

Esther Rantzen visits DDVG



Esther Rantzen with DDVG staff members, volunteers and ex-detainees from the Dover Immigration Removal Centre

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Esther Rantzen is well-known for her work for charities, having founded *ChildLine* in 1986. After meeting staff and volunteers at the national finals of the Mentoring and Befriending Recognition Awards in December 2010, Esther Rantzen was invited to visit the *Dover Detainee Visitor Group* (DDVG) to see how the charity helps those held in the Dover Immigration Removal Centre (DIRC) and ex-detainees. Esther Rantzen accepted the invitation and visited staff members, volunteers and ex-detainees at the DDVG office and was allowed to step inside the world of detainees at the DIRC. Continued on **page 2**.

Upcoming Ex-Detainee Conference

The DDVG Ex-Detainee Conference will be held on Thursday 9th June 2011 in London. It will be an opportunity for DDVG to evaluate the progress of the Ex-Detainee Project and build on the fantastic work already done since last year's conference. With a high turn out expected from organisations in the sector, including a representative from the *UK Border Agency*, Juliette Wales and Christine Oliver (new Ex-Detainee Project Manager) are looking forward to meeting as many people as possible in order to discuss the future of the project. Turn to **page 3** to find out more information about the conference and personal biographies of both Christine and Juliette.

Esther Rantzen visits DDVG

'I don't like these secret worlds and I don't like unaccountability and I think you are playing a very important link between the best of Britain and the people that you visit.' **Esther Rantzen**



Esther Rantzen speaking with DDVG volunteers

'I have a particular reason to think that if we treat asylum seekers well, then they will give us more than they receive, like my great, great grandfather.' **Esther Rantzen**

Before arriving at the DDVG office, Esther Rantzen was given a brief tour of Dover, enabling her to see the main historic sights and attractions. On arrival at the DDVG office, Esther participated in a meeting with DDVG staff members, discussing the charity's work and future.

After giving a short interview to the local media, Esther Rantzen was very keen to meet and speak with DDVG volunteers to discover the reasons why they want to volunteer for this charity. On meeting several volunteers, some long-serving and some new, she asked each one to detail the work they have been doing with detainees and how they feel that detainees benefit from their visits.

After enjoying a buffet lunch, Esther Rantzen was given a present on behalf of DDVG. She gave her thanks for the invitation to visit and gave a short speech detailing the history of her roots

in the UK and how she can relate to the stories of asylum seekers and refugees:

'I owe everything, my family and I, to Britain. I'm sure I have family I know nothing about who died in the Holocaust.'

After some more time speaking with volunteers and ex-detainees, including Derrick Butterfield and Percy Dubé, Esther Rantzen was taken to visit the DIRC.

DDVG would like to thank all those that participated in the event and hope that with the help of the local media, the issues surrounding immigration detention in the UK will be highlighted to the wider community.

If you would still like to view the television interview given by Esther Rantzen, please follow this link: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheDDVG?blend=1&ob=5>

Upcoming Ex-Detainee Conference

DDVG is pleased that the 2011 Ex-Detainee Conference will be held in London where so many of our clients are concentrated and somewhere that our geographically dispersed clients will be able to reach more easily. Our workshops are focusing on areas of need identified by our clients - like access to healthcare and ways for ex-detainees to spend their 'waiting' time as productively as possible, for example, in education and volunteering.

Regarding speakers at the conference, the *UK Border Agency* are sending a representative to speak and to answer questions from the floor and there also will be speakers from campaigning charities and organisations who can advise delegates how they can join in and have their voices heard in the national arena.

There are high hopes for an excellent conference which will be a learning experience for everyone in attendance (DDVG staff members included) and that DDVG comes away with greater knowledge of where the Ex-Detainee Project needs to focus its attention for the future. It is also hoped that everyone attending this conference will be able to take something tangible away with them, like a contact or some information that can help them in their day to day lives. DDVG is keen that all ex-detainees, visitors and organisations in the sector feed back their thoughts in order that we can continue and improve on how we manage the project.



Juliette Wales studied Politics and Modern History as an undergraduate and has a Masters in Human Rights. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the immigration, asylum and human rights field, having worked as a Legal Officer for the *Immigration Advisory Service*, and later for *Refugee and Migrant Justice* as a Senior Caseworker when she returned to Kent after starting a family. Juliette is extremely passionate about the Ex-Detainee Project and has injected her enthusiasm and background knowledge into the project wholeheartedly since she started at DDVG in September 2010.



Christine Oliver studied Law and Welfare as an undergraduate and completed a post-graduate diploma in Legal Practice. She spent several years working in social care and mental health and, like Juliette, has a decade of experience in immigration, asylum and human rights, working for *Refugee and Migrant Justice* as a Senior Caseworker and Team Leader. Christine is excited by the challenges of the Ex-Detainee Project and is very keen to rise to those challenges and meet them head-on. She started on the Ex-Detainee Project in March 2011 and job-shares with Juliette.

