



association of **visitors** to
immigration detainees

Annual Report 2014

Registered Charity Number 1156709



"Some detainees' cases had been progressed too slowly resulting in prolonged, unnecessary and therefore possibly unlawful detention"

HMIP on Tinsley House, 2014



29,655 people left detention in 2014. Of these, nearly 14,000 - 47% - were released back in to the UK community - their detention having served no purpose.

What is immigration detention?

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Anyone who is subject to immigration control can be held in immigration detention: the use of custody to hold someone while considering a request to enter the country or pending deportation or removal from the country. At the end of 2014 there were 11 detention centres or 'immigration removal centres' in the UK and four residential short term holding facilities including Cedars, designated as 'pre departure accommodation'. Many others are held in holding rooms and ports and airports, or in prisons. The UK is one of the most prolific users of immigration detention, detaining around 30,000 migrants each year.

There is no time limit on immigration detention in the UK, unlike most other countries in Europe. Decisions to detain are made by case owners rather than a court, and there is no automatic access to bail hearings. Detention is unjust, ineffective and causes lasting harm.

What is AVID doing about it?

Mission Statement

AVID upholds the human dignity and well being of immigration detainees. We do this by voicing the concerns of those detained, our member groups and the nationwide network of visitors, and by supporting and coordinating visiting nationally.

Strategic Directions

Building a skilled, confident, supported and knowledgeable visitors network

Raising awareness of the realities of immigration detention, presenting a national voice for change to decision makers

Ensuring authoritative and high quality information on the realities of immigration detention is available to all



List of members 2014

Asylum Welcome

Campsfield House IRC

Bristol Visitors to International Detainees

HMP Bristol

Detention Action

Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC and Verne IRC

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

Brook House IRC, Tinsley House IRC, Cedars pre-departure accommodation

Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Asylum and Refugee Network

Detention issues in the local community

Friends Without Borders (Haslar Visitors Group)

Haslar IRC

Jesuit Refugee Service

Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC

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

NI Law Centre/Larne House Visitors Group

Larne STHF

Samphire (formerly Dover Detainee Visitors Group)

Dover IRC

Scottish Detainee Visitors

Dungavel IRC

SOAS Detainee Support

Colnbrook IRC, Harmondsworth IRC, Yar's Wood IRC

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Community Support

Sudanese Visitors Group

Supporting Sudanese detainees

Wandsworth Refugee Network

HMP Wandsworth

Yar's Wood Befrienders

Yar's Wood IRC

Zimbabwe Association

Supporting Zimbabwean detainees



Chair's Report

The question that puzzled AVID's Trustees and Director at the beginning of 2014 was how we should commemorate our twentieth anniversary. No sensible person would celebrate twenty years of immigration detention, but we did want to mark the occasion and to use it to thank the many supporters who had made AVID's existence and work possible.

We were struggling to find a suitable idea when, in the pub after a Trustees' meeting, one Trustee told us about the experiences of a particular detainee and another remarked what a pity it was that such stories were not better known. Thus our 'oral history project' was born.

Throughout the summer and autumn, staff and volunteers interviewed and filmed visitors and former detainees talking about their experience of visiting, transcribed their accounts and then condensed hours of interviews into a coherent and moving short film, Hidden Stories. The film had its first showing at our November party to which we were delighted to welcome many of those who founded AVID and have supported its work over the years.

Reading through the project transcriptions, two things jump out at me. The first is how much it means to a detainee to have a visitor. It is not so much what the visitor does or says that matters as the fact that, when no-one else is showing any interest in the detainee, the visitor is there. The second is just how much visitors themselves benefit from what they do and how much they value the relationships that they make. Our interviews show that visiting detainees can be challenging, emotionally draining, stretching, but also life changing.

As well as our oral history project, this year has been marked by our having in post for the first time a full time Training and Membership Coordinator, enabling us to devote additional time and energy to supporting our member groups. We have also successfully negotiated the change from being unincorporated to being a charitable incorporated organisation. This has given us a modern, more flexible constitution, together with the benefits of being a company, which should leave us in good stead for the future.

I am also pleased to report that AVID is more financially secure than it has been for some time; a big thank you to all the funders, members and individuals who have made that possible.

