

Scottish Detainee Visitors

**Annual Report
2009**

Chair's Report

Since our last AGM Scottish Detainee Visitors has faced a number of changes and challenges. I would like to take this opportunity to reflect upon the journey.

In May 2009 we received some fantastic news: SDV had secured three years of core funding from the Tudor Trust. This not only ensured that we could continue delivering our fundamental support for detainees in Dungavel, it also offered us the freedom to begin thinking about how the organisation could develop in the future.

Then in June 2009, Kate Alexander, our dedicated coordinator of over four years stepped down. Although we were very sorry to see her go, we also felt excited by the possibility of bringing new energy into the organisation. Our new coordinator, Nicola McLelland who immediately introduced fresh ideas, provided that energy. In particular, Nicola played an integral role in launching our new recruitment and induction system. However after six months Nicola decided to leave SDV and understandably recruiting a new coordinator twice in one year presented the organisation with a significant challenge.

I am delighted to say though that in November 2009 we appointed Anna Beesley as our coordinator. Anna brought with her a vital positivity, a determination to help shape the future of SDV and most importantly, a passion and skill for supporting detainees. Her previous experience as a volunteer with London

Detainee Support Group means she comes to us with a well-informed perspective about how we operate and deliver our services. On behalf of all our members I'd like to welcome Anna to SDV. We are very excited about what she has already brought and will continue to bring to the organisation.

Despite all the changes throughout the year, we maintained our regular visits to Dungavel and continued to offer vital emotional and practical support to detainees. This is down to the hard work of our visitors and committee, who share a belief that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and humanity.

As I write this report, it is overshadowed by the horrific news that a family of three have taken their own lives at the Red Road flats in Glasgow. Although the details behind this tragedy are still emerging, anyone involved in the asylum sector will recognise the stories of fear, isolation and mental ill health that are now being discussed in mainstream media. Unfortunately their story is evocative of so many people trapped in the hostile UK Immigration system, nowhere is this more visible than in Immigration Removal Centres. The support we offer alongside other organisations in Glasgow and across the UK attempts to counter the cruel and inhumane immigration system. This work is essential and cannot be underestimated.

Catrin Evans
Chair, SDV

Coordinator's Report

I immediately felt welcomed by SDV when I started in November and have continually been amazed by the amount of time, effort, and hard work the volunteer visitors and management committee put into ensuring SDV fulfils its aims. Therefore I would like to begin with a huge thank you to everyone involved.

I have also met and spoken with many of the detainees visited by SDV who confirm the dedication and devotion that the visitors put into supporting them. The relationships between visitors and detainees exist in a variety of capacities and we were lucky to have an ex-detainee joining us at our Christmas meal - something that illustrates the sincere and long lasting relationships we make.

While I can only speak of the latter part of 2009 there is much to report. We received a lot of positive feedback from the new Induction and Recruitment Days which has resulted in SDV's pool of visitors growing in both size and skills. 2009 has also seen the development of a full programme of training and information sessions for our Visitor Update meetings in 2010.

Maintaining and creating links between SDV and other independent organisations that work in and around detention is something which I am passionate about. We have already established a working relationship with Medical Justice, an independent charity

that exposes and challenges inadequate healthcare provision in immigration detention, as they begin to set up a Scottish group to visit in Dungavel. This is fantastic news for those detainees whose physical and mental health is overlooked or neglected, and also an important development in the services SDV can refer detainees on to.

Another positive development for Dungavel's detainees will be the legal surgeries run by Nicola McLelland (ex- SDV Coordinator) of Immigration Advisory Services.

Being keen to strengthen SDV's relationships with other visiting groups around the UK, I represented SDV at a Detention Sub Group meeting, a forum for members of all AVID visiting groups to meet and discuss related issues and problems. Because of the fluid nature of the detention system, in which detainees are moved from centre to centre for no obvious purpose, these relationships are crucial as they allow for the sharing of information between support groups. Additionally they help maintain the profile of SDV and ensure that what is happening in Dungavel is kept on the agenda, not just locally but UK-wide. Being more involved with other detainee support groups, and learning how they are operating and developing, will be of enormous benefit to SDV.

Anna Beesley
Coordinator, SDV

What did SDV do in 2009?

Visiting Detainees

SDV exists to alleviate feelings of isolation and disempowerment for people detained in Dungavel. This can only happen through the emotional, practical, and social support SDV's visitors provide. Because of the isolated location of Dungavel and poor public transport links, SDV relies on visitors giving up their whole evening and using members' own cars to travel to there every Monday and Thursday.

Now with 35 active visitors SDV made 92 visits to Dungavel in 2009, despite having to cancel visits at the end of the year due to bad weather.

SDV visited a total of 157 detainees over the year. The average number of detainees seen on each visit was seven but the number varied from two to fourteen.

