

Information about yourself	
Your name	Amara Koroma
Do you want your name to be made public?	Yes
Do you wish to give oral evidence before the inquiry panel? (Please note that due to a limited amount of time available, the panel will not be able to take evidence directly from everyone.)	Yes
Are you making this submission by yourself or is someone helping you? If so, who is this person?	Helped by Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Date you are completing this form	20/9/14
If you are you in detention now...	
When did your detention begin?	10/10/13. Re-detained from reporting just 1 month after being released on bail
Is this the first time you are detained in the UK?	No
If this is not the first time you are in detention, can you tell us how many times you were in detention before and how long?	This is 3 rd period of detention 1 st period: 9/9/11 – 2/11/11 (2 months) 2 nd period: 1/8/13 – 20/9/13 (1 month)
Can you tell us a little about why you are in detention?	I came to the UK when I was 15, as an orphan from Sierra Leone. I was granted Discretionary Leave and placed in foster care. I consider my foster family as the only family that I have in this world as my biological parents were killed during the war in Sierra Leone. I went to school and was planning on going to college. My social worker encouraged me to try and get work, and I was working and paying taxes. I had friends and a girlfriend, and helped care for my girlfriend's daughter from a previous relationship. I applied for further leave but this was refused. I went through the appeals process and kept getting refused – I spent all my money on a private solicitor who did nothing on my case.

	So I am now being detained as an overstayer.
If you are no longer in detention and are currently living in the community...	N/A
When were you released from detention?	
How long were you in detention?	
In which detention centres/prisons were you detained?	
Can you tell us a little about why you were in detention?	
Do you now have a right to remain in the UK?	
If you are still waiting to hear from the Home Office about their decision on your case, how long have you been waiting?	

Questions form the panel – Please read the sub-questions on pages between 12 and 15 of ‘The Guide for Individuals’. Make sure your answers will not be longer than 3,000 words.

- 1) Your experiences of living in immigration detention, including the context and duration of your stay;
 - I have been detained three times here in the UK - the place where I believed I was safe and happy, the place where I felt secure. This time round, I was detained from reporting just 1 month after being released on bail, despite the fact that I have always kept to my reporting requirements and never absconded. All my three times in detention happened while I was reporting
 - I have been detained previously in Harmondsworth IRC, Morton Hall IRC, Colnbrook IRC and Haslar IRC. Currently I am in Brook House IRC.
 - I came to the UK when I was 15, as an orphan from Sierra Leone. I was granted Discretionary Leave and placed in foster care. I consider my foster family as the only family that I have in this world as my biological parents were killed during the war in Sierra Leone. I went to school and was planning on going to college. My social worker encouraged me to try and get work, and I was working and paying taxes. I had friends and a girlfriend, and helped care for my girlfriend’s daughter from a previous relationship.
 - I applied for further leave but this was refused. I went through the appeals process and kept getting refused – I spent all my money on a private solicitor who did nothing on my case.

2) The conditions in immigration detention, including your ability to access services such as legal advice, healthcare, pastoral support;

- **The process of being detained** was stressful and upsetting. I was detained from reporting. I arrived and was told I was going to be detained, then was kept waiting at the reporting centre for 5 hours. I did not have the opportunity to collect my belongings, and had to leave my bike locked up outside the reporting centre. This was despite the fact that I had presented myself there voluntarily and not broken any of my reporting conditions. The escorts were shouting at us, they were rude and aggressive. Everyone started to feel angry as we had been kept waiting so long.
- **The mixing of people with very different backgrounds in the same detention centre** - The fellow detainees in the different centres where I have been create a negative impact to my life and safety. Some people come to detention from prison, some of them are high risk to others. I had to share a bedroom with a high risk offender, who should have had a single room – but there were no single rooms available. I felt concerned for my safety. I have also experienced bullying from my roommate - too much bullying and violation of our right has been happening to many of us who has never been to prisons or who are not a risk to ourselves or any one. But the Home Office put us in the same place because of we are foreigners.
- **Phone calls** – There is very poor phone signal in Brook House, so it is often difficult to make phone calls, e.g. to my solicitor, girlfriend and volunteer visitor
- **Internet** – many websites are blocked, not just social media but websites with information about your country of origin. This makes it difficult to get evidence to support your case, as you cannot access this information online
- **Transfers** - During my first period of detention (9/9/11 – 2/11/11) I was detained in 5 different detention centres. It is disruptive being moved around all the time – it makes it difficult to settle down and make friends, and breaks up your support networks with your family, solicitor etc. They can just come and tell you that they are transferring you without giving a reason. They came to me at 5am and said ‘pack your bag, you’re moving to Colnbrook’. It seems unfair, it is difficult to understand how these decisions are made
- **There are differences between the different detention centres.** Some of them you have restricted hours to access some of the facilities – e.g. in Colnbrook you can only access the centre facilities such as the shop in the morning, the rest of the time you are shut on your wing. Whereas at Brook House you can go off your wing to access facilities at any time of the day. The officers have different attitudes at different centres as well: in Morton Hall and Colnbrook the officers were racist and unfriendly, they would say ‘you’re illegal’, they were more likely to use force. In Brook House and Harmondsworth the officers were more friendly and helpful