2014 was my last full year as Chair, and my term as a Trustee will come to an end at the 2015 AGM. I am very pleased to tell you that, subject of course to the AGM's wishes, Andrew Wilson who is a visitor at the Morton Hall detention centre and an experienced Trustee has agreed to become the next Chair. I wish him well.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped me in my time as Chair, particularly our Director Ali McGinley, our Treasurer Madeline Church, and all the other Trustees.

Kathleen English

*In 2014, over **670** volunteer visitors made up the 20 groups that are part of AVID, supporting over 2,000 detainees a year*

Director's Report

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Volunteer visitors are always at the heart of AVID's work, but never more so than in 2014, our anniversary year. The year began for us with the question of how to tackle the problematic issue of the opening of the Verne, the UK's second largest detention centre, which continued to operate under prison rules in its first months. The sheer size of this centre and the prison regime, and its location in rural Dorset, would surely prove prohibitive to the establishment of a visitors group. How wrong we were. The local community surprised us all, turning up in their droves in February 2014 to our awareness raising event in Weymouth with Detention Action. And they have continued to turn up: at the year's end the group has one of the most active volunteer pools and are supporting 20-25 detainees a week. A more than promising start.

Stories such as this are the reason why we decided to celebrate our 20th anniversary, rather than sit back, resigning ourselves quietly to 20 more years of the uphill battle to challenge immigration detention. Over the 20 years, we know that thousands of detainees have been supported by many hundreds of volunteer visitors, and that without these volunteers, the plight of immigration detainees in this country would, very likely, be much worse. Immigration detention remains hidden and secretive; volunteer visitors can and do counter that, and we felt that was worth celebrating. Our Testimony Project – six months of oral history research into the stories and experiences of volunteers and those supported in detention- has been one of the most inspiring projects I've worked on since joining AVID five years ago. A genuine collective effort, the project became bigger than we'd ever imagined with so many volunteers coming forward, keen to share with us their experiences. We've hours of testimony from visitors old and new, and those with experience of detention, from all over the UK. The launch event in November and the screening of Hidden Stories was a truly momentous event, and I'm really grateful to everyone who took part, helping to make it such a success and something we'll continue to reflect on in years to come. It also consolidates once again, if needed, the importance of volunteer visitors groups in reaching out to those detained, making a difference in an individual capacity, but also continuing to challenge the injustices faced by those inside.

Our day to day activities continued in support of detainees and visitors, and this year it is great to be able to report on the success of our expanded training and support programme, thanks to the addition of Jessica Lousley to the AVID team. With a staff cohort of two, our outreach programme has grown significantly, and we are glad to have been able to provide more intensive support to new groups this year. A second staff member has also freed up time to enable a reinvigorated focus on our advocacy work, sadly even more necessary than ever this year with expansions of detention across the country, and continued use of prisons to hold immigration detainees. Our activities report details the full extent of this work throughout 2014. My thanks to Jessica for a fantastic first year in post.

Thank you also to our volunteers, particularly Tamsin Koumis, Teresa Lamas, Anna De Mutiis, and Michelle Ball, for all their hard work and flexibility, often going above and beyond their initial roles. I'd like to extend a special thanks to Mark Evans, for creating the Hidden Stories film, and for his patience and creativity throughout the project. Thanks also to all of our Trustees whose support and guidance is always appreciated. Our Chair, Kathy English, stands down at this AGM and will be missed. Her contribution in these past five years, including four as Chair, cannot be underestimated, and she has steered AVID with patience and resolve. We wish her all the best.

Ali McGinley

Activities Report

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With the addition of a second staff member – a Training and Membership Coordinator - to the AVID team, we were able to significantly increase activities across all areas in 2014.

A selection of key activities is detailed below:

Training

The support, training and advice we were able to offer visitors groups was greatly enhanced this year – and as such the number of volunteers we've been able to reach with our training programmes has increased, with just over 70 volunteer visitors trained in 2014. This includes 53 visitors who were trained to visit with newly established visitors groups, testimony to the increased awareness and concern amongst local communities about detention in their area.

