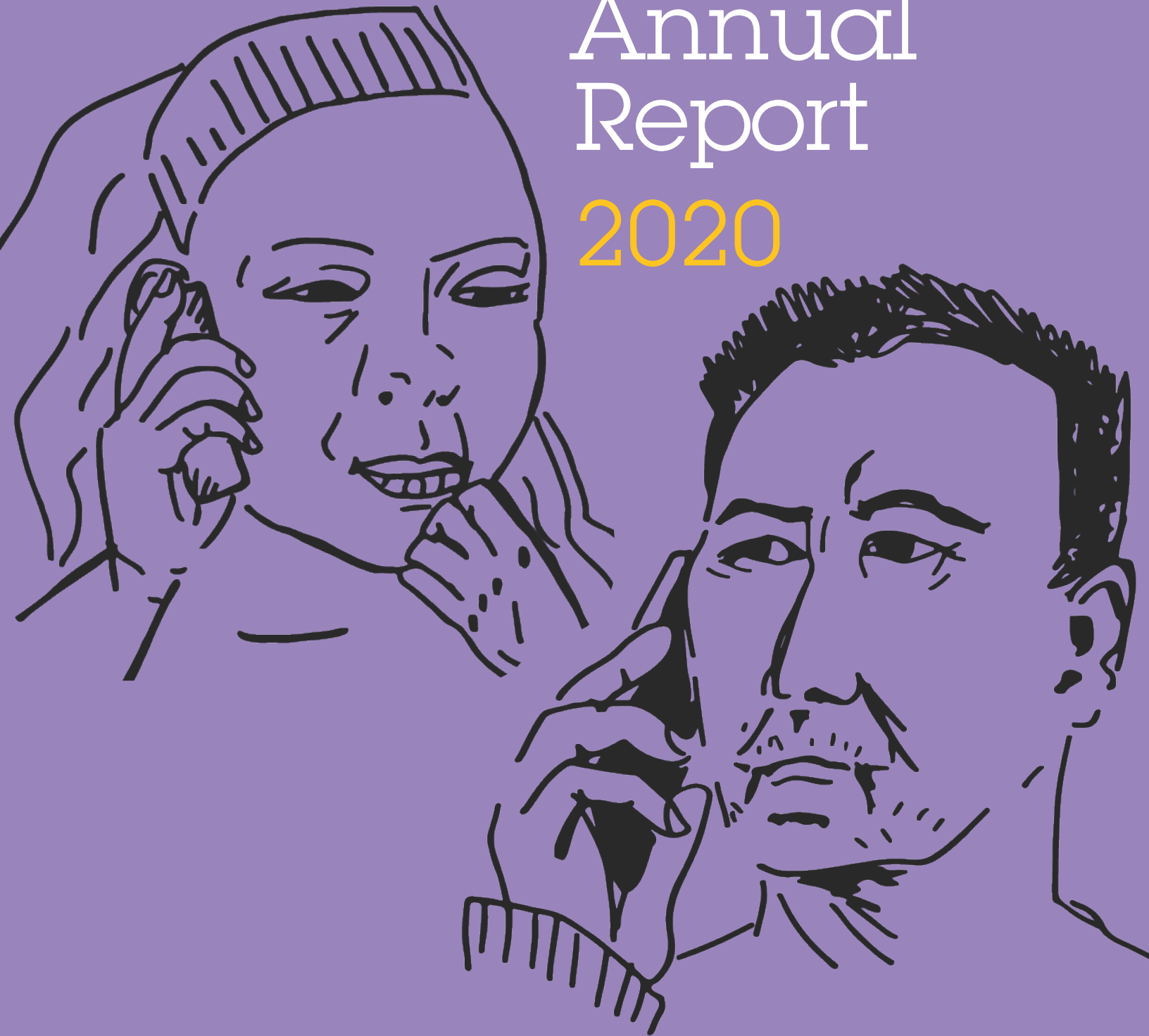




association of **visitors** to
immigration detainees

Annual Report 2020



Who is AVID?

AVID is the national membership network supporting volunteer visitors in immigration detention. Our independent member groups provide a wide range of support to people in every detention centre in the UK, and several prisons. We provide advocacy, training and support, working to ensure everyone affected by detention in the UK can access a skilled volunteer.