As in previous years and consistent with the overview of people detained, the majority of the people we visited were single men (85 per cent). We also visited 15 women (9 per cent), most of them detained as single people, and nine children (6 per cent) four more than last year.

In 2009 we saw four family groups. In May we saw a Nigerian woman detained with her 9 and 20 month old sons. This is not to say that there were only four families detained during the year in Dungavel.

There may have been many more but because Scotland adopts a policy which aims to detain children for no more than 72 hours, a family can arrive and leave Dungavel between our bi-weekly visits. Their swift removal to Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire, or Tinsley House near Gatwick Airport, can be extremely traumatic and detrimental to any support they may begin to access in Scotland.

SDV visitors have helped out in these situations by driving up to Dungavel a day after a visit to bring the family belongings that they were not able to take when they were detained. Belongings such as prayer mats, children's clothes, and toys, that are essential in maintaining some kind of stability at a deeply confusing and stressful time.

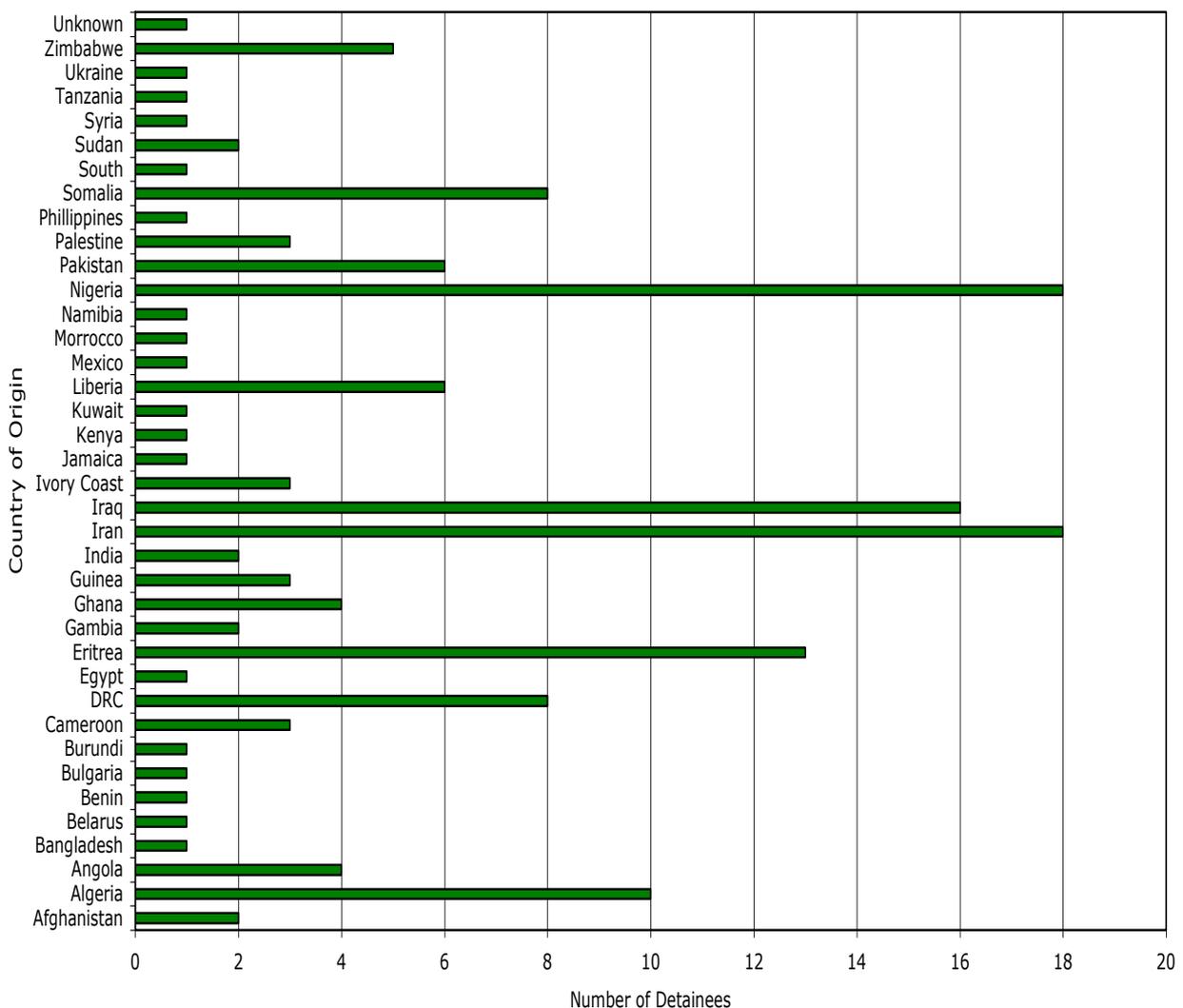
The proportion of detainees we saw for just one visit was 40 per cent. The average number of visits a detainee received in 2009 was 8. One detainee received more than 39 visits during the year.

