

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

5-Year Strategic Plan



Refugee Tales 

Foreword

We are delighted to share our strategy for the next five years. It continues our journey responding to the needs of people during and after detention. The backdrop is an external fast-changing hostile environment in which the people we work with experience destitution, uncertainty, suffering and fear. In creating this strategy, we looked at our areas of work, at our performance and what might hold us back at a time when demand for our support is high. We combined these findings with our values and the ways we learn, grow together and how we create transformation. We listened in many ways: in focus groups for those who like talking, in emails for those who like to set down their thoughts on paper, in local group discussions and in reflections on community walks. What we have created presents four pillars for our work: Inspiration, Equity, Sustainability and Strength and represents the combined thinking

of people who have been detained, volunteers who have been with us for nearly 30 years and volunteers who are new to the organisation, trustees, Refugee Tales walkers and the staff team. We all wish to work together, in the words of our Refugee Tales Patron, Ali Smith for 'the better imagined.'

*Anna Pincus – Director of GDWG and
Laura Moffatt – Chair of the Board.*

Vision

A society where people whose right to live in the UK is being questioned are treated with humanity and justice by all.

Mission

To improve the welfare and well-being of people affected by the immigration detention system through friendship, support and advocacy for fair treatment while calling for positive change and an end to indefinite detention.



What We Do

GDWG works with people during and after immigration detention through the work of trained volunteer visitor befrienders who offer emotional support, and a dedicated staff team who assist people to access the legal, professional, medical and practical support they need. The UK is the only country in Western Europe that detains people indefinitely in immigration detention and being detained without a time limit has a terrible impact on the mental health of people who are held as an administrative convenience. Detention has an enormous human cost and social and economic costs too; it is, quite simply, a waste of life. We have come a long way in our 30 years. We are a visitor group and listening in the visits room is at the heart of what we do. In recent years our support has extended beyond the walls of the detention centres at Gatwick. We now work with people formerly detained at Gatwick who are held in limbo in the community in settings that replicate the agony of

detention, in order to help them find local support.

Refugee Tales is how we draw attention to the way that detention is experienced by people, how their lived experience is foregrounded and how we advocate for change. The GDWG self-advocacy group of people who are experts by experience share their tales with well-known writers or share them in the first person. The tales are published in Refugee Tales anthologies that are used by the self-advocacy group as tools to have conversations with people of influence and feature in our programme of school talks. Using the Canterbury Tales model of walking and sharing tales, we go on a long walk every year and every evening of the walk we hold events where the tales are shared with the community. Over 20,000 copies of Refugee Tales have been sold and since 2015 we have walked over 500 miles calling for change.



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What Inspires Us

'GDWG don't give up on you, support is from detention and all the way through, they fight with you to the end'
Self-advocacy group

'In GDWG self-reflection isn't a buzz word, it's actually lived by the organisation'
Volunteer

'Anything is possible. Nothing is off-limits. The person we are supporting is at the centre and we work with them.'
Staff

'Our values: Listening, and being there for someone when they need it, and how they need it. Respecting the wishes of others. Core values are the value of an individual, and their own experience.'
Volunteer

'Those in receipt of care do not have to earn it – do not have to belong to any particular group, it is freely given to all'
Trustee

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Our Plans

We shall adapt creatively to challenges and build on strengths each year. Our annual Business Plan will outline next steps to our agreed goals according to our four pillars: Inspiration, Equity, Sustainability and Strength. Through annual target setting we shall incorporate our shared learning.

INSPIRATION

We shall inspire detained people to gain hope and agency and inspire our community to work for change and thrive.

By 2028 we shall have:

1. Put in place a range of tools and programmes to develop the ways we inspire people in detention and in work with the self-advocacy group post-detention. We shall inspire volunteer visitors to support people during detention and as they develop community connections post-detention.

We shall carry out a review of the pathways taken by detained people through our services with a focus on the ways we reach new people. Existing support for visitors will be extended to

all GDWG and Refugee Tales volunteers with an annual volunteer conference for all our volunteers.

