

**Life After Detention as
“Detention Without Walls”**

Research Report

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with the Life After Detention
Collaborative Research Group

University of Glasgow
Find A Solution



**“All I wanna be is be a dad
but how can I be a dad
when I’m not even sure if I’ll
see him tomorrow.”**

(Pablo)

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

APPGR&M: All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees & the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration

DWW: Detention Without Walls

GRAMNet: Glasgow Refugee Asylum and Migration Network

ICIBI: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Prisons

IRC: Immigration Removal Centre

LAD: Life After Detention project

SDV: Scottish Detainee Visitors

PAR: Participatory Action Research

About the Author

This report is not co-written but is the result of a collaborative research and film project lead by Bridget Holtom who recently completed a MRes in Human Geography at the University of Glasgow.

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Summary

Scottish Detainee Visitors (SDV) are a campaigning and befriending group that visit Dungavel House Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). This research focusses on life after immigration detention for people released on temporary release or bail. This report signposts what support is available for people released from immigration detention and makes recommendations for how support could be improved.

Research aims:

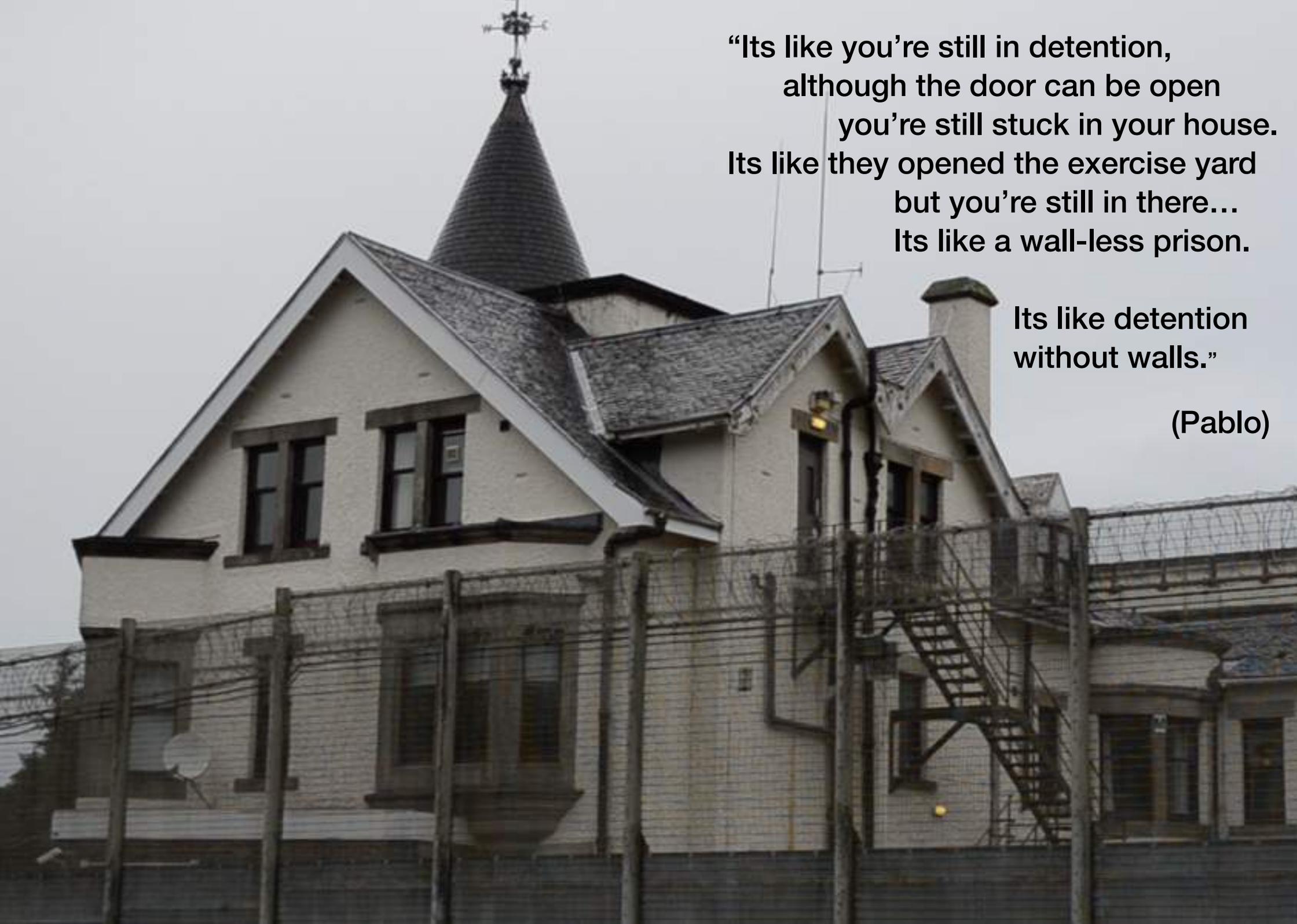
1. Highlight the difficulties faced by people released from immigration detention and understand the reasons why,
2. Identify what support is available for people released from immigration detention, and
3. Identify ways in which support for people released from immigration detention could be improved.

