

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

Survey of Visitors 2010

Background

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG) is a group of volunteers visiting asylum seekers and immigration detainees at two immigration removal centres at Gatwick airport. The group is a registered charity and the volunteers are supported by an office with four members of staff and a management committee of nine trustees.

This survey of visitors was commissioned by the Trustees in autumn 2010. The aims of the survey were to elicit the views of volunteers on:

- the training and support provided by GDWG,
- the impact the role of visitor has had on volunteers personally, and
- the volunteers' views on the benefits of visiting to detainees

and the results will be used to help develop and improve support for GDWG volunteers.

The survey will also be used to support applications to external funding bodies and as a record of the views of volunteers at the end of 2010 so that comparisons can be made over time.

Methods

In previous years, the survey of volunteers had been a paper questionnaire designed by the GDWG management team and collated and reported by SSMR Ltd., a subsidiary of the University of Surrey. This year, the survey was designed and developed using a web-based questionnaire Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The included questions were based on those used in previous years with small adjustments made to ensure they were suitable for web-based data collection. In addition where the respondent was being asked to evaluate according to a subjective criteria, a five-item scale was used where the level of agreement or disagreement with a statement is measured. A full copy of the questionnaire is given in appendix A. Briefly, the questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first 'About you' asked basic demographic information with responses based on standard Office for National Statistics categorisations and also questions on how long they had been involved in GDWG. In the second section 'The experience of visiting', questions focused on finding out what visitors thought of the preparation and support offered to them by the GDWG office and management team as well as asking them how visiting detainees had impacted on them personally. In the third section 'How we support detainees', visitors were asked their opinion on the impact their visits had on the detainees.

Survey Monkey was also used to collect data from visitors. An email was sent to the list of 96 current and former visitors inviting them to complete the online questionnaire. A period of two weeks was given, after which a reminder was sent with an extension for another two weeks. Five visitors do not use email and were sent a paper copy of the questionnaire in the post with a stamped addressed envelope to return the questionnaire to BB's home address. Thus the potential sample includes a total of 101 visitors.

Once data collection was complete, Survey Monkey was used to automatically generate an Excel database of responses, onto which the paper responses received by post were added. We anticipate that the online responses and web-based database generation has minimised any possible bias in data collection. In the results, responses are reported as percentages where appropriate. Where a scale was used the results are summarised as follows: the lowest rating was given a score of 1, the next a score of 2 up to a maximum score of 5 for the highest rating. The average score for each question can then be reported; an average score over 3 means that on average the level of agreement with the statement was good, over 4 that the average level of agreement with the statement was very good, over 5 average agreement was excellent.

Results

Response rate

There were 58 online questionnaires completed (60% of potential sample) and three paper questionnaires completed (50% of potential sample), with a total response rate of 60%.

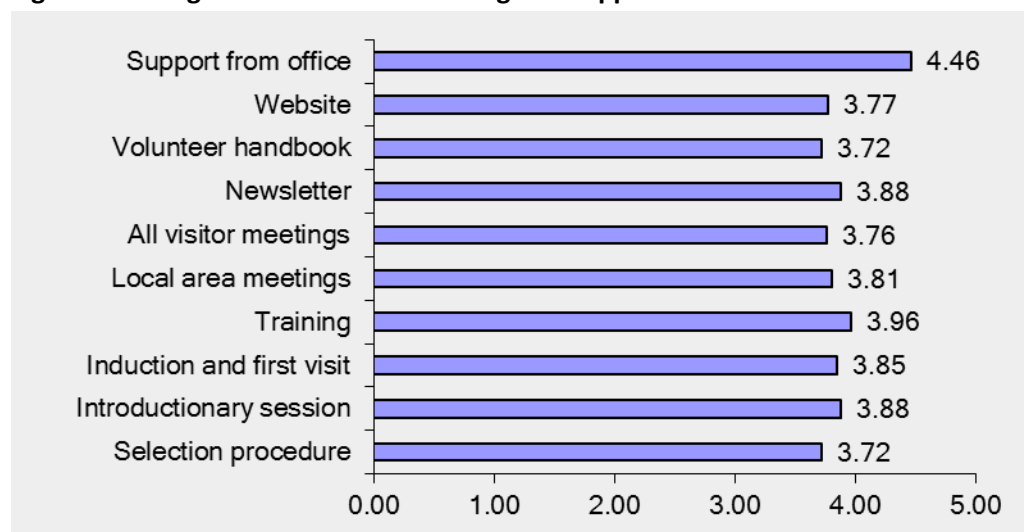
Characteristics of visitors

GDWG visitors are overwhelmingly white (92%), with the remaining 8% of mixed race or 'other' ethnic group. Half of the visitors who responded work either full-time or part-time, 10% are students, 30% retired and 10% out of work. Responses mostly came from current visitors (82%) and there was a pretty even distribution of those who had recently become visitors (33% less than one year), those who had been visiting for between one and three years (33%) and those who had been visiting for much longer (14% for between four and nine years and 19% for ten years or more).

