



association of **visitors** to
immigration detainees

Annual Report

2019



List of Members 2019

16

member groups
supported by
AVID in 2019

Asylum Welcome
Campsfield House IRC

Detention Action
Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC and London prisons

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Brook House IRC, Tinsley House IRC

Jesuit Refugee Service
Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC

Larne House Visitors Group
Larne House STHF

Lewes Group in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
HMP Lewes

Liverpool Prisons Visiting Group
Liverpool prisons

Manchester Immigration Detainee Support Team
Pennine House STHF, HMP Manchester (formerly Strangeways)

Morton Hall Detainee Visitors Group
Morton Hall IRC

Scottish Detainee Visitors
Dungavel IRC

SOAS Detainee Support
Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC, Yarl's Wood IRC

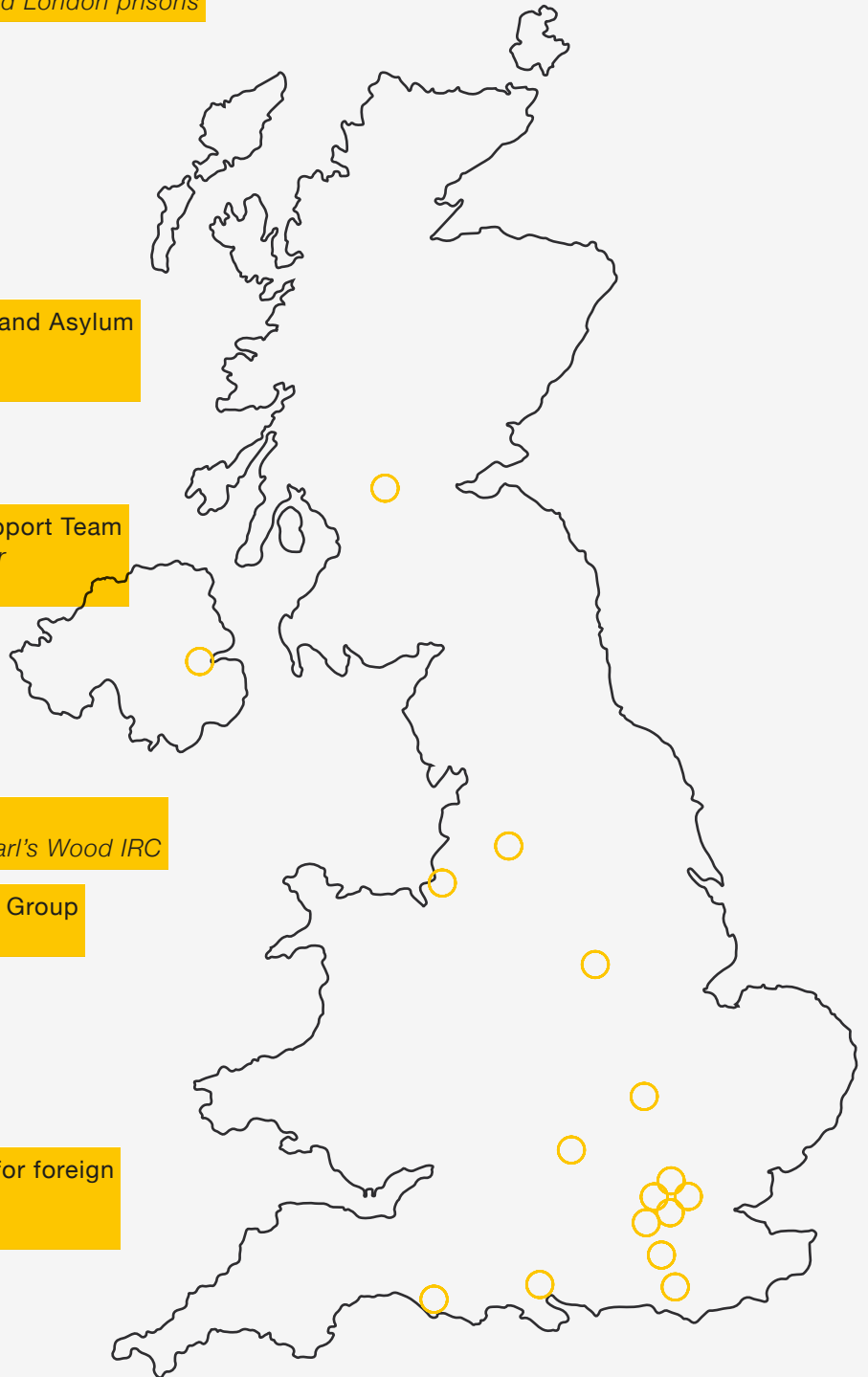
Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group
Community Support