Key findings:

1. The difficulties experienced inside immigration detention do not end with release as there are new and unexpected obstacles.
2. As the root cause of insecurity is not addressed with release, people are still at risk of deportation and experience difficulties associated with uncertainty such as stress and sleeplessness.
3. Often the support is available but there are misconceptions about accessing support, especially for 'foreign national ex-offenders'.

Key recommendations:

1. Continue to address and remove the root causes of detention.
2. Where possible make decisions about service provision with people who have lived experience of immigration detention.
3. Consider the implications of campaigns that emphasise vulnerable or hard-working migrants in contrast to 'foreign criminals'.
4. Extend services or better communicate what support is available to people released from detention with spent criminal convictions.



**“Its like you’re still in detention,
although the door can be open
you’re still stuck in your house.
Its like they opened the exercise yard
but you’re still in there...
Its like a wall-less prison.**

**Its like detention
without walls.”**

(Pablo)

Background

The primary focus of this research is life after immigration detention. Immigration detention has been in the media in 2015 due to hunger strikes and allegations of sexual abuse at Yarls Wood IRC. In March, detainee-led protests coincided with the publication of the Report of the Inquiry into the Use of Immigration Detention (APPGR&M) which recommended an end to indefinite detention and pushed for “a very radical shift in current thinking”. As a result, a time limit to and alternatives to detention are currently being considered by political parties and campaign groups.

The conditions within immigration removal centres (IRC), such as Dungavel House in South Lanarkshire, Scotland, have been shown to cause distress and negatively affect the wellbeing of detainees.

