



Young arrivers share common routes to immigration detention and face specific forms of harm

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About the research

Children who are not citizens, or 'young arrivers' often face difficulties growing up in the UK, but their rights are generally more extensive than those of adults. It is far less likely that they will be detained or deported than adults. Once children approach 18, they move from protected to unprotected status. Many are not able to secure settled immigration status, but even when they do, they risk automatic deportation orders if they go to prison.

Having spent a significant part of their formative years in the UK, some adults end up detained in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) while the government tries to deport them to places that feel foreign. This can be a frightening process which dramatically challenges identities and rights that they previously took for granted. But there has been little written on the topic and no research about this group in relation to immigration detention.

This research uncovers ways in which people who arrived when they were under 18 become detained as adults, and explores how detention affects them as a distinctive group. The work provides a platform for the voices of people whose conceptions of safety, belonging and Britishness have been shaken by the immigration controls they are now subjected to.

The research explores how young arrivers end up detained and how detention affects them as a distinctive group

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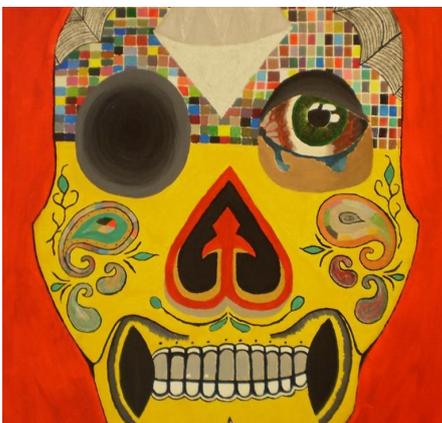
Policy implications

- Indefinite immigration detention should be brought to an end and replaced with a 28-day limit and community-based alternatives.
- The 2016 Home Office 'Guidance on adults at risk in immigration detention' should be implemented properly without delay and administrative factors should never take precedence over safety and wellbeing.
- Young arrivers should be classed as a potentially vulnerable group generally unsuitable for detention and Home Office guidance should consider the dynamic nature of vulnerability in detention.
- When people arrive in the UK as children, settled immigration status should be granted swiftly. They should then automatically be on a path to citizenship.
- There should be an advocate who takes responsibility for regularising every child's status and, once this is achieved, registering them as a British citizen.
- Links between criminality and growing up in Britain, including within the care system, should be recognised. Young arrivers should not be demonised as foreign national prisoners and automatic deportation orders should not be issued.

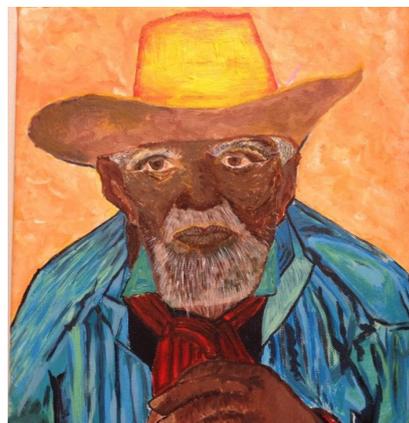


Key Findings

- Young arrivers in detention are likely to have experienced trauma as children and to have been in the care system. Inadequate support and inappropriate care placements can leave them vulnerable. Local authorities sometimes fail to regularise immigration status and citizenship. A lack of guidance as well as use of police intervention to deal with disruptive behaviour can lead to early convictions.
- Detained young arrivers are likely to have been through the criminal justice system. Crimes that lead to deportation orders are often relatively minor and are inextricably tied to growing up as marginalised young people in Britain, but their status as foreign national prisoners mean that they are treated differently to their British peers. Young arrivers are not adequately informed about the possibility of detention and deportation, and are not granted opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
- Young arrivers feel deeply connected to the UK, and being detained triggers intense shock. Detention causes people who had previously felt British to begin to feel foreign, excluded from society and the identity they had grown up with. Detention causes fear about being deported to places where they have few connections, meaning that post-deportation futures are unimaginable and feel impossible.
- Young arrivers, who often have substantial networks of family and friends in the UK, face difficulties in maintaining relationships in detention which leaves them isolated from their support networks. Young arrivers are also likely to experience prolonged detention and are particularly vulnerable to mental illness while detained. These findings show that recent Home Office policies to prevent vulnerable people being detained are not being implemented.



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When I Get Out of Detention)* by Ridy

Further information

This collaborative research was carried out by Dan Godshaw, an ESRC funded Doctoral Researcher at the University of Bristol, and Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG).

GDWG is an independent charity providing emotional and practical support to people detained under immigration powers in Brook House and Tinsley House IRCs next to Gatwick Airport. GDWG has around 40 volunteers who visit people detained, and a small team of office staff who undertake advocacy and casework. GDWG also does outreach work to raise awareness about immigration detention as well as collating information to improve the system as a whole.

The project is based on six months of fieldwork in 2017 including visits with people held in Brook House, interviews with detainees and expert practitioners as well as analysis of Home Office documents. The full report, *Don't dump me in a foreign land: Immigration detention and young arrivers* is available on the GDWG website:

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