The experience of visiting

The summarised ratings based on the scales of the experience of visitor training and support is shown in Figure 1. The results show that all elements of visitor training and support have an average rating of over 3.5, meaning that on average visitors scored them as 'good' or 'very good'. Support from the GDWG office had a rating of 4.46, meaning that on average it was scored as either 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Figure 1: Rating scores for visitor training and support



Concerning preparation for visiting a detainee, 5% of respondents felt extremely well prepared by GDWG training and support, 61% felt very well prepared, 26% somewhat well prepared and 4% a little prepared. No-one felt that they were not well prepared for visiting. The satisfaction of visitors to the support offered to them reflects this; 34% were extremely satisfied, 57% very satisfied and 9% somewhat satisfied.

The impact that involvement in GDWG has on visitors personally is summarised in Figure 2. A score of between 2 and 3 means that on average respondents felt ‘a little’ or ‘somewhat’ level of agreement with the statement, a score of between 3 and 4 means that on average respondents felt ‘somewhat’ or ‘very much’ agreement with the statement and a score of between 4 and 5 means that on average respondents felt ‘very much’ or ‘a great deal’ level of agreement with the statement. The results suggest that the role of visitor has increased the knowledge of visitors, made them more appreciative of other cultures, made them feel valuable and benefited their confidence and self-esteem. However there is less evidence that, on average, visiting improves health or well-being, increases trust in others or affect future job prospects (though this may be related to the high proportion of respondents retired).

Figure 2: Rating scores for level of agreement with the statement ‘Do you think your role as a visitor has...’



There was acknowledgement from those who responded to the questionnaire that at times, visiting could be difficult and challenging. 90% of respondents said that they found visiting a detainee challenging to some extent, though 78% said that they agreed ‘a lot’ or ‘a great deal’ with the statement that they had been able to establish a rapport with their detainee. When visits had been difficult, almost three-quarters (74%) of respondents reported that they found support from the GDWG office, half (51%) from local groups and peer support was illustrated with 28% finding support from another visitor.

How we support detainees

The GDWG visitors surveyed clearly think that the group does important valuable and important work, 22% thought it did most of the time and 78% thought it did all of the time. Respondents also felt that visiting improved detainees well-being, 14% felt it did to some extent, 44% very much and 44% a great deal.

Conclusions

GDWG visitors reported an overwhelmingly positive response to the training and support they receive; the charity office was rated particularly highly. The result was that 96% of respondents felt well, very well or extremely well prepared for their visiting.

Visiting detainees was also demonstrated to have a positive impact on the visitors themselves, with respondents reporting that visiting had increased their knowledge and made them more appreciative of other cultures.

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Dr Barbara Barrett, February 2011

Declaration of interest BB is the daughter of chair of trustees John Barrett though she has no role in GDWG and is not a visitor. She is a Lecturer in Health Economics at King's College London; however this report represents her own work and has no formal association with the University.

Appendix A

1. Are you?
Male/Female
2. Which age band are you in?
Under 25/25 – 35/36 – 45/46 – 60/Over 60
3. How would you describe your ethnicity?
White/Mixed/Asian or Asian British/Black or Black British/Chinese or Chinese British/Other ethnic group
4. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?
Yes/No
5. Are you currently...
In full-time employment/In part-time employment/A student/Retired/Looking for work/Not looking for work
6. Which GDWG area group are you in?
Brighton/Crawley/East Grinstead and Oxted/Horsham/Reigate
7. Please state whether you are...
A current GDWG visitor/A former GDWG visitor
8. Please indicate how long you have been, or were, a visitor with GDWG
Less than one year/1 - 3 years/4 - 6 years/7 - 9 years/10 years or more
9. Please rate the following elements of visitor training and support
Selection procedure
Introductionary session
Induction and first visit
Training
Local area meetings
All visitor meetings
Newsletter
Volunteer handbook
Website
Support from office
10. How well were you prepared for visiting detainees by GDWG's training and initial contact with staff?
Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Very/Extremely
11. How satisfied are you with the support offered to visitors?
Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Very/Extremely
12. Do you think your role as a visitor has benefited your confidence and self-esteem?
improved your skills or future job prospects?
increased your knowledge?
made you more appreciative of other cultures?
made you new friends?
made you feel valuable?
improved your health and well-being?
increased your sense of trust in others?
13. Thinking about your visits over the last six months
Have you been able to establish a rapport with your detainee?
Have you found visiting your detainee challenging?
14. If you have found visits difficult, have you found support from
Comments another visitor?
your local group?
the GDWG office?
15. Do you think that GDWG does valuable and important work?
None of the time/Some of the time/Most of the time/All of the time
16. Do you think that visiting detainees improves their well-being?
Not at all/A little/Somewhat/Very much/A great deal
17. Thinking about your visits over the last six months. Have you been able to help your detainee in any of the following ways, either by yourself or on collaboration with the GDWG office?
Provision of clothing/toiletries
Phone cards
Access to legal advice
Contact with family