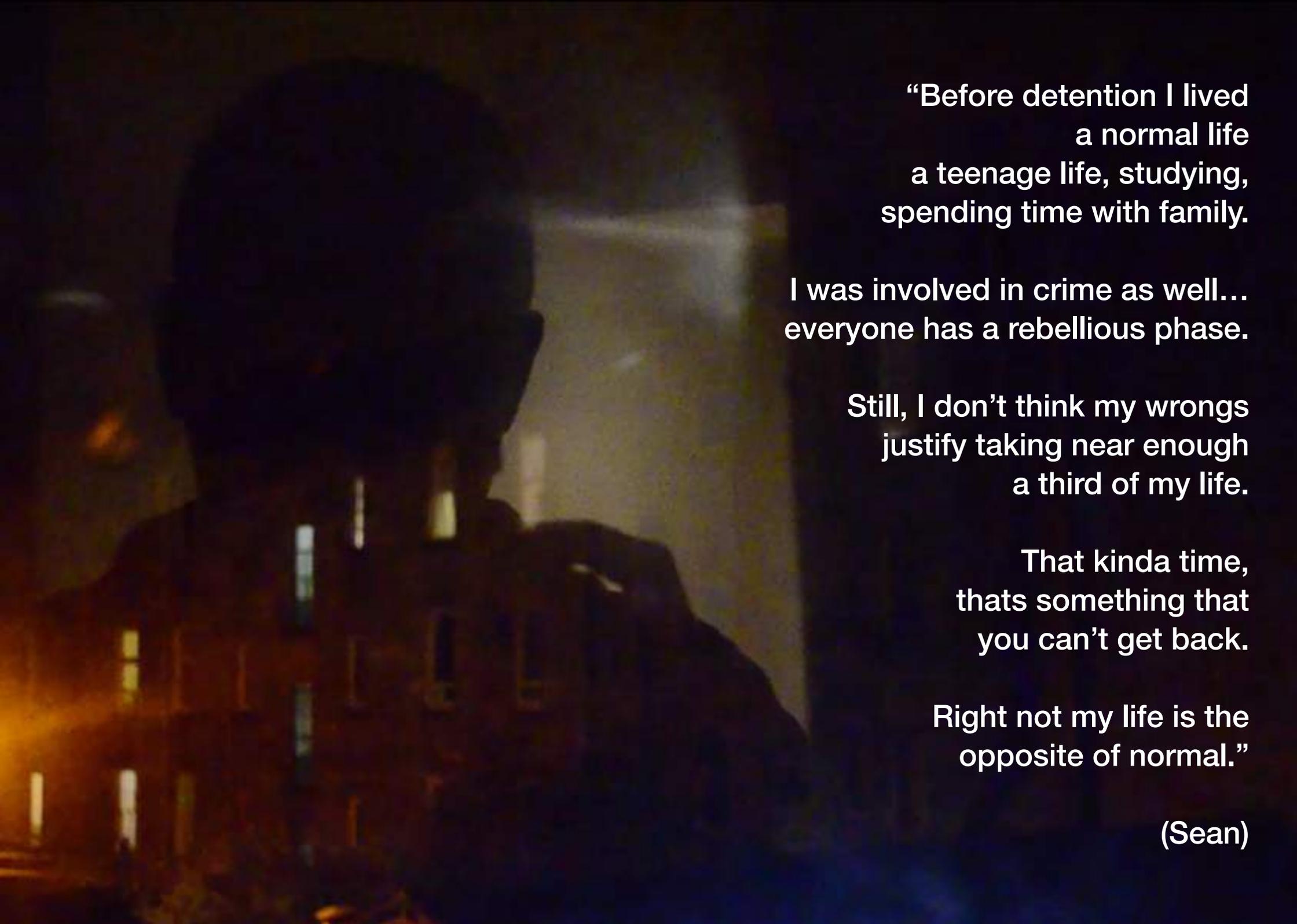
Whilst people are detained on the assumption that they will be removed as quickly as possible, indefinite detention means some spend several years in detention before being removed or released. However, in 2014 5 people were detained for three to four years and 1 person for over four years. Furthermore of those who left detention, 55 per cent were removed from the UK, but 37 per cent were released. When detainees are released from immigration detention without status on temporary admission or bail they often face isolation and destitution. At the moment of release, Dungavel guards accompany ex-detainees to Hamilton train station where they are left with no liaison officer to get to their next destination.

People released without status do not have the right to work and subsequently face dependency on friends or family or may face destitution. There are various forms of support and integration services available for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Glasgow. These are signposted to later in this report (page 15).

The timeline opposite highlights the interaction between immigration and crime. Officially, deportation of ‘foreign national ex-offenders’ differs from the administrative removal of ‘failed asylum seekers’ to their country of origin. If travel documents are unobtainable or it would breach human rights legislation to return someone to their country of origin people are deemed ‘unremovable’ and can spend years in limbo.

Timeline

- 2006 The news that over the previous decade 1,023 former foreign national prisoners had not been considered for deportation resulted in the resignation of Home Secretary, MP Charles Clarke.
- 2007 The UK Borders Act introduced automatic deportation orders for any foreign national sentenced to 12 months or more in prison or whose sentences over the past 5 years cumulatively add up to more than 12 months.
- 2011 A report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Prisons (ICIBI) found that since the scandal in 2006, foreign national ex-offenders were likely to be held in immigration detention for longer than other detainees.
- 2014 A clause was added to the British Nationality Act 1981, “to deprive a person of a citizenship status” if the “deprivation is conducive to the public good” and if the person might be able to “become a national of another country or territory”.
- 2015 The 2015 Immigration Bill is debated in Parliament along with three related bills: the Foreign National Offenders Bill 2015-16, the Illegal Immigrants Bill 2015-16, and the UK Borders Control Bill 2015-16. If passed, new policies will criminalise working without permission, extend electronic tagging, further prevent access to services for people without regular migration status and implement ‘deport first, appeal later’ principles. Deport first, appeal later will significantly reduce the chances of successful appeals by deferring the right of those subject to immigration controls to appeal until after removal.



