

MHVG

Morton Hall Visitors' Group Annual Report 2021

Registered Charity no: 1174056
Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 December 2021

Table of Contents

MORTON HALL VISITORS' GROUP: A BRIEF HISTORY.....	2
ANNUAL REPORT – ACHIEVEMENTS & PERFORMANCE.....	3
CHAIR'S REPORT.....	3
COORDINATOR'S REPORT	4
RESPONDING TO CHANGE	5
VOLUNTEERS & VISITS	6
TRAINING	7
PARTNERSHIP WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE.....	7
FUNDRAISING	9
TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2021	9
FINANCIAL REVIEW	10

MHVG is currently funded by:

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
The Allen Lane Foundation
The WF Southall Trust
The Bergman Lehane Trust

Previous funders have included:

The Leigh Trust
The Noel Buxton Trust
Marsh Christian Trust
The National Emergencies Trust
The Hilden Charitable Fund
Swan Mountain Trust
The Souter Trust

Morton Hall Visitors' Group Annual Report 2021

Morton Hall Visitors' Group: a brief history

This year marks eleven years since our charity was founded. Eleven years of providing emotional support and practical help to people detained indefinitely under immigration powers at the remote Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) in Lincolnshire, Morton Hall.

In this time, MHVG has cultivated a group of skilled and dedicated volunteers who have supported hundreds of people held indefinitely in detention at Morton Hall. Many of the people we support are waiting to find out if they will be allowed to stay in Britain or returned to their countries of origin.

It is our belief that indefinite detention at an IRC, or other facility, almost always has a detrimental impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing and that the experience can be especially traumatising for those who have fled violence and persecution, or for people who have been victims of human trafficking. In the most recent inspection of Morton Hall, H M Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) reported that 71% of people detained at Morton Hall felt depressed and 29% felt suicidal.

We believe that immigration detention should end and be replaced with more humane, community-based alternatives. Until then, our primary aim is to ease the isolation and anxiety associated with incarceration and indefinite immigration detention by providing solidarity and signposting to services able to offer specialist advice and guidance. Our volunteers also act as unofficial human rights monitors, by providing a bigger-picture view of the reality of immigration detention. This helps to challenge negative rhetoric surrounding immigration and asylum. It also informs and supports national campaigns that promote progressive immigration policy reform.

In April 2021, we were made aware that the Home Office would be opening a Residential Short-Term Holding Facility on the Morton Hall site. Due to be operated by Mitie Care and Custody, Swinderby RSTHF is set to open in June 2022 and will have capacity to hold around 35 people (men and women) for a maximum of 7 days under immigration powers.

In August 2021, Morton Hall IRC closed in preparation to reopen at some point in 2022 as a category C adult prison for "foreign national offenders". Sadly, following months of constructive negotiations, in the last quarter of 2021, the management of what will become HMP Morton expressed reservations about MHVG's suitability to visit a prison environment. While continuing to consult with Morton Hall management and re-establishing access remains a priority, MHVG will focus on preparations for the opening of Swinderby RSTHF, in addition to launching a pilot project with HMP Nottingham, initiated in August 2021.

Despite another year of Covid restrictions preventing access to clients, and the eventual closure of Morton Hall IRC, it is MHVG's intention to build upon the foundations laid in 2021. Our group remains committed to providing friendship and support to people held under immigration powers, as well as to non-British nationals serving custodial sentences, in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.

Annual report – achievements & performance

Chair's report

Chair's Report 2021

I begin this report as the Nationality and Borders Bill is being examined line by line by members of the House of Lords. Many agencies, including UNHCR believe that, should the bill be passed by the Commons, most refugees seeking asylum in our country will be penalised even further. The model undermines established international refugee protection rules and practices e.g. 1951 Refugee Convention. The Scotland and Wales governments and The London Assembly have rejected this anti-refugee bill. We will need to increase our activity in campaigning for the rights of those seeking refuge in the UK.

As one of the 17 groups visiting immigration detainees as part of AVID we are aware that the need for support for detainees and prisoners remains high. Our strategic aim is to reduce the human and social cost of immigration detention. As befrienders we share concerns about the use of detention in the UK.