The average number of visitors on a visit was 3 however towards the end of 2009 after the Induction and Recruitment Day, we were able to run many more 5 person visits.

Where are the detainees from?

In 2009, SDV visitors supported detainees from 37 different countries. The country producing the highest number of detainees was Nigeria and Iran (18 detainees each).

The ongoing sectarian violence in Nigeria meant that it also produced the most detainees we visited in 2008. Iraq was next (16 detainees) followed by Eritrea (13 detainees).



Providing support to detainees

At the core of SDV's work is providing both emotional and practical support. Detainees may enter Dungavel with few or no belongings and to help alleviate the isolation this creates, SDV offers many practical services and items.

In 2009 visitors:

- Provided 252 phone cards to detainees and 61 mobile top ups.
- Provided toiletries and clothes and hold alls to detainees on 57 occasions
- Provided £20 emergency money to 4 detainees when they were removed.
- Provided written information and paperwork to 50 detainees
- Liaised with lawyers and other organisations on behalf of detainees once a week.
- Retrieved personal belongings from the detainees point of detention and took them to Dungavel.

SDV's Visitors

SDV's visitors are a diverse and dedicated group. With various ages and backgrounds, they bring an assortment of experiences and skills to the organisation. The visitors language skills include; French, Italian, Kurdish, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Turkish, Fula, Farsi, Swahili and Mandarin. We also have visitors with management, evaluation,

and project development skills. Importantly all the visitors share a commitment and devotion to support and defend the rights of some of the countries most marginalised people.

'Visiting is a challenge which I need to prepare myself for each time. I often feel a little anxious beforehand but I always come away with a feeling of satisfaction that I have brought a little friendship into the detainee's day. Most of them have been treated really badly by British officials and don't know what the future holds so its nice to feel you can at least offer a smile and a sympathetic ear. It's also nice to sometimes be able to get clothes or books to ease the humiliation and boredom of being detained. I enjoy the conversation and hearing people's life stories as they are usually strong and interesting characters with a lot to share. I feel very passionately that the British public need to be more aware of what is happening in our names.'

SDV Visitor

Supporting visitors is another core area of SDV's work. The new Induction and Recruitment Day gives visitors a strong basis on which to begin this challenging role and relies on the participation of more experienced visitors and members of the management committee to facilitate the day. The morning session functions as an overview of SDV and what being a member involves whilst the afternoon focuses on training. Included in the day is; an overview of the 'Detention Estate', an in depth examination of various scenarios one might expect to come across when visiting detainees, informal interviews, and an

'Asylum Support: The Essentials' training session.

Immigration Detention in 2009

Every year 2 000 children are detained under UKBA powers (Outcry! 23.06.09) and Dungavel is one of the three detention centres in the UK that detains children. In 2009 a number of stories of children traumatised by their experiences in detention were brought to the public's attention. This included the horrifying story of a ten year old Nigerian girl who tried to strangle herself after being detained in Tinsely House Immigration Removal Centre for the second time round. (The Guardian 23.10.09). 2009 however also saw the emergence of the 'Outcry! Ending Child Detention' campaign www.outcrycampaign.org.uk. Run by The Children's Society in conjunction with Bail for Immigration Detainees this nationwide campaign has achieved a high profile for its criticism of the government's policy on detaining children and the campaign has gathered enormous momentum over the year.

Lisa Nandy, Policy Adviser at The Children's Society, and Amanda Shah, Assistant Director at Bail for Immigration Detainees, comment:

'The (Home Office) statistics reveal the scandalous extent of the detention of children for immigration purposes, and confirm our deep concerns about the way children are being detained. Twenty nine per cent of children were detained for over a

month, contrary to Home Office policy that children are only detained for the shortest possible time.

Fifty six per cent of detained children were released back to their communities in the UK, their detention having served no purpose other than wasting taxpayers' money and traumatising the children involved.' (31.08.09 OutCry!)

Both mental and physical health is high on the agenda in the argument against detention, especially that of children. The Royal Colleges of General Practitioners, Paediatrics and Child Health, and Psychiatrists, and the UK Faculty of Public Health are officially demanding an end to child detention after it has been made clear that detaining children in immigration centres puts them at risk of mental health problems, self-harm and even suicide. (The Guardian 10.12.09)

SDV's Plans for 2010

In 2010 SDV plans to:

- Continue to provide twice-weekly visits to Dungavel and, to reach out to more detainees who may need our services.
- Produce more expansive data and statistics to assist in monitoring issues such as unlawful detention.
- Continue to run Induction and Recruitment Days to train and recruit new visitors.
- Complete an evaluation of the services SDV offers
- Raise awareness of SDV through our website and fundraising events.

