

Do you have a spare room?



A briefing about joining the Glasgow Bail Circle

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DO YOU HAVE A SPARE ROOM?

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This briefing has been written for people wanting more information about joining the Glasgow Bail Circle. For more copies contact The UNITY Centre, 30 Ibrox Street, Glasgow G41 1AQ or by phoning 0141 427 7992.



• Introduction

Dungavel House opened as an asylum and immigration detention centre in September 2001. The centre was built as a shooting lodge and has been previously used as a prison. Situated on the B743 between Muirkirk and Strathaven, the centre is about 20 miles, or an hour's drive, south from Glasgow city centre. In 2006 Group4Securicor (G4S), the largest security company in the UK with 15,500 security officers and an annual turnover of £350 million (and the second largest security company in the world with operations in over 100 countries) took over the contract to run Dungavel.

Initially Dungavel housed up to 150 people, it was extended in 2003 and now has a capacity to hold 194 people - 148 single males, 14 single females and eight families. People can be detained in Dungavel indefinitely without any indication from the Home Office when they will be released.

People detained in Dungavel are not criminals. It can't be stressed enough that they have NOT been detained as punishment for committing crimes or because they are a danger to members of the public. The decision to send someone to Dungavel is taken by civil servants working in the Home Office (now the Borders and Immigration Agency.)

Most of the people in Dungavel have been brought there from places in England and have been moved far away from the support networks of friends, relatives and supporters they may have developed after arriving in the UK. Isolated from these support networks, detainees face real difficulties in applying to the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal in Glasgow for bail to be released.

To get bail they need three simple things:

1. ***Somewhere to stay while they wait for their National Asylum Seeker Support (NASS) benefits and accommodation to be arranged***
2. ***Someone to act as a 'cautioner' who will make an undertaking to the court that they will ensure the person will report when required and will not abscond. Usually the person offering to let the person stay at their address also acts as the cautioner.***
3. ***A sum of money will usually also have to be paid to the court that will be kept if the person absconds. (Please note that we don't expect people acting as cautioners to pay the bail money - see the Money section on page 8 below.)***

But because they do not know anyone in Glasgow or Scotland, people in Dungavel find it hard to find bail addresses or cautioners.

There's an urgent need for people to act as cautioners for people in Dungavel. Every week people detained in Dungavel make contact with support groups in Glasgow asking for help in getting released and the Glasgow Bail Circle has a long waiting list of usually single men who are waiting for a bail address to become available. On occasion, concern about the mental health of people in detention has led to members of staff at Dungavel making contact to try and arrange their release.

The Bail Circle is a new initiative in Glasgow. In this briefing we've tried to answer all the questions you may have about getting involved but immigration policy changes all the time and we don't have all the answers. We hope we've provided enough information so that you will join the Glasgow Bail Circle and help with this evolving project.

If you would like to discuss anything to do with the Bail Circle further, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us c/o the UNITY Centre.

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- **Why are people detained?**

Dungavel detention centre can hold up to 194 detainees both male and female. It's not the only one in the UK but it is the only one in Scotland. Part of it is also a family unit where families with children are held after they have been detained in Glasgow before they are moved to the Yarl's Wood or Tinsley House family detention centres in the south of England near to Heathrow and Gatwick airports respectively. Current Home Office policy is for children to be detained in Dungavel for 72 hours before being transferred.

People detained in Dungavel are in a 'Kafkaesque', bureaucratic limbo not knowing how long they will be there or when they will be released. People are not detained because they are criminals. Although an Immigration Judge may decide whether someone should get 'bail' from the detention centre, the decision whether someone should be detained is not taken in a courtroom. It's a decision taken by an immigration official, not by a judge. Often, the reasons given for keeping someone in detention can be completely arbitrary or simply mistaken.

The Home Office will claim that there is a risk that the person will abscond if released. People may have been kept in detention after an attempt by the Home Office to forcibly remove them in the past has failed due to the swift legal action by their lawyers.