Morton Hall Detention Centre closed last year and the premises will re-open as a prison later in 2022. We have experienced a year without access to detainees because of Covid rules, but a year when Beth, our Acting Co-ordinator, has consolidated our position by focussing on the opportunities when Swinderby Short Term Holding Facility opens. In addition we have been invited to be part of a visiting programme at HMP Nottingham. Despite the lack of visiting opportunities we have kept our visitors up to date with appropriate courses and had a good response to our stall at Nottingham Green Festival in the autumn.

The trustees are very grateful to Beth, Stuart, our volunteer book keeper/administrator, Estelle Fischer our examiner of accounts and CA Plus who deal with salary payments. Together we have a strong team. This year we will be engaging a paid book keeper who will deal with our day to days finances and visitors' expenses so allowing our Treasurer Trustee Elie to focus on fund-raising bids.

I hope you find our Annual Report interesting and urge you to continue to support our group and spread the word to others who may consider visiting or becoming a trustee.

With best wishes

Lynda Wilson
Chair MHVG.

Coordinator's report

With all the Covid-19 disruption of 2020, I had hoped that my report for 2021 would be filled with reference to getting back to doing what we do best: making a positive difference to the lives of people in immigration detention. Unfortunately, Covid-19 restrictions dictated that we were never able to recommence visiting at Morton Hall IRC before its closure in August 2021.

Undoubtedly, it has been another challenging year for our group, not least because of the closure of Morton Hall IRC and ongoing Covid-19 restrictions severely limiting our access to clients but also due to the bigger immigration detention picture. 2021 saw the Nationality and Borders Bill pass through the House of Commons, without the adoption of any of the amendments proposed to safeguard human rights. The message being, it is clear that 2022 is likely to bring with it an increasingly hostile environment for people who are non-British nationals.

However, there is also a lot to be positive about as we enter our eleventh year. Far from being disheartened, as a group we are more determined than ever to provide much needed friendship and support to people in immigration detention and the criminal justice systems regionally.

Until its closure, we continued to support people detained at Morton Hall IRC by phone. We have retained some dedicated and truly inspirational volunteers and recruited others. We have campaigned as a part of a wider network on issues such as mass deportations/charter flights and the use of barrack accommodation to house people arriving in the UK in small boats. We have strengthened our board of trustees with new appointments. We have participated in training to upskill ourselves for the future. We have made some positive inroads with Mitie Care & Custody to assure access to people detained at Swindery RSTHF, once it opens in June 2022. We are in the final phase of negotiating a pilot project with HMP Nottingham, where we will support people detained under immigration powers as well as non-British nationals serving custodial sentences. And we have continued to secure funding from generous funders to safeguard the future of the charity and extend our remit to support more people in the immigration detention and criminal justice systems in the region.

As we welcome Camille back after maternity leave, it is my turn to thank the volunteers, trustees and people from within the AVID network, who have helped me in this role over the last 18 months. It has been a privilege to lend my support and help steer MHVG through such an unprecedented phase. I now look forward to returning to my previous volunteer role and getting back to visiting people as soon and as safely as possible.

Beth Godley
Acting project coordinator/director

Responding to change

Ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, along with the IRC's subsequent closure, prevented MHVG accessing people detained at Morton Hall in person in 2021. Maintaining telephone support services remained a priority but, with several changes to the regional immigration detention landscape, including the proposed opening of Swinderby RSTHF and increasing use of prisons to hold people under immigration powers post sentence, the group recognised the importance of planning.

MHVG has continued to respond effectively to an uncertain and changeable climate. The group has explored new ways to support non-British people in the immigration detention and criminal justice systems in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire and is on track to continue providing emotional support and signposting services.