Sudanese Visitors Group
Supporting Sudanese detainees

Verne Visitors Group
Community support

BEST (Befriending and support team for foreign nationals in HMP Wandsworth)
HMP Wandsworth

Yarl's Wood Befrienders
Yarl's Wood IRC



Chair's Report

In joining AVID as Chair in November 2019, I was finding my feet in the role when all that we once thought we knew changed, rapidly, and is still very much in transition.

As I write this in Summer 2020, in the wake of the COVID pandemic, so much has changed for all of us. Yet, in many ways, for those who were detained and for those who remain in detention, time has stood still, and the legacy of their detention experiences weighs heavy.

I can't pretend that the weight of responsibility for AVID, its members and beneficiaries did not weigh heavily on my mind as I tried to come to terms with the impact of COVID in many different ways.

I think it is safe to say that we have all noticed the passage of time more keenly in recently months. Lockdown has certainly been eye opening and an opportunity to reflect ever more keenly on what it is to feel safe, have sanctuary and support. Never have I been more grateful for things that I previously took for granted. Never have I been more determined to ensure that those who do not have safety, sanctuary or support are empowered to access those basic rights. These are all things which detention takes away, and which AVID works to uphold throughout all of our activities.

2019 was the first year of our new set of strategic directions and it has been an exciting time to explore with our members how we adapt and respond to the changing environment in which we all operate.

Our new strategy emphasises adapting to uncertainty, and our activities therefore reflect our role in helping our members and their volunteers to manage that. From developing new training partnerships, another successful AVID annual conference, training many more volunteers, and overseeing a significant number of policy outputs, the AVID team has once again shown how much can be achieved through collective working and by being agile and responsive to changing needs. Our full activities report is detailed on page 8.

Our Board is grateful to our members and their volunteers for all that they do to support people in detention. Whilst our trustees do not walk in our members'/volunteers' shoes we all have some insight into detention from our professional lives or personal lived experience. We draw on that whenever we can to inform every decision we make. We work hard to ensure that the AVID team has the support in place to confidently take on the challenges it faces.

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Our people

In 2019, we welcomed Carolina Albuerne Rodriguez back to the Board after a brief hiatus of maternity leave and warmly congratulate her on her new addition to the family.

Our Director Ali McGinley also returned from maternity leave this year and we very much welcome Ali back to AVID. Trying to find or achieve balance on return from maternity leave at a time of renewed challenges, including the ever increasing hostile environment in the UK and COVID-19, is no mean feat. We are therefore incredibly grateful to Ali for her continued efforts to provide AVID, its staff and

its members with calm and considered direction, guidance and support to navigate through these challenges. We hope to support Ali, AVID's staff, our volunteers and members going forward to strengthen and grow AVID to ensure we can respond to need.

Also this year we said goodbye to Amy Ramsay, Training and Membership Coordinator, and wish her all the best. We are grateful to Amy for her time with us and her contribution to AVID, more of which you can read about in the activities report.



AVID AGM panellists, 2019

Our future

Our priority for the future is to create space for those with experience of detention to voice their concerns and to ensure that their hopes and priorities shape our approach to change. We will continue to play a grounding role in supporting our members as they provide solidarity to people in detention, whilst pushing for meaningful reform. We will work to promote community-based alternatives to detention and continue to build our network to provide some semblance of security, hope, safety and sanctuary for those that need our support.

