



Charity no. 1120185

Annual Report 2018-2019



Kent Refugee Help is a small user-led charity, now in its twelfth year. Our main focus is working with foreign national prisoners in London and Kent prison establishments. Some of our clients are in prison under immigration regulations, being deemed too high-risk to be placed in a removal centre. Others may be refugees, former unaccompanied minors, EU migrants, those with long residence who came to the UK fleeing human rights violations with their parents when very young, people who are undocumented or stateless. All are trying to navigate the complex legal system they are caught up in, with very little help or advice available. Many are facing deportation at the end of their sentence without legal representation. We are there to listen and take forward in whatever way is appropriate for each client.



During the year 2018-2019 we have held a 2-monthly surgery at HMP Pentonville and at HMP Rochester. This is partly due to support and encouragement from the Diversity Equalities officers at Pentonville and Rochester. Despite cuts and huge pressures on the staff a dedicated officer can make an observable difference to the men for whom they are responsible. In addition we have received individual referrals from HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Rochester and Elmley, and from the Social Services 18 Plus Team who support unaccompanied minors who have been in their care. There is complex ongoing work with several former detainees from the DIRC (Dover Immigration Removal centre), which closed in 2015. This work is done by the previous case worker on a voluntary basis. Men on bail, waiting for their asylum case to be resolved, are most of the time forbidden to work, must conform to reporting restrictions, and are frequently tagged. This is akin to 'prison in the community'. This situation continues. KRH believes that indefinite detention of any person for administrative purpose is discriminatory and should be challenged. Social contact is maintained with the former detainees throughout the year, culminating in the Christmas party which is very well attended and included an auction of paintings and prints from our previous exhibition of prisoners' arts. During this year we continued the project for support work by volunteers who have visited clients in prison.



Meryem, Ali and Kate outside court after Ali got bail

KRH Personnel

Trustees: Pat Enfield, Bahriye Kemal, Chris Perks, Antti de Ruano

Caseworker: Kate Adams

Support caseworker: Raga Gibreel

Admin. support: Lesley Grove of Accuracy Accounts, Caroline Gipson VA.

Website: Nick Tompsett

Volunteers: Hakki Aganoglu, Catherine Carpenter, Pete Keenan, Maria Ruano, Liza Seed, Mathew Rose.

Although we no longer find Sureties for bail, we acknowledge that some of our former Sureties are still in touch with and support the people they stood bail for, some of whom have to wait many years for the resolution of their case.

We continue to work with the **Kent Law Clinic**, and **BID (Bail for Immigration Detainees)**.

Finance and Funding

Our prison work this year has been funded by the **ARM Trust**, **The Allen Lane Foundation**, **the Vulnerable Persons Fund** administered through the **Kent Community Foundation**, and the **Huguenot Trust**.

Donations from individuals and church groups have continued to be generous. We see this as proof of a strong public desire to see more positive action to welcome and support refugees in the UK. Donations are treated as 'unrestricted' funds, which we use for the many individual needs of our clients. Because of this money we have been able to save a family from destitution by making a regular monthly payment to them. In addition to small amounts to cover emergency food, travel and phone top-ups, we have paid for gym membership, clothing and footwear. We paid for an art course for an ex-detainee following the sale of his paintings at our exhibition. We helped with court fees for a client in prison with no access to funds. The amounts are small, but each one makes a positive contribution to the lives of our clients.



Kadour Milnyali with his postcard painting

In collaboration with other groups we co-organised a Benefit for the Stansted 15 at Whitstable Umbrella centre. The Benefit was organised because the 15 Protestors faced imprisonment after taking direct action to stop a deportation flight, which saved the lives of the passengers seeking asylum. Kadour's painting was a raffle prize in the benefit for Stansted 15 fund raising. We also raffled T shirts donated by Right to Remain. In total £1000 was raised for the protestors' legal expenses.

Casework and Campaigning Report

In the year that followed our last AGM Kent Refugee Help in has worked with others to highlight and resist the cruelty of the Hostile Environment for refugees and migrants. We have continued to provide a comprehensive casework service to assist foreign prisoners seeking legal advice for immigration, criminal and other matters.

Outreach and protest: Diary of Action



Martin Mayer, Canterbury Constituency Labour Party

“To migrate, to organise and to struggle is not a crime!” Monica Vargas C, Permanent People’s Tribunal.

In October 2018 I spoke at a meeting at Whitstable’s Arts and Community Centre, **End the Hostile Environment**, alongside Mini Rahman an immigration expert from the Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants and Huda Elmi, campaigner for BAME rights from the Labour Party’s National Executive Committee. Subsequently I was invited to speak at a local Labour party meeting and attended with the sister of one of my clients who is facing deportation. We explained how deportation separates families and how her brother who is a torture survivor attempted suicide due to indefinite detention in a prison. I received a donation of £100 and several offers of volunteering.

