

1. I am the Head of School for ESOL at the College of North West London. Many of the College's students are asylum seekers, and as such, we have come into contact with students being detained in immigration detention.

• What are the impacts of immigration detention on individuals, family and social networks, and wider communities?

2. There is a general fear amongst asylum seeker students of being taken into immigration detention. Many of our students see the threat of detention as arbitrary and therefore feel that it could happen to them at any time. Recently two of our students were taken into immigration detention. In both cases, this was in the middle of the academic year, mid-studies, and severely disrupted their college courses. One student, J*, was in detention for 3 months, and when he was released, was not accepted back onto his IT course, as he had missed too much work. The other student, F*, was also not accepted back onto his course, but this had further reaching consequences, as the Local Authority withdrew their support for F, as he was not in education. His stay in detention had removed both his chances of education and his housing and support.
3. Furthermore, unless a teacher in College understands immigration detention, they are likely to look unfavourably on a student returning from being detained, as any student who leaves a course half way through (whatever the reason) is barred from re-enrolling in College (as it affects our retention & attendance statistics.)

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

4. As a College, we would hold a student's place open for about two weeks if they were in full communication with us. The problem with immigration detention is that it is quite difficult for a student to communicate regularly with their teacher (they have more pressing contacts to make eg solicitors) and they have no idea when they will come out. In this situation, a teacher would usually withdraw a student from a course (if they didn't know when they were able to return) as it would affect retention and attendance statistics. For this reason, indefinite detention is very damaging to the student's chances of returning to college.
5. I remained in contact with one of my students who was in immigration detention, and the 'not knowing' of indefinite detention was extremely damaging to his mental health. He regularly said that it was 'worse than prison' and there was no way to think about or plan for the future (mentally or practically) as there was no time limit. Indeed, there were people in detention with him who had been there for more than 2 years, and that was a terrifying prospect for this young person. His mental health deteriorated as a result, and although he has subsequently been released, he still has mental health difficulties and is terrified of being sent back to detention.