"I moved from Iraq to Iran when I was eleven years old. When I fled to the UK, with my Iranian wife, we claimed asylum from the Iranian regime. When the Home Office decided to remove me and my family back to Iran my lawyer managed to stop this because I was in fact an Iraqi citizen not Iranian. That was over a year ago, since then I have been kept in detention even though my wife and daughter were released very quickly and now have a flat in Glasgow. The Home Office won't let me out of detention because they say I have lied to them."

Alternatively it may be they are alleged to have in some way breached the conditions imposed when they were given permission to enter the UK to make their asylum case. It may be it's alleged they failed to report at a police station or reporting centre when they were supposed to; they may have been caught working without the right documents or they may have been detained because in the past they have been convicted of things like driving offences.

"When the Home Office tried to send us back to our old country my lawyer managed to stop it by going to the High Court. The Home Office released my wife and our three children but they wouldn't release me because they said I had missed going to report every week for five months but I hadn't. I hadn't missed reporting once, but they had just lost the records and that meant I was kept in detention for a month longer than the rest of my family."

Crucially many of those in detention are still waiting to have some aspect of their legal case for asylum considered in some way and so are in the UK completely legally. Many cannot be forcibly removed from the UK – usually for medical or legal reasons – but the Home Office will not release them from the detention centre without a bail address and cautioner.

• Positive things

Have you ever wished to travel the world? Maybe you already have and miss the thrill and stimulation of meeting different cultures and getting a different perspective of things? Or maybe you've had a busy and fulfilling family life but now the children have grown up and left home and you have some empty rooms? Or maybe the idea of anonymous bureaucrats locking up people fleeing from war, torture, rape or slavery fills you with anger?

If any of that's true then having an asylum seeker stay in your house will be a truly rewarding and positive experience.

"When we heard that X was getting released and coming back to Glasgow to stay in our flat I shouted and punched the air I was so pleased! It was fantastic news. We'd got to know her over the phone but had never met because she had been taken to a detention centre in the south of England. We'd been trying to support X whilst she was pregnant and trying to stop the Home Office returning her to her country. To hear that she was getting out after all the stress and worrying about what was going to happen to her was just the best news we could have heard."

It's an opportunity to meet people from different parts of the world from different cultures and to make long lasting friendships with them.

"I have gained some wonderful friends. I still keep in touch with most people who have stayed in my flat and have learned lots about different countries and cultures. It doesn't take long for people to realise what a dreadful cook I am and take over in the kitchen. One guy who stayed with used to borrow my bike but maintained it to a better condition than he had found it. Another time I had to go away for a few days and my freezer broke down and the guy staying here managed to get it all sorted out, at a cheaper price than I expected."

• Do you have a spare room?

Immigration Judges often release someone in detention while they wait for a decision on their asylum application if someone else acts as a cautioner for them. (They can and sometimes will agree to release someone without a cautioner and sometimes people can get bail on the decision of a Chief Immigration Officer but this is not so frequent and this briefing is primarily for people thinking of helping someone to get bail from the Immigration Tribunal.)

Glasgow Bail Circle helps people in Dungavel to get bail by encouraging people to join us in befriending detainees and then supporting each other if we then decide to act as surety. We register people who are willing to let someone stay with them for a short period of time (usually between 1 and 2 months) until their NASS support is arranged.

To be a cautioner you need several things

- 1. You must be a British citizen or have Indefinite Leave to Remain**
- 2. You must either own your own home or have permission from your landlord for someone to stay with you**
- 3. A suitable spare room where the person can stay**
- 4. The judge will want to know how you know the person in detention**
- 5. And you will need to lodge some money with the court** (We don't expect people acting as cautioners to pay the bail money required by the court - see the Money section on page 8 below.)