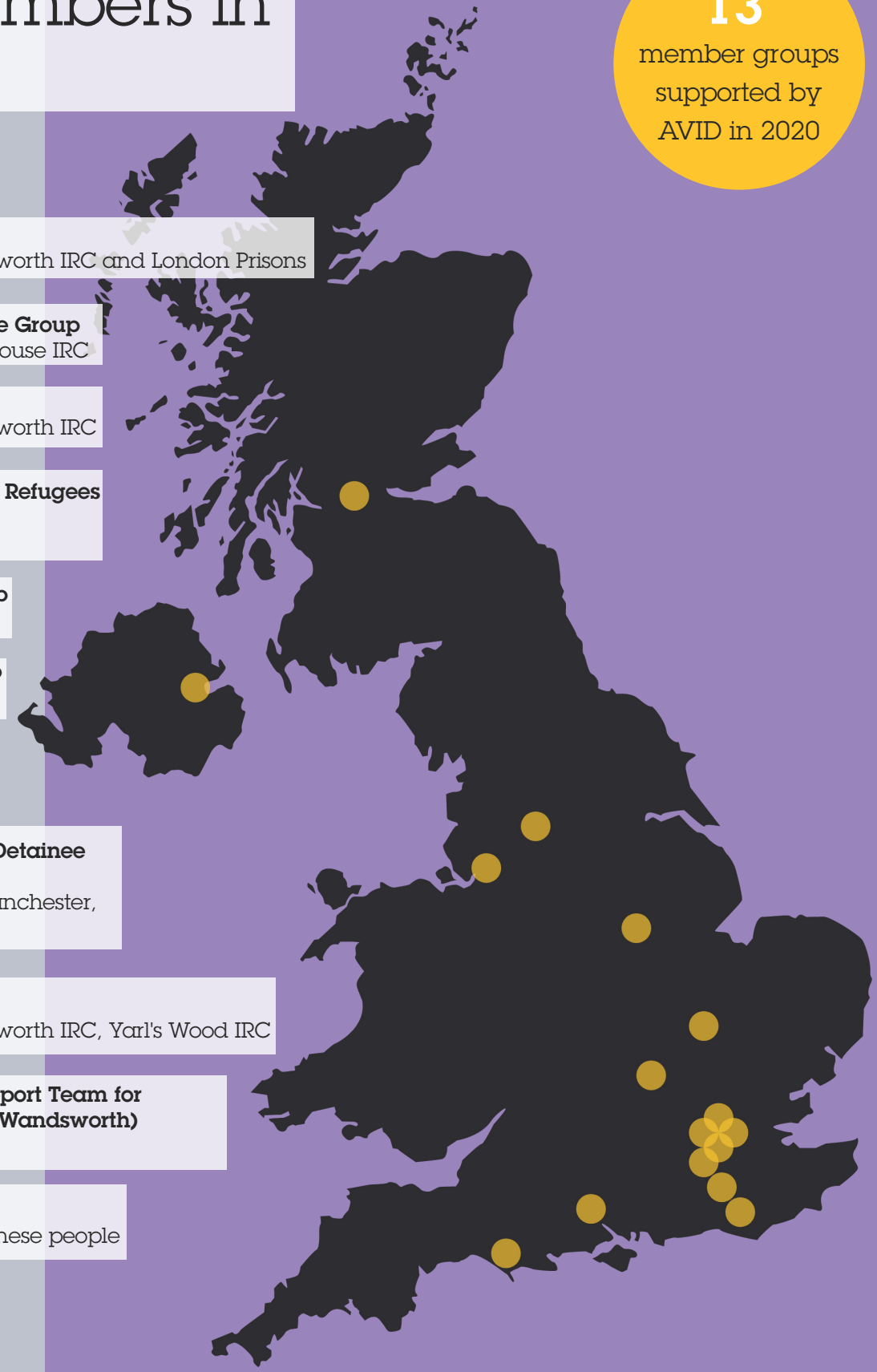


Immigration detention in 2020

- In 2020 there were **7** detention centres, or IRCs (Immigration Removal Centres), operational in the UK, along with several residential short-term holding facilities.
- In 2020, **14,773** people entered detention, **down 40% since 2019** (24,443) and 15,449 people left detention, down 37% since 2019 (24,512).
- Of those who left detention, 4,048 (26%) were removed from the UK, and so **74% were released from detention back into their community**, their detention having served no purpose.
- The government is only supposed to detain people it intends to remove. In March 2020, Detention Action launched a legal challenge on the basis that it is unlawful to detain people during a travel ban. Though the challenge was unsuccessful, the Home Office was prompted to **release almost 1000 people** from detention.
- At the end of June, there were **only 330 people held in detention centres** in the UK, with an additional 368 people detained in prisons, representing the lowest number of people detained at one time in the last decade.

AVID members in 2020

- Asylum Welcome**
HMP Huntercombe
- 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
- Lewes Group in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**
HMP Lewes
- Larne House Visitors Group**
Larne House IRC
- Morton Hall Visitors Group**
Morton Hall IRC
- Scottish Detainee Visitors**
Dungavel IRC
- Manchester Immigration Detainee Support Team**
Manchester STHF, HMP Manchester, HMP Risley
- SOAS Detainee Support**
Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC, Yarl's Wood IRC
- BEST (Befriending and Support Team for Foreign Nationals in HMP Wandsworth)**
HMP Wandsworth
- Waging Peace**
Supporting detained Sudanese people
- Yarl's Wood Befrienders**
Yarl's Wood IRC



13
member groups
supported by
AVID in 2020

Chair's report

As I write this in the Spring of 2021, looking back on 2020, it is hard to capture in words the significant challenges we faced as a society last year. What stands out to me is the uneven health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, which have compounded pre-existing racial and social inequalities and caused exceptional distress for people in immigration detention in lockdown. In this context, AVID's staff, members and volunteers have worked tirelessly to adapt to this ever-changing landscape, innovating and collaborating with others to try to meet the needs of people and communities impacted by detention.

In the recent political landscape, we have seen the cancellation of community-based alternatives to detention pilots; the planned opening of a new detention centre for women at Hassockfield, County Durham; and the consultation on the Government's New Plan for Immigration, which includes the use of 'reception' or quasi-detention centres. In view of the ongoing hostile environment and increasingly negative rhetoric directed at asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, AVID's voice, especially in amplifying the voice of those with lived experience of detention, is more critical than ever.

At AVID, we believe in the importance of pushing for change that is inclusive of everyone affected by detention. For this reason, we used our AGM in 2020 to foreground the experiences of people detained post-sentence under immigration powers in prison, who face additional barriers to accessing voluntary and specialist support. Our work throughout the year has built on

those efforts, for example, pushing the Government to explore the disparities between the experience of those detained under immigration powers in prison and detention centres.

In our previous annual report, we talked about our commitment to collaborate with partners to raise awareness of the structural racism that underpins immigration detention and to explore ways we can support meaningful, systemic change. Not only for those who are detained but also for those that have previously been detained or live in fear of being detained. We are mindful that we have a long way to go on this journey. Internally, we are reflecting on what meaningful change might look like at an individual, collective and systemic level. We will reach out to collaborate with members to shape how AVID can support more sustained action to address inequalities and contribute to ongoing engagement with anti-racism at the heart of AVID. One of our first priorities when



we revisit our organisational strategy shortly will be facilitating ways for people with lived experience to meaningfully shape AVID's path going forwards.

I extend a heartfelt thanks on behalf of the board to AVID's volunteers, members and staff; and to Ali McGinley for her direction and guidance in steering everyone through the last 12 months. I also extend our sincere thanks to those that have funded AVID to enable it to meet the ongoing needs of its beneficiaries, especially for their responsiveness to the emergent needs that came out of the pandemic and the flexibility extended to AVID with funds already secured, which ensured we could adapt as best we could to meet new demands.

I am deeply thankful to Ciaran Price our Treasurer who is stepping down as a trustee after six dedicated years of service, and would also like to welcome our new trustee Tom Nunn, who brings enormous insight from his work as a public law solicitor with Duncan Lewis.



AVID's staff, members and volunteers have worked tirelessly to adapt to this ever-changing landscape, innovating and collaborating with others to try to meet the needs of people impacted by detention.

Finally, I would like to thank the board for their immeasurable support over the last year and their ongoing commitment to AVID. The board continue to work hard to support AVID to respond with confidence to the challenges it faces. They are keenly aware of the pressures faced by our members and those in detention and fiercely loyal to AVID and its efforts to support visitors and advocate for people in detention. Time given by trustees does not go unnoticed but is rarely given a platform for recognition, so thank you all.

Our community stands for engagement not enforcement. In solidarity with those in detention we will continue to advocate for respect, dignity and humanity, and encourage you to do the same in supporting us.

Elizabeth Flint, May 2021



Director's report

Visitors are a lifeline for people in detention and are often the first port of call for someone who is feeling particularly vulnerable and isolated. Visitors are also often the first to report concerns about conditions in detention and act as informal 'human rights monitors'. Access for civil society organisations like AVID members is therefore vital, yet events of 2020 put this under unprecedented strain. For the most part of the year, the response to the pandemic and successive lockdowns effectively suspended all face to face support inside detention. While this in itself posed huge challenges for our members, the latter months were characterised by an increasingly reactive and ad hoc approach to immigration detention, with centres 'redesignated' in status, often with no notice. This put immense pressure on detention NGOs to adapt quickly in order to reduce the human impact of an ever changing landscape of detention facilities and procedures.