AVID's long established training modules, such as Introduction to *Visiting and Immigration Detention* were delivered along with new modules in *Visitors Boundaries*. We also expanded our delivery of training in partnership with external experts, piloting a new training on *Unlawful Detention* with the Migrants Law Project. In delivery of our training we prioritise smaller or developing groups and this year we were able to reach far more groups than ever before, with training delivered to Morton Hall Detainee Visitors Group (Nottingham), Wandsworth Refugee Network (London) and the newly established Larne Visitors Group (Belfast), Verne Visitors Group (Dorset) and Bristol Visitors to Immigration Detainees, amongst others. All were given the opportunity to build their knowledge and understanding of visiting and supporting detainees, and of the complex policy background of immigration detention in the UK. This gives volunteers a solid grounding with which to ensure they can provide the best support to those detained, and can do so with confidence.

"The training session on unlawful detention was one of the best training sessions I've been on, for anything"

Training participant, Morton Hall Detainee Visitors Group, May 2014

"The session on visiting skills was really useful. It was very practical and made clear the areas we need to think about and how to prepare"

Training participant, Larne House Visitor Group, August 2014

Supporting the development of new groups

We were able to respond proactively to the opening of the UK's newest and second largest detention centre, the Verne in Dorset, in 2014. In February we coordinated an awareness raising event, with Detention Action, held in Weymouth, to inform local community there about the new centre and the needs of detainees. We were overwhelmed when over 80 people attended, many of whom expressed an interest in visiting.

Building on this, we have focused on the support and development of a locally-owned and led visitors group. At year end, with over 30 new volunteer visitors recruited and trained throughout the year, this group is now actively visiting 20-25 detainees a week. This is a solid model of local group development that we hope to build on in the future.

We were also able to provide one to one support, advice and training to three new visitors groups to facilitate their set up and help them start visiting. In the case of Larne, a short term holding facility in Northern Ireland, this was the first time detainees had been offered the support of a visitor. The establishment of this group has also meant that there is now an AVID member visitors group in every single detention centre and short term holding facility in the UK.



Unlawful Detention Training, 2014



Coordinators' Conference 2014

Coordinators' Conference

Our annual Coordinators Conference, open to all member visitors groups and providing two days of training and best practice, proved its worth again this year. In the beautiful setting of Woodbrooke, on the outskirts of Birmingham, the peaceful gardens, home cooked food and warm welcome provides a relaxed and comfortable environment for those who come together to learn, discuss and share experiences. This year we hosted 16 people from groups all over the country. Our programme was varied and demanding, with sessions on, for example, the *impact of the immigration bill and ongoing legal cuts* delivered by Colin Yeo, barrister and founder of the Free Movement blog, and *challenging wrongful convictions of asylum seekers and detainees* delivered by the Criminal Cases Review Commission, amongst others. These thematic trainings were accompanied by workshops on 'Building relationships with IRC and prison management' and 'Building safe, secure and trusted relationships between visitors and detainees'. The conference remains the key opportunity for visitors groups coordinators from groups large and small to meet, and provides immediate face to face opportunities for those smaller, less experienced groups to share ideas and experiences with larger, more experienced groups, and also to forge connections to strengthen the potential for longer term interaction and exchange across the AVID network.

"AVID has been an invaluable resource for us. The AVID handbook is a superb piece of work which we have referred to very frequently over the years. However, it's also about being able to pick up the phone and say we have this or that situation and do you know anyone else who has experienced that - and inevitably AVID is able to pass on to us very useful information... so that when we feel embattled, we know we are part of a much larger body of people who are aghast at what we see and hear"

Anne Dickinson, Coordinator, Friends Without Borders (Haslar Visitors Group)

Information and awareness raising

Along with the publication of our monthly immigration detention digest, In Touch, we have continued to work to raise awareness of the realities of detention and the need for change this year. This has included working with external support and monitoring bodies, including the delivery of a training session on immigration detention and visiting to 20 British Red Cross volunteers, a presentation on the work of visitors groups to the Independent Chief Inspector of UK Borders and Immigration's Inspection Team, and presentations to the St. Vincent De Paul Society and at the AGM of the South West Multicultural Network.

In 2014 our AGM was accompanied by an awareness raising event: *Deaths in Detention: Are Lessons Being Learned?* at Garden Court Chambers. Guest speakers were Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, and Nigel Newcomen, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, who were able to tackle this sensitive issue with tenacity. Despite the recommendations of the PPO and the work of INQUEST to ensure lessons are learned following deaths in detention, we were alarmed by the lack of systemic follow up by the Home Office after a death has occurred. Both speakers emphasised the work that visitors groups can do to ensure a spotlight remains on this critical issue.