“Before detention I lived
a normal life
a teenage life, studying,
spending time with family.

I was involved in crime as well...
everyone has a rebellious phase.

Still, I don't think my wrongs
justify taking near enough
a third of my life.

That kinda time,
thats something that
you can't get back.

Right not my life is the
opposite of normal.”

(Sean)

Research Methods

The idea to collaborate was proposed to the part-time coordinator of SDV and it was by chance rather than design that a former detainee, Pablo, was attending the monthly visitor update. After hearing about the difficulties Pablo was facing since his release, the group came to an agreement that this experience, life after detention, would be the research focus. It was agreed that we would work closely together, with input from a wider project advisory group, to design and undertake the research, forming the SDV Life After Detention (LAD) project. In the tradition of Participatory Action Research (PAR), everyone is considered an 'expert-by-experience' and is referred to as a participant-researcher throughout this report.

Recruitment and Sample

Participant-researchers were recruited through a snowball approach, but people were also referred through an information leaflet. The research was open to anyone subject to immigration controls who had been released either on bail or temporary release.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

The SDV Life After Detention project wanted to try to change the situation at the same time as studying it. The LAD project established a weekly drop-in which formed the foundation for the participatory action research, providing a platform for action-reflection in three ways. Firstly, the drop-in sessions were a new initiative by SDV and the group were able to reflect on the impact of the intervention on their life after detention. Secondly, the small acts and kind words impacted on everyone involved in the group. Thirdly, it provided a free, safe space to share understandings about individual and collective experience of life after immigration detention. The table below is an example of the phases of action-reflection in PAR.

Phase	Activities
Action	Establish relationships and common agenda
Reflection	On research design, ethics, power relations
Action	Build relationships, identify roles, responsibilities and ethics
	Collaboratively design research process and methods
	Discuss and identify desired action outcomes
Reflection	On research questions, design, roles and relationships
Action	Work together to implement research design
	Undertake data collection
	Collaboratively analyse information generated
Reflection	On the data collection process
	Evaluate participation and representation
	Assess need for further research or action
Action	Plan research-informed action (in this case the DWW film)
Reflection	Evaluate action and process as a whole
Action	Identify options for further participatory research and action with or without academic researchers

The group included destitute asylum seekers, people who had overstayed temporary work or student visas and so-called foreign national ex-offenders who after serving a prison sentence were awaiting deportation. In total the sample size included 10 former detainees sharing experiences of life after detention, with 5 attending the drop-ins regularly and 5 SDV visitors attending the drop-in sessions and a focus group. The research validity is based on the sustained participation of former detainees for over 6 months, building an in-depth picture of life after detention by those with lived experience of detention.

Ethics

As the subject people wanted to speak out against, their citizenship status, is the reason they are at risk, names are disguised and information about individual cases, length of time in detention and countries of origin are omitted. All participants provided full and informed consent. The group also co-wrote and signed a code of conduct to ensure the safety and cooperation of everyone involved.



“Who am I?
I’m a woman.
Strong, independent
and intelligent who
really knows what
she wants but my
current situation
is not letting me
excel in the places
that I want to...and it
frustrates me but still,
hey i’m a strong woman
nothing will put me down.
(Latifah)

