



Dover Detainee Visitor Group- Peer to peer exchange

Our clients are Immigration Detainees, ex-detainees who are at risk of destitution, and local community. We have been established 8 years, and have 6 staff, 12 committee members and 60 active volunteers.

In this paper we share our experience of sharing best practice and tips when writing applications for funders, monitoring projects, and related themes.

Summary of activities

- 1. Visiting Scheme at Dover:** We provide support and practical help to immigration detainees held indefinitely at the Dover Immigration Removal Centre (DIRC). This includes: weekly visits, clothes and phone cards, information and referrals. We also advocate on detainees' behalf to improve their conditions while in detention. As part of this project we support Detainees Families by issuing travel warrants to families of detainees so they can visit their relatives.
- 2. Ex-detainee Project:** This project provides services to ex-detainees threatened by destitution. Emergency accommodation, food, vouchers, reimbursement of travel expenses to reporting centres, doctors, hospitals, dentists, solicitors, etc. and referral to other organisations. This project also organises an annual ex-detainee conference
- 3. Raising Awareness:** DDVG raises awareness about indefinite detention, immigration and human rights issues. We do this by running free public talks, designing brochures, publishing articles in the press and local magazines and participating in fairs and events in our local area, tackling misunderstandings around immigration.

Describe what your RCO did, and what came out of this

On the 21st of April 2010, we participated in the "Peer to Peer Support Scheme" organised by the Basis Project. This experience was a myth busting and unique one in the Dover Detainee Visitors Group history. Some people see other organisations of the same field as a threat, but this experience confirmed the opposite. We are not competing; we can contribute to each other's work and find support in very innovative and thoughtful ways.

We met with another RCO representative in London in order to share best practice about fundraising in our particular field. We discussed themes such as monitoring, management, and also shared documents such as a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which helped us to design a SLA we signed with Canterbury Prison for a new visiting Scheme that will probably start there in the near future.

Likewise, the organisation we met has different ways to fundraise than ours. One of the interesting and positive results of that meeting was that our organisation is seriously considering avenues of funding that we never thought we would explore such as a fundraising event.

It was a great and unique opportunity to study our own organisation. It was "food for thought" and what was discussed there has indirectly fed in to our future strategies. We now seek partnerships constantly (there is a future project discussed with WEDGE in Canterbury, to make a video about different types of immigrants as a teaching resource).

What problems and barriers did your RCO face in doing this, and how did you overcome or try to overcome these?

We would not have done this activity if the Basis Project hadn't suggested this scheme. We are located in Dover and the other RCO is not located in Kent. It is difficult to know the realities / needs of other organisations even if we are in the same field. We did not have any way to know that we could actually help another organisation and also benefit from other organisation's experience. It took an organisation like Refugee Action (through the Basis Project) to know both organisations and make the match. Besides the cost of travelling to London was something that we cannot easily afford and we received help for this.

If your RCO accessed any support to help you with this area of work, describe this support and whether it was helpful to your organisation

The Basis Project covered our travel expenses to the place of the meeting which hugely helped us to actually materialise this meeting. The payment of travel expenses to this ends would be an activity difficult to justify for funders, unless it is included in a particular project and it was not.

What are your tips for other RCOs considering doing something similar?

We highly recommend this activity to any RCO that is considering improve their performance / delivery, is considering taking a turn in their strategy or in any way trying to consolidate their situation in the field.

The advantages of information and experience can be invaluable in the process of decision taking. Other organisations can guide us through processes they have already gone through decreasing the chances of failure, can provide guidance and support in general. The network that remains as a result of this activity is also useful as well as the doors that it opens for partnership work etc.

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