



# Infopage

*Supporting immigration detainees, volunteers and ex-detainees, as well as raising awareness within the community about detention and immigration issues.*

**A Quarterly Newsletter**

**Moving Forward**



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Helping you keep up to date through meetings and training provided by DDVG.

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People attending the AGM had a chance to air their views and influence the support the team provides for detainees and visitors

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**DDVG Staff Structure and our NHS award**

DDGV has been recognised for the care we provide to detainees.

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## Our Door is Always open

**With funding secure for a further three years, DDVG is set to improve its service for detainees and visitors.**

Director Vebi Kosumi said: "We have come a long way since we started five years ago in one room with a computer and printer,

but each year we re-evaluate our services to ensure we are meeting our objectives. Now I want to ensure our visitors understands the changes we are making.

Vebi has declared an "open door policy" at DDVG offices in Dover.

"We welcome visitors because it helps people to see how we operate and also brings a welcome breath of fresh air from the outside, as long as it doesn't stop us working!"

If you would like to help out at the office, discuss a problem, or just drop in to see what is going on, see the organisational chart to know who is the member of staff to approach according to their responsibilities.

For detainees we have recently designed a leaflet entitled "Can We Help You?" listing the range of services we provide, including regular visits, contact with solicitors, help with clothing, paperwork and assistance after release. Special meetings to update visitors on the new services are also underway ( see section 'Dates for your Diary' on page 2).

*This edition of InfoPage includes suggestions for improvements, which were posted on the special "Graffiti Wall" at the AGM, as well as news of training, events, meetings and changes in DIRC procedures affecting visitors.*

*If you have any suggestions for how communications can be improved contact Marianela on 01304 242 755.*



## Moving Forward



Miriam Wood, the newly appointed chair of DDVG is looking forward to fresh challenges. A former teacher, Miriam became involved with the visitors' group in 2003, "To put a human face on the often ill informed publicity about immigration".

She has seen the services of the charity grow. "I see the core service still as the visiting. But we try to listen to the needs as expressed by detainees to visitors. We have gone from providing CD players and phone cards, to providing practical and financial support to ex detainees."

" I enjoy volunteering with DDVG because it is a chance to make a difference on a personal level, face to face. I hope that in future we will be able to do more to help both those detained and those trying to settle into our country."

As well as her work with DDVG, Miriam is also a mentor, helping young people who have been given temporary leave to remain in the UK, as part of a project with Kent Refugee Action Network (KRAN).

## Refugee and Migrant Justice



Detainees are often frustrated by the legal system. Finding the right lawyer, chasing correspondence, applications for bail and understanding the appeals process are at the root of most of their requests for information.

Refugee and Migrant Justice(RMJ), formerly the Refugee Legal Centre has been based in Dover since 1992 . Their objectives are to secure justice for asylum seekers and other migrants in the UK. A leaflet describing their services is available from the office but the headlines are:

- They will provide first-line advice and, depending on an assessment of the merits of the case, may be able to provide full legal representation to detainees.
- If they cannot help they have an extensive network of partner organizations who they can refer clients on to.
- They provide a comprehensive, professional, independent and confidential service.

RMJ hold advice surgeries twice a week Dover Detention Centre. They also have a detention advice line for foreign nationals available Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10.30am-1pm, 2pm-4pm. Free on 0800 592 398 or 020 7780 3333.

Their offices are open Monday-Friday 10am-4pm. Contact no: 01304 203 003.

## Dates for your diary

*Remember to book you place early for a training course by contacting Claire*

01304 242 755

### November

#### Support Meetings

(With special discussion about DDVG new services, all SM at 7:30p.m)

#### Canterbury

November 3rd  
Friends Meeting House

#### Dover

November 4th  
20 Park Avenue

#### Deal

November 6th  
76 Middle Street

#### New Diversity Training

November 11<sup>th</sup>  
Place: DDVG Offices  
Time: 2:00-5:00  
Presented by: Mike Underhill  
Diversity Manager DIRC

#### DIRC Tour

(restricted to four places)  
November 16<sup>th</sup>  
Place DIRC  
Time: 2pm

### December

#### Christmas Party

December 17<sup>th</sup>  
Place: St Mary's Parish Centre,  
Dover.  
Time: From : 7p.m



## Brochures, Talks and Articles:

As part of our new DDVG expansion and development project, we need to reach out our communities, and for that we need your help. Among other measures DDVG needs to a) deliver more brochures, b) publicise more articles in different Media sources and c) give more community/awareness raising talks. Please contact DDVG if you:

- Can deliver our brochures in your nearest library, university or local group. We can send you some in the post immediately.
- Can access publications, newsletters or magazines local or regional that would be able to publicise a section about DDVG and its work.
- Can arrange a talk. Do you know a group that may be interested in listening about Immigration detention and the work we do? Would you be willing to talk to local groups? If so, please contact Marianela directly.

