



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Immigration Detention

Inaugural Meeting – Minutes

Wednesday 24 April 2019,
Room W2, Houses of Parliament, SW1A 0AA

Parliamentarians present: Alison Thewliss MP (SNP) - Chair
Peter Bottomley MP (Conservative)
Rt Hon. Harriet Harman QC MP (Labour)
Afzal Khan MP (Labour)
Rt Hon. Joan Ryan MP (Change UK - The Independent Group)
Paul Sweeney MP (Labour)
Hywel Williams MP (Plaid Cymru)

Others present: Heather Daniel (Office of Christine Jardine MP)
Emma Ginn (Medical Justice)
Elspeth Macdonald (Medical Justice)
Andy Murphy (Office of Alison Thewliss MP)
Amy Provan (Office of Afzal Khan MP)
Rachel Smethers (Office of Harriet Harman MP)
Lauren Wards (Office of Alison Thewliss MP)

1. Welcome

1.1 The chair welcomed attendees to the inaugural meeting of the APPG on Immigration Detention. She spoke about her motivations for establishing the group, including the problems

she and other MPs were seeing on a regular basis through immigration detention-related casework.

1.2 The chair explained that immigration detention charity Medical Justice would provide secretariat services to the new group.

2. Aims of the APPG on Immigration Detention

2.1 Elspeth Macdonald outlined the proposed aims of the new APPG: to increase understanding within Parliament of immigration detention in the UK; connect parliamentarians with relevant research, experts and organisations, including people with lived experience of detention; and advocate for evidence-based policy reforms and the welfare of detainees.

2.2 The chair then invited Members to highlight the issues they would be keen to raise or explore further through the group. Issues mentioned were:

- a) Large-scale use of immigration detention in the UK
- b) Immigration detention as an issue impacting both rural and urban constituencies
- c) Home Office decisions to detain/release - lack of transparency
- d) Suicide and self-harm in detention
- e) Situation for women and families
- f) Situation for victims of torture
- g) Lack of access to legal advice, interpreters and other services
- h) Ongoing threat of detention during reporting process - impact on health, including mental health

It was suggested that the group might ask colleagues to share constituents' experiences of immigration detention. It was also suggested that the Chair write to the Immigration Minister once the group was registered, to invite her input and engagement.

3. Introduction to secretariat

3.1 Emma Ginn explained that Medical Justice provides medical advice to people in immigration detention in the UK, including arranging independent medical visits and reports. The organisation worked with over 80 volunteer clinicians and 100 volunteer interpreters, and handled over 1,000 detainee referrals per year. It was active in all immigration removal centres across the country.

As well as its work with individual detainees, Medical Justice also undertook wider research, advocacy and litigation to bring about systemic policy change.

4. Election of officers

4.1 The following parliamentarians were elected as officers of the group:

Chair: Alison Thewliss MP (SNP)

Vice-chairs: Christine Jardine MP (Liberal Democrat)
Afzal Khan MP (Labour)

Treasurer: Paul Sweeney MP (Labour)

Secretary: Rt Hon. Joan Ryan MP (Change UK - The Independent Group)

Officers: Sir Peter Bottomley MP (Conservative)
Stephen Doughty MP (Labour)
Ruth George MP (Labour)
Helen Hayes MP (Labour)
Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour)
Stuart C. McDonald MP (SNP)
Kate Osamor MP (Labour)
Rt Hon. Keith Vaz MP (Labour)
Hywel Williams MP (Plaid Cymru)

5. Next meeting of APPG

5.1 The chair noted that a full launch event for the group was provisionally planned for early June. Further details would be shared shortly.

6. AOB

6.1 None.