3) Whether there were appropriate mechanisms to deal with any mental, physical or emotional issues you may have experienced prior to or during your time in detention;

- I am an orphan, my family was killed during the war in Sierra Leone. I feel that being in detention has damaged my mental and emotional health. Being in detention refreshes my memory of what happened in my country, during the war. I am just thinking all the time, and am frightened about being returned to Sierra Leone – this makes me think of all the bad things I saw in Sierra Leone. I think ‘How will I survive?’ if I go back? I can’t sleep at night, I have been losing my hair and losing weight...detention is affecting me seriously. I feel hopeless, I have nothing to hope for. You don’t know what’s going to happen, you don’t know when you’ll come out or if you’ll come out. This is bad for your mental health.

- Despite the human atrocities I witnessed in my country Sierra Leone during the bloody war, and the mental scarring which I was having during the time I was in Sierra Leone, my foster family has been working greatly in helping me overcome my fears and stretching my confidence for me to put all that has happened to me in the past. This was not an easy task for me and my foster family but we nearly achieved that target with the help which was received from Croydon social services and my tutors in Croydon college and friends and family members here in the UK. I almost forget about my past experiences in Sierra Leone as a child. But because of my continued detention here in the UK has caused me a lot more mental scarring and stress and depression than ever before
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- 4) Any longer-term impacts of detention on you, your family and/or your wider community;
- Detention weakens everything, all of your relationships, as you are separated from your family and friends. It has put a strain on my relationship with my girlfriend as it is difficult for her to visit. I also miss my girlfriend's daughter – I was very involved in her care, I used to take her to school, but now I have been detained for nearly a year and I have missed out on a lot of time with her. The distance of these detention centres makes it impossible for family members and friends to reach me for visiting purpose. Separating me from my family and friends here in the UK has caused me a lot of stress and depression and a broken heart.
 - This is my third period of detention. When I was released from detention before, it still had an effect on me because I was worried all the time about being re-detained again. And then I was re-detained!

5) Any other information about detention that you would like to share.

I am well settled in the UK, I am happy to continue staying here. While I am here in the UK I have tried to put all the bad memories that I had in my own country during the bloody brutal war. I wanted to have a good life and be a responsible young man that can contribute to the economy of this great country. I thank the whole of the British people and their government for all the support they have given me. My foster family, my half brother, my girlfriend and my friends also my teachers at college. I am really grateful to all their support and encouragement. May God bless them all.

Separating me from all these valuable people in my life will caused me a huge distress and a heart broken also a mental stress for the rest of my life which will lead me to become something that I don't want to become.

I have been detained now here in Brook house IRC for eleven months like a prisoner or slave or like a high risk person to the public, or like a terrorist which I am NOT. I am an orphan, I am a young man that is trying make a better future for myself. I am tired of being detained like a

prisoner or slave.

6) How far does the current detention system support the needs of vulnerable detainees, including pregnant women, detainees with a disability and young adults?

7) There is currently no time limit on immigration detention – in your view what are the impacts (if any) of this?

I think there should be a time limit on immigration detention. If it's meant to be a removal centre, people should not be there a long time waiting to be removed.

When people are too long in detention it causes frustration... you see people on ACDT (Assessment Care in Detention and Teamwork, framework for managing detainees at risk of self harm/suicide) who want to commit suicide. They have lost the plans they used to have for themselves. They have lost hope. A time limit would stop people being in detention for a long time like this.

8) Are the current arrangements for authorizing detention appropriate?

There is no travel document or travel ticket for my removal and yet the Home Office says my removal is imminent. The Home Office persuades the judges not to grant me bail, saying that I will be removed soon when there is no time given. Numerous Temporary Admission applications have asked for my release from detention and yet the caseworkers turn a deaf and blind eye to my requests.

Most of the time the Home Office tells lies to the judges in bail courts when I apply for for my release. I have never absconded in the past and yet the Home Office says I will abscond if I am released. I have never been a danger to the public before and yet they will say I am a danger to the public. Even though the Home Office know that I was brought to the UK with the help of a British Action Aid worker as a minor, and yet they hold it against me that I came here illegally.

9) What are the wider consequences of the current immigration detention system, including any

financial and/or social implications?

10) How effective are the current UK alternatives to detention (e.g. bail, reporting requirements)?
Are viable alternatives to immigration detention in operation in other countries?

Many people in detention (including myself) have been cooperating with the government for quite a long time. We have been reporting to the place where we were asked to be reporting by the Home Office and UKBA with no issue of absconding or failing to surrender when we are required to. I have never absconded or failed to report as I was required to. All my three times in detention happened while I was reporting.