for three years

I am **Quincy** and I was detained for five months

I am **Miriam** and I was detained for 72 days

The 10 people in our group were detained for a total of four years and eight months.

That is 1,709 days that none of us can get back again.

41,000 hours of life, simply, lost.

And for what?

# Thanks

## Committee

Sarah Anderson (Secretary)

Anna Beesley

Monish Bhatia (Treasurer)

Mary Child

Giovanna Fassetta

Martha Harding (Vice Chair)

Katie Hawkins (Chair)

Kathy McNeill

Blair Melville

## Staff

Kate Alexander (Director)

Shirley Gillan (Coordinator)

## Funders in 2016

Tudor Trust

AB Charitable Trust

Endrick Trust

Jill Franklin Trust

Trades House of Glasgow

Eleanor Rathbone Trust

Craignish Trust

Hugh Fraser Foundation

## And ...

SDV volunteers (visitors, fundraisers, country researchers, ambassadors)

SDV members

SDV donors

People in detention

People building a life after detention