



GATWICK DETAINEES WELFARE GROUP

ANNA PINCUS is the Director of Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group (GDWG), a charity that supports people at risk of deportation held at two government immigration removal centres: Tinsley and Brook House.

GDWG provides an invaluable lifeline to those in detention and their families, assisting relatives who wish to visit their loved ones and providing practical goods such as: second-hand clothing, international phone cards, and small amounts of money to those experiencing great hardship and destitution.

Anna explains the difference that the Refugee Crisis Fund has made to people being detained within our Diocese:

'If you take off by plane from Gatwick Airport you will pass two immigration removal centres situated at the airport's south perimeter. These buildings, built on a category B prison model, hold up to 700 immigration detainees at any one time.

'The people held there are not incarcerated because they have committed a crime. There is no judicial oversight of the decision to detain, nor do individuals know how long they will be there; it can be days, months or years. The longest I know someone to have been detained is nine years!

'Being held in detention can be extremely isolating. We have 70 trained volunteers who visit people in detention weekly, conveying hospitality and welcome in spite of the context of the visits. The support offered by our volunteers is a lifeline; they provide transformative, unconditional friendship and acceptance to people who often have very little support.

'We have seen first-hand the difference the Diocesan Refugee Fund makes. Donations to the Refugee Fund have helped people in crisis, who are marginalised and have no other source of support as they are not eligible to receive benefits.'

The Refugee Crisis Fund has made a real, practical difference to the people GDWG encounters as Anna explains:

'A grant from the Refugee Fund enabled the family of a blind man in detention to visit him before he was returned to Zimbabwe. This was the last time he would be visited by his wife and daughter. For the price of two rail tickets, the family were able to say goodbye, which was of huge importance to the man's child, who will remember that her father was forced to leave and did not disappear without care.

'Another family were able to travel from the north of England to an important bail hearing. Their presence at the hearing demonstrated that the person being held had a loving, close, genuine tie with his family. This was a significant factor in him being reunited with them and given bail.

'Without your fund we would have had to stand by and watch; because of your generosity we were able to make a positive intervention.'

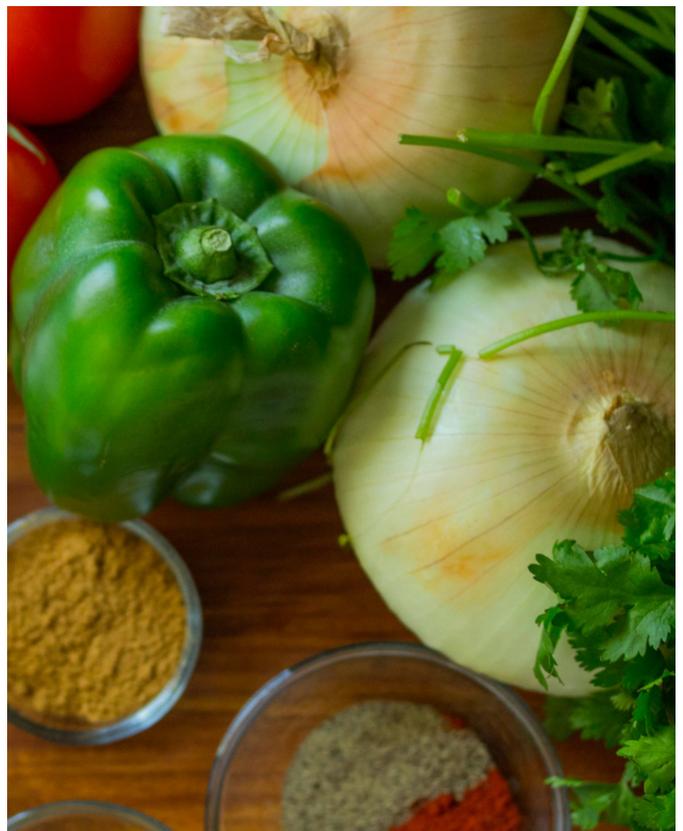
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'Thanks to the fund, we were able to give supermarket vouchers to families who were destitute, had no access to food banks and would otherwise have been without money to buy food.'

Anna Pincus GDWG



DID YOU KNOW?

Immigration detention is overseen by the Home Office although detention and removal centres are frequently managed by private companies.

According to Oxford University's Migration Observatory approximately 24,700 people entered immigration detention centres in the UK in 2018, including 63 children. Roughly half of those detained had claimed asylum in the UK and were waiting for their application to be processed.'

1 Stats taken from Oxford University's Migration Observatory:
<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/immigration-detention-in-the-uk/>