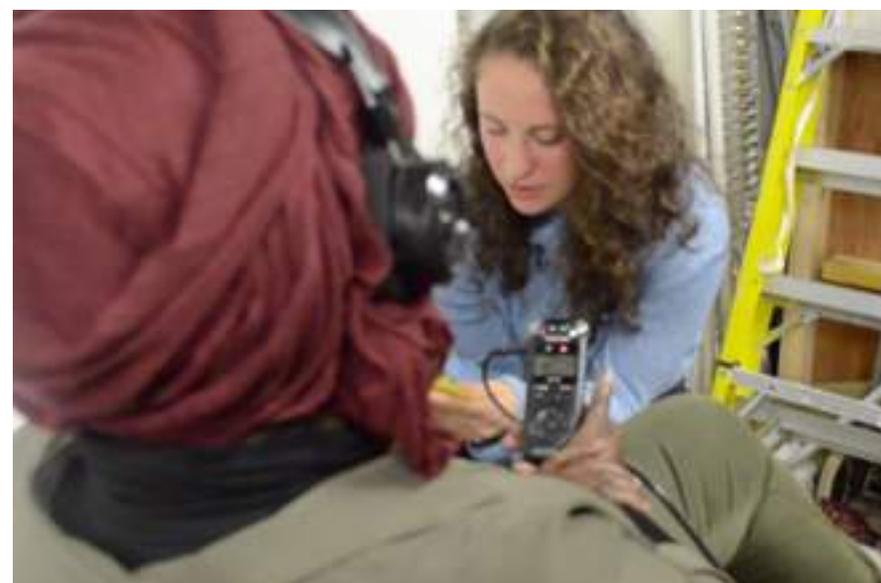
Research Methods

As the data we sought to collect were everyday lived experiences of life after detention, participant-researchers chose a variety of qualitative methods. Flexibility was a priority in order to allow former-detainees to respond in whichever way they felt most comfortable, allowing for non-verbal responses. This was critical as people in the immigration and asylum process often tell their story during interviews with immigration officials or lawyers where they can feel “cross-examined” (Latifah). Therefore the research methods used were:

- Focus groups** 12 weekly unstructured drop-in sessions (see PAR Box).
1 semi-structured focus group with SDV visitors.
- Interviews** In total, 25 interviews lasting between 30-60 minutes.
Some participant-researchers interviewed each other.
Where possible respondents transcribed their own interviews.
- Mapping** Individual maps of places and services available/accessed.
Group mapping of emotions associated with detention.
- Photography and Poetry** Cameras were provided to document daily experiences.
People were also invited to share photos or poems they already had to prompt discussions at the drop-in.
- Film-making** The group decided to document and share their experiences with a wider audience by making a short documentary film called Detention Without Walls.

Research Analysis

Research analysis usually takes place in a separate phase, conducted by “experts” who triangulate data. However, as former detainees are understood to be experts-by-experience themes emerged during filming were used to develop analysis frameworks. Similarly, documentary film is usually made by outsiders who retain control over production. However in participatory video participants make the decisions about priorities, direction and dissemination.





Research Results

This section answers the first research question by highlighting two key difficulties people face after detention; dispersal and destitution. It then discusses possible explanations for these difficulties.

Dispersal

Dispersal is the act of distributing asylum seekers and other migrants eligible for accommodation provision to different cities across the UK. It is designed to “spread the burden” from the south-east, but in reality it can be disorientating and isolating. The research identified three key difficulties:

Disorientation

Former detainees described feeling “lost and confused” (Sean) when they left detention and were left at the train station. Others shared how release felt like being “in a dark room” (John) or “blindfolded” (Dave).

“You come out of detention, straight to the station and you don’t know where to go.” (Juan)

Privacy in accommodation provision

Whilst former detainees believed “its good to have shelter” (Alex), they also identified poor quality emergency accommodation

and a lack of privacy in the accommodation provided through Section 4 Support as a key problem. Sean says “they just let themselves in, where’s the privacy? This is not a jail its my living room!” Similarly, the lack of ownership created uncertainty, with Pablo saying “I don’t have anywhere to call home anymore. they can take my new house away from me at any moment.”

Separation from family and friends

The dominant experience of life inside and after immigration detention was that of being separated from friends, family and support networks. Dave was released without Section 4 and stayed in the north of Scotland. He travelled over 500 miles once a month to see his three-year old daughter. Therefore, release can bring new opportunities to see family but new financial and geographical barriers continue to separate and isolate former detainees.

Destitution

When released from immigration detention without status people face destitution, exacerbating difficulties due to dispersal. This research identifies two connected difficulties; the inability to work and the risk of re-offending.