One step forward, two steps back

Numbers in detention across the UK reduced dramatically in 2020, in response to a legal challenge. The amplified risk of transmission in custodial settings led to prolonged periods of isolation for those who remained locked up, and for those released, as navigating life post detention in the middle of a pandemic presented huge difficulties. AVID members were called on to provide post-detention support in response, proving once again our collective adaptability in the face of change. With as few as 330 people in detention centres in June, there was a moment of hope

for the pursuit of community-based case management, and the chance to explore the key question: if people can be supported in the community, why detain? Providing elements of solidarity, signposting, peer support and a range of other services to people post release was new for many of our members but has given us much to think about in terms of how we can adapt our skills and experience to extend our reach. The work of our members in their communities is a great example of how community-based case management approaches could work in practice, as a far more effective and humane 'alternative' to detention.

The proportion of people detained in prisons as opposed to detention centres increased significantly in 2020, prompting more groups to explore prison visiting as a way to reach people who arguably face even greater barriers to exercising their rights. AVID took a lead in our AGM by discussing the additional barriers to accessing justice and support faced by people detained in prison, highlighting that advocacy and solidarity should be inclusive of everyone affected by detention. New places of quasi-detention also appeared as, increasingly, the government chose to hold people seeking asylum in institutional detention-like settings before they were able to make an asylum claim. By the close of the year, immigration detention looked very different. It is telling that AVID and its members have responded, adapted and continued to do what we do best – stand alongside those at the sharp end of this cruel system – despite the numerous challenges that 2020 has posed.

In light of the necessary and urgent Black Lives Matter protests and the hugely disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities of colour, 2020 also challenged us to reflect as a network on how to meaningfully counter the structurally racist nature of immigration detention and the criminalisation of racially minoritised people in the UK. At AVID we acknowledge that we are only at the start of our journey towards integrating anti-racism into all aspects of our work and foregrounding the expertise of people who have experienced detention across our decision-making. As a start, we have begun by ensuring anti-racism and anti-saviourism are at the centre of our core training for visitors to ensure the visiting relationship is rooted in a solidarity approach that aims to dismantle rather than reinforce inequality. We have also expanded our staff capacity to engage the public and raise awareness about detention and the structural racism it operationalises. We are now halfway through our current 2019-2022 strategy, and due to the extremely fast-paced nature of change we've seen in 2020, working in an integrated fashion across our three strategic focus areas has never been more urgent: increasing understanding; influencing



For the most part of the year, the response to the pandemic and successive lockdowns effectively suspended all face to face support inside detention.

change and strengthening our community of solidarity with people affected by detention. I hope you will enjoy reading about our activities this year.

Internally, AVID has also undergone significant change. With thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, we were delighted to welcome two new staff members to the team in the last quarter of the year. Fiona Ranford joined as Gee Manoharan's job share partner in the Training and Membership Coordinator role, providing hands-on, tailored support to all organisations in the AVID network. Orla Gill is AVID's first Communications Officer, leading on our awareness raising and communications work and overseeing our voluntary social media team. We also welcomed two social media volunteers this year, Rosie Burrell and Thea Slotover, and I am grateful to both for their dedication and creativity in handling our dynamic twitter feed. I'd like to thank Gee Manoharan for his unwavering commitment in the face of what can only be described as a tumultuous year, and our dedicated Board of Trustees for all their support.



Influencing reform of detention policy and practice

Looking to the future

In 2021, we will continue to advocate for independent civil society access to places of detention, to ensure people in detention know their rights and to informally monitor how people are being treated.

We will continue centring anti-racism and anti-saviourism in our trainings for volunteer visitors and supporting organisations in our network to foreground meaningful participation of people with lived experience of detention in their organisations.

We will be calling for increased transparency and formal scrutiny of the consequences of the Home Secretary's enforcement-focused policy approach.

And we will be highlighting the need for alternatives, for which we can draw inspiration from the many community-based initiatives in our network that stand alongside people in and post detention.

Ali McGinley, May 2021



Collective advocacy around treatment of people in detention during Covid-19

As public health guidance and lockdown measures began to be rolled out nationally, it was clear that practices such as social distancing would be almost impossible to implement safely in custodial settings. We consulted with members in our network in every detention centre in the UK to monitor health protection measures in different places of detention and highlight discrepancies. This led to us advocating, successfully, for the Home Office to publish its guidance on Covid-19 prevention in detention. The guidance, however, was woefully inadequate for addressing the extremely high risk of transmission.

We began receiving reports of high levels of anxiety, distress and self-harm from inside detention. Together with our members, we wrote an open letter to the Director General of Immigration Enforcement highlighting our concerns. In the letter we called for the immediate release of all those who remained in immigration detention in a safe, managed way, as well as further evidence that the Home Office was adequately working to mitigate transmission.



Kate Alexander, Director of our member group Scottish Detainee Visitors, said:

“ We are extremely concerned that there are still people being held in detention. There is little prospect of removing people from the country because of the current crisis, so their detention serves no purpose. The people we are in contact with are stressed and anxious and this is exacerbated by their increased isolation due to the lockdown. It's time for the Home Office to act.

On the 18th of March, Detention Action issued a legal challenge to the continued detention of many hundreds during the pandemic in light of national restrictions such as the travel ban. While the legal challenge was ultimately dismissed, it did result in some significant concessions from the Home Office including the release of almost 1,000 people.

Detention monitoring and coalition advocacy

In 2020, we continued to piece together a national picture of trends in immigration detention policy by chairing our regular civil society forum the Detention Monitoring Group, while establishing new partnerships to collaboratively influence detention reform.

The Detention Monitoring Group's regular meetings provide a safe and collaborative space for AVID members and other NGOs working inside detention centres and prisons. The group met five times this year, sharing information and working collaboratively on a range of issues including quality of legal aid provision particularly in prison detention; healthcare, case management and alternatives to detention.

15 organisations regularly attend these meetings, and work together on joint advocacy and sharing best practice.

Along with our membership, during the pandemic we collectively monitored:

- ➔ Covid-19 responses in different places of detention
- ➔ Cases of Covid-19 in different places of detention
- ➔ Numbers in detention, as well as releases and what happened on release
- ➔ Movement of people across the UK between different places of detention

Influencing reform of detention policy and practice (continued)

Having been a founding member of the Detention Forum, a broad membership network of civil society organisations and individuals campaigning to reform detention, we continued to contribute regularly to the development of the Forum's policy positions. We are also members of the Communications Strategic Working Group which aims to develop effective messaging on the need for detention reform for a range of parliamentary, civil society and public audiences.

Government engagement

Policy engagement with the Home Office remained challenging throughout 2020. In addition to our bilateral advocacy meetings on behalf of our members, we continued to lobby collectively with partner NGOs at various Government stakeholder forums, including the detention sub-group of the National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF) which meets quarterly. In addition, this year our Director was invited to be part of the Strategic Engagement Group of the Community Engagement Pilots; the Home Office's community-based alternatives to detention pilots. We continued to push for transparency about how the pilots will be evaluated and how this evidence will be taken into consideration in future. We also consulted with the Home Office's Director of Detention and Escorting Services to discuss managed and safe returns for volunteers in detention following the easing of lockdown restrictions.

