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## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

### **Key messages on Alternatives to Detention**

July 2022

We want everyone to live in a supportive environment. We want to live in a society where migrants are supported by our communities, our local government and our national government, and where law is applied fairly.

We believe that we should treat people with compassion and dignity, in a way that we would want to be treated ourselves.

Within the immigration system, we think everyone should retain their liberty while they receive appropriate support to determine if there is a way for them to remain in the country. Such an approach is called community based case resolution.

The evidence shows that people will engage with the system much more if they feel that they understand the process, are listened to, and are supported to make a case to stay. Isn’t that what we would want for ourselves?

We think that it should be possible to run an immigration system without relying upon detaining anyone indefinitely, if there is a question over their immigration status.

Even within the [current](https://freemovement.org.uk/what-are-the-hardial-singh-principles/) rules – that people should only be detained for a reasonable period before their deportation – we know that detention is used far too much. And worse, those rules are often ignored. We should not be locking up innocent people without judicial oversight, in prison like conditions and with no time limit.

Yet the government has funded its own “alternatives to detention” projects in the North East and South East of England. Both were successful, achieving high levels of engagement. In the latter project, 75% of clients were helped to establish that they had the legal right to stay in the UK. The UN Refugee Agency has praised this approach. Why can’t we see more such projects to wean the Home Office off its dependency on locking people up?

We don’t think this approach of locking innocent people up is supported by the British public. The response to Ukraine and Afghanistan shows that the public wants to welcome people seeking safety here. Sadly, instead of building a fair and compassionate asylum system, this government is locking innocent people up

People come to this country seeking safety and looking for a chance to rebuild their lives. We think that we should use the power of the state to help them, not to punish them, and to work with them to achieve the best sustainable outcome for each person.

We think that there is a better way. We can have an immigration system without this unhealthy dependence on locking people up. There is an alternative. Our own government has funded such alternatives. We know that there is a better way. \