To support our objective of maintaining vital provision, in the last twelve months MHVG has undertaken several actions. These include:

- Continuing to liaise with the management of what will become HMP Morton Hall to negotiate access once the prison opens. Telephone meetings took place monthly during the first half of the year and were initially productive. Conference calls with management were complemented by the 'Visiting in Prisons' working group committee meeting, held via Zoom, chaired by MHVG's coordinator and attended by several volunteers.
- Maintaining provision to people in immigration detention, MHVG was quick to make connections with Mitie Care & Custody, in addition to the Home Office representative overseeing the project, when it was announced that a RSTHF would open at the Morton Hall site. These talks are ongoing and so far, encouraging, with agreements in principle in place and an offer of a tour of the new facility ahead of its opening in June 2022.
- Extending our remit, MHVG worked collaboratively with the charity Detention Action, to pitch our service to HMP Nottingham. The prison is very interested in providing more support to their non-British population and recognises the value MHVG can offer. As such, and after a successful meeting at the prison in December 2021, a pilot project has been agreed and is due to commence in the coming weeks.
- Undertaking recruitment activity to replace lost volunteers and bolster visitor numbers in anticipation of facilities opening/ HMP Nottingham pilot commencing. This has included advertisements across partner organisations' social media pages, within village newsletters and through a presence at Nottingham Green Festival.
- Continuing to attend prison visiting peer support meetings to understand best practice from visitor groups that already visit non-British people in prisons. Close working relationships have been established with Asylum Welcome and the Lewes Organisation in Support of Refugees & Asylum Seekers.
- Maintaining our membership of Clinks, an organisation that promotes and represents the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families

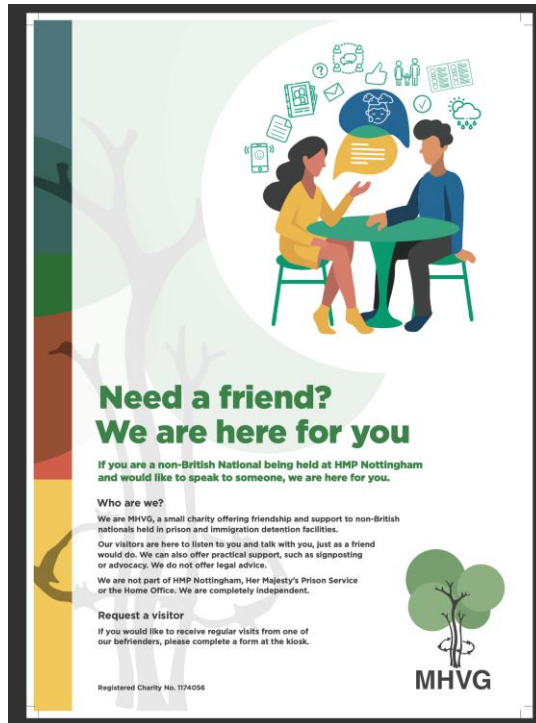


Image 1: Poster for HMP Nottingham pilot, visiting non-British people serving custodial sentences + people held under immigration act powers

Volunteers & visits

Volunteers - visitors, trustees and people who support with essential admin activity - remain the lifeblood of MHVG. While we have understandably lost some volunteers, due to inactivity over the last year, we remain grateful to the volunteers who continue to lend their support to our group and the people we will once again soon be supporting.

In 2021, MHVG had 26 active volunteers registered, an increase from 2020's figure. Likewise, prior to the IRC's closure in August 2021 when in-person visiting was still prohibited, our volunteers placed 135 telephone calls to people in immigration detention at Morton Hall - providing much needed emotional support and signposting in what was an incredibly frantic, distressing, and isolating period.

While we welcomed only one new volunteer during the year, we are hopeful that this figure will increase substantially during the first quarter of 2022, as demand increases and we progress expressions of interest and applications received during 2021 recruitment activity.

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Active volunteers over the year	28	32	22	26
New volunteers trained/inducted	16	9	10	1

Non visiting volunteers	3	3	8	6
Client referrals	45	68	16	7
Number of visits	94	110	24 (+62 calls)	135 calls

Training

We have inducted one volunteer during 2021 but, owing to the ever changing landscape and inability to visit, have not delivered any formal training directly to volunteers in 2021.