Our media work is in the early stages but growing, with AVID mentioned in a range of local and national press this year, and at year end our twitter account had over 1,500 followers.



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Advocacy and Policy

2014 saw a major step change in awareness of detention, thanks to the work of NGOs, people with experience of detention, dedicated campaigners and journalists and many others in ensuring various scandals were brought to light. While this may have made the context in which we work a little more understood, it has not yet translated into substantive change. It did, however, provide greater opportunities to engage in advocacy work, particularly with the first ever Parliamentary Inquiry into Immigration Detention which took place this year.

We proactively engaged with the first Parliamentary Inquiry into immigration detention, developing resources to assist visitors groups with their submissions as well as making our own. As a Coordination Group member of the Detention Forum we were pleased to be able to participate also in helping build the evidence base, raising awareness of the Inquiry and the importance of taking part. We continued to undertake parliamentary advocacy work on issues raised by our membership group through the submission of regular parliamentary questions, building links with like-minded parliamentarians, producing parliamentary briefings on issues such as the need for statutory guidance on short term detention, vulnerable people in detention, and the expansion of the detention estate.

We continue to work collaboratively through our role as Secretariat of the Asylum Rights Campaign's Detention Sub Group, the monthly meeting of visitors groups and NGOs working on detention issues, and by representing our membership at stakeholder meetings with the Home Office, taking forward a range of concerns such as internet access, induction and screening, visitors groups levels of access, or the availability of mental health support.

Our key strategic advocacy objective is to end the detention of vulnerable people, and to this end we have consistently worked to raise awareness of the appalling conditions in which people with mental health needs in detention are held. In 2014 this included facilitating links between visitors groups and NHS England, as the transfer of healthcare commissioning to the NHS continued this year. The lead avenue for our work on vulnerability more broadly has been as co-convenor, along with Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group, of the Vulnerable Peoples Working Group of the Detention Forum. This year this included the submission of evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry based on our research, emphasising that vulnerable people should never be detained. We were delighted to see the Inquiry report echoed our concerns.

Other groups we would include as 'vulnerable' are those detained in short term holding facilities (STHFs), particularly in light of a death in Pennine House in early 2014 and the ongoing absence of statutory rules on these facilities. This year, we have written and spoken widely on this issue including briefings for Parliament, radio interviews and online blogs. We were asked to write a briefing for Lord Avebury in advance of the debates during the passage of the Immigration Bill in 2014, and as a result he was able to secure a commitment for the publication of STHF statutory rules. However, as we enter 2015, this commitment has still not been met. We will continue to pursue this in 2015 to ensure those who are held in STHFs no longer fall foul of this protection gap.

AVID's Testimony Project



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In November, staff, volunteers, Trustees past and present, visitors old and new, former detainees and visitors groups from across the country gathered in St. Ethelberga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace. Under twinkling fairy lights, prosecco in hand, we were treated to live music specifically put together for AVID by Songlines Choir, moving speakers from AVID's past and present, and perhaps the most delicious Ethiopian food ever tasted. An accompanying exhibition of photographs and testimony adorned the walls around us. But it was the sight of some of AVID's founder members laughing and chatting with newer volunteers from groups in Bristol or Glasgow that made this event unique, and very special....and that was even before we dimmed the lights and screened our very first film, *Hidden Stories*....

"I felt like I was in a coffin. But I was still alive"

"We are just women here. We are not...murderers"

These are the stories of people like Ruth, held in Yarl's Wood and supported by Yarl's Wood Befrienders, or Derrick, a volunteer visitor who was himself a detainee in Dover. Their voices are part of AVID's short film put together to commemorate our 20th anniversary. The film is the culmination of several months of intensive interviewing, recording, transcribing and production of over 30 stories, and is the first piece of work produced by our 'Testimony Project', an oral history of volunteer visiting which celebrates their role and the support they've given detainees over 20 years.

