

Written Evidence to parliamentary inquiry into immigration detention.

Evidence from Matthew from Zimbabwe; current detainee in Colnbrook IRC. Transcribed by and bold added by Tom Kemp.

Your experiences of living in immigration detention, including the context and duration of your stay;

1. I have been in the UK for 13 years. I'm an ex offender and I was sentenced to 24 weeks. **I was then detained on 25 November 2010 when I finished my sentence. I've been detained ever since.** Every time I go for bail I get refused— because I'm not volunteering to return. I have no outstanding immigration cases. I've been to the tribunals but I my article 8 and asylum claims were refused. I was refused based on my criminal offence.
2. At the moment Zimbabwe is not taking any forced deportations. **The Zimbabwean embassy is refusing to give me a travel document. They want me to go voluntarily. But I have my family – my cousins, my brother, my seven year-old daughter and my child's mother - here in the UK.**

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

3. **Healthcare is a mess.** I booked to see the doctor 2 weeks ago, and they keep telling me that he will write to me when he is ready. There is no care in detention centres. Just when there are extreme conditions; that's when they will respond. Otherwise they just give paracetamol.
4. When it comes to the food, we are just having sandwiches in the afternoon. The food is going down the drain.
5. This place wasn't built for people to stay here for long. It only works for short term. There is no life. I don't know how to explain it. You have to visit in order to understand.
6. It's not a clean place. **There's not as much security anymore.** There are only three officers in two units so it's not safe because people are frustrated every single day. You have one officer and one computer dealing with the requests for healthcare and legal advice and there are 56 people on each unit and so lots requests.
7. **There used to be a welfare manager; he has lost his job.** The welfare is cancelled. You have to ask the officer for welfare. So everyone has to ask the officer for everything. Because of the transfer to the new company, Mitie.
8. Legal advice used to be organised through the welfare. Now you have to get it through the officer. The funding has now been cut down since the transfer.
9. Even the cleaners, there's not as many cleaners. There used to be cleaners that mopped the units and now they only take the bins. **The place is filthy; it has changed dramatically in the past three weeks.**

10. I don't understand why they keep us here for years. It would be reasonable for a set amount of time. My country is not accepting me, it is between governments not between me. And I am here and my daughter is growing up with a dad in prison for not being English.

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;

11. I'm on tablets for depression and I have been for about a year. There is no care in this place. They said they would get me to see the counsellor 8 months ago but I have not seen one.
12. I haven't seen the psychiatrist in over a month, since the new company took over.
- 13. Having to book an appointment yourself, and waiting for a long time when you feel depression is not easy.**

Any longer-term impacts of detention on you, your family and/or your wider community;

14. **There is a lot of impact; especially on children.** My kid comes to visit me. They locked me up when she was 3. The whole period I've been moved between Colnbrook and Morton Hall and now she is 7.
15. Going for bail is heartbreak for myself; but **they know my case and they know the decisions they've made before and so they use the same judgement years later on.** That detention is my own doing because I don't want to volunteer to go back; when I left there when I was 14 and I have nothing there.
16. I didn't know about how to do things in Africa; I was forced to come to the UK. I was not in a stage in my life when I could make decisions. But I have to deal with them. I found myself with a daughter. With a lovely baby's mother who assists me, and brings her to me. And she has a mobile now and she phones me and texts me on her own now.
17. There's no legitimate way you can detain a person for years because you don't know what to do with him. What about my life and my daughter's life and everyone else I know.
18. Even if they did release me, I would be tagged and put in section 4 accommodation. **But I would love to contribute to the country and the economy. I would love to have a life with my daughter.**

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

19. This causes hatred. Detention will be with us with the rest of our lives. It's unfair that there is a law that you can just take somebody's life. When people go back they have

got hatred because of detention. Most people who are a threat to the UK have been hurt by things like detention, they have pain in them and that causes hatred.

- 20. They have taken my life; no work, no education, and now I am doing nothing. You can't earn. Every human being needs to earn in order to achieve.**
- 21. I would like you to reconsider detention and look at it properly. And release those that need to be released. Don't detain people who can't be removed because I don't want to be locked up for the rest of my life. Please consider our cries. This place is kept behind close doors, it's not on tv and nobody knows. This is a business, everybody is making money, like Mitie. But this is not a way to tackle the problem. It costs a lot of money to keep us here. I ask you to reconsider and look into the issue with seriousness, because it is wrong and we know it's wrong.**