However, volunteers have attended external training on a range of topics, including a session delivered by charity, Bail for Immigration Detention (BID), on bail and immigration detention in prisons. We have liaised with our colleagues at Larne House visitors' group and have started the process of designing initial training for visitors to Swindery RSTHF. This will be completed and signed off ready to be delivered later this year once we have more information about access requirements and regimes. Research for initial training for visitors set to take part in the HMP Nottingham pilot also took place in the last quarter of 2021 and will be delivered in the first quarter of 2022.

Partnership work and organisational profile

Through attending local events, engaging with the immigration detention NGO community, retention and recruitment of volunteers, and thanks to membership of AVID and Clinks, MHVG has continued to raise the profile of the organisation and its mission.

While this activity has reduced during 2021, in comparison to previous years, due to staff furlough and continued reduced staffing hours to conserve funds while visiting was restricted, some of 2021's highlights include:

- Developed and strengthened MHVG's relationships with other organisations working in the field, with a focus on groups providing support to people in prisons, including Asylum Welcome and Lewes Organisation in Support of Refugees & Asylum Seekers. This included regular meetings over Zoom and sharing of documentation and best practice.
- Continued involvement as members of Detention Forum, a group established to enable a more coordinated approach across a broader spectrum of NGOs working on the theme of detention (not just inside centres).
- Continued membership of Clinks
- Continued to work to develop MHVG's relationship with the management of what will become HMP Morton Hall, with regular telephone and email correspondence taking place between all parties throughout the first three quarters of 2021.
- Worked with Detention Action to raise awareness of MHVG's provision and expertise to HMP Nottingham, which resulted in request to initiate a visiting pilot for non-British nationals held at the prison.

- Joined and participated in the shared campaign movement: together with refugees #whoweare
- Attended Nottingham Green Festival with exhibition stand and group of MHVG volunteers to raise awareness of immigration detention system, speak to the general public and encourage recruitment in the Nottingham area, ahead of the HMP Nottingham pilot launch.

We have a very good relationship with AVID, and we have attended regular AVID coordinators' meetings in 2021. This has been a vital exercise in sharing information re: the rapidly evolving nature of the detention estate, as well as providing an opportunity to share and learn from best practice with other visitors' groups, (15+), across the UK.



Figure 2: MHVG exhibiting at Nottingham Green Festival in September 2021.

Fundraising

Grants received in this financial year comprised £250 from the Bergman Lehane Trust, £5,000 from The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, £3,000 from the WF Southall Trust, and £3,000 from the Allen Lane Foundation. Individual donations comprised £220.

Trustees report for the year ending 31 December 2021

Trustees report for the year ending 31 December 2021

The trustees during the financial year and up to and including the date the report was approved were:

Name	Position	Dates
Lynda Wilson	Chair	Appointed 1 August 2017
Francesca Bargiela	Trustee	Appointed 1 August 2017
Sayeeeka Farnaz	Trustee	Co-opted January 2021 Resigned March 2021
Christopher Leaman	Trustee	Appointed March 2021
Eleanor Hull	Trustee	Co-opted June 2021

Charity number

The charity was registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, number, on the 1 August 2017.

Registered and principal address

The Sycamore Centre
33A Hungerhill Road
Nottingham
NG3 4NB

Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4JQ

Structure, governance and management

The charity is governed by a constitution adopted on the 1 August 2017

Method of recruitment and appointment of trustees

The trustees of the charity are appointed by the members at the AGM.

Objectives and activities

The charity's objectives

For the public benefit, to relieve the needs of foreign nationals who are, or who have been, detained under UK law at the Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre, or elsewhere, who are suffering financial hardship, distress or are otherwise in need by the provision of financial support, goods, items, advocacy and support, particularly through, but not limited to, the provision of a trained visiting network.

Trustees report (continued) for the year ending 31 December 2021

The charity's main activities

1. The provision of a trained visiting network of volunteers who can offer emotional and practical support to detainees in Morton Hall IRC
2. The education of the public about the plight of immigration detainees, the experiences they may have had historically or whilst detained, and the broader legal situation for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

Public benefit statement

In setting our objectives and planning our activities our Trustees have given serious consideration to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and in particular the prevention and relief of need.

