



APPG on Immigration Detention – Meeting

Wednesday 5 November 2025, 10.00 – 11.00
CPA Room, off Westminster Hall

Attendees

- Chair:** Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP – Labour
- Speakers:** Hannah Carbery – Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG)
Zoe Bantleman – Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association (ILPA)
Dr Rachel Bingham – Medical Justice
- APPG Members:** Rt Hon. Diane Abbott MP – Labour
Kim Johnson MP – Labour
- Other parliamentarians:** Andy McDonald MP – Labour
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb – Green Party
- Parliamentary & other staff:** Staff members from:
- Office of Lord German – Liberal Democrat
 - Office of Peter Lamb MP – Labour
 - Office of Olivia Blake MP – Labour
 - Office of Tony Vaughan MP – Labour
 - Office of Alex Sobel MP – Labour
 - Office of Tim Farron MP - Labour
 - Office of the Bishops of Derby, Lincoln and Sheffield
 - Joint Human Rights Committee
 - Home Affairs Committee
 - Commons Library – Home Affairs Section
 - Medical Justice
 - APPG Secretariat
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Meeting summary

1. Welcome

After welcoming everyone, the Chair explained the purpose of the meeting: to discuss the implementation of the Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Journeys, signed this summer between the UK and France.

The topic fell within the APPG's remit because, after arriving in the UK by small boat, people selected for return to France under the agreement were being placed immediately into UK immigration detention.

There had been some alarming reports so far, including of age-disputed children being amongst those detained for removal to France. The APPG wanted to better understand what was happening on the ground in the UK – particularly in terms of the impact on human lives.

2. Presentations

- **Hannah Carbery, Advocacy Manager, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG)**

Ms Carbery noted that GDWG had had direct contact with over 90 people detained for removal under the UK-France agreement detained at Brook House Immigration Removal Centre, including at least 8 age-disputed children.

Drawing on the experiences of these clients, Ms Carbery explained the detention “journey” that people were subjected to in the UK, from arrival by small boat, detention at Manston Short-term Holding Facility and transfer to an IRC such as Brook House, through to – for some – forced removal back to France. They also had to navigate important legal processes at the same time. She underlined how overwhelming, confusing and frightening people were finding it, and noted how this was exacerbated by long-standing serious problems in detention including: failures by the Home Office to identify individuals with histories of torture, trafficking and/or serious mental health conditions which made them unsuitable for detention; inadequate use of translation; and insufficient access to legal advice.

The impacts on people's mental health were extremely serious. People found it hard to sleep, and were becoming anxious, exhausted and depressed. GDWG were aware of at least 15 people detained at Brook House IRC for removal to France who had made attempts on their life or expressed suicidal thoughts. Others had witnessed suicide attempts.

Ms Carbery ended by sharing the testimony of one of GDWG's client detained for removal to France.

- **Zoe Bantleman, Legal Director, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)**

Ms Bantleman began by explaining that, in ILPA's view, the structure of the UK-France Agreement was dehumanising and in fact served to strengthen the hand of trafficking gangs.

She then set out the very serious challenges that people detained in the UK for removal to France were facing in terms of accessing legal advice and representation, and thereby the courts and justice. Whilst inadequate legal advice provision in immigration detention was a longstanding issue, certain features of the UK-France Agreement process such as the extremely short

deadlines involved were further exacerbating the problem. She shared examples of people who had already been removed to France and who reported having received inadequate or even no legal advice whilst in the UK.

Ms Bantleman also pointed out that no single government department was responsible for monitoring/ensuring access to justice for people in detention. ILPA believed this needed to change urgently.

A full copy of Ms Bantleman's presentation is available at: https://appgdetention.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/20251105_APPG_UKFranceMtg_ILPA.pdf

- **Testimony of Medical Justice client**

One of Medical Justice's clients detained for removal to France provided a testimony, which was read out to the APPG with the client's consent. The testimony is not published here, in order to respect the client's wishes.

- **Dr Rachel Bingham, Clinical Advisor, Medical Justice**

Dr Bingham presented evidence gathered from a group of Medical Justice's clients detained for removal to France. They included men, women and age-disputed minors from countries such as Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, Iran, Palestine, Somalia, and Yemen. Many of the clients were extremely vulnerable, with histories of torture, trafficking and serious mental health conditions.

Dr Bingham spoke how both the fear of being returned to France, and the experience of being detained in the UK were impacting the individuals' health, describing suicidality as "alarmingly common". She ended by sharing, with the affected person's permission, the case study and testimony of a Medical Justice client who had been subjected to the use of force during an attempt to remove him to France.

A full copy of Dr Bingham's presentation is available at: https://appgdetention.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/20251105_APPG_UKFranceMtg_MedJustice.pdf

6. Q&A

Topics covered during the Q&A included:

- The government's process for selecting people to return to France, which appeared to be random.

- The procedures in place for people once they arrived in France. These had been well laid out in [a recent briefing](#) by the NGO Humans for Rights Network.
- Once returned to France, the risk people faced of chain refoulement e.g. if they were sent to Poland under the EU asylum rules, from where they might then be pushed back into Belarus. Access to legal advice was critical in ensuring the person could challenge that.
- Who provided interpretation and translation services in IRCs. The companies were Big Word and Language Line. Lawyers provided their own interpreters.
- The crucial need for good quality interpretation/translation services. If these services were poor, then it could lead to a lawyer receiving poor quality instructions, which could then impact on a person's case and ultimately their legal status.
- Poor conditions in France faced by people seeking asylum and whether France could be encouraged to improve them. This was deemed unlikely since the conditions had not yet been found to amount to a breach of Article 3 ECHR (which bans torture and inhuman and degrading treatment) so there was little incentive for France to spend money on improving them.
- How "safe" the in route from France to the UK really was. It was pointed out that people might see a risk in applying for the in-route – because if their application was not successful, the UK government then had all their details and if they were subsequently found in the UK, they might be sent back to France.

7. Thanks and close