AVID has always worked in solidarity with others who share our vision for a world without detention, but recent events (writing this in 2020) more than ever illuminate the need – in my opinion – to make a more conscious, vocal and committed effort to work alongside the Black Lives Matter movement.

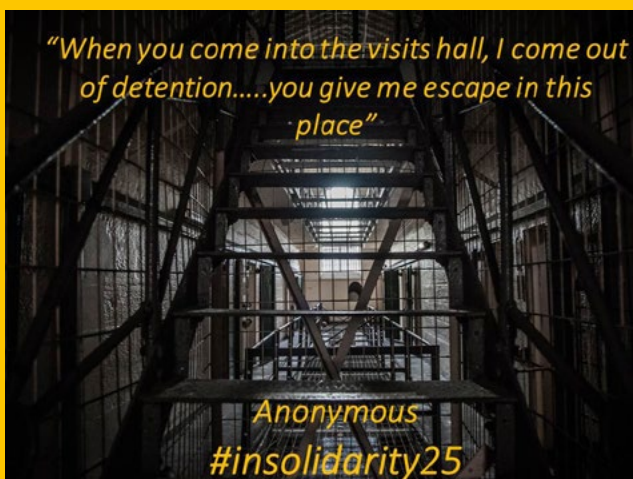
We must work together on efforts to raise awareness of the systemic racism that underpins immigration detention and to explore ways that we can support meaningful, systemic change not only for those that are detained but also for those that have previously been detained and for those that live in fear of being detained.

Recent months especially have given us all an idea of the unknown, of what it is to live in uncertainty and in a state of insecurity. I hope we can build on all our life experiences positively, gathering more support for those in detention. People in detention live daily with uncertainty, especially given detention is without time limits. There is much to do. Please join in our efforts to make change happen.

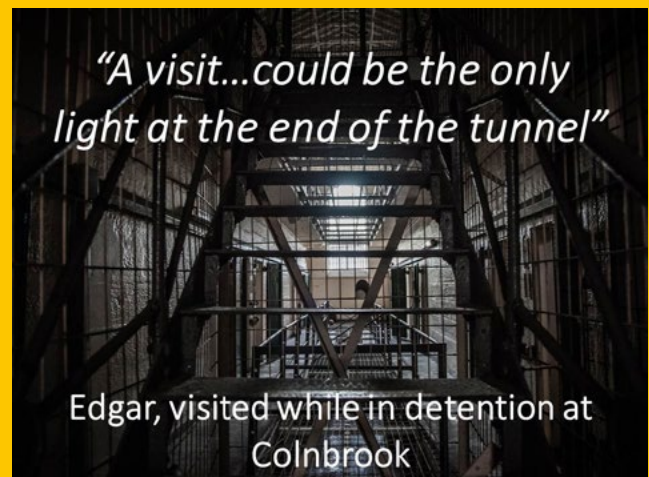
Elizabeth Flint, August 2020



People in detention live daily with uncertainty, especially given detention is without time limits. There is much to do. Please join in our efforts to make change happen.



Images from the #insolidarity25 social media campaign



Director's Report



Political uncertainty seemed to characterise 2019, a landmark year in many ways. The UK faced very real and ongoing political difficulties, although at the time of writing – in summer 2020 – it is clear now that we very much underestimated the amount of change that was just around the corner. Writing this now and reflecting on our work last year, it is hard to contemplate a world before we'd heard the word COVID. 2019 will probably be forever referred to as the 'before', in light of recent world events.

Nonetheless, 2019 did also feel like a year of turmoil and uncertainty, and had its own particular trajectory, albeit of a very different nature to the uncertainty we now face. On the positive side, immigration detention remained very much under public scrutiny, particularly in parliament and the media. This scrutiny included highly critical reports from the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the Home Affairs Select Committee, both of which recommended a range of reforms including a 28-day time limit. The number of people detained also reduced significantly during the year, following some high-profile closures in the preceding years. And the Government continued to explore its commitment to community-based alternatives to detention, through a series of pilots. However, it was also a year that became characterised by an entrenched commitment to indefinite detention by the Government, despite these high-profile recommendations. We were also painfully aware, as the year went on, that extremely vulnerable people were suffering in detention and that the Adults at Risk policy was failing on a range of levels. 2019 was also, in this sense, a

year where it became clear that the promised policy reforms were achieving little more than lip service.

