



# GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

Registered Charity No. 1124328

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

<b>Policy title</b>	Volunteering policy
<b>Approved by</b>	Louise Williamson
<b>Date</b>	August 2019
<b>Date ratified by Board</b>	September 2019
<b>Date revision next due</b>	September 2020

## **Rationale and background to policy:**

GDWG sends volunteers to visit immigration detainees, who are vulnerable by the nature of their detention.

GDWG recruits volunteers to visit immigration detainees, to help with advocacy support in the office, to help with the Refugee Tales project, to help with the Walk with Us project, and to fulfil other roles from time to time.

The purpose of this policy is to inform staff, volunteers and trustees of the agreed methods of recruitment, training and support.

This policy covers:

- How GDWG recruits and selects volunteers
- The process of becoming a volunteer
- How GDWG trains and supports its volunteers
- What happens when a volunteer leaves

This policy is intended to ensure, as far as possible, that through careful selection and appropriate training volunteers will be suitable people to work with detainees, and to ensure that volunteers get the support they need to carry out this difficult work.

GDWG will endeavour to operate according to best practice in all its recruiting, training and support of volunteers.

## **1. Recruiting and selecting volunteers**

GDWG will actively seek to recruit volunteers through publicity, communication with the public, local authorities, other voluntary organisations and elsewhere as appropriate. GDWG will have a volunteer recruitment schedule to ensure that volunteer numbers are maintained.

GDWG will run periodic 'Information Sessions' through which potential volunteers can be introduced to the mission and vision of GDWG, and practical aspects of visiting. These sessions will be facilitated by a member of staff with experience of visiting. It will be an opportunity for potential volunteers to have their questions answered.

All prospective volunteers will complete an application form detailing their interest and experience. The application form includes a declaration of any criminal offences and agreement to an enhanced DBS check (adults). Applicants are required to give details of two referees who are not relatives/spouse and who have known the applicant for a minimum of five years.

Prospective volunteers with a satisfactory application form will attend an interview to ensure that they meet the Volunteer Role Description and Person Specification requirements. The panel will normally comprise a GDWG staff member and an existing volunteer with experience of visiting.

GDWG will take up two references for all volunteers.

## **2. Becoming a volunteer**

All new volunteers will be required to attend an 'Induction Session'. The Induction Session will include an accompanied visit to one of the detention centres. During an Induction Session the new volunteer will receive a copy of the following:

- Visitor's Handbook
- GDWG Volunteering Policy (This document)
- GDWG Volunteer Code of Conduct

All new volunteers will be required to complete a Standard 'Disclosure and Barring Service - DBS' application. If the DBS check is returned not clear then the Director will conduct a risk assessment based on the nature of the offence or charge and decide whether the volunteer is safe and appropriate to volunteer with clients. The Chair will be provided with the risk assessment before a decision is communicated to the volunteer in question.

The new volunteer will be asked to read and sign the 'Volunteer Code of Conduct' which shows the volunteer's commitment to GDWG. When a volunteer signs the 'Volunteers Code of Conduct' she or he agrees to abide by GDWG procedures, policies and guidelines including the following:

- GDWG Guidelines for Gifts for Detainees
- GDWG Equal Opportunities Policy
- GDWG Comments Compliments & Complaints Procedure
- GDWG Vulnerable Adult and Child Safeguarding policies

## **3. Training and Supporting Volunteers**

### **3.1. Training**

New volunteers are expected to attend the mandatory new visitor training session after a few weeks of visiting and one legal issues training session and one psychological issues session within their first year of volunteering with GDWG. GDWG will maintain a record of volunteers who have completed the mandatory training and the two other sessions.

These training events are experienced in a group setting, though occasionally if a volunteer has a special skill such as a language and has been recruited specifically outside of the usual recruitment and training cycle there may be an individually tailored programme as authorised by the Director.

GDWG will arrange training opportunities for volunteers on a regular basis. This training is not mandatory but is beneficial for all GDWG volunteers.

Some useful information for visitors can also be found on GDWG's website – [www.gdwg.org.uk](http://www.gdwg.org.uk) and staff will circulate internal policy updates to volunteers by email. Regular updates on GDWG and newsletters will also be circulated.