In November 2018 I was invited to give evidence at The Permanent People’s Tribunal in London, a grass roots international event which put the Hostile Environment on Trial. I spoke to a submission on legal aid cuts from my colleague Catherine Carpenter

The New Year, brought the news that the Stansted 15, a group of young activists who had taken peaceful direct action to stop a chartered deportation flight leaving Stansted Airport were to face imprisonment. KRH worked with local activists to organise a benefit, **Stand with Stansted**, for their legal expenses. Whitstable musicians gave their time and energy to this cause and we raised £1,000. Laura Clayson, one of the Stansted 15, whose family live in Whitstable gave an emotional and moving speech. She told us that 11 of the 57 people to be deported remained in the UK, 10 had made asylum claims, 3 had leave to remain, 4 had been referred to the National Referral Meeting Mechanism for Traffickers and two had given birth. At the event Matt Rose an anthropology student came forward to volunteer. Matt has since been visiting a young Eritrean refugee who was remanded for a serious conviction on behalf of KRH. This volunteering informed his final dissertation and Matt received a first- class

degree! Matt is now considering how his dissertation could be adapted to raise awareness and promote action against the Hostile Environment.

In May 2019 my colleague Catherine Carpenter and I spoke at the Prisoner's Advice Service Annual Discussion on the subject of, **Brexit and Foreign National Prisoners: from the Hostile Environment to an Unsettled Future**. KRH makes many referrals to the PAS as prisoners have multiple issues that come under the remit of Prison Law but there is no legal aid.

In June 2019 a march against racism and violence 2019 was organised in response to a horrific attack on a German/Lebanese student by a group of teenagers. KRH attended the march and helped to organise speakers. **The march was reported by the Institute of Race relations in their Calendar of Resistance for June**, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/enforcing-belonging-racial-violence-and-the-far-right>. In the photo the KRH banner is carried by Aram Wrarf, former asylum seeker, recently elected as a town councillor for Labour. We also held a stall at the Multi- Cultural Festival in Dover. Leroy, one of our clients came with his wife to volunteer and help sell his wonderful postcard paintings.



Casework

The Casework team consists of myself and Raga Gibreel, as sessional caseworkers, assisted by volunteers Catherine Carpenter, a former solicitor at the Kent Law Clinic and Liza Seed an experienced detainee visitor. We are developing our second surgery at HMP Rochester with the help of the new Equalities officer Donna Collins and now receive up to 14 referrals for our bi- monthly sessions.

Deportation

The main issue continues to be the cuts to legal aid which deny foreign national prisoners' legal advice and representation for deportation appeals. As non- legal caseworkers who are not OISC accredited we are not allowed to give immigration advice but we can sign post clients to general information. Catherine Carpenter has produced a leaflet based on information from Bail for Immigration Detainee's (BiD) website to help our clients complete their appeal form and apply for a hearing. It is crucial that this is done within the fourteen-day time limit so the leaflet will be extremely helpful. As part of peer group supervision Catherine has also given training on how to help clients apply for Exceptional Case Funding,

Legal Aid (ECF). This is a form of legal aid available for appeals based on Article 8/ family life and private life grounds but applicants have to prove exceptional circumstances and that they cannot represent themselves. Of- course they are unable to do so when the law is so complex and in most cases, English is not their first language.

Windrush

Due to the spate of Windrush deportations we have received many more referrals from Jamaican prisoners, some of whom claim to be Windrush descendants. I managed to place one person with JCWI who are dealing with the majority of Windrush cases after he had applied for and was eligible for assistance from the Government's Windrush Scheme. I visited a Jamaican man in prison faced with a deportation hearing within 10 days. He had learning difficulties and was suffering from several serious medical conditions such as heart problems and diabetes. OISC regulations did not permit me to even help him write a letter in his own words to support his appeal. After trying seven immigration law firms who declined his case, I finally turned to BiD who assisted him in getting an adjournment and making an application. for ECF. I was able to attend the client's administrative hearing and tell the Judge that an application for legal aid was in place. However, BiD's deportation project is oversubscribed and many of our clients will have to represent themselves with as much help as we can provide without breaching OISC rules.

Destitution

Additionally, the abolition of Section 4 bail addresses is hugely problematic, resulting in some vulnerable prisoners being released to the street. This was the case with an Iranian man who had severe mental health issues and a previous heroin addiction. I had attended a training course run by the Asylum Appeals Project (ASAP) about the possible but limited alternatives for a release address. I was able to obtain some accommodation from the Home Office for my client with the help of a solicitor, after a delay of 5 weeks! It is shocking that a release to the street for vulnerable refugees with no recourse to public funds has become accepted practice by the Home Office. Another indictment of the Hostile Environment.