2019 also marked the 25th anniversary of AVID. I think often of those who founded AVID in 1994, and feel blessed to still be in contact with some of them. How much has changed since those early days. While our network of committed volunteers and organisations remains something to celebrate and feel thankful for, the hostile environment has created an enforcement system that is more entrenched, more privatised, more deliberate and more damaging. As such, any celebration of our 25th year was bound to be more low key. Five years ago we marked our anniversary with the production of our Hidden Stories project, and a huge party. This year, a more modest event was held albeit with a similar theme. We did what AVID does best. We brought volunteer visitors and people with experience of detention together to hear their stories. At a small event at our office in Hackney, we gathered together, sharing food and raising a glass to all those volunteers who have given so much to those locked away and otherwise out of sight. We were delighted to be joined by some new volunteers, sharing their first experiences of visiting, as well as friends who had experienced detention, sharing with us their stories of receiving a visitor. We were also entertained by two of our network's most long standing volunteers, John Barrett from Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group and Crystal Dickinson from Yarl's Wood Befrienders. Together they've given about 40 years to volunteer visiting. Their stories could fill many volumes.



We did what AVID does best. We brought volunteer visitors and people with experience of detention together to hear their stories.

2019 also marked another anniversary, and a more personal one for me, having joined AVID as Director in 2009. These ten years have been an immense privilege and I'm so grateful to have been able to be part of AVID's journey in this time.

Our activities are detailed on page 8, and as always, it is testimony to the very real need that our activities continue to be in such high demand. Having trained 65 volunteers this year, we have also worked hard to develop our methods of support outside of traditional training models, developing and piloting initiatives including peer support, mentoring for coordinators, and our skill share programme, which enables expertise from around the network to be shared.

This year I'd like to particularly thank our long-standing funders, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the Tudor Trust, who have shown such faith and commitment to AVID's work and supported us – both financially and developmentally – for many years. Thanks also to our members and those who have supported us over these last 25 years, whether as a visitor, donor, training or workshop attendee, volunteer, Board member, funder, or simply a twitter follower. We hope we can count on this support as we move forwards, as there remains – as ever – so far to go.

Ali McGinley, August 2020

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as ever –
so far
to go.**



AVID Trustee Michael Darko, AVID AGM 2019

Activities Report

2019 was marked by increasing political uncertainty, requiring, as ever, constant scrutiny of the external environment to ensure we were able to adapt and respond effectively, and to support our members. Around 24,400 people entered detention in 2019, the lowest number since 2009 when official statistics were first produced by the Home Office. Organisations like AVID – at the forefront of the civil society push for detention reform – can draw some optimism in seeing immigration detention reduce by 40% over the last ten years.

While this downwards trajectory is to be celebrated, it takes place against mounting calls from a range of different voices to implement a time limit for those who are detained and continued shocking evidence of the mistreatment of extremely vulnerable people. Most notably in 2019, conclusions drawn by both the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the Home Affairs Select Committee, which both published reviews of immigration detention, emphasised the need for systemic change in relation to vulnerable people, and a time limit. That the time limit question featured so centrally in the debates that accompanied the Immigration Bill is also testimony that this is no longer a sideline issue but a mainstream political concern. Sadly, 2019 was not the year of change in this regard. At the year's end there felt little to celebrate as the country appeared more divided than ever and a time limit seemed elusive.

However, we remain hopeful that some new opportunities for scrutiny will enable us to open up the secretive world of immigration detention and to continue to shine a light on its worst injustices. To that end, the establishment of the first APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) on immigration detention and the forthcoming Brook House Inquiry will be a strategic focus for AVID, its members, and partner NGOs, in 2020.

2019 also marked the 25th anniversary of AVID. While on first glance it may appear that there is little to celebrate in 25 years of immigration detention, as always, the work of our members and the many thousands of volunteer visitors were worth marking. An online campaign provided the perfect opportunity to raise awareness and share messages of solidarity with people in detention. The resulting #insolidarity25 campaign took place in the run-up to Christmas and provided a chance to showcase what AVID does best. Bring people together.