Inability to work

Participatory analysis identified being unable to work as a key difficulty. Although

not a justification for immigration detention, participant-researchers agreed that “at least inside detention you had a routine” (Juan) and “they even give you a paid job” (Alex). The irony of being unable to work outside but being paid £1 an hour while inside detention, was picked up by John who asked “who profits from our suffering?”

Risk of re-offending

Destitution was also believed by participant-researchers to increase the possibility that former detainees commit crimes in order to survive. Andy who has been destitute for 8 years believed that “by pushing us into destitution they’re pushing crime on the street”. Furthermore, Sean argued:

“How do you take someone who was living off crime and never had a job and tell them you can’t work, you can’t study, and then give them 24 hours a day, what do you think he’s gonna end up doing?”

If people are detained following a prison sentence they do not have access to rehabilitation services and are less likely to access programmes in prison.

This research found that people experience new difficulties after release from detention due to dispersal, destitution and the threat of deportation.



Fear and threat of deportation

The obligation to report at the Home Office is designed to deter absconding. Some respondents reported monthly, most weekly, but for some it was a "daily chore". Whilst the threat of deportation is higher inside detention, after detention the fear is associated with certain places or moments. For example, when reporting Electron gets "nervous, my heart speeds up". Dave says:

"Every week I worry I'll be detained."

This research reveals how fear of deportation was present in certain places, such as the Home Office on Brand Street and how fear of deportation worked through the circulation of stories about deportation. Worrying about re-detention and deportation meant that the drop-in was a welcome distraction but also that people might not always want to talk about their traumatic experiences. The threat of deportation meant that people released without status "couldn't make no plans" (Latifah), as they were always "up and down with paperwork...waiting, waiting, waiting." (Juan).

As people are still at risk of deportation, many experience difficulties associated with uncertainty such as stress, anxiety and sleeplessness.

Feeling stateless

Many participant-researchers felt they had "no where else to go" (Andy) after being "made stateless" (Alex). The drawing below done by a SDV visitor describes how "some people is not free, feel not in sky, not on earth, like slaves."



This feeling of being "in-between" (Latifah) is primarily due to the relationship between citizenship and the sovereign nation state. Regardless of whether someone is legally stateless, while they are simultaneously deportable and unremovable, they have less access to legal rights and support.

The current relationship between states and citizens is a root cause of insecurity and it creates a stratification of rights.

Figure of the 'foreign criminal'

Crime and immigration intersect as acts of migration are criminalised. People are sentenced for illegal entry, fraudulent documents, failing to report and for overstaying visas. The introduction of automatic deportation orders following the foreign national prisoner scandal broadened the eligibility for deportation.

Representations of 'foreign criminals' tend to exaggerate the risks people pose to society. This fear drives security strategies that justify detention and deportation. The figure of the 'foreign criminal' was identified as something that affects us all, regardless of our immigration status or criminal history. Ismail was administratively removed to his country of origin early in the research.

"We talk about people's cases as if they are separate from lives. They [the Home Office] make your case illegal...but the case is your life, it makes or breaks you." (Ismail)

The figure of the foreign criminal contributes to the justification of the detention and deportation regime by exaggerating the risks associated with certain populations. As acts of migration are criminalised more people are eligible for detention and deportation.

Being at
other
pep
suffocated
Indignation
cornered
Unwanted
deprived / deskill
Overwhelmed
Surprised
restricted / trapped
Unprepared
before / inside
d

Signposting Support

This page responds to the second research question by signposting to support available for people released from immigration detention.

There are several sources of social, legal and financial support available in Glasgow for refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants. However, due to the changes in immigration law, policy and service provision, it is difficult to maintain a comprehensive list of service providers. This report signposts the reader to:

Glasgow Asylum Destitution Action Network (GLADAN) who update a [map](#) and a [list of agencies](#) available [online](#).

Positive Action in Housing (PAiH) have a directory of support services available to purchase on their [website](#).

Unity Centre is on Ibrox Street opposite the Brand Street Home Office Reporting Centre.



A key finding was that there was a perception that people released on bail from immigration detention who had spent criminal convictions were not eligible for services advertised for refugees and asylum seekers.