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When someone registers with the Bail Circle we record relevant details and visit their home to meet and go over the procedure and make sure the arrangements are suitable. Once you've been registered we'll match the bail address with people on our waiting list.

We prioritise who should get bail by looking at a number of factors such as how long they have been in detention and medical factors. The Bail Circle will then put you and the people in Dungavel in touch so you can get to know each other.

We'll also appoint a volunteer from the Unity Centre to act as a 'mentor' for you both so there is someone who'll be there to guide you and the person in detention through the bail process and sort out any problems that may crop up.

With the help of the Scottish Detainee Visitors, the Bail Circle will help you arrange to visit the person in Dungavel so you can both meet, make friends and decide whether you are both happy with the person coming to live in your household.

If you'd rather help someone else in detention then this is not a problem. It's important that both you and the person in detention are happy for them to stay with you and you'll need to show the court that you've developed a friendship before bail is granted. If you're both happy with continuing with the bail application we'll contact the detainee's lawyer so they can arrange a bail hearing.

The lawyer may want to meet or talk with you before the hearing to take your details so they can pass them onto the court when they apply for bail. We can also do this for you and you won't have to meet the lawyer until the morning of the bail hearing before the hearing has started.

Bail hearings are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays and you must attend or the bail application will fail. If the bail hearing is successful then the person will be released usually from the Eagle Buildings as soon as the set amount of money has been paid into the court bank account. The whole process can happen very quickly. Between registering with the bail circle and someone walking out of court free could take less than two weeks.

• What happens at the Court?

Bail hearings are held at the Immigration Tribunal on floor 4 in the Eagle Buildings at 215, Bothwell Street, Glasgow (see map at the end of this briefing.) Bail hearings usually happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays (sometimes Fridays as well.)

As the cautioner you must attend the court or it is likely the bail application will fail.

If you're working you'll need to make arrangements to attend. Most bail hearings happen in the morning and usually finish by 1pm so you should arrange to take at least the morning off work.

You need to be at the court for 10.00am when you'll meet the lawyer.

You must bring with you:

- 1. Your passport or your documents proving that you have indefinite permission to remain in the UK***
- 2. Documents such as a mortgage agreement proving you own your home or a letter from your landlord saying they are happy to have someone stay with you***

When the hearing is called you'll go into the courtroom and the person you are acting as cautioner for will be brought into court by a Group4Securicor guard. Often there'll also be a translator. Before the judge comes into the room you'll be able to exchange a few words, shake hands or hug the person applying for bail. There'll also be a lawyer representing the Home Office sitting at the table opposite 'our' lawyer. When the judge enters the room you are expected to stand and the hearing will start.

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First of all, 'our' lawyer will be asked to say why the person should be released on bail. The judge will then ask for the Home Office lawyer to say why the Home Office are opposed to bail and then there will be a legal debate about whether the person can get bail.

You'll be asked to stand up and will be asked questions by the judge. The Home Office lawyer will also be invited to ask you questions. Usually this is not very difficult and you should be able to answer the questions easily. Sometimes, depending on which judge or Home Office lawyer it is, the questions can be quite thorough and you may, if you're unlucky, get a grilling. Past questions have included:

- How did you get to know the person in detention?
- How long you have known the person?
- How will you ensure they report when they are supposed to?
- What will you do if they are due to be returned to detention?
- About whether your home will be suitable for them to stay with you and about other people living in the same household
- And you may be asked details about your job or how you are supported.

It can be quite intimidating to stand up in court and be expected to answer questions the first time, however the immigration court is less formal than a Sheriff court, you don't have to swear an oath, for example and the judges don't wear gowns and wigs.

Your mentor will be able to give you advice on what it's like in court; we can arrange for you to meet other people who've gone through the process and there'll be other people in the court to support you and the person applying for bail at the hearing.

After you've answered questions the judge will decide there and then whether to release the person on bail. In theory the main issue the judge should be concerned with is whether the person will abscond if they are released from detention.