Voluntary Return Explained



VARRE (<http://www.iom.ee/varre/&arhiiv=1>)

What and Who?

According to the *International Organisation for Migration* (IOM), voluntary return refers to the 'return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or a third country based on the free will and well-informed decision of the individual in the absence of coercive measures.'

Voluntary return can also be further split into two categories:

- **Spontaneous return**
A person 'initiates and implements the return without the involvement of States or other national/international actors.'
- **Assisted voluntary return (AVR)**
A person 'receives financial and/or logistical support (and in some cases also reintegration assistance) from a State/other national/international actor.' (IOM, *Enhancing the Role of Return Migration in Fostering Development*, July 2008)

AVR programmes are for those who do not have a permanent right to remain in the UK and want to return permanently to their country of origin (e.g. those who have been unsuccessful in the asylum system).

Why?

According to the IOM, AVR is becoming the most favoured return option as it proves to be ‘more cost effective, humane and conducive to good relations among all players.’ In the past 10 years, the realisation of AVR programmes has increased significantly in a number of states in Europe. At present, there are over 20 AVR programmes operating out of 18 countries in Europe whereas 10 years ago, there were only four. (IOM, *Return Migration: Policies and Practices in Europe*, 2004)

The IOM identifies the main benefits of voluntary return for returnees, returning governments and countries of origin:

Returnees:

- Takes account of migrant’s decision.
- Allows preparation for the return.
- Ensures respect for human rights.
- Avoids stigma of forced return and negative repercussions for integration.
- Provides counselling, financial/logistical and reintegration support.

Returning Governments:

- Generally more cost effective.
- Helps to avoid friction with national and international partners.
- Opens way to genuine partnerships with countries of origin and implementing partners.

Countries of Origin:

- Ensures the rights and dignity of their nationals.
- May include reintegration assistance for individuals and/or their communities.
- May provide future opportunities for legal migration. (IOM, *Managing Return Migration: Challenges and Opportunities*, DNF)

AVR Programmes in the UK

Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP):

- VARRP is available to asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers of any nationality (apart from UK, European Economic Area or Swiss nationals) meeting the eligibility criteria. This programme provides support in obtaining travel documentation, flight to the country of origin and onward domestic transport, airport assistance at departure and reintegration support.

Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM):

- AVRIM is available to irregular migrants (trafficked people, smuggled people, those who have overstayed their visas and illegal immigrants) of any nationality (apart from UK, European Economic Area or Swiss nationals) to return to their country of origin. However, it is not available to those who have been in the asylum system. This programme provides the same support as the VARRP but does not give help with reintegration (except in particularly vulnerable cases).

Assisted Voluntary Returns for Families and Children (AVRFC):

- AVRFC is available to families and to unaccompanied children (under 18) and is offered to those who have sought asylum or are irregular migrants and provides reintegration support for each individual. (UK Border Agency, *A Basic Guide to UK Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) Programmes*, 2010)

Refugee Action took over the running of these three programmes in April 2011 on behalf of the *UK Border Agency*.

'Refugee Week is important because it reminds us that refugees are not just statistics to be used and abused, they are living, breathing people.'

Benjamin Zephaniah, Poet
(<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/AboutUs/what-people-say>)

'Refugee Week is a unique time when we can all celebrate the contribution that refugees have made over the years to the UK—both culturally and economically.'

Colin Firth, Actor and Brightside founder (<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/AboutUs/what-people-say>)

What's in the news?

Refugee Week 2011

This year's Refugee Week will take place from 20—26th June 2011 and is an opportunity for everybody to celebrate the contributions refugees make to British society. Many events are scheduled, including art, educational and cultural events, making it possible for everybody to find something they can get involved in.

The theme for this year's Refugee Week is '60 Years of Contribution' due to the 60th anniversary of the Refugee Convention and the slogan is 'Different pasts, shared futures'. Organisers of Refugee Week state that they 'encourage organisers to organise events around the idea that Refugee Week is a space of encounters between different communities and an opportunity to use more creative ways to bring refugee experiences closer to wider audiences.' (<http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk/AboutUs>)

The 1951 Refugee Convention

Why is it so important?



On 28th July 1951, the United Nations approved the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It outlines refugees' rights and obligations towards their host governments.

Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as:

- 'a person who is **outside** his or her country of nationality or habitual residence;
- has a **well-founded fear of persecution** because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion;
- and is **unable** or **unwilling to avail himself or herself** of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.'

