

Stakeholder interview with the IMB
Jackie Colbran, Chair, Gilly and Dick
29th September, 2015

This was a friendly meeting of people who all want to help detainees but with a totally different view of the situation detainees are in. I think you could sum it up by saying they believe what G4S say and we believe what detainees say. They believe we could be so much more effective if we were 'friends' with G4S i.e. if we were more like them!

Although our approach is very different to theirs I think we could fruitfully work together for the benefit of detainees.

Are the services provided by GDWG needed?

"Yes, you fill the gap by providing things which Welfare cannot provide e.g. clothes and mobile top-ups BUT your relationship in the past with BH has been set back by moving away from your core function of helping".

"There is an element of suspicion about you"

"You fill in the gaps but you must focus on the core work. There should be a clear divide between support and going beyond that".

Your visitors should be "friendly" but not "friends" with detainees. Would it be better if no one was permitted to visit the same detainee for more than 3 months.

At this point I explained that when we started 20 years ago we did solely provide the core work of practical and emotional support but the way that detainees are treated had led us to set up services to try to obtain the release of those we believe to be unlawfully detained and to campaign against unjust practices

"We don't know very much about you" said Jackie "but this is our fault as we weren't asking the right questions. I talked to just two detainees this week and both said they had received clothes and top-ups". She said she wanted to talk to the Welfare Officers but couldn't as queue to see them was too long – she wanted to talk to them about our work.

"We see you as much more valuable now than we did in the past as we have asked detainees about you."

"Does Ben Saunders (Centre Dir) know how much you do?"

Do you send him your annual report. BH are very keen on statistics.

What could we do better

Get a better relationship with senior management. You would be more effective if you had a positive relation with Ben and Steve Skitt.

At this point I tried to explain that there were occasions when we had to complain about G4S and this was one cause of the negative relationship. I did however let them know that Nic has vg relationship with Ops Manager, Chris and with Ben.

They suggested that we should get the detainees to complain, rather than complaining ourselves and mentioned their IMB complaints box but did say that it wasn't emptied very often. I explained that detainees are nervous of complaining and this was evident from the very few complaints that they received.

Did we know

Security has been tightened e.g. visitors watched.
There is now a counselling group for detainees
They now have full team of 9 IMB members.

Jackie has tried to get Ben to invite Nic to attend the DCC (Detention Consultative Committee) which meets monthly and includes G4S Management, detainees and IMB.

Is there any way that we can help the work of the IMB?

“No, but we can help you”

Healthcare, especially mental health

G4S Medical run medical services now. (I suggested that they still sub-contracted to Maidenbower but they thought I was wrong and they may be right). Overall responsibility now is with the NHS Commissioner Nick.....(Jackie will send me Nick's surname – but Nic may already know it.)

They are not totally happy about mental health care but did not want to explain.

They suggested that we contact Jackie and tell her if there is a detainee who we are concerned about because of health or torture.

They said that healthcare have a Drop-in every morning and then the nurses will give you an afternoon appointment with a doctor. Jackie said that the nurse was the gatekeeper.
They see such a totally different view to ours and believe that any deserving case will get the health services they need. I did suggest that maybe sometimes G4S staff in healthcare or elsewhere don't actually do everything they should. To their credit they did take this on board.

Legal

IMB member, Mary, is doing work on legal aid.
I did not follow this up but it might be worth Nic talking to her.

Suggested actions following meeting

1. Send Jackie copy of our Annual report.
2. Send Ben Saunders a copy of your Annual Report.
3. Send Jackie copies of our research Prison in the Mind and Cutting Justice.
4. Please invite us (IMB) to your AGM
5. Please give IMB leaflets showing what we offer
6. Please send Jackie examples of what is not good about healthcare esp. mental health
7. Tell Jackie if there is a detainee we are worried about or if we have a problem with a staff member
8. Dick would like to have a copy of our list of good solicitors?
9. Can you provide evidence of what you do at BH to Ben
10. They said that they had not really seen our posters.
11. They suggested that Ben was key influence and that Nic's emails to Chris Milliken (Ops Manager) should be copied to Ben.
12. Have an Open Day at your office