



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1124328

A Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England and Wales No. 4911257

Policy title	Staff and Volunteer Policy on detainees who pose a safety risk
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Staff and Volunteer Policy on detainees who pose a safety risk

1. Past experience shows that the vast majority of detainees are very appreciative of the service they received from GDWG and show respect to visitors. This policy aims to ensure equal and non-judgemental treatment for all detainees who seek our support, without undermining our organisation's key values. Most important, it is intended at all times to preserve the safety of Group members. This is particularly relevant where detainees behave inappropriately to staff or volunteers. GDWG will not accept behaviour which is verbally or physically inappropriate, abusive or threatening.

2. When accepting a service from GDWG, detainees will be informed that this is based on two-way respect. Although we accept there may be a need for detainees to vent anger and frustration, this must be set against the well-being of our members.

3. Some detainees are awaiting deportation having served criminal sentences. There is no obligation by the authorities to inform us of detainees' convictions. Although they may do so, we cannot assume we know everything relevant in this area. Similarly, although a detainee may inform their GDWG caseworker of their criminal convictions, this is not a condition of receiving a service from GDWG. Indeed, detainees with no criminal convictions are not necessarily going to pose less of a risk to GDWG members than those who have convictions.

4. When allocating a visitor to a detainee, caseworkers will take into consideration relevant matching considerations. This can include relevant interests, e.g. poetry. It may also include

considerations of age and gender. If a detainee is known to have served a long prison sentence, they will frequently be allocated an experienced visitor if one is available to visit.

5. GDWG staff and visitors should be alert to the possibility that any of us can be uncomfortable with the behaviour of a person in detention. It is important to stress that we do not expect anyone to continue visiting where this is the case. If you are uncertain about a detainee's behaviour towards you or feel challenged by a new situation they pose for you, explore this with a member of staff or your buddy.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Rudeness
- Lack of respect
- Manipulative behaviour
- Repeatedly overstepping boundaries, e.g. asking them out, frequent phone calls
- Aggression, including sexual aggression (physical or verbal; overt or by innuendo and implication).

Any of these behaviours might be exhibited during face to face meetings, calls, texts or other means of communication. The unacceptable behaviour might be directed at a GDWG member or at others in detention or elsewhere.

6. If you visit someone whose views are challenging, please also discuss this with a member of staff. We recognise that visitors may encounter ways of looking at the world that are very different to their own, and this may be unsettling. It is important to bear in mind that people in detention may have grown up with very different cultural and ethical norms and we still wish to offer them acceptance and respect. We expect visitors to be open minded to the views of others but appreciate that in extreme cases it may be necessary to terminate visits.

7. GDWG staff providing the drop-in service at Brook House meet detainees privately in one of the "legal rooms". G4S staff are not within sight or earshot, and an alarm bell is provided if the staff member needs to call for assistance. To prevent the possibility of being held in the room by the detainee, the staff member may consider sitting nearest the door so their exit is clear. However, facing the door may be considered more of a priority for reasons of outlook onto the corridor and to give detainees space to behave authentically without being in sight of the officers.

8. Should issues of unacceptable behaviour arise, one of the caseworkers in the office should be informed as soon as possible, so the problem can be discussed and a way forward agreed. In their absence, the matter should be referred to the Director. It may be necessary to draw a visitor's attention to the GDWG Code of Conduct and to the Guidelines on Contact with Former Detainees if they may have contributed to the issue themselves.

It may be that:

- Strategies can be suggested for the visitor to counter this behaviour
- A staff member can talk to the detainee, and explain that this is not acceptable behaviour. It may be necessary to point out that if it continues, it might lead to visits from that visitor being stopped
- The detainee can be visited by someone else
- The visitor or staff member needs support following an issue arising. As well as being offered the opportunity to discuss this on a 1:1 basis, visitors can be reminded they can

use their buddy or local group for support. Area coordinators and experienced visitors from the local group should be sensitive to the possibility of such problems and encourage the sharing of views.

9. We recognise there may be times when a detainee's behaviour to a volunteer or staff member can pose a particular challenge. In exceptional circumstances, this may lead to the termination of visits, and even withdrawal of support.

10. A detainee must be told promptly of any decision to change their visitor, end visits or withdraw support and the reason for such a decision. Advocacy staff should make a joint decision on this, involving the director. They will need to agree what reason is given to the detainee for the decision. The decision should be clearly recorded on their database entry with 'Serious Incident' in the subject line.