



Samphire

*Working to create a society which is inclusive
and compassionate towards migrants*

POST DETENTION SUPPORT PROJECT CONFERENCE REPORT

14th JULY 2022

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

**PROTECT
THE
HUMAN**
Amnesty International

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Joy Poppe Stephens Chair of Samphire



It's been a long and tough time since we last held a face-to-face Annual Conference. A lot of things have happened in the intervening years. Covid! The increased crossing of the Channel; our Government trying to break international conventions by proposing flights to Rwanda; the criminalization of innocent people. During this challenging period you built your resilience, honed your survival skills. We have a lot to learn from you. When I think times are tough for myself, I think of you, people with lived experience of immigration detention, and it helps to put things into

perspective.

But the point of today is to celebrate. To celebrate survival, to encourage one another with stories of courage and endeavour, to build our skills and hopes for the future. This is your Day! Take pride in who you are – people of lived experience of immigration detention of Great Britain 2022. Even if you have nothing else to celebrate, you can join with us in celebrating the crumbling of Boris Johnson's premiership and a government which has set back refugee and asylum rights, disobeyed the laws which they enacted, and eroded values of humanity and empathy in our society.

Indre Lechtimiakyte, Legal and Migrant Support Manager

In March 2021 the charity was given another three years funding by the National Lottery Community Fund so we can continue our crucial work supporting people who have experienced indefinite immigration detention.

At the moment we are in touch with over 500 people who have been subjected to indefinite immigration detention – some of them have been with the project for as long as 7 years.



We continue to specialise in crisis management, and when the most urgent needs have been met we provide help as needed with whatever problems the person is experiencing – loneliness, isolation and depression is a massive problem.

We aren't always able to produce the outcomes for people that we would like, but we do try with what we have. Even when we can't solve the problem, we can listen and be a shoulder to cry on. Year on year, and especially throughout the isolation of Covid, this has become more and more important.

We recognise the importance of holistic local support networks for ex-detainees and have developed relationships with a wide range of organisations nationwide to which we can refer people.

Elisha Sutton Project Coordinator—Lived Experiences Steering Group



Within my short time at Samphire I have spoken with some of you sitting here today and tried to help with what means we have had available and going forward from today I really want to concentrate and build on the amazing Steering group.

I want to enable people to get their voices heard and make a stand to reform the detention centers. The best way to do this is to hear from those who have lived experiences. You guys and so many others like you, that have had to live with the after effects of being in detention centers, with little to no support from the government or local authorities. We hold monthly meetings where members voice what they need and feel would benefit them and then at Samphire we take what is said and look into how we can help make those requests a reality. I not only want to do more to enable positive change, but as a country that calls ourselves 'great' Britain, we NEED to do more.

Shehrezade Maria Mamjan—Post Detention Caseworker;

The post detention case worker provides support to people who have been released from immigration the UK, with the aim of alleviating destitution, improving their quality of life and facilitating integration into their local communities. The case worker contributes to the smooth running of the Post Detention Project.



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

- Registered 59 new beneficiaries with the project.
- Dealt with 1400 individual requests for assistance.
- Supported over 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 people with lived experience of immigration detention to make changes that will improve their lives and impact positively their local communities.

In the past year alone we have had well over 500 calls asking for emotional support. From a recent survey in March 2022, 66% of the respondents said that speaking to the EDP staff had helped them feel less anxious and 80% said that the information provided by the project had improved their access to services.

We will continue to, with the support of our funders, volunteers, and people with lived experience, 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



"This conference has provided an insight that I am not alone in this situation and am able to access support"



"Really great to gather ex-detainees together"



"Great conference"



59 attendees at 2022 Conference



People were able to air their opinions without interruption or interference



"So sensible, understandable and supportive!"



Lunch was provided by a Middle eastern Restaurant in London—Imad's Syrian Kitchen.

The restaurant owned Imad—a Syrian refugee, who arrived to London in 2015



FEEDBACK AND PHOTOGRAPHS



“100% of the attendees surveyed agreed that the conference addressed some of the major issues ex-detainees face ”



91% of attendees felt that overall the conference has contributed to a better understanding of ex-detainees problems and opportunities



91% of attendees learned something new from the speakers' presentations



100% enjoyed the speakers' presentations



100% felt that the conference provided them with ideas that will help making changes in their life/work



SPEAKERS, PERFORMANCES

Miss Jacqui



Miss Jacqui is a Poet and Songwriter who knows a great deal about working with the cards that you are dealt. She is someone who always tries to challenge societal perceptions, like what it actually means to be a black woman with a disability. A wheelchair user herself, Miss Jacqui wants her poetry and music to help her listeners to see the world differently, and to inspire others to feel confident in being themselves.

Migrants Organise—Immigration System and Mental Health

Migrants Organise provides a platform for refugees and migrants to organise for power, dignity and justice to enable meaningful inclusion and integration. They combine advice and support for individuals affected by the hostile environment immigration policies with community organising, advocacy, research and campaigning to help dismantle structural racism. During the Conference, Brian spoke about how the immigration system and hostile environment, including indefinite detention system, has a long lasting impact on mental health.