Against this backdrop, our work continued in pursuit of our strategic objectives as follows:

Right: #insolidarity25 social media campaign

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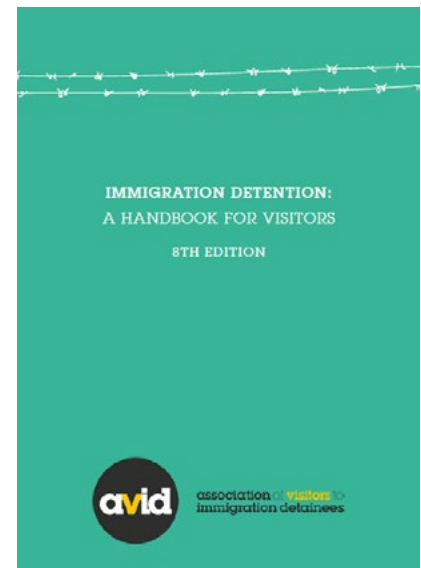




STRATEGIC AREA ONE

Increasing understanding of the harm caused by detention on individuals, families and communities

- This year we were delighted to finalise our long-awaited publication of the **immigration detention handbook**, a one-stop shop for any individual or organisation working with people in detention. Available in both ebook and hard copy format, this publication was very well received by AVID members, and members of the public. Copies were also distributed to all detention centres in the UK, so that people in detention can access them. Alongside a thorough guide to visiting in detention the handbook also contains the most up to date law and policy on the topic;
- We continued to provide **bulletin updates** to our members and the wider sector on immigration detention policy and practice, ensuring members remain abreast of the ever-changing external environment that impacts on our work. This includes parliamentary monitoring, statistics, and policy changes;
- This year to commemorate 25 years of our organisation, we launched our **first major online campaign**. Working primarily to raise awareness of the impact of visiting on people in detention, the campaign utilised the message of solidarity to encourage members of the public, people with lived experience, AVID members and beyond, to send their messages of solidarity to people in detention. Based around the idea of an advent calendar with a daily 'message', and with some very powerful testimony, the #insolidarity25 campaign successfully raised income for AVID as well as raising awareness of the cruelty of being locked up indefinitely;



Above: AVID's Immigration Detention Handbook

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We gathered in solidarity to mark the contribution of the many thousands of volunteers AVID has supported over the years.

- AVID wrote two pieces as part of this year’s **‘Unlocked’ social media tour of immigration detention**, facilitated by the Detention Forum. One article focused on our Director’s reflections on ten years of supporting immigration detention visiting and the other on detention at Morton Hall in Lincolnshire;
- Our key awareness raising event this year was **‘In solidarity: 25 years of volunteer visiting’**. This event marked the 25th anniversary of our organisation, but while there was little to celebrate in the continued indefinite detention of people in the UK, we gathered in solidarity to mark the contribution of the many thousands of volunteers AVID has supported over the years. With an expert panel including volunteers with 25 years’ experience or more, in conversation with new volunteers and with contributions from people who had been supported in detention, this was a lively event and a chance for our members to celebrate their work;
- In addition, our dynamic and reactive **social media programme** continued, with over 5,000 twitter followers by the end of the year. Our website continued to be well utilised by both members and wider audiences.



Detention Action taking part in #insolidarity25 social media campaign

STRATEGIC AREA TWO

Strengthening and growing our community of solidarity and friendship with people affected by detention

- As always, AVID prioritises the **development and support of our dynamic organisational membership**. This year, we provided a portfolio of options to visitors' groups across the UK, including tailored support, advice and mentoring alongside our established training and skillshare programmes. This was made available to all 15 members during the year;
- Our **training programme** included a range of topical external trainings developed and delivered in partnership with thematic experts, as well as our respected in-house training modules. In total, 65 volunteer visitors from groups across the country were trained during the year and a further 14 participated in skills share sessions;
- **Six training sessions** were delivered in 2019, including 'Hearing voices in detention', developed with MIND in Camden, a mental health charity; 'Mental Health First Aid' training with the Take Action Group; and 'Age disputed cases in detention and what visitors can do to help', with the Refugee Council. These specialist trainings were open to all visitors from our membership. We also delivered regular sessions on visiting skills, which we continue to tailor to the specific needs of each organisation;
- Two **skills share sessions** were held this year, based on topics identified as priority by our members. This included a session on 'post detention support' and a second on 'improving visitors' wellbeing';