This convention is important because it was the first 'truly international agreement covering the most fundamental aspects of a refugee's life. It spelled out a set of basic human rights which should be at least equivalent to freedoms enjoyed by foreign nationals living legally in a given country and in many cases those of citizens of that state.' The convention also 'recognised the international scope of refugee crises and the need for international cooperation, including burden sharing among states, to tackle the problem.' (<http://www.unhcr.org/3c0f495f4.html>)

Mid Sussex Council District Planning Committee gives green light for pre-departure accommodation



Photo by Alec Smart

On 14th March 2011, the Mid Sussex Council District Planning Committee approved the conversion of the Crawley Forest School in Pease Cottage into a pre-departure accommodation for children and families about to be removed from the UK. Permission to convert the school, which provides accommodation for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, was approved by 14 to 1 votes.

The *UK Border Agency* said that this move is to form a part of the Coalition Government's pledge to end child detention by May 2011. According to the *UK Border Agency's* Planning Statement, although facilities for families at Dungavel House and Yarls Wood have been closed, 'the need remains to provide a suitable facility to accommodate families with children whose removal from the UK is being arranged where they have failed to accept various opportunities to leave voluntarily or to comply with the returns process. Pre-Departure Accommodation provides that solution.' (UKBA, *Planning Statement: In respect of Proposed Change of Use of Site to Pre-Departure Accommodation at Crawley Forest School*, February 2011)

Damian Green, Immigration Minister, stated that the accommodation will 'have an entirely different look and feel to an immigration removal centre, with a high degree of privacy for each family.'

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/mar/09/barnardos-play-facilities-yarls-wood-replacement?INTCMP=SRCH>)

However, campaigners concerned about the detention of children have deemed the decision as appalling and claim that the government has backtracked on its pledge to end child detention. According to an article from the *Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network*, Ilona Pinter, policy director of *The Children's Society*, has expressed her doubts about the new facility:

'Given the lack of clarity about the proposed new pre-departure accommodation, we are concerned that this would result in detention by another name.' (<http://www.qarn.org.uk/homepage/2011/02/05/new-centres-to-detain-child-asylum-seekers/>)

Quick Wordsearch

A	Z	A	H	C	I	T	I	Z	E	N	S	H	I	P
S	M	D	Z	Z	I	W	J	M	M	W	F	B	U	I
I	I	F	N	O	I	T	A	R	G	I	M	M	I	Z
V	G	N	D	E	T	E	N	T	I	O	N	N	E	W
C	R	E	K	E	E	S	V	T	B	Z	H	E	A	D
I	A	D	D	O	L	F	Y	R	Y	G	G	M	U	N
D	T	Q	E	L	B	A	Q	A	Z	J	M	I	Z	Z
P	I	Y	E	X	N	G	U	F	O	I	K	G	W	M
Q	O	X	G	B	M	P	D	F	J	P	T	R	E	L
E	N	N	U	E	Z	W	C	I	E	F	O	A	J	U
R	X	V	F	K	Q	S	G	C	L	I	Q	T	D	X
B	Q	C	E	S	S	C	T	K	F	Y	R	I	R	E
T	N	A	R	G	I	M	M	I	W	Q	X	O	D	V
E	L	T	A	C	F	Q	T	N	G	Y	N	N	D	V
V	F	S	V	C	Y	J	C	G	A	S	Y	L	U	M

ASYLUM SEEKER, CITIZENSHIP, DETENTION, EMIGRATION, IMMIGRANT, IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION, REFUGEE, TRAFFICKING, VISA

Volunteer Corner

A massive well done to two of DDVG's volunteers for their recent running efforts! Douglas Rintoul ran the Lydd Half Marathon in March, raising money for DDVG and Sam Lake completed this year's Virgin London Marathon in April, raising money for both Arthritis Research UK and the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society.

Recent DDVG Events

March 2011—DDVG had its 'Focus Day', where a discussion was held regarding the future of the charity.

It was also an opportunity for DDVG to update its vision and mission statements.

May 2011—DDVG was delighted to welcome a talk given by Mick Croning, Community Police Officer, regarding the effect of detention on separated families.

Dates for your Diary

01/06/11 6.30-8pm — Support Meeting (talk by ex-detainee) (DDVG office)

09/06/11 10.30-4pm — Ex-Detainee Conference (Amnesty International UK Headquarters, London)

16/06/11 6.30-8pm — Support Meeting (DVD night) (DDVG office)

27/07/11 — Listening and Responding Skills Training (DDVG office)

28/09/11 11-1pm — Annual General Meeting (Venue to be confirmed)

If you would like to attend an event, please e-mail: info@ddvg.org.uk or call 01304 242755

Quick Link

Follow this link to hear Immigration Minister Damian Green's answers to recent immigration reforms:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MRn8SsOful>

**The DDVG clothing store is now up and running at the DIRC on Tuesdays 2-3.30pm.
Please contact Claire on 01303 242755 for more information on how you can help.**