Casework Statistics

This year we have been in contact with 80 people, 25 of these we have worked intensively. Two clients have obtained immigration bail and one long term client has finally been granted 5 years refugee status. One client was assisted to return to his country of origin voluntarily and sadly one person was transferred to a prison in his home country against his will. We have seen clients from Afghanistan, Algeria, Albania, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Eritrea, Gambia, India, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Kurdistan, Lithuania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Somalia, Syria, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda and the US.

Conclusion

A big thank you to all the progressive individuals and groups that KRH has collaborated with, both to help provide essential legal advice and support for foreign national prisoners and to raise the banner for refugees and migrants. We will continue to highlight and press for an end to the automatic deportation of foreign prisoners, for the restoration of legal aid and the repeal of the Hostile Environment legislation.

Kate Adams
Caseworker
Kent Refugee Help

Most of my clients are from vulnerable backgrounds and younger people who found themselves entangled with drug dealers. Many end up staying in prison even after their sentence ended. Communication is the biggest hurdle for prisoners. Here are some examples:

Mr. BK who I helped in Rochester is being held in prison beyond his sentence, because The Home office was unable to obtain an ID for him. The client told us he got his ID and received a letter from the Evidence Management Centre which confirmed this. We enabled him to communicate with both the Home office and his Probation officer to secure his release and assist him to return to his home country. Here is a letter from BK:

<p>Hello, I was visited by your kind Representative today (11/01/19) and I was really glad to see the help coming. I am grateful thank you. But unfortunately I received a letter today, later on after the visit with important information I wish to share. I am Eligible for deportation for a month and your kind Representative is aware of that her name is RAGA GIBREEL. But when I ask the Prison DMU about my deportation they said I'm waiting for a passport/ID or a travel document in general. So the whole point of my letter is that the letter I receive tells me I am now able to collect my ID card/PASSPORT from the Evidence Management Center, but I am unable to collect it myself, because unfortunately I am in Prison, so I would like to ask a favor from you. Can you please collect my passport from the Evidence Management center, and I</p>	<p>have another Problem as well I have 28 days to collect it, but since I received the letter today and the letter is dated on the (04/01/19) it means I have only time till (01/02/19) to collect it. All I need to give you is an authorization slip/paper which was attached to the letter, so you can have the Authority to pick my passport for me and therefore you can help me leave prison and see my family. I know it is too much to ask, since I have nothing to offer back, but I am all by myself in this country and I am 20 years old in Prison, so please, Assist me going back home. Immigration said the only thing I need is my passport, so if you get it for me, I have hopes to see my family. The letter also says that the Police are not delivering it which makes my life even harder. So all I need is a person who I can give the authority paper, so he/she can get it (my passport) for me and I can finally leave in peace. I apologise that I'm asking you, but honestly when you are all by yourself two time zones away from home, there is</p>
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Not a lot of options aren't they.
So if you can collect my passport just book a visit, and I will be looking forward to it. I really think you guys make a difference, have a good day and thank you for your help and Attention.
Tell Raga Gibreel, she's a blessed person! A Really nice person to talk to! Period!

Mr. W is a mandarin speaker, another client referred to us by the Equality officer at HMP Rochester. He has a long sentence; he is struggling with cancer and isolated as no one speaks Mandarin in prison. He is now receiving letters in his language. I helped him get his mother's phone number on the contact list so he could be in touch with his family in China. Kate made a payment of £10 to cover the cost of the call. He appreciated letters in his language

FL is another case in Rochester. His name was on visit request and we were unable to see him twice because of an unpredictable curfew in the prison. In our first meeting he stated: "communication is the biggest problem in prison". He felt no one outside prison could ever understand this including his own family. He lived all his life crime free, living legally in the UK for over 22yrs. He worked as a vegetable and fruits exporter. His goods were contaminated with drugs in 2017 and he ended up in prison. He was at emotional risk, finding it challenging to deal with his physical illness in prison and concerns for his own family, especially with threats of deportation looming over his head and the family separation. He is a parent and a grandparent of two, and his grandchildren obviously adore him. We helped him to request adjournment so that he could secure the financial evidence needed to get representation and a fair trial.

Raga Gibreel, Sessional caseworker

Volunteers

I have volunteered for KRH for two years, visiting men in three prisons and one detention centre, sometimes with Kate or Raga, sometimes alone. During visits I do not give advice as I am not allowed to do this but I may help someone complete a form. One prisoner was feeling very depressed. I told him about an exhibition KRH organised and paintings done by prisoners. I suggested he might consider attending art classes in prison which he did and found them stimulating and calming at the same time. He has now been released and continues to paint regularly.

I sometimes go to the prisons with Kate and Raga to hold workshops for the prisoners from abroad who may wish to talk about their situation: again, we can't advise but we can signpost to people and organisations they could contact. Prison officers are very supportive

One man who contacted KRH is held in a prison too far away for me to visit but we write to each other regularly. He had been suffering from depression and had thought about self harming. He wrote a few weeks ago to say he is feeling a little better.