The *Hidden Stories* film is a moving and powerful account of relationships built in the visits halls of detention centres up and down the UK: in Liverpool, Glasgow, at Gatwick, or Heathrow. The commonalities of concern, friendship, of human beings reaching out to those behind bars in their local communities, are told in the volunteers' and detainees' own words, and as such our film is the first nationwide project to record and celebrate the unique contribution of volunteer visitors to the lives of detainees and their local communities. Over the last 20 years, the constant presence of volunteer visitors in places of detention has enabled detainees' stories to be heard, and has brought to light many issues that would otherwise have remained hidden. Immigration detention is nothing to celebrate, but this small army of volunteers certainly is.

Along with the accompanying photographic exhibition, *Hidden Stories* is already being used in training sessions and at public events. We will continue to develop the Testimony Project in 2015; a report is planned and we hope the film will continue to be a useful resource in training and awareness raising for all visitors groups.

Hidden Stories

AVID's Testimony Project began in 2014. A commemoration of the work of volunteer visitors and a celebration of the support they've given detainees over 20 years, the project aims to record through oral history testimony the experiences, stories and memories shared in the visits halls.

It is the first project to document the relationships that are built through volunteer visiting and the difference this can make to both volunteer and visitor.

In their own words, over 30 volunteers, past and present, and former detainees, shared their Hidden Stories with us ...



Iris

"When I ended up in Yarl's Wood detention centre, it was a horrible feeling... being in a place where you're being told you're going to be taken out of the country, away from your family. I was lost. I felt like I was in a coffin, but I was still alive. I was nailed in a coffin, but I wasn't dead. I was choking. That's how it felt like every day, like I was choking... that's what Yarl's Wood felt like."

"It helped to know that someone out there was thinking about me, and concerned about me, and appalled at what was going on... It made me stronger - knowing that she was fighting. I probably would have lost it if it wasn't for her..."

Iris was detained at Yarl's Wood IRC in 2008, and again in 2012-13.



Abel Asfaw

"I was by myself - I had no friends in this country, no family...I was feeling really alone, really down because nobody came to see me. But after I contacted Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group, they sent me Celia. I was really happy to talk to someone from outside, and tell them what happened in detention, you know... We talked about everything - I would tell her about my family, and she used to contact my family back home..."

Really, she's like my mum now. I really care about her, because she cares about me. I have no words to explain about Celia."

Abel came to the UK from Ethiopia in 2005, aged 17. He was detained twice, in 2006 and 2012. He now has refugee status and lives in London with his partner and young son.



Giovanna Fassetta

"I think it's the frustration of being deprived of any control over one's life. I think that must be the most difficult thing about detention... And the fact that, whilst for some it's quick...for many others there's no end in sight. They don't know when it will end. They see other people who have been in there for one year, two years and they're thinking "Is that going to be me? Am I going to be in this situation every day...?"

Giovanna is a visitor and committee member with Scottish Detainee Visitors. She has been visiting Dungavel since 2010



Charlotta Nuboer-Cope

"The difficulties about visiting are not so much the actual visits, although they can be really difficult if somebody is really upset or their story is really horrific, but the difficulty...of their experience in this country, because the asylum system is really awful - the fact of putting them into detention is such a shock to most people. It's difficult to see people treated so badly by the system and to have so little you can do to make it better for them. The legal avenues are very limited and getting more and more limited, and they are treated really, really harshly."

Charlotta is a volunteer visitor with Asylum Welcome and has been supporting detainees at Campsfield for over 9 years.



Visits Hall Image reproduced courtesy of Border Criminologies



Heather Jones

"... there is a huge amount of negative publicity about asylum seekers. Some people will take the attitude that "well, they shouldn't be here anyway" - they're not really interested.

But if you tell them an individual story about the experiences of one particular woman, they're often quite taken aback - and then they're not just a faceless, nameless group of people. There are some very individual, painful stories that people will feel somewhat differently about and think, "well, perhaps she should stay then." So telling peoples' stories, being that witness, I think it's very important."

Heather became a visitor with Yarl's Wood Befrienders in 2005 and was the group's Coordinator from 2006 to 2015.



Simone

"I didn't know how I was going to feel about this visit. I was open to it because my friend had encouraged me. So, the befriender came, and she was lovely - the loveliest woman I've ever met. She gave me time to talk about what I wanted to talk about. She didn't push me to talk about what I didn't want to talk about. I lost my sense of being, you know, and she somehow helped me see that there is something on the other side, so I need to not give up on fighting for what I believe in, for who I am. I shouldn't give up, so she gave me that hope, even though we were fighting something really big and very bad, she gave me that hope"

Simone was detained in Yarl's Wood in 2012, during which time she was supported by Yarl's Wood Befrienders.