On occasion, supporters may be taken into the centre accompanied by a member of staff. They will be supervised throughout the visit and be made aware in advance of the conduct required of GDWG representatives. Such people are likely to be patrons or special supporters of GDWG.

### **3.2. Development**

GDWG is committed to helping volunteers to develop by making opportunities available to them. This may take the form of training, assisting staff with volunteer interviews, giving talks on behalf of GDWG, taking on the role of an Area Coordinator or a Trustee participating in various sub-groups which may exist or representing GDWG at meetings of other organisations.

### **3.3. Financial Support**

The following expenses will be reimbursed by GDWG:

- Travel to and from the local detention centres, to and from group training or support events. The current mileage rate can be obtained from the office. Disabled or elderly volunteers may charge for taxis for these journeys.
- Small gifts to detainees – see 'Guidelines for gifts to Detainees' for further information.
- Childcare in exceptional circumstances as agreed with the office.

Expense claims will be made using a claim form available from GDWG and should be made within 6 months (see 'Internal Financial Controls').

### **3.4. Office Support**

We ask new visitors to report in after their first visit with a new detainee. Thereafter, visitors can contact the office as and when they need support with the visits. We ask all visitors to let the office know when they finish seeing the detainee and very importantly to complete a feedback form at this point (the form is available on the website). Feedback forms are necessary for GDWG to monitor the impact we make and to report this to funders.

Volunteers are encouraged to contact the office at any time. This may be for support or advice, to share their experiences of visiting or to ask the office staff to provide some service to the person they are visiting.

GDWG website ([www.gdwg.org.uk](http://www.gdwg.org.uk))

The site provides information about the work of GDWG.

GDWG Newsletter

GDWG produces a regular newsletter. It is both a source of information for volunteers and a forum in which volunteers can express their opinions or voice their experiences.

### **3.5. Area Support Group Meetings**

Area support group meetings are held every 6 – 8 weeks. A volunteer will be reminded that they have committed to attend such meetings regularly. The meetings may be convened by an Area Coordinator who is a volunteer or a staff member. Each area support meeting is usually attended by a staff member. The purpose of such support meetings is primarily to provide a forum for the sharing of the experiences of visiting but they also facilitate keeping volunteers up to date with office news and provide an opportunity to volunteers to feed back comments, suggestions or criticisms to the office staff and the Trustees of GDWG. The Board of Trustees consider volunteer issues that arise at each board meeting.

### **3.6. Buddy System**

GDWG operates a formal buddy system. We try to match every new visitor to an experienced volunteer for help and advice.

### **3.7. Insurance**

GDWG has Personal Accident insurance which covers their volunteers when they are on GDWG business which includes volunteering or visiting the GDWG office, participating in GDWG training events, visiting one of the local detention centres or any other GDWG event. Please note this does not cover car accidents where volunteers choose to drive themselves to their volunteering.

### **3.8. Health and Safety**

GDWG's Health and Safety Policy is available at the office. GDWG gives consideration to the health and safety of volunteers at all times, be it in the GDWG office, at meetings for training or other purposes, at the Detention Centres or travelling to the Detention Centres.

### **3.9. Related Documents**

- 'Volunteer Role Descriptions and Person Specifications' - describes the characteristics of the person suited to visiting people in immigration detention or supporting people in detention in an office casework capacity.
- 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' Procedure – A formal process through which GDWG listens to its volunteers.

### **3.10.**

## **4. When a volunteer leaves**

If a volunteer agrees, we will carry out an exit interview when a volunteer tells us that they are leaving. Volunteers do not always tell us when they are leaving and so we will get in touch with any volunteer who has not visited or carried out other volunteering roles for 6 months without already notifying us of a leave of absence, and will carry out an exit interview unless they tell us that they want to continue volunteering with GDWG. The purpose of an exit interview is to thank the volunteer for their service and to gain feedback on what was good and less good about GDWG's volunteer procedures and support, with a view to our continuous improvement.

For details on what we do with our volunteers' data after they leave the organisation, please see GDWG's 'Data Protection Policy'.