Through volunteering I have met some interesting people and I hope to continue while there is still a need.

Liza Seed
Volunteer

KRH Challenging the Hostile Environment



Cllr Bernadette Fisher, Kate and Nick with stall and petition against the Hostile Environment.



Sam at the anti-racist, anti-austerity march in London calling for a General Election in February



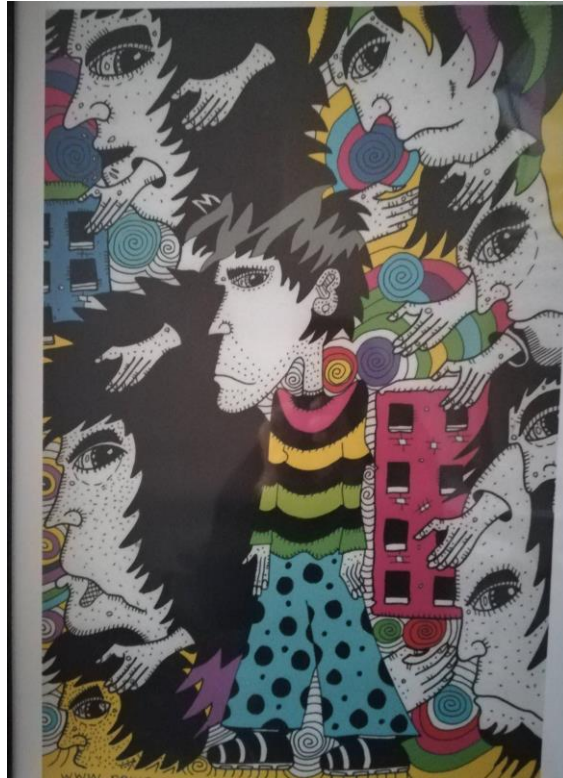
Outside Chelmsford Court protesting the sentence hearing of the Stansted 15, Matt, Steve, Kate and Wes.



Events



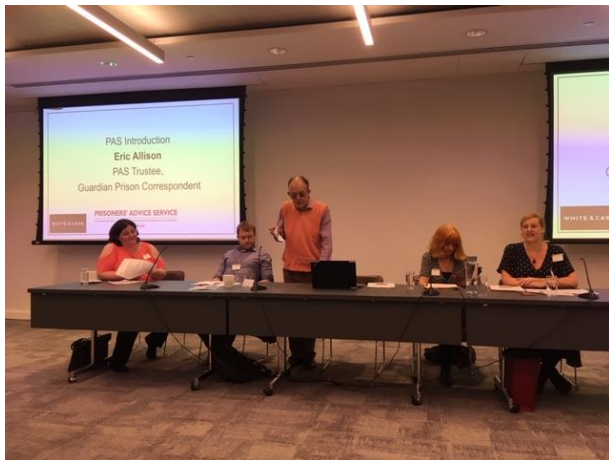
Worku, "The Coffee Ceremony".



Print by Chris Bird



Last Christmas, we held a celebration at the Whitstable Labour Club, which was very well attended. As part of the event we auctioned paintings and prints from our previous exhibitions, which included 'I live Here' and 'Our Lives', consisting of works by prisoners, former prisoners and our supporters.



Panel with Kate at the Prisoners Advice Service Annual Discussion Meeting: Brexit and Foreign National Prisoners: from hostile environment to uncertain future.



Permanent People's Tribunal 2019, at which Kate and Catherine gave evidence

Training

KRH attended an important training event on bail addresses and destitution run by the Asylum Appeals Project. This provided us with the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other charities that work with refugees.

We have also set up peer group supervision for caseworkers and volunteers and additional training has taken place in this context. Kate led a session on Destitution and Catherine Carpenter; Catherine Carpenter led a session on Exceptional Case Funding Applications, and training on the general information in relation to appeal against deportation.

KRH is in the final process of applying for registration by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide legal advice and representation in immigration and asylum law matters, as a not-for-profit organization. The benefit for our clients would be considerable, since it is at present extremely difficult to secure such advice and representation. We hope it may also open fresh sources of funding.

Looking Forward...

As a result of the state of the world and hostile environment towards people seeking asylum, the need for our work increases all the time. We are very grateful to the support of our volunteers and friends upon whom we depend for so much.

Our work in supporting refugees and asylum seekers is more urgent than ever, and we will do our utmost to make their voices heard.



Night Fire by Leroy Letts our client painted when he was in Brook House IRC

We would like to thank Pat Enfield, one of our trustees who is saying goodbye to us as trustee but has continued fully to support and raise funds for us throughout the year. We are also privileged to welcome Clio Barnard, a documentary and feature film director, as our new Patron, and Andrew Jordan, as our new trustee.