

3000 words numbered paragraphs
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Direct experience of immigration detention:

1. There is a lack of gender sensitive behaviour by officials within the detention centres. This has been noted by women and bisexual and homosexual men. One detainee even noted that 'anyone who is gay should never ever be detained.' Detainees have felt the need to behave in certain manners in order to get the attention of staff. Staff have often not necessarily considered the vulnerabilities of detainees when responding to them. The behaviour of detention centre staff can be demonstrative of stereotyping and further, discriminatory as defined under international legal norms specifically UDHR and CEDAW. Some detainees have felt that they needed 'to flirt' with officers in order to have access to certain privileges. In some cases, detainees have noted that officers have been involved in relationships with detainees. This has led to, in some instances, jealousy, competition and even divisions between the detainees, which has further exacerbated isolation for some. 'In the centre, we all knew where there were no cameras. It was there that the staff would make advances on some of the detainees.'
2. Detention is financially divisive. From the time detainees are detained, purchases need to be made. If a detainee has greater access to finances, s/he will survive better within the detention system. In one particular case, a detainee recalls being '...Scared, having no questions answered about why I was being held. Every question I asked was met with silence. I was taken from one room to the next and when asked for an explanation about why I was there or when I was going to be released, none was given except that I was to be interviewed soon. I did not even know why I was going to be interviewed. I did not have any £. I had to convert money from my country just to make a phone call to try to get support from my family overseas. When they were not able to assist me, I had to continue changing money and changing money until I used up a lot of my cash on phone calls just to get a lawyer who told me that there was nothing that could be done for my case.' Another detainee mentions, 'Some people who have private lawyers seem to be treated better and they can buy whatever they want from the shops. I don't have money to be able to buy more.' Another detainee mentions, 'I do not understand, I am allowed to work in the detention centre for less than minimum wage, but outside of detention it was a problem. Why?'
3. Medical services are insufficient. One detainee was not able to get appropriate treatment for a head wound. The detainee stated, 'It is serious. I was bleeding from my head for a long time. I know that the treatment in detention was poor because once I had another specialist organisation look at my wounds, I got medication to treat it. While in detention, I had to wash my pillow case every single day because I was bleeding on it so much at night.' Another said, 'One of the nurses was really poor. Nothing was ever done about my situation. I suffered a lot and even when they did take me out, I was taken out in handcuffs. I am not a criminal. It just did not feel right. The doctor was there and then there was a guard in the room and I did not even have an interpreter. English is not my first language. I felt like a criminal.' Another detainee said, 'I had a heart condition. In the centre, it is a running belief that if you are unwell, they will just give you paracetamol. It does not matter what the illness or complaint is, paracetamol is the solution.' Another detainee mentioned, 'I was watched everywhere I went. When I went to the bathroom regularly- I guess it was complete panic and nerves about being put in jail for the first time in my life- they seemed to suspect me for something. I have no idea what, but it seemed as though I was always expected to be doing something wrong.' Still another stated 'I was put in isolation, it was not explained why. I was not given the results of my test. I was kept away from everyone else when I relied on them for support. They would not even let me see my visitor that day and did not even warn my visitor that I could not be seen before the visitor's arrival.' 'All of this

has been terrible for me. I was trafficked into this country and the isolation and the circumstances under which I was placed were like experiencing the trafficking all over again. This is trauma and to go through trauma again for no reason does not seem to make much sense.'

4. Awareness of accessible organisations is difficult. Detainees do not know who is there to assist them and even if the organisations are available, it is very difficult to discern who may actually believe your story and who may be trying to undermine your credibility. One detainee said 'I only got through it because of my visitor.'
5. Officers would behave oddly when detainees would get on and become friends to try to understand what was happening. It seemed they were insecure in their power position and that this support network which was necessary to maintain the sanity of those detained was often attempted to be squelched by the officers. We were just trying to make friends in circumstances which were just unbearable after suffering from trauma. Why would anyone want to take those friendships away? The officers were allowed to be friends with their colleagues, why were we treated differently?
6. Once someone is detained in the UK, they are detained upon return to their country of origin. Often, this results in a repeat of previous traumas. Other times, it requires paying a bribe in order to get out even if no crime has ever been committed. Even if it is the result of a bi-lateral economic agreement between states, people are subjected to incarceration (detention) and then incarceration again after freedom. Again, this is usually with no understanding as to why they were held to start and secondly, it can be the result of an inability to deal with the traumas immediately after being released from one centre into another.
7. People have mentioned flashbacks to detention. Some have said that the bright florescent lighting and the smell of a shared cramped space when there was no window to open were particularly unbearable. Others note a fear of anyone dressed in official clothing and the fear of speaking to anyone in an official capacity for fear of being thought to be lying or completely misunderstood as post-detention traumas.

Experience of visiting detention centres

8.

People (detainees) are shocked and manipulated and made to feel less than human and then manipulated into believing that they have done wrong. Once they leave the detention centre, they often enter a period of self-detention arguably resulting from the trauma of the experience. Former detainees have said that they have feared leaving home, that it has become a habit to stay inside like in prison like conditions. They try to leave home, but they often cannot afford to leave and they also cannot bring themselves to do it as a result of the trauma.

