



# Samphire

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

## **Newsletter** **February 2019**

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### *Announcement*

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This is our first newsletter. We hope you like it and find it informative. We are a small local Dover based charity which works with migrant and local communities - please do read on to find out what Samphire is all about We would really like your feedback on this newsletter, or any of the content therein please do email the editor Richard at [richard@samphireproject.org.uk](mailto:richard@samphireproject.org.uk)

### *In This Issue*

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- Migrant crossings — our Director responds
- Our work with those who have been detained at immigration removal centres.
- Our work locally and how to get involved.

## *Migrant Crossings*

Dover has been at the centre of heightened media attention over the last couple of months as pictures of cold scared people arriving on our shores in small, often inflatable, boats have been beamed into our homes.

As we all know, the Channel is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world. It is a miracle that, to date, there have been no deaths.

These crossings are striking and shocking. They have stimulated lots of debate in Dover. Generally, people's reaction is a mix of compassion and confusion. We all find it shocking to see people taking such a grave risk with their life to reach Britain. But at the same time, many people don't fully understand why they are doing it. Why come to the UK rather than staying in France? Where did they come from originally? And are they genuinely seeking asylum?

The statistics provide some of the answers. Most people arriving in Europe after fleeing conflict or persecution claim asylum and settle in other European countries such as Germany, Italy, Greece and France. Only a small minority find their way to northern France with the aim of coming to the UK.

International law allows this – there is no rule stating that asylum must be sought in the first safe country reached.

So why come to the UK? Imagine your life being at risk – your first reaction would be to flee, and to find a place where you can rebuild your future. Most of us would try to get to a place where we have a connection – a family member, or where we speak the language. A large proportion of those in Calais have family ties to the UK.

“We should show compassion towards those who risk their lives to come here..... People idealise Britain as a safe place where human rights are respected: I think that's something we should be proud of.”

What's more, charities that work in the camps report that conditions in Calais are atrocious and the migrants face constant harassment from the French police. So it's no wonder people, albeit a small number, are willing to take a risk to reach the UK.

We should show compassion towards those who risk their lives to come here. All they want is for their application for asylum in Britain to be considered. In many countries, people idealise Britain as a safe place where human rights are respected: I think that's something we should be proud of.

Samphire has a long history of working with migrants in Dover – from visiting detainees at the Dover Immigration Removal Centre (now closed since 2015) to working with migrants resident here in our town today. We aim to shift attitudes and create a better understanding around issues relating to migration.

We are working closely with the children of Dover through interactive workshops which explore this topic, and we are engaging working with local residents through Dover Together to bring our diverse communities together in celebration.

Please read on to find out what we do in Dover and come and join in!

Tanya Long

## Ex-Detainee Project

Samphire's nationwide Ex-Detainee Project runs a Freephone telephone helpline for ex-detainees to call for advice and support about their situation. We advise, enable and empower ex-detainees to make changes that will improve their lives and impact positively in their local communities. We have over 600 people currently registered with the project, all have spent time in immigration detention. We mainly help with destitution issues- homelessness and essential living needs being the main focus-in addition to offering practical and emotional support. We also seek to influence the wider debate about migration through our policy work and taking part in campaigns such as putting an end to indefinite detention and giving asylum seekers the right to work in the UK.

In 2018 we created the Community Champion Programme- a peer support group for ex-detainees, run by ex-detainees. We trained a number of ex-detainees to become Community Champions who hold fortnightly meetings within their regions of the UK. The



A graphic for the Ex-Detainee Project. At the top left, it says "Ex-Detainee Project" in blue. To the right is the Samphire logo, which is a stylized blue figure inside a circle, with the word "Samphire" below it and the tagline "Changing attitudes to, and improving the lives of, ex-detainees and migrant communities" in smaller text. Below the logo is a blue wavy banner with the text: "We are an independent charity, supporting people released from immigration detention across the UK". Underneath is a white box with three bullet points: "Advise - Provide a telephone helpline for ex-detainees.", "Enable - Help ex-detainees access essential services in their local areas.", and "Empower - Empowering ex-detainees to make changes to improve their lives." Below this is another blue wavy banner with contact information: "Telephone: 01304 201535", "Freephone: 0800 9179397", and "Helpline opening times: Monday-Friday 10am-1pm".

programme runs in Plymouth, Middlesbrough and Uxbridge, with a different region of the UK to be set up later this year. We have worked with community champions to integrate into their area through developing links with local support organisations and actively supporting them in their communities. Ultimately, this new people-led initiative will become self-sustaining and we hope will be rolled out across the country.

Over the past 10 years we have helped over 1000 ex-detainees, including Danny\* who came to the UK in 2003 from Democratic Republic of Congo and contacted us for help in 2011. Since this time we have assisted him in many ways, including helping him when he was homeless find somewhere to live

and to buy food. He had suffered with mental health issues-mainly connected to his experiences whilst being detained both in his home country and the UK, we were able to help him find professional help and support him to get to a better place emotionally.