If we are successful then the person will be taken back to the holding room and you will leave the courtroom. The clerk of the court will then come and ask you to sign some forms and check your details. The clerk will then give you a slip that you need to take to the branch of the Clydesdale Bank on Bothwell Street to pay the bail money in. The bank cashier will then stamp the slip to show the money has been paid and you will need to take this back to the court to show the money's been paid.

Once you can show the bail money has been paid the paperwork will be completed and the person will be released out of a door at the far end of the court complex.

● **What happens if the person absconds?**

It's important to remember that if you help someone get bail and they abscond you have not committed any offence. You cannot get into any trouble. Sometimes you may be asked to return to court if the Home Office allege that the person you've helped get bail has broken their reporting conditions – usually this will be a mistake by the Home Office. If the applicant absconds - and it is a very rare occurrence – you may be required to attend forfeiture proceedings. If you don't attend this in person you are likely to lose your money. The advantage of attending is that you can explain how you attempted to maintain contact with the bail detainee. If you can convince the immigration judge that you have made a good effort to do so, they may decide that you should only forfeit part or even none of your money.

- **Personal experiences of detention – Part 1**

The story of a young African man:

"I was in detention in Dungavel for four months in the summer of 2006. I was detained because the Home Office wanted to return me to Italy where they said I had claimed asylum before coming to Britain. I was released after the Italian government said they didn't have a record of me claiming asylum there.

I was arrested in my friend's house. We'd been watching football in the town centre [a town in the north of England] late one night. Because it was late my friend [another asylum seeker from my home country] told me to stay overnight in the hostel where he lived because it wasn't safe for me to go home by myself.

I was supposed to go to report the next morning but at six o'clock in the morning when we were sleeping the police knocked on the door, "Knock, knock, knock!" on the door and I got up and opened the door for them because I didn't know who it was.

There were more than six of them, they were all dressed in black and wearing big heavy [stab-proof] vests. They collected all the people staying in the hostel into the TV room. There were more than ten of us and we were all wearing t-shirts and shorts all pushed into the one room. They asked for our ID cards and checked them one at a time. It was very frightening. After a while they called out my name and told me to get dressed. They asked me if I lived in the hostel and I told them my address. They said 'Why are you here?' and I explained about the football and then two of the police took my arms and told me that I had to go with them and took me to the Home Office van outside.

I was taken to a police station and held for three days in a cell there for three days. I had only one blanket and it was very cold. The toilet in the corner smelt very bad and I couldn't sleep and I wouldn't eat the food. There was a lot of noise because there were drunks and drug addicts in the other cells and the man in the cell next to mine didn't stop shouting and banging his cell door.

While I was at the police station they telephoned my lawyer in London and the interpreter explained to me what was happening. I couldn't eat or sleep because I was so worried about what was happening to me.

After three days they told me that I had to eat something because I was going to be taken to another place in a van and it would be a long journey and they gave me some sandwiches that I managed to eat.

In the van they told me I was going to a great place with a gym, pool tables, table tennis, a library, good food and friendly people. They made it sound like a hotel!

Then we arrived at Dungavel after three or four hours. The van went into one gate with a lot of cameras and then through a bigger gate with an officer on guard. Then the van parked outside the reception at the back of the building. The officers at reception then searched me and they had photographs on the wall showing me how to stand with my arms held out when they were searching me."

**REMEMBER IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BAIL CIRCLE
PLEASE CONTACT US c/o THE UNITY CENTRE ON 0141 427 7992**

- **Money**

In Scotland the cautioner usually has to pay a lump sum of money to the court. (The situation is different in England.) The amount depends on what the immigration judge thinks is suitable. In our experience it can range from £10 to £150 to over £1000.

When the judge sets the agreed amount at a bail hearing, the person will be released almost immediately when the agreed amount is deposited as cash into the court's bank account.

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In Scotland the court does not need evidence that you can pay the agreed amount and they do not usually ask for any information about your income.