6
training
sessions

65
volunteers
trained

2
skills share
sessions



Jesuit Refugee Service
taking part in the
#insolidarity25 social
media campaign



- Work was ongoing throughout the year to **maintain access for NGOs and visitors' groups to places of detention**, enabling more people in detention to receive support. In 2019 we were delighted to work in depth with the Lewes Prison Visiting Group, part of Lewes Group in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, to re-establish their visiting at HMP Lewes. This followed a number of years where the group were prevented from visiting. Alongside this we also continued to work across a number of detention centres and short-term holding facilities to build and facilitate working relationships between our members and the management of these facilities, vital to ensuring volunteer support is delivered smoothly and easily;
- Our **annual Members Conference** was a pivotal moment in the year for AVID and its members. This year, the programme of workshops, shared learnings, training, and networking was attended by 14 group representatives from across the UK. Over the two-day event, attendees were provided with a series of workshops, training sessions and events. External speakers included: 'Supporting people in detention who lack capacity' by Jennifer Blair, Barrister No 5 Chambers; 'Scrutiny and oversight in detention' delivered by Hindpal Singh Bhui of HMIP (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons), and 'Immigration legal updates' by Mark Heylands, Solicitor at Deighton Peirce Glynn. Sessions were also delivered by members, including a useful workshop on safeguarding delivered by Detention Action. We also enjoyed a lively morning workshop examining the changing landscape of the detention sector and considering how visitors' groups may respond to, for example, centre closures or a potential time limit. Sessions were tailored to the specific needs of our members as well as prioritising key changes in law and policy;
- Continuing our **programme of outreach nationally**, enabling us to ensure group development plans remain relevant and up to date, and to provide support, advice and guidance on issues identified at these visits. In this last year, this included volunteer recruitment, staffing recruitment, working with detention centre staff, casework input, and safeguarding;
- In 2019 we developed **peer mentoring** for new staff joining the AVID membership network, enabling advice, guidance and information sharing between visitors' group coordinators across the UK. This was developed in response to the very niche nature of immigration detention visiting, and as a way of ensuring new staff are less isolated and can learn from each other;
- Complementing this, our Training and Membership Coordinator also continued to deliver **mentoring and coaching support** to Group Coordinators within the network. This ongoing support and advice has proved invaluable to the coordinators of visitors' groups, many of whom are working in emotionally stressful environments and balancing casework with volunteer management;
- **Best practice resources, guidance and information sharing** continued to be a priority this year, working to consolidate the systems in place to ensure best practice is captured and learning is iterative. This included working to upskill coordinators and to strengthen the sustainability of members through capacity building. This year, this included working with members to encourage their participation in various advocacy initiatives and to gather evidence and monitor conditions in detention;
- Facilitating greater interaction between visitors' groups across the country, including through our **online discussion forum**, open to all members. This enables a confidential discussion of the practicalities of running a visitors' group and provides a safe space for information sharing about the myriad issues that arise, including casework, management, or relationships with those running the centres.

