



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1124328

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

Policy title	Code of Conduct for Volunteers
Approved by	Avril Loveless and Louise Williamson
Date	March 2020
Date ratified by Board	April 2020
Date revision next due	March 2021

As a registered charity GDWG has to maintain the highest standards. The activities of the charity's volunteers are part of the public face of GDWG and it is particularly important that volunteers should act in the best interests of the detainees whom the charity serves. Accordingly GDWG expects its volunteers to adhere to a Code of Conduct and has procedures for dealing with departures from that Code (see separate Volunteer Disciplinary Procedure).

1. I will read and work within the guidelines, policies and procedures contained in the Visitors' Handbook.

2. I will respect detainees' confidences, keeping what they tell me within GDWG, unless they ask me to talk to someone on their behalf or a safeguarding issue is concerned.

Many detainees have reason to fear what might happen to them or their families if the wrong people discover where they are. They may also have things they want to hide from the authorities or they may simply not like the idea of other people discussing their private lives. It is vital to respect their confidence, and not to discuss or relate their business with anybody outside GDWG without their permission. This includes interpreters, other detainees, people from their own country, staff at the detention centre and their legal representative. If you are talking through an interpreter, remember that there may be things the detainee does not want their interpreter to know.

It is a good idea, if possible, to explain to the detainee that you will not talk about them to anyone outside the group without discussing this with them first. Sometimes detainees may tell you things which make you feel uneasy, and it is important that you feel free to talk about this in your local support group or with one of GDWG's staff. If a detainee tells you something that you feel that you need to pass on beyond the group - for instance, that they are under 18, or that they are suicidal or unwell - discuss this with them, and if in doubt consult a member of

staff before doing anything. Please also refer to the GDWG's Guidelines for Visiting Suicidal Detainees and the policies on Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children. If you are concerned that the detainee is in danger of harming themselves or others, you must immediately contact those listed in these Guidelines.

All information held by volunteers on detainees must be stored safely and securely. It should be deleted from personal email accounts, phones and computers when the volunteer stops visiting them. If the volunteer feels that the information they have may be useful in the future then they should send this information to the office for secure filing. On no account should any data be held more than 6 years.

3. I will be non-judgmental towards the person I am visiting, and all that they tell me.

Those in detention have come to UK for a wide variety of reasons and have had a wide variety of experiences since they came here. Fascinating though their stories are, it is not our role to decide the merits of their cases, nor to probe or sort out what really happened to them. It is up to them to decide what they want to tell us. Whatever they do or don't tell us, we are there to offer support, care and acceptance. This is not always easy: talk to the office staff or other volunteers in your area group.

4. I will treat any detainee I visit with dignity and respect at all times and try to empower them.

Detainees have very little control over their lives: they do not even know how long they will be detained. Ways of empowering them include: ringing before you visit, so they can say if the time is not convenient; asking them to teach you about their country, culture or language; keeping your promises to them. You may be able to help by liaising with their lawyer, or with community groups, but respect the fact that they may not want you to. Always ask them before you do anything for them, and don't take anything out of their hands that they want to do for themselves.

5. I will respect people's religious beliefs, and will not try to convert them to my own.

The detainee you are visiting may hold different religious beliefs from you. They are extremely vulnerable, and may feel beholden to you, so it is not appropriate to try to convert them. Please respect the detainee's beliefs. Please do not take unsolicited religious literature into the detention centre without consulting a member of staff.

6. When allocated a detainee I will visit them every week that they are in the detention centre. However, if I am unable to visit one week I will let them know and contact the office if they would like someone else to visit in my place.

The detainee you are visiting needs to be able to rely on your visit, and on you. Please let the office know if you are not able to visit one week, and check with the detainee if they would like someone else to visit them or they may prefer to have a phone call with you instead.

7. I will let a member of staff know when the detainee I am visiting leaves the centre, and I will inform the office quickly if I am having problems visiting on a regular basis or if I have to stop visiting altogether. I will also complete an online feedback form once I have stopped visiting each detainee.