AVID also pushed for greater transparency on the Home Office's work to address the disparities in treatment between prison and detention centres. As a result, regular meetings of the Home Office's 'Prison Parity' project were set up, where the barriers accessing legal advice and support for people detained in prisons relative to detention centres was investigated. The Home Office met with AVID along with Medical Justice, BID and Detention Action. Alongside this work, we continued to monitor the detention of people in prisons post sentence, regularly submitting requests, via the Freedom of Information Act, to establish where people are being held post sentence under immigration powers. This information is not provided within official statistics, making it harder for support to be provided in specific prisons. We ensure this information is shared on our website.

Statutory partners

We continued to develop a relationship with the UK's statutory monitoring bodies, both HMIP (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons) and the IMB (Independent Monitoring Boards). This year we provided a briefing paper to HMIP with evidence on each detention centre in the UK ahead of their adapted 'scrutiny visits' which have replaced inspections during the pandemic. Following AVID's briefing, and further information we shared on behalf of members, HMIP confirmed that immigration detention was a priority for their inspection team during the crisis.

Alongside this, we continued to facilitate the input of our membership to scrutiny processes and designed an awareness raising session for an IMB training day in March which focussed on strengthening relationships between IMB and visitor groups to improve outcomes for people in detention.

National access and transparency

As in previous years, we were heavily involved in advocacy and negotiations on a national level to maintain access and transparency for civil society groups to places of detention. The Home Office made several ad hoc changes to the status of detention centres during the pandemic, and access for visitors both in person varied across the year and from centre to centre. Our work in this area has included monitoring changes in access provision, challenging attempts to dilute the independence of our membership groups working inside detention and pushing for transparency on decision-making affecting the use or status of detention facilities across the UK.



No Return to Normal: International Partnerships

Together with campaigner Mishka Pillay, who has lived experience of detention, our Director co-wrote an article entitled 'No Return To Normal' published by Western Sydney University and the International Detention Coalition which highlighted the dangers of Covid-19 in detention and called for the expansion of community-based alternatives following releases from detention during the pandemic. AVID was also invited to present at an international symposium organised by Open Society Foundations about the approach of the UK government to Covid-19 from a detention perspective and outlining civil society responses.

The pandemic also brought into sharper focus the similarities between immigration detention on both sides of the Atlantic. This led to several discussions between AVID and our sister organisation in the USA, Freedom for Immigrants, sharing evidence of the amplified risks posed by the pandemic to those in carceral settings out of which came our joint letter work discussed below.



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

Weekly peer support sessions for our members

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic we've been developing different support methodologies to ensure our members have access to information, training and support. A key feature of our response was to set up regular peer support calls for volunteer coordinators to share best practice and pool information as the pandemic unfolded.

The coordinators' calls have been a great tool for bringing groups from across the UK together in an informally. The sessions acted as a support system for coordinators while providing opportunities to find out more from each other about the current situation in each centre and share ideas about alternative ways to support people held throughout the pandemic.

We split the calls to ensure we covered both members' local updates on visiting access and thematic questions such as 'setting up Skype drop-ins' or 'what to do when numbers or referrals are low due to lockdown'. We also produced a map of language skills in the network, so that groups could easily get in contact with each other when they urgently needed a language speaker.

As well as a place to let off steam, these meetings highlighted key information gaps and discrepancies between health protection measures in different detention centres. They also contributed to stronger horizontal links between organisations in our network who have reported feeling better connected with the national picture and better prepared to reach out and partner with each other where possible. The calls have become invaluable as a source of collective monitoring of detention during a time of crisis, and there is a real sense of joint ownership as members made more regular contact with AVID and each other.

New post-detention, wellbeing and phone befriending training resources

In mid-2020 the Government briefly acknowledged the elevated risk of Covid-19 transmission in detention centres and released hundreds of people into the community without adequate support. Our member organisations were thrown into the deep end, due to people's need for continued support after their release. In response, we developed a new digital signposting and information toolkit mapping post-detention services across the UK with each member contributing information for their region.

We also developed bespoke training resources to aid member groups who were training their volunteers to visit people over the phone. This was our first online training, which we developed as a rapid response to the first lockdown in April. Members appreciated the timely delivery and began delivering the training to their own volunteers immediately.

“We've very quickly realised that we really needed to help people who'd been released to get access to what they needed, whether it was food, clothes, accommodation, signposting to organisations that could help them ... it became massive ... it became something that was even more important than what we had been doing before, which was generally just emotional support.

- Volunteer visitor, quoted in Dr. Teresa Degenhardt, 'Impact of Covid-19 on Volunteer Visitors to Immigration Detention' (Queen's University Belfast, 2020)



“I've found it really useful to have updates from groups about what's going on across the country

- AVID Member

Avid members' peer support zoom call (December 2020)

“I've liked the opportunity to share policy-based actions and also to learn from people's experience of transitioning to remote forms of support.

- AVID Member

“Great way to get to know staff from all the groups

- AVID Member

To accompany this we designed a new volunteer Wellbeing Programme which our Training and Membership Coordinator along with AVID Trustee, campaigner Michael Darko, delivered to volunteer coordinators. This completely new session provided a necessary focus on a neglected area and was designed to provide coordinators with a platform to freely discuss their worries, concerns, and current challenges in their role. From the session, we created a resource for coordinators to deliver themselves, to help combat volunteer burnout in a time of crisis.

Strengthening and growing our community of solidarity with people affected by detention (continued)

Record number of training sessions

The unique challenges of 2020 coincided with our own plans to improve our capacity for online training delivery, allowing for more regular attendance from our geographically far-reaching network. The transition to online delivery allowed us to forge exciting new training partnerships and we were actually able to deliver more bespoke trainings to our members than ever before.

Fuelled by an increased need, we trained 161 people including coordinators of 13 organisations who between them oversee some 550 volunteers.

We also held special awareness and discussion events on pressing issues in immigration detention, detailed below.

AVID Training Sessions in 2020

1) Introduction to Immigration Detention and Visiting

2) How to access DDA (Detention Duty Advice) lawyers in detention

3) Wellbeing and self care for volunteer coordinators

4) Transitioning to Skype and telephone befriending 'Train the trainer' session

5) Talking to people with suicidal thoughts led by Samaritans

6) Supporting LGBTQI+ people in detention led by Rainbow Migration

7) Immigration Detention and the impact of EU transfer led by TACTIC

Crisis of removals: special webinar series

In Autumn, Home Secretary Priti Patel pledged to remove 1,000 people who had recently arrived in the UK via small boat. Despite a global pandemic, detention and deportations began taking place at an increasing pace and scale, particularly charter flights. This inhumane strategy to rush through as many removals as possible under EU-related Dublin regulations – prior to the UK Brexit date – was putting people at risk.

