



Samphire

*Changing attitudes to, and improving the lives
of, ex-detainees and migrant communities*

EX-DETAINEE PROJECT CONFERENCE REPORT

21st JUNE 2018

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**Mon/Tues/Weds/Thurs/Fri
between 10.00am and 1.00pm.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Dr Soeren Keil, Chair of Samphire



I have been involved with Samphire's Ex-Detainee Project since 2009. I am today, as much as I was in 2009, extremely proud of the work that the project does with ex-detainees and am pleased to be welcoming everyone to the 2018 Ex-Detainee Conference.

We have faced a few challenges over the last year: 12 months ago we were running out of funds and discussing the closure of the charity - since then we have been fortunate to receive three years of Big Lottery Funding for the project which means - more staff and expansion of the project. The charity has been re-energised! What a difference 12 months can make; 12 months from now this country won't be a member of the EU. This poses a challenge for Samphire and will create a new group of vulnerable migrants, and Samphire plan to develop new ways to support these people in need.

This is my last year as Chair, and I am glad to be leaving Samphire in such a strong position. Samphire today is a charity that is very strong, reasonably well-funded with committed staff, trustees and volunteers. The ex-detainee project has been at the heart of what Samphire does for nearly 10 years now and has a positive future that is dedicated to achieving Samphire's mission to improve the lives of people released from immigration detention and experiencing destitution in the UK, and to support the development of well-informed, cohesive and diverse communities in the Dover area and beyond.

Angie Murphy, Senior Project Coordinator

In 2017 we were unable to hold our much anticipated Ex-Detainee Conference, and we didn't know if we would still be here this time last year! This year I was delighted to present our 9th Ex-Detainee Conference, held at Amnesty International Human Rights Action Centre.

The Ex-Detainee Conference had a packed schedule of inspirational speakers, joyful presentations and informative workshops. Many of you told us in your feedback that you gained some useful information from attending the workshops, enjoyed meeting up sharing experiences with each other as well as hearing first-hand how the services we provide have impacted on ex-detainees lives.



I am proud to have been part of the Ex-Detainee Project for over six years and look forward to continuing to help the project go from strength to strength in serving a unique and vital purpose for ex-detainees living in the UK.

Indre Lechtimiakyte, Project Coordinator



Thanks to the Big Lottery Fund the Ex-Detainee Project has been able to create the new Community Champion Programme, a peer support group for ex-detainees, run by ex-detainees who are trained to become community champions and support each other within their communities.

The programme holds a fortnightly meeting in four different regions of the UK, Plymouth, Rochdale, Middlesbrough and Uxbridge. We add to the work of

other service providers in the regions and offer training and support to the community champions.

Our three year plan is to set up the groups, deliver training on how to run a community group, integrate the community champions into their area and actively support them to deliver the project. Ultimately, we plan for this new people-led initiative to become self-sustaining and be rolled out across the country.

In the last year, the Ex-Detainee Project has;

Registered 100 new ex-detainees with the project.

Dealt with 2000 individual requests for assistance.

Supported 550 ex-detainee service users.

The Ex-Detainee Project supports some of the most vulnerable people in our society. We work to improve the lives of people released from immigration detention and those experiencing destitution in the UK. We advise, enable, and empower ex-detainees and seek to influence positive changes in their circumstances through our policy and advocacy work.

We operate a Freephone telephone helpline, Monday- Friday 10am-1pm, for ex-detainees to call for advice and support about their situation. We empower ex-detainees to make changes that will improve their lives and impact positively their local communities.

There has been a significant increase in the emotional support we provide via our telephone helpline. We recognise the importance of local support networks for ex-detainees and have developed relationships with a wide range of organisations nationwide to which we can refer and signpost ex-detainees.

In the past year alone we have had well over 500 calls asking for emotional support. From a recent survey in May 2018, 100% of ex-detainees who responded, said that the project had helped at a time of need, with 80% saying they felt less lonely and isolated.

We will continue to, with the support of our funders, volunteers, and ex-detainees who help us understand more and more what their needs are, to do what we can to help those that have been released from immigration detention and are most at need in the UK.

FEEDBACK AND PHOTOGRAPHS



“Fantastic, uplifts and boosts ex-detainees”



“Inspiring and energising to keep working and fighting”



95.8% of attendees thought that the conference addressed some of the major issues ex-detainees face



93.5% of attendees thought the conference provided them with information and ideas which will help make changes in their life and/or work



“Brilliant work”



An exciting and enticing lunch was provided by the wonderful **‘Welcome Kitchen’**-a collective of friends and refugee chefs from North London. The menu consisted of a Syrian lamb Kofta stew, Syrian Moutabel served with Turkish bread. Ivorian Riz Gras and an Ivorian Salad.

FEEDBACK AND PHOTOGRAPHS



“Well
organised”



“Brilliant, energising and
empowering”



97.9% of attendees felt that
overall the conference has
contributed to a better
understanding of ex-
detainees problems and
opportunities



“Very good, understandable
and helpful information”



“Very varied and
informative”



SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOPS

Survivors Speak Out



Kolbassia Haoussou, spoke about the importance of ex-detainees voices being heard. He advised attendees to use their experiences of detention to change the system and that the only thing a person has is their voice. He encouraged ex-detainees to show that we can work together to achieve change, to spread the message that one person has to shout loud to be heard, but if there are more people we will be taken notice of.