Please inform the office as soon as a detainee has been released, transferred or removed. You may well feel you need a break at this point if so, please inform a member of staff when you might be ready to take on a new detainee. If something happens which means you have to stop visiting a detainee while they are still at Gatwick, please make sure that the office knows, so that they can reallocate the detainee you are visiting. Please complete an online feedback

form for each detainee you visit, once your visits to that person have ended.

- 8. I will attend both the training sessions provided by GDWG and my area support group meetings. On any occasion that I cannot attend I will let a member of staff know beforehand, and undertake to read the notes of the meeting sent to me subsequently.**

Part of your commitment as a visitor is to make use of the support the group offers you through training sessions and area group meetings. We provide training in issues related to visiting, the legal process, medical and psychiatric issues and in other relevant subjects. It is also highly recommended that volunteers attend area group meetings: they provide mutual support, a chance to talk out boundaries issues which may arise and are a channel for information on changes at the detention centres and in immigration law. Even if you do not feel particularly in need of support, you may have experience and information which would be useful to other visitors.
- 9. I understand that I must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when visiting a detainee or when I am undertaking any other activities on behalf of GDWG.**
- 10. I will maintain the good relations that have been built up between GDWG and the detention centre, acting in a courteous and polite manner at all times when I am visiting.**

Please be courteous towards the detention centre staff. Your behaviour towards them can affect their relationship both with GDWG as an organisation and with the detainee. If you have any problems, report back to the Director or Chair of Trustees.
- 11. I will adhere to the Equal Opportunities Policy and positively act upon it.**
- 12. I understand that GDWG's campaigning activities are limited and carefully planned to be consistent with its welfare objectives and that those are the only campaigns in which my participation would be under GDWG's auspices. If I take part in any other campaigns it will be in my personal capacity. I will not get involved in any capacity in any campaign to close down Tinsley House or Brook House or demonstrate outside the centres.**

Please respect the fact that we are not a party political group, and that our lobbying and campaigning work is carefully planned by the staff and trustees. If visitors become involved in campaigns to close down Tinsley House or Brook House this could jeopardise our access to detainees. Please do not take the media or public figures into the detention centre, or seek publicity of any kind, without consulting with the Chair of Trustees or Director. Please do not take political or campaigning literature into the detention centre.
- 13. I accept that if I give my phone number or address to a detainee, I do so at my own risk. I have had the potential risks explained to me.**

We advise you not to give out your address, as some visitors have had difficult experiences after detainees have been released. However well you get to know the person you are visiting, you do not know everything about them and they may misunderstand your relationship with them. You can give the office address instead, and the staff will pass on mail to you. Please also think carefully before you give a detainee your phone number. This can be helpful - as it means that they can reach you if they are particularly anxious and the office is closed - but it may lead to phone calls at inconvenient times, calls after they have left detention, or calls from strangers to whom they have given your number. As an alternative you can give them the office phone number, and ring them up between visits if you want to offer extra support. We also suggest you hide your mobile phone number, and avoid sending texts.
- 14. I accept that it is not GDWG's policy for visitors to stand bail for their detainees.**

The detainee you are visiting may ask you to stand bail for them. Please do not do this, for the

following reasons:

- You risk losing your money if they abscond. The detainee may be trustworthy, but they may feel absconding is the only option available to them. This has been the experience of members of GDWG in the past. You must ask yourself how well you really know the detainee, and how much contact are you going to have with them after they are released.
- You are already contributing your time and energy: we do not want you to feel under pressure to risk your money as well. Nor do we want you to suffer the pain of having your trust broken if someone you have stood surety for absconds.
- Finally and most important, if word gets round Tinsley House or Brook House that you are standing surety for the detainee you are visiting, this will encourage other detainees to put pressure on their visitors to do the same.

For similar reasons we **do not encourage, and advise against**, visitors offering **accommodation** to detainees after their release.

- 15. I have read and understood the implications of GDWG's Child Safeguarding and Adult Safeguarding Policies and consent to a DBS check. I undertake to inform the Director if I am subsequently arrested, charged or cautioned for any offence or there is a safeguarding investigation about me.** Please note that not all convictions will exclude you from volunteering with GDWG. If you have any concerns, please speak to the Director.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the Code of Conduct, please contact the Director.

Name:

Signature:

Date: