



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1124328

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

Policy title	Working with detainees with serious convictions or inappropriate behaviour
Approved by	Felicity Dick and James Wilson
Date	November 2018
Date ratified by Board	December 2018
Date revision next due	December 2020

1. 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, i.e. volunteers and staff.

2. We recognise there may be times when a detainee's behaviour to a volunteer or staff member can pose a particular challenge. This may occasionally lead to termination of visits, and even withdrawal of support.

In almost all cases, a detainee who is allocated to a visitor will have met a staff member or experienced volunteer at a drop-in meeting first. This meeting will explore casework needs as well as the possible need for a visitor, and the detainee will often discuss any criminal history with us at this point. However, if they do not want to discuss criminal convictions, we will not put pressure on them to do so. There is also no obligation by the authorities to inform us of detainees' serious convictions. So, though we are often made aware of a criminal record, we cannot assume we know everything relevant in this area.

Where it is known a detainee's convictions may pose serious challenges to a visitor, staff assess the level of support needed, and allocate an appropriate visitor.

This includes:

Sex offences; offences against children; violent offences, particularly those aggravated by race, religion, sexual orientation etc.

Where a conviction is considered serious, staff assess whether visits are appropriate and which visitor should be allocated.

Staff should consider:

- The nature of the offence.
- The detainee's attitude to the offence.

The volunteer assigned to visit the detainee, and other staff, are informed as fully as possible of a detainee's serious convictions. The volunteer has the right to decide that are not comfortable visiting a particular detainee in light of the offences in question. Equally, if a detainee has not initially admitted a conviction, and this comes to light later, a visitor is entitled to end the relationship if they feel uncomfortable. It is noted that it is not a requirement for detainees to inform us of their convictions in

order to be entitled to support from GDWG. Staff should be kept promptly informed where this is the case.

3. There are various types of behaviour which might make GDWG members uncomfortable or which they may find unacceptable. These include:

- Rudeness.
- Lack of respect.
- Manipulative behaviour.
- Aggression, including sexual aggression.

This last could be physical or verbal; overt or by innuendo and implication. Any of these might be during face to face meetings, calls or texts or other means of communication.

4. Though we fully accept there is often a need to vent anger and frustration, this must be set against the well-being of our members. Staff and visitors should be alert to the possibility that any of us can be uncomfortable with a detainee's behaviour or can find some views unacceptable. The presumption is that we do not expect anyone to continue visiting where this is the case.

5. Where difficulties are anticipated or known to exist, it is particularly important that a visitor's attention be brought to GDWG Guidelines on Boundaries and to the Guidelines on Contact with Former Detainees. Staff, area coordinators and experienced visitors from the local group should be sensitive to the possibility of problems and encourage the sharing of views.

6. Where these issues arise staff should be informed as soon as possible, so the problem can be discussed. It may be that:

- Strategies could be suggested for countering unacceptable behaviour.
- The detainee in question could be contacted/visited by someone else.
- The issue could be addressed by a staff member's talking to the detainee, and explaining this is not acceptable behaviour. It may be necessary to point out it could lead to visits being stopped.

7. A detainee must be told promptly of any decision to end visits or withdraw support. Staff make a joint decision on this, if possible involving the director. They may choose whether to give the reason to the detainee.

It is important to consider the wellbeing of the detainee and the GDWG member involved, and it is expected any withdrawal of support would not be presented as punitive to the detainee.

Updated: Nov 2018

Chair