Beryl Payne

"I started about 12 years ago, and I'm just as keen to visit now as I was in the beginning, probably more so. With all the problems that are going on in the world today, it's just getting worse and worse. I just want to tell everybody people's stories - because people just aren't aware of what goes on."

Beryl visits with Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group and has been a visitor for 12 years.



Martin Dore

"The thing that I will take with me all my life from visiting is the experience of meeting people with such courage, such bravery, and sometimes a serenity in coping with so many difficulties, and having no knowledge of where their lives are going, perhaps being sent back to further danger, and yet still having faith that it will all work out, and that they will survive."

Martin Dore has been a visitor with Gatwick Detainee Welfare Group for 17 years.

Summary of Accounts

Financial Year January to December 2014

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	Unrestricted Funds 2014	Restricted Funds 2014	Total funds 2014	Total funds 2013
INCOME				
GRANTS				
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	-	40,000	40,000	30,000
Allen Lane Foundation	-	-	-	5,000
The Tudor Trust	-	30,000	30,000	-
Awards for All	-	10,000	10,000	-
Lankelly Chase Foundation	-	15,000	15,000	18,000
Samuel Sebba Trust	-	-	-	5,000
John Paul Getty Junior Charitable Trust	-	-	-	8,000
Truemark Trust	3,000	-	3,000	7,500
Edith Maud Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust	1,000	-	1,000	-
Souter Charitable Trust	3,000	-	3,000	-
Marsh Christian Trust	450	-	450	400
The Armours and Brasiers Gauntlet Trust	-	-	-	500
Other Grants	-	-	-	500
DONATIONS				
All Saint's Church, Milton, Cambridge	600	-	600	600
Parish of Holy Trinity and St Mary's, Guildford	450	-	450	450
M and K English	2,000	-	2,000	-
Phyllida Lloyd	1,000	-	1,000	-
Gift Aid recoverable	-	-	-	860
Other donations	4,161	-	4,161	5,788
Bank interest receivable	140	-	140	101
Subtotal (grants and donations)	£15,661	£95,000	£110,661	£75,098
INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES				
Membership income	1,820	-	1,820	1,913
Handbook sales	110	-	110	175
Provision of training	200	-	200	1006
Subtotal (income from charitable activities)	£2,130	-	2,130	3,094
TOTAL INCOME	£17,931	£95,000	£112,931	£78,293
EXPENDITURE				
Staff Costs	-	68,213	68,213	45,112
Accounts	1,613	-	1,613	1,231
Fundraising Strategy Development	-	-	-	3,000
Governance (Trustees expenses, AGM)	1,673	-	1,673	1,255
Rent and Rates	-	5,269	5,269	6,408
Project costs: Visitors Group support, training and outreach; Information and Awareness Raising; and Advocacy project	3,049	4,500	7,549	4,635
Coordinators Conference	3,955	-	3,955	3,414
Website Development	-	-	-	7,531
Fundraising Costs	403	-	403	-
Testimony Project	1,865	2,497	4,362	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	12,558	80,479	93,037	72,226

In 2014, AVID set aside three months of reserves (22,750).
The full set of independently examined accounts for the year can be obtained on request from AVID.

On 31 December, AVID transferred all assets to the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation AVID (Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees), charity number 1156709. The CIO was established on 1st January 2015 and submitted a set of accounts for 2014 to cover the small amount of funds required during the year to establish new bank accounts. These are also available from the office.

Treasurer's Report:

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I am really pleased to report that despite a very restricted funding picture in the sector, the support that AVID enjoyed this year from three main donors, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Lankelly Chase Foundation and the Tudor Trust, has enabled us to work much more closely with smaller and developing Visitor Groups. The funding support from the Tudor Trust to enable us to add Jessica Lousley, Training and Membership Coordinator, to the team, has made a huge difference to what we can achieve. Our second Awards for All Grant has made it possible for us to tell visitors' stories to a wider public, and to celebrate AVID's role in supporting them. Those of you who contributed to the film, Hidden Voices, and were able to attend our celebration party, will know how important it was to document such a rich history. We had set aside funds to do this, and the grant has freed those up for AVID to prioritise other work, and ensure that we retain three months of reserves. Funds raised from personal donations, small trusts and faith-based groups continue to show that the issues AVID deals with are keenly appreciated.