Achievements and performance

Please see annual report 2021 achievements and performance section (see contents page).

Financial review

We started the year with £4,417 in the bank. The net payments for the year were £18,033 and net receipts were £21,052. Grants received in this financial year comprised £250 from the Bergman Lehane Trust, £5,000 from The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, £3,000 from the WF Southall Trust, and £3,000 from the Allen Lane Foundation. Individual donations comprised £220, and we were also in receipt of £6,334 from the HMRC Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for Camille, and a further £3,247 from the HMRC for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS) for Beth. At the end of the financial year our closing balance was £7,435 with a further £111.75 in petty cash.

Given the lack of visiting activity for much of the year, the main item of expenditure was the Project Coordinator's wages. From October onwards we reduced staff hours to one day per week. However, we did organise several successful volunteer recruitment events which, along with a brand-new website, took our spending on publicity to £780. We also returned an unspent portion of the grant that we received in September 2020 from the NET Lincs Covid 19 Fund.

Reserves policy

Last year we adopted a 'reserves policy' which sought to ensure sufficient reserves are maintained to cover the winding up costs should it be desirable or necessary to cease activity. These will be sufficient to cover staff redundancies, rent and utility costs and any professional fees likely to be incurred. The reserves target has been met for this financial year.

Signed on behalf of the board of trustees:

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynda Wilson', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Date: 14 March 2022

Name: Lynda Wilson
Chair

**Independent examiner's report to the trustees of:
Morton Hall Visitors Group Registered Charity number 1174056
The Sycamore Centre, 33A Hungerhill Road, St Anns, Nottingham
NG3 4NB**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Morton Hall Visitors Group, for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible but not required, to be subject to an independent examination, it is my responsibility to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145 of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that **no** material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
 2. the accounts did not accord with those records; or
 3. the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.
- I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Estelle Fisher

Estelle Fisher

Name: Estelle Fisher, Postgraduate Diploma in Audit Management and Consultancy, Institute of Internal Auditors, Advanced Diploma.

Address: 35, Mere Road, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7LH

Morton Hall Visitors' Group: Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending December 31 2021

Morton Hall Visitors Group						
Receipts and Payments Accounts for the year ending						
December 31 2021						
			2021		2020	
Receipts		£	£	£	£	
	Donations		220		600	
	Grants		11,250		6,450	
	Bergman Lehane Trust	250				
	29th May 1961 CT	5,000				
	WF Southall Trust	3,000				
	Allen Lane Foundation	3,000				
	HMRC		9,582			
	SMP	6,334				
	JRS	3,247				
	Total receipts		21,052		7,050	
	Payments					
	Wages, NI, Pensions & Payroll	16,204		16,410		
	Bank charges	102		60		
	Insurance	339		297		
	Office/Phones/Website	144		405		
	Visitors Travel/Expenses	-		268		
	Staff Travel/Expenses	-		389		
	Membership/Subscriptions	72		72		
	Publicity	780		462		
	Equipment	-		-		
	Events	-		35		
	Misc: NET Grant refund	391		147		
	Total payments		18,033		18,545	
	Surplus		3,019		(11,495)	
	Statement of Assets and Liabilities		2021		2020	
	Cash in bank		7,435		4,417	
	Cash in hand		112		112	
	less Liabilities due in year		-		-	
	Total		7,547		4,529	
	Represented by bank balance b/f		4,417		15,883	
	Cash in hand b/f		112		141	
	Surplus income over expenditure		3,019		(11,495)	
	Total		7,547		4,529	
	Notes to Morton Hall Detainee Visitors Group accounts for the year ended 2021					
	1 Accounting policies					
	Basis of accounting					
	The trustees have taken advantage of section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 and have prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis					
	There has been no change to the accounting policies since last year.					
	No changes have been made to the accounts for previous years.					
	Taxation					
	As a registered charity the organisation benefits from rates relief and is generally exempt from income tax and capital gains tax but not from VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is included in the cost of those items to which it relates					