Kolbassia spoke about his own experiences of detention, he said the one positive thing to come out of his detention experience is that it has motivated him to fight detention.

Counterpoints Arts

Emily Churchill Zarea and Usman Khalid were there to speak about Refugee Week, the UK's largest festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and asylum seekers. This year they are celebrating 20 years of Refugee Week. It is a coming together of communities, getting to know each other better and about having a space for celebration in the midst of going through the challenges of the



immigration system. Refugee Week has a focus on arts, culture and education. At the conference we learnt some new welcoming phrases in different languages from Usman. Emily then shared the video of Lips Choir-who support the closure of Yarl's Wood Detention Centre-with their version of 'Stay'.

Music in Detention



Sally Jaquet and Xi-Mali Kadeena-Guscoth created a celebratory atmosphere by teaching all attendees a song that was written in immigration detention called Freedom. It had everyone dancing in the aisles as well as some joining in with instruments and singing the tune for the rest of the day!

Student Action for Refugees

Emma Williams, the Chief Executive at STAR, spoke about what STAR have done and are doing in leading a campaign in partnership with NUS to ensure that asylum seekers have Equal Access to higher education. Emma spoke about the huge successes in the campaign with over 40 universities now offering scholarships or fee waivers, as well as improvements in government policy.



Keynote Speaker: Diane Abbott, MP



The MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington & Shadow Home Secretary spoke about the current challenges for our attendees and migrants in the UK and Labour's pledge to end indefinite detention as well as putting an end to the current hostile environment in the UK. Diane talked about the outrage of the Windrush scandal and how she had met many people, including her constituents that have been directly affected. She talked about her experiences of visiting Yarl's Wood IRC, which

under a Labour government, she promised to close down. Diane was an inspirational speaker and many of the attendees enjoyed and supported her positive message towards the issues currently being faced by migrants in the UK.

SPEAKERS AND WORKSHOPS

Accessing education –Adam Hundt- Partner at Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors

Adam ran a workshop covering the recent changes to studying in the UK and explained rights and entitlements to accessing education.

The key points were:

- Children can access education irrespective of immigration status.
- A new policy was introduced stating individuals who have failed asylum claims/ appeals rights exhausted, and have been issued with BAIL 201 conditions, will not be permitted to study in the UK (this includes ESOL).



Detention-campaigning/telling your story-Mishka and Kasonga- Freed Voices

Mishka and Kasonga began by asking people in the room to add up the time, collectively, they had spent in detention. It amounted to over 15 years which was shameful.

The key points were:

- To remember that you are not alone, people want to help and together we are strong.
- That telling your story promotes understanding and can lead to changes in the system

Rights and entitlements to volunteering- Francesca Valario- Migrants Organise



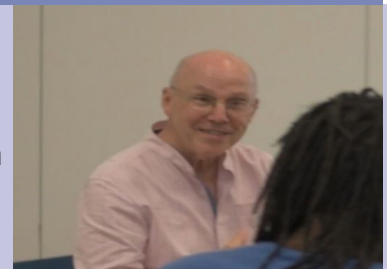
Francesca informed the group about their rights and entitlements to volunteering. The key points were:

- The differences between volunteering and volunteer work (everybody is entitled to volunteer but not to do volunteer work).
- Some volunteering roles will require a DBS. If a person doesn't have a passport, but has other proof of ID or documents accepted for the DBS, they can apply and will be asked to go to the closest police station so that the finger prints can be taken.

Mindfulness Tools for Managing Stress - Richard Reoch-Shambhala London

Richard's focus was on practical techniques to help with stressful conditions. The key points were:

- Our brain works in unison with the body, and it is how we process and act on our experiences that can help us to learn to reduce and manage life's stressfulness.
- It is important to take time to live 'in the moment' and meditation can help by allowing the mind to relax and settle.



Our heartfelt thanks goes to all of our speakers and presenters who took the time and effort to speak at the conference.

Some of our achievements in 2017-2018:

Raised public awareness:

We have a dedicated media staff member who is running the Samphire website, www.samphireproject.org.uk, which has been revamped. We have well over a thousand followers on our Twitter and Facebook pages to which we contribute with news and events effecting ex-detainees all across the UK.

As many of you may have noticed the conference was videoed this year, please go to our website and watch the video on the youtube link– you may see yourself on film!

Community Champion Programme:

We have set up three of our four programmes offering a peer support group for ex-detainees, run by ex-detainees, living in Rochdale, Plymouth and Middlesbrough. Uxbridge is to be set up in the early 2019.

Some of what we plan to achieve in 2018-2019:

Help ex-detainees settle into their communities:

We will make more connections with groups so that we can then refer and signpost to those best placed to help ex-detainees become part of their communities. We want to see ex-detainees integrating more deeply in their communities and to play a more active part. This can be extremely beneficial for ex-detainees' wellbeing but is also essential to changing opinion at the local level.

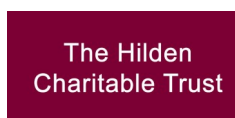
Attend all Immigration Removal Centres in England:

To provide staff with a better understanding of the experiences of those released from immigration detention. To provide information to those that are in detention about the services of Samphire's Ex-Detainee Project once they are released into the community.

With thanks to our generous funders and sponsors:



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**



Nancy Wishart Trust

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Nicky & Eileen Barber

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Leonard Laity Stoate charitable trust

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This report has been designed and created by Emily Wilson, a Samphire volunteer.