

**Our Governance**

**September 2021**

**Introduction**

Our co-ordination group recently asked me to offer some more thoughts on governance arrangements for this group within Detention Forum.

**Moving forward**

The purpose of our co-ordination group should remain the same as we agreed back in May of last year, namely:

* *Advise on our strategic direction*
* *Co-ordinate the different advocacy activities within the Forum for maximum impact*
* *Advise on key spending decisions*
* *Advise on the direction for funding bids*

It will be incredibly useful to have co-ordination group members who can cover one of two key areas of focus:

* To be able to act as **a representative of one of our working groups** to ensure that our co-ordination group is connected with the thinking in each of our groups (including our group of social media volunteers). There must be a CG link with all of our working groups.
* To be able to offer **strategic overview of the sector with experience building networks** so that Detention Forum can maximise the synergy of its work in different areas for maximum impact.

Going forward, we want to see more people with lived experience of detention on our co-ordination group. We would like to see the members of our working groups to have at least one third of their membership with lived experience, and some of the working groups’ representatives on the co-ordination group to have lived experience. We are also keen to hear from our members about other ideas to help us to deliver on our ambition around lived experience.

We know that this is important work in progress for our Forum. We will return to our governance arrangements, when we are clearer on how we can work in a more meaningful way with people with lived experience, and share a revised version with our members.

We would also like to see the leading campaigning organisations on detention to have someone on our co-ordination group.

We also think it would be incredibly helpful to have co-ordination group members who are:

* Enthusiastic about our mission
* Willing to do get things done
* Able to engage with co-ordination group meetings and with email discussions
* Attend our quarterly meetings as often as possible (and if not to engage with the agenda beforehand and minutes afterwards).

For us, the vital element is having people who can fulfil those 4 bullet points.

It would be helpful for us to share these criteria for membership of the co-ordination group with our members. But that then does pose the question how does one become a member of the coordination group?

Power rests with our members and our strategic decisions are taken at the quarterly members’ meeting, and there needs to be a degree of accountability between that meeting and our co-ordination group.

**Membership of the Co-ordination Group**

* There should be a stated length of term of office for each individual of three years with a possible renewal for another three years
* Each working group (communications; Parliamentary; new allies; grassroots; and social media) should nominate one of their number (with a deputy) to join the CG and to be the link between their working group and the CG. *5 members in total*.
* In addition, we could have up to *4 members*, who can offer us strategic advice and will attend on behalf of an organisation. Expressions of interest will be sought from our membership.
* There should also be *one* place reserved for the legal host for our Forum: the Refugee Council.
* The names will be put to a members’ meeting for their approval.

We don’t want to make things too bureaucratic, but nor do we want any accusation that we are operating as a closed club within a wider network. Although we are fully cognisant that people are also busy, and that there will not be a clamour of people wanting to join the co-ordination group! Nevertheless, our members should be crystal clear what are the criteria for membership and how they can join if they are interested and meet our criteria.

**Decision making in the Forum**

Developing the logic in this paper therefore, it follows that **all strategic decisions** should be taken at the members’ quarterly meeting.

In between these meetings, **operational decisions** will be taken by the CG. All of our decisions will be recorded in my project director’s report and shared with our members who will be able to challenge any decisions that they feel are not operational to be brought back to a members’ meeting.

Decisions on signing up to joint letters and initiatives will be made by the co-ordination group, which will decide if any decisions then need to be put to the full membership. All decisions will be recorded as above in my project director’s report and shared with our members.

If we ever get to a point of needing a vote at a members’ meeting, it will be one member organisation, one vote. We maintain a current members’ list, and we will use that list to instigate a vote if one were to be needed electronically.

We should review this proposal on a regular basis, say 6 monthly, to ensure that these new arrangements are working for us as a forum.

ENDS