As a visitor, it is likely that you will meet someone in detention who is subject to removal or deportation. It is vital to learn more about current barriers to accessing good quality legal advice, the risk of transfer to an EU country and how this can be challenged.

To ensure volunteers are equipped to support people through these challenges, AVID partnered with Bail for Immigration Detainees, Duncan Lewis Solicitors and TACTIC Immigration and Asylum Training Consultancy to offer a series of webinars focusing on key themes relating to charter flights, access to legal advice in detention and the risk of transfer to an EU country.

Maintaining Local Access

Work was ongoing throughout the year to maintain independent access for local visitor groups to places of detention, enabling more people in detention to receive regular support. Alongside this we continued to work across a number of detention centres and short-

term holding facilities to build and facilitate working relationships between our members and management teams at these facilities. This work is vital to ensure people detained are aware of volunteer support and that this support is delivered smoothly.

Online discussion forum

During the pandemic our online discussion forum for visitors came into its own with regular posts and information being shared from across the network. We estimated a 200% increase in traffic following the start of the pandemic and the increased need for accurate real-time information about what was happening to people in detention in this context. This shows how important a tool this has become for members. Groups have been actively sharing their resources, concerns and solutions. Members reported forming deeper horizontal relationships stemming from use of the forum and the newly introduced peer support calls, increasing collaboration and signposting across the network.



Strengthening and growing our community of solidarity with people affected by detention (continued)

Mentoring and Coaching Support to Group Coordinators

In 2020 we continued our programme of mentoring and coaching support for group coordinators, working collaboratively on development plans to ensure our tailored support, advice and guidance remains relevant to each member group's goals. In the last year, this included countless group meetings and weekly one-to-one phone calls throughout lockdown sharing expertise in remote visiting, volunteer recruitment, staffing recruitment, working with detention centre staff, casework input, and safeguarding. In 2020 we worked closely with visitor groups in Larne and Manchester to share learning with each other about visiting in short-term holding facilities and responding to Covid-19.



Since I've taken on coordinator duties, my direct contact with AVID has increased and I have gained more of an appreciation for how important it is as a way of bringing us all together. It has helped our group make that link to the wider network. AVID has also been really useful when there is something going wrong systematically and we need to hold people to account; so we need to coordinate that."

- Thom, Coordinator, MIDST (Manchester Immigration Detention Support Team)

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

Public Cross-Border Call for Release

In Summer 2020, AVID's Director Ali McGinley along with Christina Fialho, the Director of Freedom For Immigrants, our sister organisation in the USA, co-authored a public letter calling for cross-border collaboration to release people into community-based alternatives to detention in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Signed by over 47 visitor groups representing over 1,778 volunteers, the letter emphasised the similarities in the use of detention in both countries and their woefully inadequate response to the current pandemic:



People in immigration detention are always vulnerable to abuse and medical neglect. During a health pandemic, the likelihood of abuse occurring is at an all-time high. Both countries have responded to Covid-19 by terminating all social visits to immigration detention. This leaves migrants without independent medical support and – crucially – without face-to-face contact with family, the community, and lawyers in many cases.



Volunteer visitor groups not only provide interpersonal support to people isolated in detention centers, they also monitor for human and civil rights abuses.

With organisations from Glasgow to Guadalupe, and from Houston, Nottingham, Iowa and Bedford, the letter represented the first joint call from visitor groups in both countries. We asked both Governments to release everyone from detention as a matter of urgency, and to ensure they receive ongoing support in the community.



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

Double Punishment: Immigration detention in prison

In November we held our key awareness-raising event of the year on the subject of immigration detention in prisons. More than sixty people attended, including campaigners, people with experience of detention and dozens of volunteers from 10+ visitors groups across the UK.

The aim was to share lessons learned from our members nationally, of whom an increasing number regularly visit people detained in prisons. We wanted to start a larger conversation about why detaining people in prisons is a problem that should no longer be sidelined.

As panelist and AVID trustee Michael Darko pointed out, the lack of rights experienced by those detained in prisons often gets left out of conversations and even campaigning on immigration detention:



The notion that someone that commits crime looks a certain way is not just a theory, it is a subconscious assumption that affects how we react. So we really have to ask ourselves why are we afraid to bring this topic up? Is it because we are worried about scaring funders away? Then we should also be

asking funders why they do not want to fund an organisation that is standing up for the human rights of those who have been losing their humanity because they committed a crime.

People held under immigration powers in prisons are hidden in plain sight. Solicitor and AVID trustee Tom Nunn had a client who had been held under immigration powers for 12 months after the end of his sentence without even realising it. Even his probation officer thought he was still serving his custodial sentence. The experience is doubly dehumanising and the number of people detained in this way is increasing.



When you are detained under immigration powers in a prison, even the benefits of the duty of care shown by the prison to prisoners evaporates.
– Michael Darko, AVID Trustee



The talk by Michael at the AGM about systemic racism in the criminal justice system and immigration detention system was really insightful and eye opening
- Beth, Coordinator, MHVG

Transforming our blog, website and newsletter

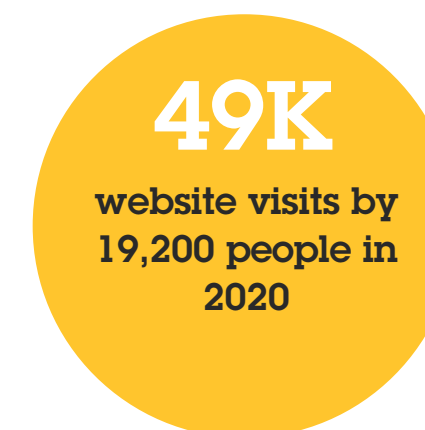
This year we redoubled our efforts to ensure our website was up to date with relevant information for people in detention, or those supporting someone detained, as well as thought-leading blog pieces exploring the human impact of detention, visiting and varied policy topics.

We wanted to foster a sense of shared ownership over our digital channels, which are a shared resource we aim to use to amplify the work of our members and the voices of people affected by detention. On the blog, guest contributors from among our network explored diverse topics, from the extreme isolation faced by people 'locked up' during lock down to the challenges of setting up a new visitor group. Meanwhile AVID staff provided statistical digests and simple summaries of key policy publications.

As a result our website is being used more often, and we saw a 23% increase in visits compared to 2019. We also refreshed our quarterly newsletter format, with dedicated space for 'volunteer voices' from across the network alongside key updates about conditions in detention, statistics and policy changes.

Collaboration with 'Bordered Lives':

We would like to thank Border Criminologies at Oxford University for donating money from sales of their book 'Bordered Lives' to AVID. The book is a collated set of powerful artworks by people in detention, giving a rare glimpse inside centres where camera phones are not allowed. It was published in Summer 2020.



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

Mobilising civil society to respond to new forms of quasi-detention

In a year of unforeseen changes as the Government repeatedly appeared to shift its approach to detention and asylum overnight, we saw a need to join up and mobilise civil society concerns about the decision to 'house' asylum seekers in ex-military barracks.