Many detainees manage to raise the money needed for their bail from friends, relatives or from their supporters. Often people with the same sort of ethnic or religious background or from the community will make donations to help raise the money.

In extreme circumstances where it looks as if someone cannot raise bail there is a fund that the Glasgow Bail Circle can approach for help and we will also contact groups and organisations that might be able to help pay the bail money.

As a rule the Glasgow Bail Circle does not ask people acting as cautioners to be responsible for paying the amount set for bail unless you are willing to do this.

If you join the Glasgow Bail Circle you will not be expected to pay the bail money, however there will be other costs.

• Other costs

When someone is released from Dungavel quite often they will have only the clothes they are wearing and a few personal items. It will also take a short period of time before they can access the welfare payments they are entitled to. Until this happens you and their other supporters will need to support the person staying with you.

You may need to buy food, toiletries and clothing for the person. At the same time for the first few weeks the person will have to travel around Glasgow to make the arrangements necessary for their long-term support and accommodation, so you may also need to cover their travel costs.

The Refugee Survival Trust should give people NASS levels of £35 (an adult seeking asylum in the UK is granted 70 per cent of the income support entitlement of a UK citizen) throughout the whole period it takes for NASS support to be re-instated and can be accessed through the Scottish Refugee Council.

Emergency funds are also available from Positive Action In Housing to support people until their NASS support starts but this is limited. Donated clothes are available from various church groups and from the Unity Centre. At the same time community groups and supporters networks may be able to provide financial help and again there are funds that the Glasgow Bail Circle may be able to access (limited funds) in cases of difficulty for households with low incomes.

On average, the ex-detainee will only need to stay with you for one or two months at most until their NASS support and accommodation is sorted out. When this happens they'll be housed either in accommodation arranged by Glasgow City Council or by the YMCA or the Angel Group. They'll also be able to get weekly support as cash from the post-office.

• Getting to know the person in detention

The Immigration Judge will want some evidence that you have had a personal connection with the person in detention. They may well quiz you about this during the bail hearing.

Ideally we like people to talk on the phone and visit the person in detention before agreeing to be their cautioner although in some emergency cases the time to do this may be limited.

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It's important for you to get to know the detainee before they come and stay with you and also allows you to show to the court that you do have a good relationship with the detainee and that you are in a position to vouch that they will not abscond.

Detainees are allowed phone calls until 10pm at night and can be contacted with minimum difficulties by dialling their extension number when phoning the main Dungavel switchboard on **01698 395 000**.

Detainees are also allowed to purchase mobile phones in Dungavel and so can be contacted in that way as well.

Once you are registered and we have identified a person you might like to help we will pass on their contact details as well as any other information we have about them.

It would also be good if you can visit the person in detention. In partnership with the Scottish Detainee Visitors we can help you arrange a visit to Dungavel with someone who is experienced in visiting Dungavel.

Scottish Detainee Visitors is a voluntary organisation that has a rota to visit detainees in Dungavel usually on Mondays and Thursdays, leaving Glasgow city centre at 6pm. Often they will have space in their car for you to join them when they visit.

Alternatively you can visit Dungavel by yourself and there are regular buses from Hamilton bus station to and from the detention centre. Details for visiting Dungavel are at the back of this briefing.

• **Time-scale**

Once you make the decision to act as a cautioner for someone in Dungavel things can move pretty quickly. Bail hearings are held every Tuesday and Thursday at the Immigration Tribunal in Glasgow. When the person's lawyer decides that it is the right time to go for bail they will make an application for a bail hearing at the next available date. If the court is agreeable then the person will be released from the court within an hour or so of the decision to release them. If there's a delay in paying the bail then the person will be released very soon after the money has been paid.

It could therefore take less than two weeks between you registering with the Bail Circle and for you to have been matched with a person in Dungavel and for them to be released. However we are keen for you to talk to the person by telephone and if possible meet the person in Dungavel before they go for a bail hearing so that you can meet and get to know each other.