At the end of the year, we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), moving our bank accounts to CAF Bank. The greater protection of being a CIO provides means that we can continue to attract dedicated Trustees for the future.

2014 has been a year of celebration of the dedication and commitment of all visitors, our members, supporters and Trustees. In the current climate of anti-migrant rhetoric and tragic deaths at sea, we are most thankful to be part of such an inspiring group of people.

Madeline Church

"I found the training really useful - it triggered me to rethink what my own boundaries are and, more importantly, why"

Training participant, Bristol VOID (prison visiting group)
August 2014



British 10k London: Our Runners

Thanks to (L-R) James McMenamin, Leah Cowan, Alison Fleet, Carolina Albuerno Rodriguez, Ana Gonzalez, Ali Bandegani who collectively raised over £1500 for AVID's work

Verne Visitors Group: One Year On

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HMP the Verne, a former prison tucked away on the isle of Portland - the southern-most tip of Dorset, may not have seemed the obvious location for the UK's newest Immigration Removal Centre. However, the daunting prospect of establishing a visitors group of local people was soon overwhelmed by the incredible support and goodwill shown by the surrounding community. Following an initial awareness raising meeting in February 2015 by AVID and Detention Action, over 80 people signed up to help detainees at the newly opened detention centre.

This has been reflected in many ways: the regular enquiries from people interested in getting involved; support from local charities and organisations; donations from individuals and groups and even small grants from the local council to support our activities.

From healthy beginnings, with 15+ people attending the first visitor training session in August, the group has continued to flourish, with over 35 people now trained up and ready to visit. To date, 90 detainees have had contact with the group – with visits arranged as requested and some partnerships ongoing since August!

The group has benefitted enormously from the help of AVID throughout – from forging good links with the Verne, to arranging awareness raising events, delivering training and always being on hand with expert advice and support.

The group has also benefitted from the enthusiasm of several key contacts at the Verne, including the Equalities Team, Chaplaincy and Independent Monitoring Board. Nurturing these relationships has enabled the group to reach more people who would like our support, with opportunities to promote the group within the Verne itself. These communication channels have been invaluable in resolving practical issues (often around communication with detainees), raising concerns and even leading to tours and training within the centre.

Communicating within the group has been a priority, made significantly easier with the use of free internet resources, such as setting up a group email and shared drive. This has enabled several co-ordinators to support the group jointly and also provided a non-personal email address for detainees to contact visitors, as well as facilitating information sharing, such as group policies and information guides.

As with every group, challenges arise every now and then. Some are practical, such as communication with detainees, others more specialised – including problems accessing good legal advice, whilst others relate to our role as visitors, as our boundaries are tested supporting people in often desperate situations. In response to the latter, we are beginning to create policies – learning from the experience of more established groups and exploring different ways we can support each other as visitors, such as providing group support sessions and visiting in pairs.

As a relatively new group, we are learning from these experiences all the time and are extremely privileged and heartened to be operating alongside the many other groups within AVID who visit people in detention across the UK.

Jenny Purcell and Marianne Henderson, Volunteer Coordinators, Verne Visitors Group

Verne awareness raising event



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End of an Era: Friends Without Borders (Haslar Visitors Group)

Haslar Visitors Group was one of the first visitors' groups, as Haslar was one of the first places to hold detainees in the UK. In fact our history and AVID's are intertwined, as some of our original visitors went on to help set up AVID in 1994. In 2014 we began to celebrate our 20th year. We remained members of AVID throughout this time.