In December, we penned an open letter to the Immigration Minister and Shadow Home Secretary highlighting the risks posed by the Home Office's policy of housing people seeking asylum in disused barracks where social distancing was impossible, and urging them to house people safely in the community, to avoid further harm.

Co-signed by more than 60 community organisations working with people in detention or seeking asylum, our letter was covered in a national exclusive by The Guardian.

Building on momentum from other spokespeople including medical professionals who had spoken out about the retraumatising effects of ex-military sites on people fleeing war and torture, this press coverage contributed to humanising the story and deepening public understanding of the situation at the barracks.

Penally barracks was closed in March 2021. Napier barracks remains open in April 2021, despite mounting criticism.

End housing of asylum seekers in old army barracks, UK ministers urged

Exclusive: dozens of organisations make plea after damning reports on conditions at former military sites



While the barracks are not detention, the consequences for individuals are the same: being isolated and cut off from support networks, without access to legal advice and other specialist help, while being held in wholly inappropriate conditions for an unknown length of time.

-AVID and co-signatories, Letter to the Immigration Minister, December 2020

Article by Jamie Grierson in The Guardian (December 2020)

Engaging new supporters

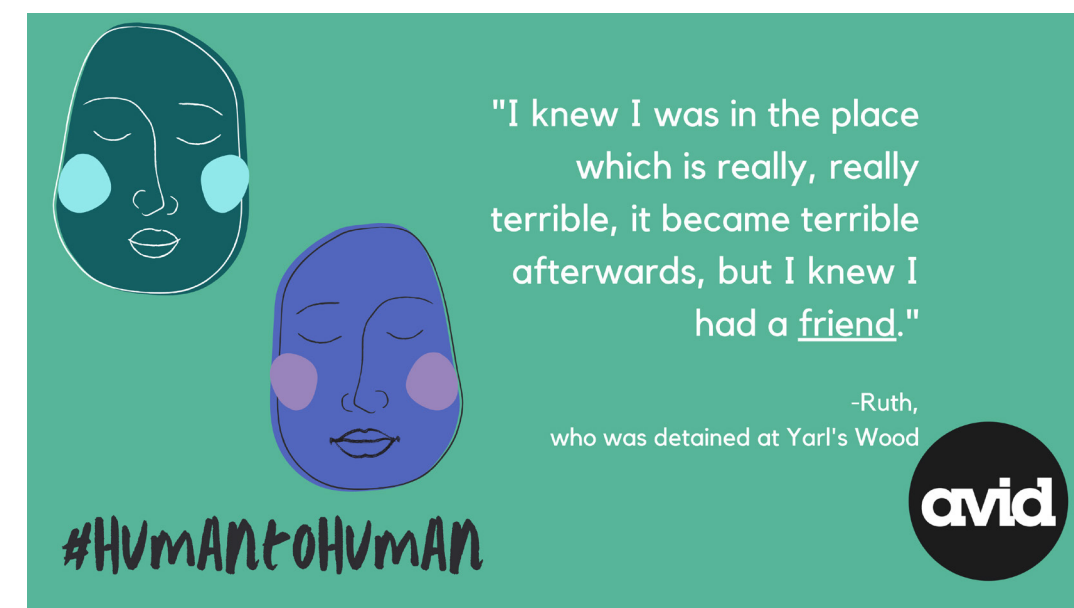
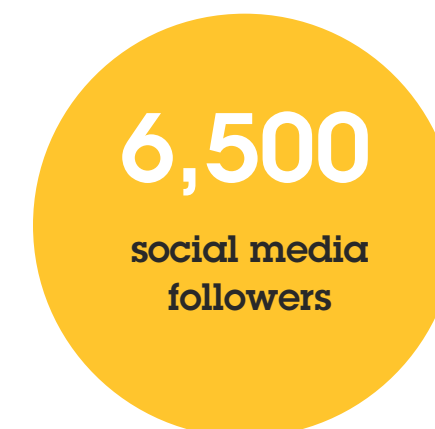
In 2020 we tried to focus on telling our story more effectively, building clear pathways for new supporters to engage with our community, from following us on social media or signing up to our newsletter to learn more about detention, to supporting us financially or becoming an individual member.

Our first Covid-19 lockdown appeal helped us raise vital funds in a time of crisis, while in December, we focussed our Winter Appeal on sharing stories of how AVID helps to build human connections across the walls of detention.

During this 'Human to Human' campaign, we saw a huge uptick in engagement as our social media posts and long form blogs, together telling a story of the need for visiting as well as advocacy for detention

reform, were repeatedly shared by partners and new supporters. Our total number of Twitter followers surpassed 6,000 in this time.

Throughout the year, we also trained and supported a team of several talented social media volunteers who helped to shape our social media voice and establish AVID as a regular, reliable online presence commenting on major issues.



Treasurer's report

This was an exceptionally challenging year for AVID. Along with the rest of the voluntary sector we had to react quickly and work hard to meet our beneficiaries' needs in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are extremely grateful for our members, individual donors, and funders who continue to support us during this global crisis. Their generosity in a time of unprecedented uncertainty means that AVID is going into the next year in a strong position.

AVID continues to implement the findings of the Income Opportunity Review we undertook in 2019. In the summer of this year we were pleased to be able to expand our team despite the ongoing uncertainty around the pandemic, creating a new Communications Officer role. This is a core part of our strategy to strengthen our network, diversify our income streams, and build upon our individual supporter base.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the National Lottery Community Fund, the Tudor Trust, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Charities Aid Foundation, and the Chillag Family Charitable Trust for their support this year. Without their support, and that of our individual donors and supporters, AVID could not have carried out its important role supporting our members and helping those in immigration detention at this crucial time.

Ciaran Price, May 2021



Summary of Accounts

For the year ending 31st December 2020

	Unrestricted Funds 2020	Restricted Funds 2020	Total Funds 2019
Income			
Grants & donations			
National Lottery Community Fund	-	50000	50000
Tudor Trust	-	45000	45000
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	27500	27500
Charities Aid Foundation	-	10000	10000
Chillag Family Trust	2000	-	2000
Donations	5312	-	5312
Subtotal grants & donations	7312	132500	139812
Membership fees	1359	-	1359
Bank interest	4	-	4
Total Income	8675	132500	141175
Expenditure			
Staff costs	479	77675	78154
Premises and running costs	74	10295	10369
Governance	157	2077	2234
Direct charitable expenditure	-	907	907
Total expenditure	710	90954	91664
Net receipts/(payments)	7965	41546	49511
Cash funds at the start of this period	5707	48206	53913
Cash funds at the end of this period	13672	89752	103424

The full set of independently examined accounts for the year can be obtained on request from AVID.

Goodbye from our treasurer

Why is it that a period of time can feel long and short simultaneously? I'm not entirely sure how six years has passed since I joined the board of AVID, but here we are! On the other hand, when I think of everything that's gone on in our space since 2015... you get what I mean.

