

**Draft over-arching narrative – for discussion**

At the Detention Forum we want to end immigration detention because it is unjust and inhumane.

We have a vision of society where immigration does not require the use of detention. We believe that there is an alternative approach to locking people up, where people are supported as individuals and helped to explore their options. All the evidence shows that such a compassionate approach produces more engagement and sustainable outcomes for all concerned.

While there is immigration detention, we want to see a time limit brought in as soon as possible; no person should be detained indefinitely. As an immediate reform, we want to see that no-one is detained for longer than 28 days.

We also want to see, as another immediate step, some of the government’s own reforms taken further. Their initiatives of detention gatekeepers (making the decision on who to detain) and case progression panels (reviewing who is detained and for how long) should have far greater transparency and independence to make them effective.

And where the government uses short-term holding facilities, especially when they do so in other countries such as France, the existing rules for detention centres concerning transparency, accountability and inspection should be extended to them. The same should apply to related facilities such as asylum hotels and ‘quasi-detention’ in former army barracks.

We believe that detention should have no place in the UK’s asylum system. People coming here fleeing persecution should be treated with compassion and supported in the community – not locked up. We think that there should be no place for former army barracks and the like. People held in these places still see it as detention. And there must be no place for schemes where people, who have already been through so much, are sent thousands of miles away. We should support people in our communities to make their claim for safety on these isles, with the belief that their integration into our society should start on day one.

More and more people detained for their immigration status are time-served prisoners. When foreign nationals receive a prison sentence, they should be supported to explore their immigration status; at the moment practically nothing happens until their sentence is over, and then they are detained indefinitely – in practice serving a second term. We want to see an end to automatic deportation after a 12 month sentence for non-British citizens. All people should be treated as individuals and their own circumstances taken into consideration.

We want to live in a caring, compassionate and supportive society. We want to see all people treated as individuals to work through their immigration options – not routinely deprived of their liberty. The golden rule in this policy should be for us to do to others as we would have them do to us – this is the foundation for the changes that we want to see.