STRATEGIC AREA THREE

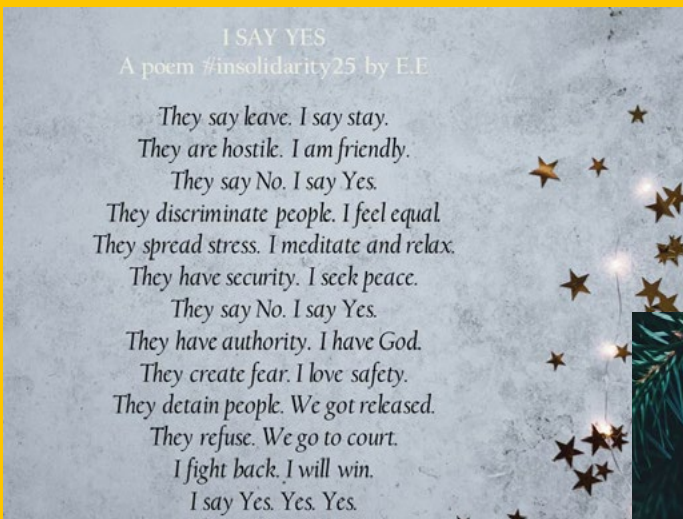
Influencing reform of detention policy and practice

- Continuing to **address national trends in immigration detention policy** by facilitating and nurturing coalitions and building effective partnerships within the AVID membership and beyond. This includes chairing regular forums such as the Detention Monitoring Group (below) alongside establishing ad hoc coalitions to encourage joint working and collaboration on key emerging trends;
- Regular meetings of the **Detention Monitoring Group** continue to provide a safe and collaborative space for AVID members and other NGOs working inside detention centres and prisons. The group met six times this year, sharing information and working collaboratively on a range of issues including quality of legal aid provision in detention; healthcare, case management and alternatives to detention; and the new ‘incentivised return schemes’ being piloted. 15 organisations regularly attend these meetings, and work together on joint advocacy and sharing best practice;
- Policy engagement with the Home Office continued to be challenging throughout 2019. Central to this was a hugely important consultation on the **Detention Centre Rules**, which regulate daily life in detention and are therefore of vital significance for everyone in detention. AVID established a short-term working group along with Medical Justice, Bail for Immigration Detainees, Freedom from Torture and Detention Action, to ensure maximum impact of our evidence on a number of the rules. AVID commented in detail, highlighting some major/overarching concerns, in particular the explicit linking of privileges and incentives in the regime to ‘compliance with removal’; changes to protections like Rule 35; and other changes which effectively downgrade rather than strengthen protections. This is at odds with the push for detention reform taking place in other detention policy areas. The consultation was submitted in June 2019, but by year’s end there was no sign of the Rules being laid before Parliament, so we don’t as yet know if any of our recommendations were taken on board;