In our Annual Report for 2014 we proudly displayed photos from our anniversary party and celebrated our 20 years of supporting detainees: we vowed to continue. We had also changed our name to encompass other areas of work, such as the support we deliver in the community. Little did we know what was ahead. Exactly a week and a day thereafter, we heard from an officer that Haslar was to close within 4-6 weeks. We expected it would more like 6 weeks, but in fact with nobody new coming in and people leaving, within 3 weeks the centre held only 18 people- people with deportation orders and the like, a number of whom went to The Verne. One set of doors had opened and another set of doors closed. Whilst we were pleased in one respect, we couldn't help but notice that the set of doors that had opened at the Verne were far larger than the doors closing here. 197 into 580; a lot of extra beds. Haslar IRC received decent HMIP reports, as a small and well managed facility. This has been ditched in favour of a 'mega facility' which is even more remote than Gosport. We don't think this will be better for detainees. We also couldn't help but notice that the staff at Haslar had not been treated much better than those they helped to detain. The servants of the Crown were dispensable to the Crown. Flotsam and jetsam on the sea of life.

Well, all we could do really is make hay out of the 20 years and call it the end of an era and hold an "End of an Era" party. We had a meal together, we reminisced and we had a quiz to find out who was the model visitor of the era. Of course – everyone won. We hope the many detainees we visited feel they won through our solidarity and companionship and advocacy over the years. We are proud of the many detainees we helped to bail. Our visitors are still in touch with ex detainees. I personally have attended a couple of ex detainee weddings and every now and again out of the blue I will receive a call or a text from someone from long ago to tell me "Thank you – couldn't have done it without you – now got Leave to Remain". One of our visitors wrote "What we have achieved in respect of support for a very vulnerable section of our population is immeasurable and it is very sad that this will not continue". Meanwhile, we continue to support the Time for a Time Limit campaign and other calls to limit, curtail and end detention under Immigration Act Powers. Together, let us put an end to this misery and let us open our doors and accept our share of those seeking sanctuary.

**Anne Dickinson, Coordinator,
Friends Without Borders**

About Us

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Trustees:

The following Trustees served during the year January – December 2014:

Kathleen English (Chair)
Madeline Church (Treasurer)
Jane Ryan (Secretary)
Carolina Albuerno Rodriguez
Polly Brendon
Suko Fricke
Juliette Stevenson
Andrew Wilson

Staff:

Ali McGinley,
Director
Jessica Lousley,
Training and Membership Coordinator

Volunteers:

We were grateful for the contribution of our office and Testimony Project volunteers this year:

Michelle Ball
Anna De Mutiis
Ula Frycz
Teresa Lamas
Tamsin Koumis

Patrons:

Colin Firth
Lord David Ramsbotham
John Scampion

With Thanks

We are grateful for the support of our membership as listed on page 2, and the following:

Our Funders

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Parish of Holy Trinity and Saint Mary's, Guildford
Phyllida Lloyd
Rebecca Graham
Sally Tarshish
Sue Jones
Suko Fricke
Sylvia Platt

And to those organisations and individuals who worked with and supported us in 2014:

ARC Detention Sub Group
Asylum Aid
Bail for Immigration Detainees
Bhatt Murphy Solicitors
British Red Cross Tracing and Messaging Service
Campaign to Close Campsfield
Criminal Cases Review Commission
Dave Wilson and Jane Jackson
Detention Forum
Dorset Community Action
Dr Mary Bosworth (University of Oxford)
Eva Arnold
Freedom From Torture
Garden Court Chambers
Hannah Chambers, Migrant's Law Project
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
Immigration Law Practitioners Association
INQUEST
International Detention Coalition
Island Community Action (Portland)
John Vine, Independent Chief Inspector of UK Borders and Immigration
Mark Evans
Medical Justice
Music in Detention
Prison and Probation Ombudsman
Prison Reform Trust
RAMFEL (Refugee and Migrant Forum of Essex and London)
Refugee Council
Richard Lumley
Right to Remain
Sarah Turnbull (University of Oxford)
Scottish Refugee Council
Songlines Choir
South West Multicultural Network, Dorset
St. Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace
UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group



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Detention expanded massively in 2014. The much publicised 580 new bed spaces at the Verne were accompanied by various extensions to existing centres, amounting to around 267 extra spaces. This is the equivalent of a new detention centre, without any consultation

Above images courtesy of Dominic Casciani

"Harmondsworth IRC is in large parts a depressing, dirty place and in some cases has a destructive effect on the welfare of detainees. Issues that contribute to this include: the poor maintenance of the centre, detaining vulnerable detainees in unsuitable conditions, the continued detention of those 'unfit to be detained' and the complaints process"

Harmondsworth IMB, 2014



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