• **Mentoring and support from other people in the Bail Circle**

Before you agree to have someone stay with you we'll arrange for someone from The Unity Centre to come and visit you in your home to go through the procedure with you and to check that there are no problems with the accommodation you are offering. Usually this person will have volunteered to act as your mentor through the process.

From our experience there are always issues that crop up from having someone come and stay in your household. It can range from the fairly simple things like what can the person eat to things, often simple things, that can become quite stressful if they aren't resolved. Your mentor will be responsible for trying to sort out any issues that may arise as well as being there to give advice, help sort out NASS support, accommodation, etc.

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We're also more than happy to put you in touch with other people who have experience of providing a bail address so you can discuss any problems with them.

"It seems stupid now but what was hardest to deal with when X came to stay with us wasn't the dealing with the Home Office and NASS while they sorted out X's support it was the fact that X didn't stop cleaning up! We'd get back from work and find the laundry and the washing up had been done and the house tidied up. I don't think X found our house particularly untidy!(I hope not anyway!) I think she was just trying to repay us for helping her but it did make us feel uncomfortable. We didn't know how to say anything though so it would have been good if we'd been able to talk to someone else who could have talked to X about it."

If for whatever reason you and the person released on bail have problems that cannot be resolved through the mentoring process, we'll take responsibility for arranging a new address for the person to stay at. This may take a little time as it'll depend on the availability of other addresses but should take about a week.

Please remember that you'll be inviting someone to stay in your house for up to two months as well as standing as a guarantor for their behaviour after they're released. It's your choice (and the choice of the person in detention) whether you both want to do this. Registering with the Glasgow Bail Circle does not place any obligation on you if for whatever reason you feel you do not wish to act as a cautioner for someone.

• Long-term commitment

Ideally, because we've such a long waiting list, we're hoping that you'll be prepared to help more than one person get out of Dungavel so your joining the Glasgow Bail Circle will be a long term commitment to have people from Dungavel living in your household.

However we know that having someone you don't know very well come and live in your home can throw up problems that are difficult to predict so before most people can make a long-term commitment to the Bail Circle you will want to try it at least once.

After that if you want to continue being part of the Bail Circle then we would be keen for you to regularly let people stay with you so that over a year you may help three or four or more people who will stay in your home, one at a time.

• Personal experiences of detention Part 2 Inside Dungavel: the "Five Star Hotel for Asylum Seekers!"

"When I arrived at Dungavel I didn't know anyone else there. I was very scared of the staff because I didn't know what was happening or what was going to happen to me. Then one officer was really nice and friendly to me and so I stopped being scared of them. But not all of the staff were that nice and there were some good and some bad officers at Dungavel while I was there."

The room they put me into had six beds. The room was about six metres by seven metres and usually there were four, five or six men in the same room, all different ages, they could be 18 years old or fifty years old. They were all from different countries and speaking all different languages. I never shared the room with anyone from my own country.

Each bed had one duvet and one pillow and we had one wardrobe with three hangers and a shelf. Next to the bed was a small bedside locker. There was only one light for the whole room and every night there were

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arguments about when to have the light "on" or "off". Each room had a TV and again some people wanted to sleep during the day and watch TV at night and some people wanted to sleep.

Every day at 7 o'clock, the officers would come in the room for 'attendance' – when they would count everyone to make sure no-one had escaped. If you were sleeping with the cover over your face they would wake you up to check and ask you if you were OK. They didn't care about our privacy – women officers and very young men would come in to count us. When they searched the room they would send us all out of the room and call us in one by one when they searched your bed and wardrobe. They would put on gloves like they thought I was dirty or something.