Financial Accounts 1 January–31 December 2009

INCOME	2009	2008	EXPENDITURE	2009	2008
	£	£		£	£
Restricted			SDV Expenditure		
Tudor Trust	15,000	-	Staff Costs	11,113	9,422
Robertson Trust	5,000	-	Detainee Items, Emergency		
Norda Trust	5,000	-	Payments & Phone Cards	4,253	3,470
Celtic Charity Fund	2,000	-	Visit Travel Expenses	1,318	1,371
Helen Tetlow Memorial Fund	1,200	-	Training/Meeting Costs	1,073	1,133
Jill Franklin Trust	500	-	Memberships/Subscriptions	554	281
Lloyds TSB	-	6,000	Insurance	434	223
Allen Lane Foundation	-	5,000	Fundraising Costs	0	288
Voluntary Action Fund	-	560			
Total Restricted	28,700	11,560			
Unrestricted					
Donations & Fundraising	3,963	5,301	Total Expenditure	18,745	16,188
Bank Interest	54	260	Operating Surplus	13,972	933
Total Unrestricted	4,017	5,561			
Total Income	32,717	17,121			

Treasurer's Report

2009 initially looked like a financially challenging year for SDV, as generous support from Lloyds TSB and The Allen Lane Foundation in the previous three years came to an end. However, funding applications were well received by a number of other organisations, reflecting the importance of the activities undertaken by SDV, and the confidence of these parties in SDV's governance and administration. Funding bodies which have supported SDV in 2009 are noted in the *Restricted* section of the Financial Accounts Summary above. SDV is extremely thankful for their support.

SDV also continues to be supported by regular private donations, and from fundraising activities. These values have fallen slightly from 2008, but still remain a significant source of income for the organisation, and are much appreciated.

Expenditure has increased on 2008, as more items were provided to detainees,

insurance cover was extended, and new coordinator recruitment costs were incurred. In addition, salary costs increased slightly as coordinator employment periods overlapped.

The continued support of the Scottish Refugee Council, through providing office space and supplies, greatly helps SDV achieve its aims and establish itself in the network of support provided to asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.

Looking forward, SDV is in an enviable position, with cash reserves greater than anticipated a year ago, and in an economic climate which remains challenging. The focus of the management committee in 2010 will be on evaluating the activities we undertake, and planning how best to use our reserves to provide a better long term service to the detainees in Dungavel.

Martin Deane

Treasurer

Thanks

Thank you to the Management Committee

I would like say a special thank you to the Management Committee. It has been a very challenging year but I believe that your energy and commitment has ensured that Scottish Detainee Visitors continues to thrive. To those of you that are stepping down, thank you for dedication – you will be missed. Best of luck with all that you do in the future. And to those of you that are staying on and to those of you joining us I look forward to working with you throughout 2010.

Catrin Evans
Chair

SDV Committee

Rima Al-Khalidi
Dan Brennan
Martin Deane (Treasurer)
Mary Kate Dickie
Catrin Evans (Chair)
Moya Flynn
Joanne Grant (Secretary)
Sophie Kavoukis (Vice Chair)
Michelle Opit

Other SDV Members

Charlotte Ager
Kate Alexander
Miana Badd
Katherine Ballingall
Anna Beesley (Coordinator)
Ross Burnside
Michael Cameron
Mary Child
John Collins
Anna Cook
Jason Donald
Jim Dornan
Marion Fairweather
Joe Farquhar
Christine Finnigan
Catriona Gibson

Claire Green
Alex Hamilton
Razgar Hassan
Nicola Howard
Karen Leaney
Alistair Malloy
Clare Malloy
Catriona Matheson
Siobhan McFadden
Julie McGee
Siobhan McGurk
Dermot McGonigle
Sean McLean
Linda McMahan
Brian McMillian
Linda McMillan
Stuart Midgley
Nadia Mohammed
Garry Morrison
Michael O'Hagan
Crystal Pan
Claire Purcell
Stevie Purcell
Marie-Laure Ross
Jonathan Sharp
Mary Shields
Rachel Simpson

Sarah Smith
Jessie Sohal-Burnside
Alison Swinfen
Karis Thain
Jan Turnbull
Marie Valente
Maeve Wightman
Fibie Whitcelo
Paul Wilson
Gerry Wilson

SDV Funders

Allen Lane Foundation
Tudor Trust
Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland
Voluntary Action Fund
Scottish Refugee Council
Robertson Trust
Norda Trust
Celtic Charity Fund
Helen Tetlow Memorial Fund
Jill Franklin Trust

And

Everyone who donated, sponsored, attended events and set up standing orders in 2008.