2. Developed a programme of events to inspire passive supporters to become active supporters and to increase youth involvement and support.

To do this we shall connect with a wide range of youth organisations and follow up from talks and presentations to build longer relationships with community partners. Refugee Tales events will open doors to further collaborations.

3. Ensured that we have inspired policy makers to create change through GDWG monitoring, case studies, research, Refugee Tales, and the work of the GDWG Self-Advocacy Group.

To do this we shall work increasingly with local politicians and build grass roots support for a future without detention. We shall develop briefing papers and an advocacy strategy for their dissemination. We shall use Refugee Tales and the Walking Inquiry Multi-Media Exhibition as tools to extend our call for change throughout the UK.

EQUITY

We shall increase the involvement of experts by experience and develop the diversity of our community ensuring a space that is anti-oppressive and welcoming for all.

By 2028 we shall have:

1. Actively reviewed our equality policies and structures and moved towards developing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in every aspect of our work. To do this we shall undertake an EDI audit using external and independent advisors and an EDI working group will guide our progress.
2. Embedded use of interpreters and translators, and trained staff, volunteers and trustees in communication through interpreters.

We shall introduce a rolling programme of training and our Advocacy and Support Volunteers will use interpreters on the frontline. We shall always respond to people in detention as individuals and not adopt stereotypes or mainstream

language that confines people during and after detention.

3. Met targets to move our charity towards being user-led.

To achieve this we shall have expert by experience volunteers in all committees and working groups as well as increasing representation in the staff and trustee teams. Experts by experience will be the voice of the charity in presentations and forward-facing work. We shall introduce an internship with mentoring and training opportunities for experts by experience in the office. We aim to recruit three trustees who are experts by experience in the period of the strategic plan and to have created a programme of trustee mentoring and training for experts by experience.



Photo © UNHCR/Andrew Testa



Photo by John Barrett

SUSTAINABILITY

We shall work for a future without detention and a time when our detention support is no longer needed. Whilst our services are essential, we shall maintain the quality of our work whilst demonstrating imagination, creativity and adaptability and drawing on innovative thinking from any field.

By 2028 we shall have:

1. Maintained our strong governance and financial sustainability.

To achieve this, regular and detailed policy formulation and review will be central to our operations. A fundraising strategy will be carried through including development of our Friends scheme.

2. Invested in our team by prioritising listening, learning together and building skills and capacity.

To do this we shall express welcome and understand the styles of working that are natural for individuals in the staff team. The boundaries of our

post-detention work will be clear. Reflective practice will be a team focus and professional updating and personal development will be priorities for staff.

3. Embedded environmental sustainability in our policy and practice.

To do this we shall undertake an environmental audit and move to a paperless office. In addition, we shall take every opportunity to foreground the challenges experienced by those who migrate in response to the perils of climate change.

STRENGTH

We shall maintain focus and speak out fearlessly and tirelessly.

By 2028 we shall have:

1. Ensured that the convictions we are all committed to including anti-racism and the universality of human rights are understood by all and expressed clearly in all multi-platform communications.

To achieve this we shall hold events where people can gather and learn together. We shall create a safe space where unconscious bias is acknowledged and celebrate our shared values.

2. Become better known and understood among key audiences.

To do this we shall review and develop our brand, name and outreach.

3. Worked with kindness and prioritised well-being.

To do this we shall build the resilience of our community and empower our community to call out

unkindness. Mental Health First Aid training will be prioritised alongside access to psychotherapy support. The joyful community of Refugee Tales shall model a community working in the best possible way for all.



Photo by Simon Way

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

www.gdwg.org.uk

**The Orchard, 1-2 Gleneagles Court,
Brighton Road, Crawley, RH10 6AD**

Telephone: 01293 657070

**Freephone number for people in detention:
0800 389 4367**

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England and Wales no: 4911257

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