My time on the AVID board has coincided with some major punctuations in UK political and social history (I stress that this is a coincidence). Brexit, the new immigration system, Covid, and economic turmoil all have huge bearing on the people in detention we are here to serve. That's not to mention the impact all this is having on us as a network, on our own organisations, and our ability to meet people's needs.

Spending time with members of the AVID network has truly been inspiring. Their determination to change things only seems to have grown with the challenges we face. And it's been my absolute privilege to support Ali and the AVID team who have worked ridiculously hard every year I've been at AVID but even more so in the last year.

There's something truly special about the network – its positivity – which I hope it never loses. Despite the gravity of the issues being dealt with, and despite the ultimate goal of ending arbitrary detention seeming so far away, this is what shines through. I think especially of the awesome creativity volunteers use – be that through plays, art, music, or poetry – to share the stories of people in detention and give them a voice. Building human connections between people in the community and people in detention is absolutely fundamental to that end goal.

I'm going to really miss being a trustee of AVID (I love a three hour meeting about spreadsheets as much as the next person). In all seriousness – this was my first trustee role. I have learned so much from the team, our former trustees and the volunteers, all of which I am taking with me and for that I say a big thanks.

Ciaran Price, May 2021



2020: A year in detention

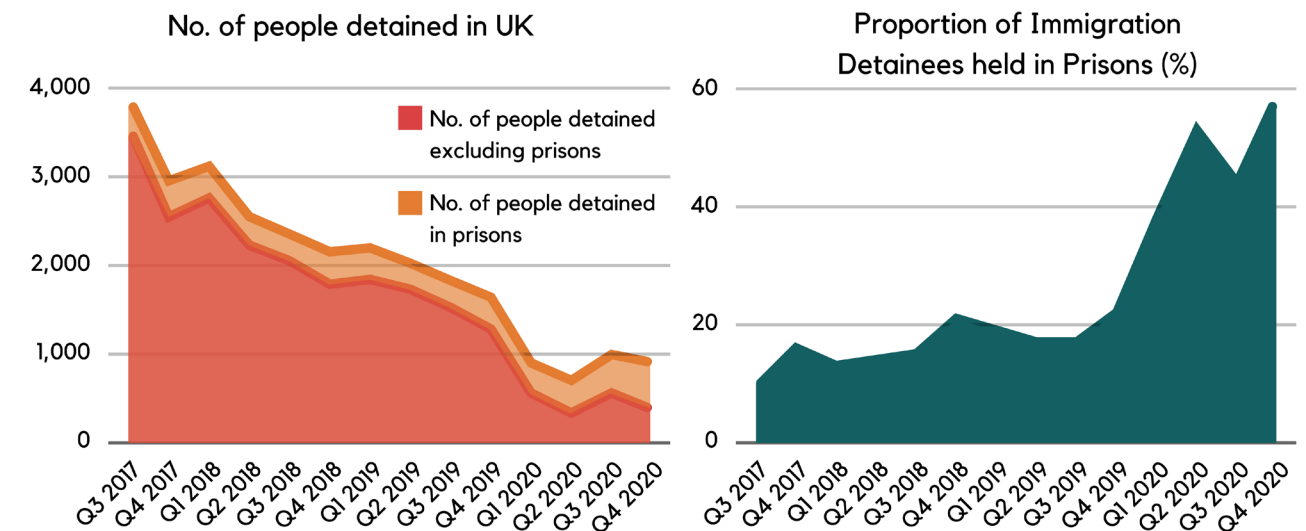
Hidden behind and within the global health crisis last year, we observed some worrying changes on the ground affecting people in immigration detention in the UK. From our perspective, 2020 was characterised by increased isolation for people detained during the pandemic, reduced access for volunteer groups and other NGOs providing support inside detention centres and a shocking increase in the proportion of people detained in prisons.

During the first lockdown, the government released people from detention at an unprecedented rate and the number of people held in detention centres fell to 330 by June 2020, the lowest point in the last decade.

Custodial settings of all forms provide conditions that have been described by global public health specialists as 'amplifying' the risk of COVID 19 infections. On the 18th of March, Detention Action issued a legal

challenge to the continued detention of many hundreds during the pandemic. While the legal challenge was ultimately dismissed, it did result in some significant concessions from the Home Office including the release of almost 1,000 people. At the end of June, there were only 330 people held in detention centres in the UK, with an additional 368 people detained in prisons, representing the lowest number of people detained in the last decade.

At this time, just 9 women were held in the only detention centre for women, the notorious Yarl's Wood in Bedfordshire. Occupancy was so low that Yarl's Wood was redesignated to hold people seeking asylum who had arrived via small boat crossings. Even then, Yarl's Wood held only 66 people in September 2020, despite having bed spaces for 410.



With these releases, and with so few people detained, we caught a glimpse of a future without detention, where people could be supported in the community as their immigration case was being resolved. However, by September, the number of people in detention overall had risen again, as had the number of women and the number of people detained in prisons. The Home Office also began repurposing ex-military barracks to introduce a concerning form of quasi-detention for hundreds of people seeking sanctuary who had newly arrived and not yet had a chance to make an asylum claim. In another worrying shift, by the end of 2020, the proportion of people detained in prison represented 57% of the people detained under immigration powers in the UK overall. In its standards on the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture describes the use of prisons to hold people under

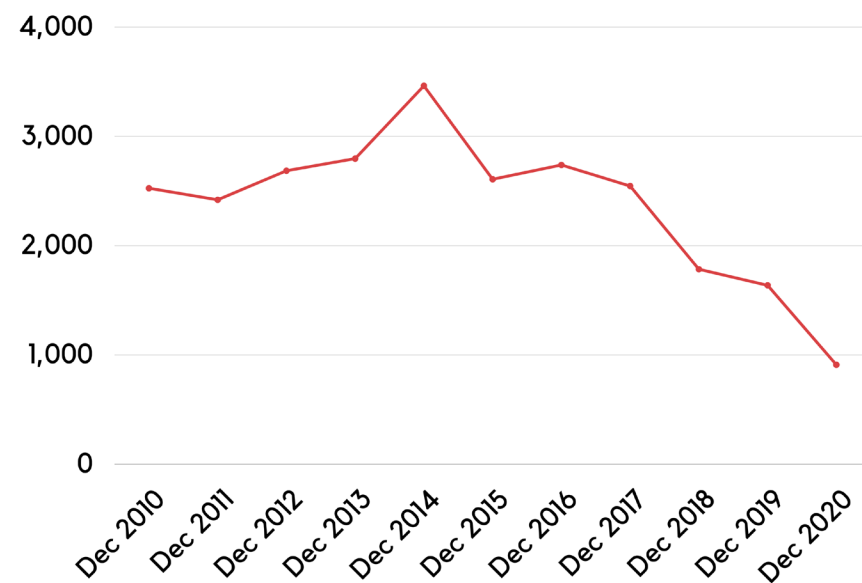
immigration control as 'fundamentally flawed'. This shocking figure shows just how far the balance has tipped in the UK towards detention in prison becoming the norm, rather than an exception.