“Every time I went to ask for support they kept asking me the same question: Are you an asylum seeker? No, are you a refugee? No, sorry we can’t help you.” (Pablo)

There was a feeling of injustice at having to wait to be seen and a lack of understanding about how people were prioritised by organisations. However, when asked directly, all the integration networks and service providers questioned responded that they were open to everybody.

Section 4(1)(C) Support

Release from immigration detention can be through leave to remain, temporary release or bail. There are two types of bail, the first is obtained by providing a surety and a bail address, the second is available through the UK Government Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 Section 4 support. Section 4(1)(C) is given to people who can not secure a private bail address, would otherwise be destitute, and who have agreed to return to their country of origin, but cannot return immediately due to external circumstances. Section 4(1)(C) consists of accommodation currently provided by Orchard & Shipman via SERCO and £35.39 a week via an Azure payment card, which can be used in a selection of shops. As of 1 June 2015, there were 107 individuals registered at a immigration bail address in Scotland. Of those, only 7 were in receipt of Section 4(1)(C).

For more information contact **Bail for Immigration Detainees** and the **Bail Observation Project**



Evaluating the SDV drop-in

The drop-in was a new intervention that provided a space for people recently released from detention to research their experiences, make a film and hear about support services. Participant-researchers felt “included in the decision-making” (Andy), that it was a space “you were trusted” (John), and that “it wasn’t charity, but something else” (Sean). Latifah said it was

“a space to talk to others who understand the difficulties we’ve been through...I keep coming back every week because I feel included, I edited my own film, you know?”

Some participant-researchers described how the drop-in felt “a bit like rehabilitation” (Sita), deterring people facing destitution and deportation from crime simply by “just knowing people are looking out for me, relying on me” (Pablo).





Recommendations

... for everyone concerned

1. Continue to address the causes of in order to end detention, deportation and destitution.

... for Scottish Detainee Visitors

The drop-in sessions were intended to run for a limited period only and the expectation is that the Life After Detention project will not continue after December 2015. However, SDV must consider how it better supports people during this transition from detention and participant-researchers make the following suggestions:

1. Pilot a buddying scheme beginning inside detention that pairs people recently released from immigration detention with people living in Glasgow.
 - Provide money for social gatherings to happen once a month for a finite period of time. For example design a 6 month buddying scheme with money for activities with recognition that these partnerships may continue but that they do so as a friendship, therefore ceasing financial support.
 - Consider working together on activities that are not just 'talking shops', such as cooking, football, film, photography.
 - Some participant-researchers want to make a second film about 'foreign criminals'. Expenses for equipment, food and travel would be needed as well as a project coordinator, ideally paid.
 - Train and support former detainees as SDV volunteers/buddies. Make steps to overcome the additional financial, emotional and linguistic barriers for these volunteers. Be wary of time commitments and be flexible with travel expenses.
 - Make use of knowledge and skills within SDV through peer support. Provide or signpost to professional counselling.

2. Work closer with other organisations in Glasgow for referrals.
3. Lobby for a change in the contractual agreement between sub-contractors GEO-Group Ltd and Orchard & Shipman to arrange for more substantial support on release. For example, a recommendation in the recent Dungavel House Immigration Removal Centre Report (9-20 February 2015) proposed 4.25 'Information Packs to be provided to all detainees being removed who require them'. Bring this up at the next meeting with Dungavel IRC representatives.

