

Inquiry into the use of Immigration Detention

1. I've been in detention for about 8 months now, before that I was in prison. They are trying to take me out of the country due to the nature of my crime, which they say outweighs my right to a family and a life here. I've been here in the UK since I was 13, 14 – I'm 23 next month, in September.
2. They are trying to send me to Guyana, but my family is here. In Guyana I only have a half-sister, but her dad is in Canada and she's due to join him there. Immigration officials say I can stay with her, but she is moving away herself.
3. When I went to prison I was eighteen years old. I've paid for my crime and everything – I've kept my head down, I've done courses, I've proved I'm not the same person I was. In court they try and say that I'm a bad person but I've paid for my crime.
4. When I left prison, I was in a D-category prison, with open prison conditions. You could go out and get monthly home visits.
5. Immigration detention, it is very hard. It's hard in a way that messes with your head. It sends you crazy because you have no idea when you're getting out. Lots of the people here get upset, emotional. I've seen a lot of people who've come off the street – you can see it's really hard for them, because they've never been locked up before. Some officers tell them to get on with it, but some of the guys are in an emotional state.
6. To be honest, I haven't inquired about emotional support – but it is not made obvious or offered.
7. It is quite easy to get access to lawyers: there are details in the library, they can get you an appointment and it is not really an issue. Health care, though, basically is a hassle. It can take three weeks to book an appointment and see a doctor. The health care is there but it's a hassle.
8. There's not really much help to deal with any mental, physical or emotional issues. When some of the new people come in, the only support is sometimes when they meet other people from their country and they can speak in their language. It helps them calm down a bit, but otherwise there is nothing there for people when they are emotional.

9. Me being in detention is having a big impact on my family. I've been in prison for so long, and at last they thought I would be coming out. At that time even I thought that it was time to come out – but now this has come up. I had plans to get a job, set up myself again straight. It's had a very big impact on my mum, who thought I was coming out of prison. It is really stressing her out. We used to have family visits in the open prison and now I haven't seen them for so long. At the end of the day, even when they do let you out, it has an impact – I can't really explain. It's a big impact on me, on my family and on my friends.
10. It's hard for people to be in detention. They have not committed any crime, but it is basically a prison. I've been in prison myself so I know. But here, you're in prison but no one has done any crime that would put them in here. People are just dragged off the street like animals just because of a little visa problem. I hope one day it could be stopped.
11. I could make any changes, I'd use the lesson from the prison I was in and at least let people go out for a couple of days to see their family. They could then come back and sign in again. It is a risk, in case some people just ran away – but some people do have family, and it is hard not to see them. It would be nice to spend a bit of time with family.