HMIP make it very clear in their recommendation that "Immigration detainees should only be held in prison in very exceptional circumstances following risk assessment and with the authority of an immigration judge." We believe the routine use of prisons to hold people under immigration powers post-sentence is entirely inappropriate. People held in prisons face a number of barriers to justice and other supports available under usual circumstances. A High Court judge has now ruled that the lack of access to legal aid advice for people detained in prison is actually unlawful. It has been widely reported that structural injustice has led to disproportionately negative health outcomes in the pandemic for people in racially minoritised communities.

For people in detention in prison, structural racism in the criminal justice system combined with the Home Office's hostile environment policies that disproportionately target and criminalise non-white non-British nationals, further compound barriers to justice and to health equality.

Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics

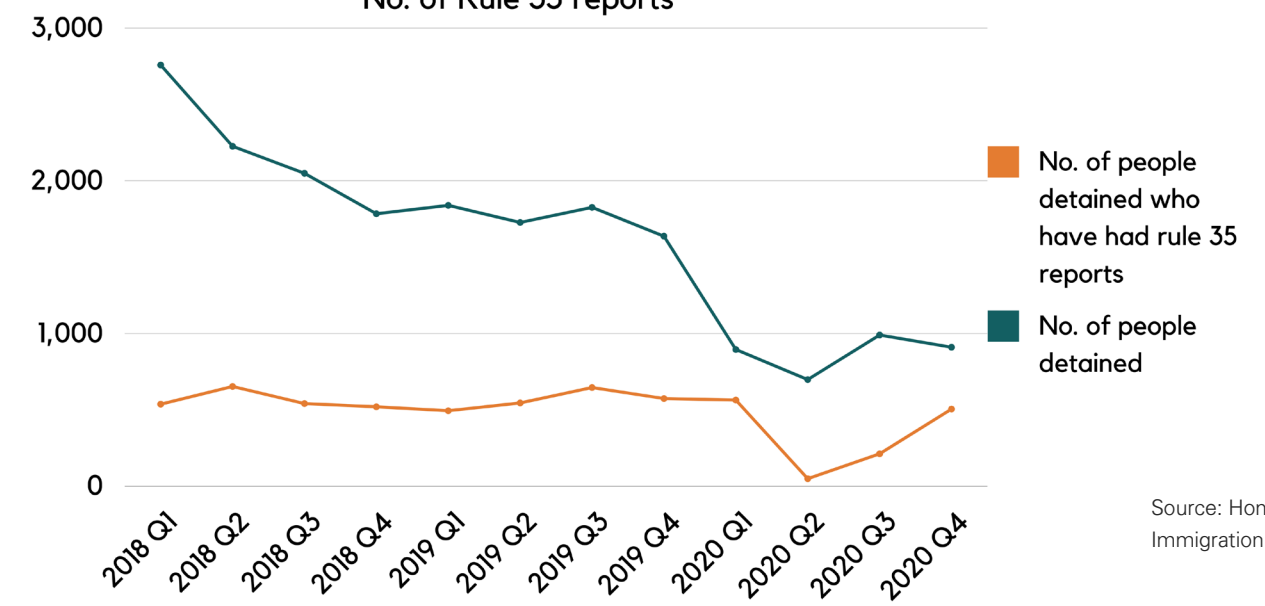
Total number of people in detention at end of quarter



During the pandemic, prisons have been subject to particularly strict lockdown regimes in which many people were kept in their cells for upwards of 22 hours a day. People in detention centres also experienced extended periods of isolation, which is known to have dramatic negative mental health impacts, as this is what social distancing amounts to in custodial settings. Government immigration statistics also show that the proportion of people in detention who have made an asylum claim at some point has risen dramatically from 50% in 2010 to 67% in 2020. Meanwhile, the number of Rule 35 reports (the key mechanism for release from detention if someone is particularly at risk as a survivor of torture, trafficking or has other particular vulnerabilities) has remained fairly constant since 2018 despite a worrying drop at the start of the pandemic, meaning a larger proportion of those detained are displaying such indicators.

All this has occurred in a context of reduced access for volunteers and visitors, who are often the only contact someone in detention has with the outside world. Our response as a network has been to support our members where possible to continue supporting people in detention over phone or video call. And amazing work has been done, with hundreds of people in detention having been supported remotely throughout 2020. But with reduced access comes reduced scrutiny. We are aware of the risk that measures aimed at containing the pandemic can also veil discriminatory practices, as the enforcement of lockdown measures in facilities such as Napier barracks and hotel contingency accommodation for asylum seekers have shown. As one judge found recently, the pandemic should never be used as a cover for delays in releasing someone from detention.

No. of Rule 35 reports



Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics

With a proposal to build the first new detention centre in 7 years, the start of 2021 has already seen a complete U-turn on government commitments to reduce the number of people held in detention overall, most notably the commitments made following the intensive, government-commissioned 'Shaw reviews' into the welfare in detention of vulnerable people. The abandonment of post-Shaw commitments is a grave concern.

The proposed new centre in county Durham would have space for up to 80 women and, notably, the plans were drawn up before the evaluation of the Action Access alternative to detention pilot for women has been published.

There is mounting evidence from within and outside the UK that holistic, community-based case management approaches can resolve people's cases more humanely and cost a lot less than the £97.66 the Home Office currently spends daily to keep someone in detention. And so, we begin 2021 much as we began 2020, by calling for more transparency as well as more engagement with civil society and people with lived experience of detention on the issues that matter.

In 2020 we saw that detaining fewer people works better for everyone, so why detain anyone at all?



In 2020 we saw that detaining fewer people works better for everyone, so why detain anyone at all?



About us

Staff

- Ali McGinley, Director
- Gee Manoharan, Training and Membership Coordinator
- Fiona Ranford, Training and Membership Coordinator
- Orla Gill, Communications Officer

Trustees

- Elizabeth Flint, Chair
- Ciaran Price, Treasurer
- Carolina Albuern Rodriguez
- Michael Darko
- Tom Nunn

Patrons

- Lord David Ramsbotham

Funders

- National Lottery Community Fund
- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
- Tudor Trust
- Charities Aid Foundation
- Chillag Family Trust

And with thanks to all our donors:

- A Bayes, F Brandt, F Brodrick, J Choi, C Cole, J Coulston, M Desira, K English, P Farnan, N Fitzgerald, R Graham, G Glynn, E Herman, D Hewitt, P Khaneka, C Kinealy, B Laurance, E Lewis-Holmes, S Lynch, A Mellor, V Miller, A Mittal, E Ndweni-Muller, N O'Brien, L Phelps, J Ratthenbury, M Riddle, A Robinson, C Ryan, M Sheeran, J Thorne, E Troup, A Ujjobbgy, V Wilkins, A Wilson, All Saint's Church (Milton, Cambridge), and the Parish of Holy Trinity and St Mary's (Guildford).



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