## Reflections on volunteering for DDVG

By Alan Myers

The following is an extract from a letter Alan sent to Vebi after he moved to Lanchester in County Durham.

My three and a half years with DDVG has given me friendships. Without DDVG I would never have met Lazarus who became a close friend and taught me about the most important things in life: one's responsibility of care for others; determination and perseverance; to be positive and hopeful about the future regardless of present obstacles and therefore to prepare for it. I am delighted and relieved that Lazarus has now been awarded refugee status.

I must express appreciation for the help and advice from office staff at DDVG. While I only visited once per week, those running the office face all the pressures associated with meeting detainee needs every day. Yet, whenever I visited the office, I was greeted with smiley faces and time was always made to help and advise.

It was a Christian upbringing that taught me who my neighbours are. They are next door, in the next street and also at the other side of the world. They are atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Some are friends and some are enemies; some are saintly, some are rogues. (Each of us is sometimes saintly, sometimes roguish.) We may not be able to bring ourselves to like them all, but we must love them all. Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib said, "Remember when dealing with others that they are either your brothers and sisters in faith, or your fellow human creatures in kind." No exceptions then. My experiences with DDVG have reaffirmed in me this belief. It is an organisation in which people of different faiths and ethnicity work together effectively and enjoy each other's company. I witnessed Samia (a Muslim of deep conviction) bearing the gift of the New Testament and Psalms to a Christian detainee; a simple act of love that transcended any barriers raised (real or imagined) by articles of faith of different religions. Acts like this are the essence of goodness and something to aspire to.

The excitement and expectation that comes with a new place and new challenges is tinged with some sadness. Chris Pilcher was a dear friend that I knew for only a short time, but her kindness to me and to others, inspired by her deep Christian faith has made a life-long impact. I send my sympathy and best wishes to husband Stuart, who with loving kindness bravely nursed her throughout her illness.

I must build on them. The nearest detention centres, at Lindholme and Dungavel, are too far to visit, but I plan to contact refugee organisations in Newcastle, Sunderland or Durham City.

## The cost of Indefinite Immigration Detention

The injustice of indefinite detention was brought home to those who attended DDVG's Annual Meeting last month, by guest speaker Jerome Phelps, Director of the London Detainee Support Group.

His group has carried out research which highlights the increasing length of time immigrants are detained in the UK. "Detained Lives" a brochure published by the group in January 2009, includes quotes from detainees, the cost of detention and key recommendations.

The group calls on the Home Office to adopt a maximum time limit for detention; only detain immigrants as a last resort, for the shortest possible time prior to removal - in line with the 1971 Immigration Act - and where no imminent deportation is possible, release detainees and allow them to live with dignity and participate in the community.

In a snapshot survey in June 2009 the team revealed that at Dover 18 men had been detained for between six and 18 months, 12 for 12-18 months, one for 18-24 months, four for 24-30 months, two for 30-36 months and two for 36-42 months.

"Detained Lives" is held in the DDVG Office Library or on line at: [www.detainedlives.org](http://www.detainedlives.org)

### Graffiti Wall at AGM

You suggested: Basic training on legal processes are needed: i.e how often apply for bail? What is judicial review? Who goes to high court and why?

We are negotiating training with Refugee and Migrant Justice.

You suggested: Training in new ways to support detainees  
We are arranging times with Professor Cornelius Katona (Mental Health training) and Annet Lukkien (Multicultural Awareness training)

You suggested: Bail Session for Volunteer Visitors  
We are negotiating a session with Bail for Immigration Detainees

### Booking Visits will be Mandatory from December onwards

From December 2009 booking your visits will be obligatory except in emergencies, i.e if your detainee feels suicidal. According to the Volunteer-Detainee Manager this is a good practice that would benefit all the parts involved. It would give certainty to both visitors and detainees.

# Staff Structure from August 2009



## DDVG awarded for contribution to health and social care

DDVG has been awarded a certificate by Eastern and Coastal Kent NHS Trust and Kent Link, in recognition of its contribution to health and social Care Services.

DDGV came fourth out of 34 applicants and as well as a certificate, received a cheque for £500.

Our thanks go to Claire Parker, project administration support, who put together the application and to all visitors who provide the day to day care for detainees.



## Our Management Committee

**Chair** Miriam Wood

**Treasurer** Ann Whitbourn

**Secretary** Robin Saunders

Alan Ramsay  
Denis Koakech  
Lazarus Banda  
Liz Wheelan  
Eve Clark  
Charlotte Dunne  
Sylvia Gilham  
Margaret Pietroforte

**Co-opted Members**

Roy Millard  
Chris Lewis  
Tony Fuller  
Cornelius Katona

**TALK:** The plight of the migrants in Calais: a humanitarian crisis on our doorstep.

Friday 13th November  
at Trinity Church Hall, Union Rd,  
Deal

by: Zoe Wilkinson

## Info Page contact:

Jenny Davis

## DDVG details:

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