Danny has two children in the UK, a boy of 9 and a girl of 18months. Unfortunately the mother was unable to care for the girl and she was put into foster care upon birth. We supported Danny through this difficult time with both practical and emotional support. This month he was awarded full custody of his daughter and is getting used to be a single parent, we are supporting him closely through these changes and he is doing really well. We hope he will soon be given permission to stay in the UK and then he can finally get on with building his life here in the UK with his children.



### Ex-Detainee Project is looking for an intern/volunteer

We need an enthusiastic, committed and reliable person for our Ex-Detainee Project, to assist with contacting existing ex-detainees by telephone to check on their welfare and identify any needs they may have from our project. We are looking for a minimum commitment of 10 hours per week for a 4 week period (would prefer 2 afternoons a week, days can be flexible).

Ultimately, we need someone who is self-motivated, has a good telephone manner and confident in speaking to people in a reassuring manner. There will be some administrative tasks, such as entering information after a telephone call onto our database, but there is also the opportunity to gain real, hands-on experience of working in a small, independent non-governmental organisation.

For more information email [ex-detainee@samphireproject.org.uk](mailto:ex-detainee@samphireproject.org.uk)



Since I met Ex-detainee project my life is different for the better.

## *Schools of Sanctuary*

The Schools of Sanctuary project aims to raise awareness amongst primary and secondary school pupils on the issues surrounding migration, asylum seekers and refugees, and to strive towards creating equality in our communities.

The Schools of Sanctuary project continues to go from strength to strength in an environment that is increasingly hostile to migrants from all backgrounds.

### **Bromstone Primary joins project offering sanctuary to those in need**



We are pleased to announce that Bromstone has joined a project offering sanctuary to those in need. Bromstone has become the first School in the county to officially offer sanctuary to anyone in danger or experiencing troubles.

A School of Sanctuary is committed to being a safe and welcoming place for all, especially those seeking sanctuary. This could be people whose lives were in danger in their own country, who have troubles at home or are just looking for a space of safety.

In the last two months we have been able to congratulate Bromstone Primary school, Guston C of E Primary School and Charlton C of E Primary School on their hard work which has culminated in each of these school gaining School of Sanctuary status. What makes this news even more exciting is the on-going commitment and enthusiasm from staff and children to make their school a welcoming and inclusive place for all children and families to be.

“Charlton CEP Schools have worked hard at making a welcoming school for refugees”

We continue to work with 11 other primary school in East Kent who are finding creative and interesting ways of supporting their children to understand and embrace other cultures. These schools have each come up with novel ideas but have some common issues, therefore a support network of local ‘sanctuary Schools’ is being created that will help Samphire’s work become more sustainable in the future.

In the last three months, the Schools of Sanctuary project has also been introduced into three secondary schools in Dover as a pilot scheme. The school curriculum presents a number of avenues through which to explore the issues surrounding migration and cultural diversity, and our

secondary schools really value the richness our charity can bring to the subject.



An unexpected bonus to extending the project to older learners is in the form of interest students expressing an interest in volunteering and work experience. This has also provided Samphire with fresh opportunities to work more closely with the local community, giving us the chance to work in collaboration with other local individuals and groups



**The Schools of Sanctuary Kent Project** aims at raising awareness among pupils in Primary and Secondary school on the issues surrounding migration, asylum and refugees,

and strives towards creating equality in our communities. On Thursday, the school welcomed Frederika from the project back into school to award the School of Sanctuary status to us and present the award to The School Council. This recognises the work the children have done in workshops and assemblies to understand the difficulties people face when they are new to the country and how we can welcome them in our school family and help them settle in the wider community.



Follow our Facebook page to find out more about our events: [@samphireproject](#)

## *Multicultural Football Tournament*

Our first Multicultural Football Tournament took place in December when over 80 people came together to enjoy football and food from different countries and cultures. The winning team were Tinks Bravehearts, a local team. Special thanks to Deputy Town Mayor Ian for attending and presenting the trophies. We had representatives from Eritrea, Nepal, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Iran and England. The next tournament will be in April or May.

## *Dover Together*

We coordinate Dover Together - a welcoming and inclusive group of local residents who put on events to help show what a welcoming place Dover can be. We meet fortnightly alternating between lunchtime and evening meetings so as wide a cross section of people can attend. At present we are working on the following events :

Cinema Evening - Saturday 6th April,  
5PM - Silver Screen Dover - Persepolis

Fashion Fest - Saturday 31st August

International Food Nights - Friday 29th  
March - Evening

Music Nights

2019 Multicultural Festival

And more

Please do get in contact if you would like to join the group

[richard@samphireproject.org.uk](mailto:richard@samphireproject.org.uk)

or ring Richard on 0754072338

Did you know?  
87% of the French  
2018 World Cup  
winning team  
were immigrants  
or children of  
immigrants

# 29 June 2019

# SAVE THE DATE!



## **“Dover Together Multicultural Festival 2019”**

**Pencester Gardens, Pencester Road Dover CT1 1N\$, 12-4pm.**



Email [richard@samphireproject.org.uk](mailto:richard@samphireproject.org.uk) for further details or how to book a stall or telephone Richard on 07540723238