Refugee Action—Access to Legal Support and regulated advisors



Unregulated immigration advice is criminal. There are different types of regulated adviser: Solicitors, Barristers, OISC advisers, etc. You can check them up on their regulator's website. A good adviser will always act in your best interests: they will keep you case confidential, will be honest (with everyone), transparent about money (suspiciously cheap is not good), they will tell you what is going on and treat you with respect. A good advisor will tell you how and when to contact them, provide you realistic timescales & expectations. They will also provide you information how to complain. A good adviser will communicate orally and in writing.

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants - Resisting Hostile Environment

If you're not sure where to start, JCWI has produced a toolkit for resisting the hostile environment. It has tips and resources to help you do all of the above and more. You can find it by searching 'Resist and Persist' on Google. It has lots of ways that everyone can get involved in resisting the hostile environment – from researching the impact of the hostile environment in your local area, to supporting other groups that are working on the frontlines in this struggle. There really is something for everyone, whatever your situation and whatever your story.



Samphire's Lived Experience Steering Group

The Steering Group are a group of volunteers, that have lived experience. At our annual conference, several of the group members, shared poems, songs and speeches that related to their thoughts and feelings, around being held in immigration detention. The Steering Group also were the ones that



picked and gave ideas for the workshops we held at the conference. You can read an excerpt from one of the speeches—a poem "We are all economic migrants" on the last page of this report.

Hear Me Out

Hear Me Out (Formerly known as Music In Detention) is a passionate team of musicians, experts, teachers and people with real experience of UK immigration detention. Together, they're working for the day when all migrants are treated with dignity. The team is devoted to supporting the mental wellbeing of the people locked in immigration detention and to changing attitudes to migrants in the communities around them



WORKSHOPS

Mental Health & Well Being – MIND

Maneet Relom and Robin Skyer from Mental health charity MIND led a workshop on mental health and wellbeing, covering different mental health conditions such as PTSD, depression, anxiety and trauma. During the session we learned how to spot signs of poor mental health and how to access support and treatment when we need it. To end the session Maneet and Robin created a safe space for people to ask questions and talk about their own mental health concerns.

The MIND website has a lot of useful information on mental health and the support available - www.mind.org.uk.



Telling Your Story for the Change You Want - Migrant Voice



How to tell your story for advocacy and creating change?

Migrant Voice shared their own experience and learning from telling their stories to build understanding and solidarity and campaign for change.

With a focus on speaking out in the media, this workshop looked at how to shape your message and how best to get it across, knowing your rights, how to deal with difficult questions, etc. - how to feel more confident and skilled when speaking out.

Creative Writing – Shazea Quraishi – Poet & Trustee of English Pen

In this workshop, we explored ways to get writing, no matter what your experience or level of English. Workshop Facilitator Shazea Quraishi shared strategies she uses to get into the flow of thinking and writing, and we used some of the tools of Poetry to generate writing that is accurate, imaginative, and connects to deeper truths. We also had the possibility of incorporating other languages and translation as a way to best express meaning.

Shazea Quraishi is a Pakistani-born Canadian poet and translator based in London. Her poems have appeared in UK and US. Shazea teaches with the Poetry School, and is a trustee on the board of English PEN.



Access to Healthcare for Migrants - Doctors of the World National Health Advisors



Doctors of the World gave a very useful workshop on accessing healthcare in the UK. The session covered how the NHS works, what to expect and how to access the help you need. We learned lots of useful information on things like; how to get free or discounted prescriptions with an HC2 certificate and knowing your rights to health care such as registering with a doctor - you do not need documents like ID, passport or proof of where you live to see a doctor and you do not need to talk about your immigration status even if you are asked. We also learned about how to access

hospital care, the difficulties that might come up and how to deal with them.

Doctors of the world have a free helpline for support with things like registering with a GP and accessing hospital care. Call free on 0808 1647 686 the line is open 10-12pm, Monday-Thursday.

We are all economic migrants

Two of them arrived not knowing where they were going

and another refused to say where he came from

whilst knowing very well where he was going.

Then one child, God bless him, knew nothing.

If there are two kinds of migrants,
there are no two ways of fleeing a country
that makes one person human and another not.

Asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants,
expatriate, tourists and other immigrants,
history, economy and climate change
have led our footsteps to merge in this land.

The sanctuary seeker or the treasure seeker
come to us
for the same reasons as the man from
Northern Ireland
finds fortune in the west Midlands.

So, let's not burden them with our woes as
they have their own.

They come with the same motivations
that push the lady from London

to the American dream of New-York and Boston

seeking to depart from an untouchable life
to one of a reputation untouched;

from an unbearable existence
to a life plainly admired.

We are all economic migrants and
we all need the respect and the freedom
we may not have enjoyed before
because our humanity is our common cause
and we must fight for one as we fight for all.

I come from here and there and I come from nowhere.

I don't know where life will take me but I have a goal.

Life has taken all she could from me but left me with a purpose
and if only I dare to make sense of it, I will find peace.

*An excerpt from a poem by
A. T., a person with lived experience
2022*

With thanks to our generous funder:



and our private monthly donators