... for other asylum, refugee and migrant organisations

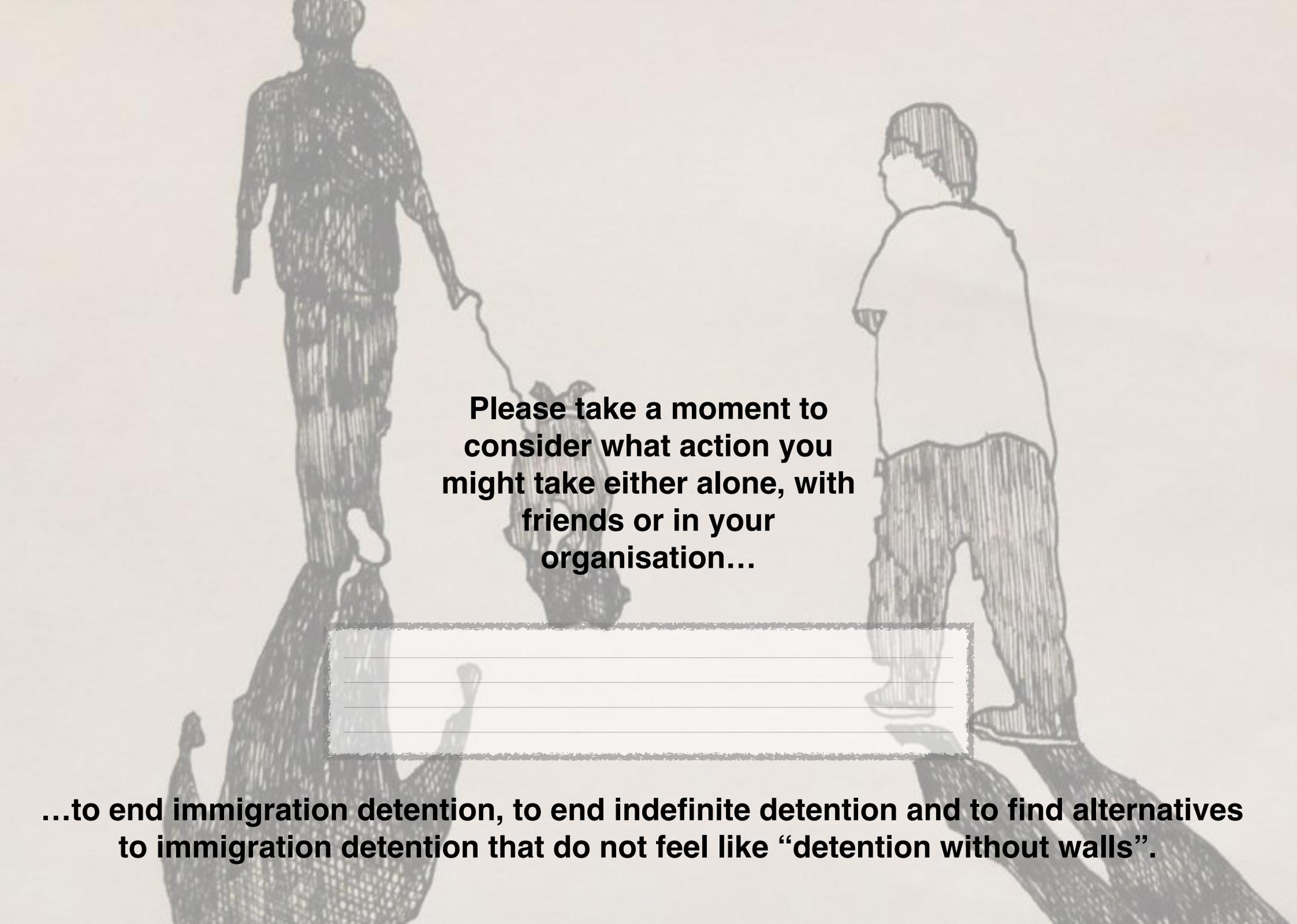
1. Extend service provision to people with spent criminal convictions.
2. Provide more activities for single, male migrants with good english.
3. Consider the implications of campaigns that emphasise the good, hard-working and contributing migrant in contrast to the dangerous.

... for private contractors (GEO, SERCO, Orchard & Shipman)

1. Provide one-to-one information sessions prior to release.
2. Provide travel money/tickets direct to the person's next place of accommodation, not just to the nearest train station and liaise effectively to ensure accommodation is available immediately.
3. Give proper notification of house inspections and visit on the date specified.

... for the Home Office

1. Extend rehabilitation services in prison and on probation to foreign national prisoners/ex-offenders, especially the provision of professional counselling.
2. Anticipate delays in removing foreign national ex-offenders and consider alternatives to detention during this time period.
3. Give people released from detention the right to work and assess how this might reduce the risk of re-offending or absconding.



**Please take a moment to
consider what action you
might take either alone, with
friends or in your
organisation...**

...to end immigration detention, to end indefinite detention and to find alternatives to immigration detention that do not feel like “detention without walls”.