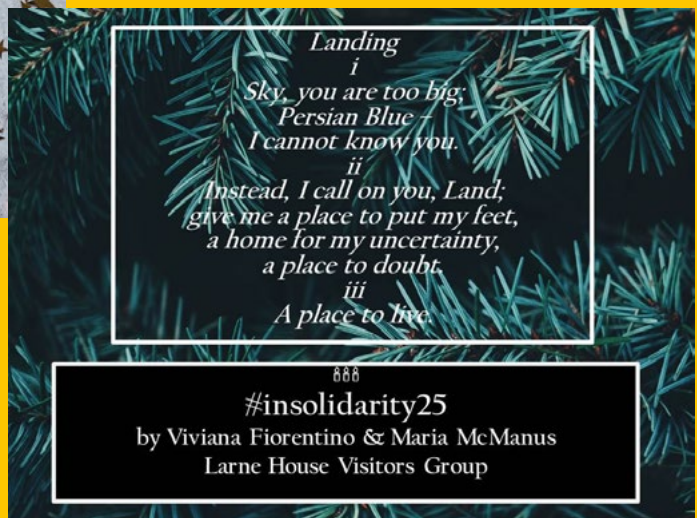


Members of Freed Voices taking part in #insolidarity25 social media campaign

- In 2019 we continued our contribution to the collective advocacy of the **Detention Forum**, with our Director on the Coordination Group and providing policy input. This year this centred on ensuring momentum around the detention reform programme started in response to the Shaw Review last year and working to raise awareness of the community-based alternatives to detention pilots;
- We continued to advocate on behalf of our members at various Government stakeholder forums, this included the **detention sub group** of the **NASF asylum stakeholder forum** which meets quarterly, and in addition this year our Director was asked to join the Strategic Engagement Group in relation to the Home Office's community-based alternatives to detention pilots. We also joined the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's stakeholder group on the Adults at risk policy;
- We continued to develop a relationship with the UK's **statutory monitoring bodies**, both HMIP and the IMB (Independent Monitoring Boards). Working closely with HMIP we continued to provide evidence on an ongoing basis as well as submitting concerns prior to and during inspections. Alongside this we continued to facilitate the input of our membership to inspection processes;
- We continued to monitor the **immigration detention of people in prisons post sentence**, regularly submitting requests via the Freedom of Information Act to establish which prisons were holding large numbers of people under immigration act powers;
- As with previous years, we were heavily involved in **advocacy and negotiations to maintain local access for our members to places of detention**. This has included monitoring changes in access provision and challenging attempts to dilute the independence of our membership groups working inside detention.



#insolidarity25 social media campaign



Summary of Accounts

For the year ended 31st December 2019

Income	Unrestricted Funds 2019	Restricted Funds 2019	Total Funds 2019
Grants & Donations			
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	-	50,000	50,000
Tudor Trust	-	40,000	40,000
Evan Cornish Foundation	-	5,000	5,000
Swan Mountain Trust	-	3,000	3,000
Edith Maud Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust	-	1,000	1,000
Chillag Family Trust	3,000	-	3,000
The Souter Trust	3,000	-	3,000
Donations	5,943	-	5,943
Subtotal grants & donations	11,943	99,000	110,943
Membership fees	1,725	-	1,725
Handbook sales	2,037	-	2,037
Bank interest	23	-	23
Other receipts	145	-	145
Total income	15,873	99,000	114,873
Expenditure			
Staff costs	1,566	75,495	77,061
Premises and running costs	2,599	-	2,599
Governance costs	11,487	8,549	20,036
Direct Charitable Expenditure	5,636	5,016	10,652
Total expenditure	21,288	89,060	110,348
Net receipts/(payments)	-5,415	9,940	4,525
Cash funds at start of period	11,122	38,266	49,388
Cash funds at end of period	5,707	48,206	53,913

Treasurer's Report

The board is very grateful indeed for its members, individual donors, and funders, without whose generous support AVID could not carry out its functions. In particular, the continued generosity of the Tudor Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation is something the board values very highly. The board is also extremely grateful for the support of the Evan Cornish Foundation, the Edith Maud Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust, the Swan Mountain Trust, the Chillag Family Trust, and the Souter Trust.

The board recognises that AVID exists in a very competitive market for funds, and that 2019 marks the final Tranche of our two major grants. Between 2018 and 2019 the board undertook necessary work on funding strategy with a view to diversifying our income streams, made possible by Esmée Fairbairn's Grants Plus programme. We engaged the services of Insley Consulting to conduct an Income Opportunity Review who reported their findings in January 2019. The board is taking these into consideration in its strategy to diversify our income streams and focus on increasing individual donations. We are also grateful to our funders for the advice they have kindly given us in this area.

Ciaran Price, Treasurer



#insolidarity25 social media campaign

About us

Staff

Ali McGinley, Director

Harriet Ballance, Acting Director (to February 2019)

Gee Manoharan, Training and Membership Coordinator

Amy Ramsay, Training and Membership Coordinator (to September 2019)

Trustees

Andrew Wilson, Chair and Acting Treasurer (to 20/11/2019)

Jane Ryan, Secretary (to 20/11/2019)

Jennifer (to 20/11/2019)

Ciaran Price

Elizabeth Flint, Chair

Carolina Albuerne Rodriguez

Michael Darko

Patrons

Lord David Ramsbotham

Funders

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Tudor Trust

Edith Maud Ellis Charitable Trust

Evan Cornish Foundation

Souter Trust

Chillag Family Trust

And with thanks to all our donors: J Thorne and family, R Roberts, A Wilson, FP Neibig, K English, D Hewitt, S Platt, J Choi, E Ndiweni-Mueller, J Conway, M Church, All Saint's Church (Milton, Cambridge), and the Parish of Holy Trinity and St. Mary's (Guildford).

Front cover photo by [ev](#) on [Unsplash](#)



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