9. Each person responds differently to being detained. Some people treat visitors as the best thing that has ever happened to them. One detainee provided a visitor with all the fruit and anything in the centre which was not eaten, so that it would not be thrown away. Also, this particular detainee may have been suffering from Stockholm syndrome after having been kept as a domestic servant for several months and being forced to eat at certain hours of the day with food pushed under the door only when the responsible party so chose. Other detainees are so depressed and traumatized that they struggle to even come out to meet a visitor. Other times, detainees cannot attend visits, but are not aware why this is as they are not given the results of tests or provided with explanations as to why (if there was a suicide attempt, etc.)

Recommendations:

1. Allow each detainee upon departure from the detention centre/acquisition of refugee status the option of providing feedback to the State regarding their experiences in detention and allow them to do so anonymously. Create a questionnaire for these purposes.
2. Change immigration policy to end detention.

3. Decrease the number of detention centres in the UK until 2 above is changed.
4. Make centres more accessible to the general public and especially to the families of detainees, some who travel hours daily just to spend time with their family members.
5. Ensure that professionals are given access to the detention centres. Their denied entry just suggests wrongdoing or unnecessary delays.
6. Ensure that any contracted providers have been thoroughly vetted before starting contracts with them. Any private company which is unable to comply with the State's policy on the treatment of vulnerable adults in detention, is not to be selected. A best practices document written by current/ former detainees (if willing and able to provide input) should be created for maximum impact and to train centre staff.
7. Anyone working in detention centres should have a maximum weekly working week of a maximum 30 hours, which should be monitored and regulated strictly. Detention centre staff should have easy access to specialist services to deal with any secondary trauma they experience from the work they are doing. Detention centre employees should be interviewed to discover which aspects of the work are most traumatizing and how those aspects can be better handled. For instance, regular counselling sessions should be offered for staff. Also, trainings such as working with vulnerable adults, trauma survivors and trainings on equality and diversity need to be offered prior to starting work in the detention centres and need to be updated regularly. Preferably, these trainings should be carried out by former detainees, health care professionals, NGOs, lawyers and Social Services. Also, these individuals should be allowed to select schedules which are professional in nature. Having people in hourly waged roles would mean that they will burn out and due to the serious conditions of the people they are working with, are more likely to err, severely impacting detainees. This is evidenced by the number of deaths in detention, attempted suicides and general ill health of all detainees. Schedules should remain consistent 10-6 type patterns of work rather than shifting from one week 10-6 to another week 6-2 to the third week 8-4 to the fourth week 12-8 as this pattern seems to increase stress levels and people's personal habits to the extent that it can contribute to an increase in disrespecting detainees. In fact, having independent evaluators assess the work of the officials in the detention centre could offer suggestions as how best to order the working day so that persons are feeling fresh and not overworked as they often seem. There are policies that can be found within organisations such as UN agencies and the Red Cross, for instance, which could be utilized to support people living and working in war zones for instance. While some elements of secondary trauma to the officials working with detainees may be quite different, some detainees experiences were in war zones, so utilizing this type of training could potentially be a positive tool for staff.
8. Detainees should be given a higher standard of food and enough food so that they do not feel they are going hungry. There should be a greater variety of food and the midday sandwiches should be changed as many detainees have mentioned that they are rock hard. There should be more vegetarian options. Contracts with restaurants could be made to ensure that there is variety in the food detainees receive and food should be brought in from the diaspora communities which are generally present within the centres so as to greater reflect food that different groups are more inclined to eat. For instance, create menus which offer food and spices from all over the world. Detained persons should not feel obliged to go to a shop to buy food to supplement meals especially when they do not have the resources to do so. Detainees should be informed immediately as to the reasons for the questioning, why they are being interviewed, what each interview means, why they are being held, under which law they are being held and how they can access available services (procedures which any criminal would be given in the UK considering most detainees they feel that they are prisoners). If English is not their first language, detainees should be given written information and an interpreter regarding the aforementioned. Detainees should be given access to extra clothing when they are feeling cold and clean bedding if their personal circumstances require it. Detainees should be offered access to specific detainee-centric health and mental health services as they are mostly vulnerable persons. Pregnant women, children, torture, trafficking survivors and people with mental and physical health issues should not be held as it often leads to traumas which duplicate or worsen past traumas. Detainees should not fear being raped or harmed by centre

officers or other detainees. If a detainee demonstrates particularly unusual behaviour, the detainee should be supported more than the other persons in the centre rather than less as those persons are probably experiencing either severe traumas or severe mental or physical health problems or just a simple inability to deal with confinement due to the fact that the language is foreign and UK culture is foreign.

9. MPs working on Immigration Policy should be invited into the centres so that they are able to get a better understanding of the circumstances facing detainees. In fact, it would probably be most beneficial if MPs were able to find a way to access the centres outside working hours as those periods are generally the ones in which abuse occurs. MPs should try to get into detention centres on a regular and preferably unannounced basis so that as true as possible a representation of the situation impacting detainees is offered.