Breakfast was supposed to be between 9.30 and 10.30 but I never really went to breakfast and just stayed in bed thinking about my situation, about being in detention and about what might happen to me. If I felt happy I would go to breakfast but I never really did, I was so shocked about being in detention because until then everyone had seemed so friendly and helpful and I was happy to be here because I thought I was going to get help. Breakfast was always the same. Some fruit, eggs and toast or bread, corn flakes, tea or milk. You were only allowed one piece of fruit, one apple or one orange.

Usually I got up at 10.00. I'd go and wash in the bathroom next door to my room and shared by the room next to us. There were two toilets and 2 urinals for 12 men. We also had two showers and one basin. We were given soap, toothpaste and a toothbrush and a towel.

Three times a week a woman cleaner would come and clean the rooms. If your room was clean she would go and tell the officers at the desk and they would give everyone in the room £2.00 for the week.

At 10.00 I would go and watch TV in the sitting room, sometimes I went to the Gym, or the Library or to Arts and Crafts. The Gym had a pool table, weights, a treadmill, an exercise bike and a basketball net. Outside was a basketball court where we played football. For the first month I was there though they didn't let anyone outside of the building – you weren't allowed outside even to get fresh air

Every time you went anywhere – to the Gym or the Library – the guards would radio ahead with a sort of code and they would search us with metal detectors before letting us out of the door. If you didn't arrive at where you were supposed to be going after fifteen minutes then there would be an alarm and they would have to search everywhere for you. In the library they would search you when you went in and when you went out. I think they were worried we would steal things from the library.

In Arts and Crafts I made t-shirts and printed them. You could paint and draw. I liked Arts and Crafts because I could be busy and forget my problems. When you were in your room or watching TV you'd always be thinking about your problems and worrying and feel scared. I liked Arts and Crafts because I could forget about all that.

At 12.00 everyone had to be back in their room so you could be counted again and then from 12.30 to 1.30 you could go for lunch. Once I missed lunch because I was watching the England – Portugal match in the World Cup. That day I was supporting England but they lost. The guards were not happy I was supporting England but when England lost they were happy!

At meal times everyone would eat all in one room. There would be maybe as many as 130 or 140 or even 160 people all in a room that measured only about 12 metres by 7 metres. There would always be long queues to get food and if you were late you would miss the good food. Each week they would have one day when there was traditional food from your country. But most of the time I didn't want to eat very much because I was not very happy

Everyone had to stay in the restaurant until 1.30. You were not allowed to take any food out of the room except fruit. You were not even allowed to take tea or coffee out of the room. Children had to eat the same food as the adults and you were only allowed to take one piece of fruit. I really liked fruit and sometimes when the manager was not looking I would be given a second piece of fruit, and I really liked the yoghurt.

Sometimes there was not enough food for everyone and you had to wait until everyone else had eaten to get seconds. It wasn't a big room and sometimes not everyone could get a seat. All the cutlery was disposable and the plates were plastic. Some people really didn't like the food but I wasn't eating very much and I thought it was OK

After lunch you could go and do what ever you wanted. On Saturdays we had bingo. One time I won £5 but usually I never won anything. On Thursdays we'd have a pool championship and the winner got £5 and

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sometimes there was a football competition and all the players on the winning team would win £5. The library was small and there was a room for the English classes and there was one room with a computer, but you couldn't get the internet so it was only for writing and printing. We asked for a computer teacher so we could get the internet but they said no.

I never got any books from the library. They had newspapers in different languages but most of the books were in English and they also had boxes with information about your home country and your country's situation in them and things like that. The librarian gave one newspaper printed from the internet from my country but it was only one copy for everyone from my country in the detention centre and I had a fight with her because she would only make one copy. English classes were in the morning but I couldn't concentrate and it was difficult to learn and I didn't feel like learning English. Why did I want to learn English – so I could speak good English in detention or in my country when they deported me? What was the point?

Sometimes they had music classes in the afternoon. Two or three days a week they had guitar or piano lessons. One guy had a traditional musical instrument from my home country and he would play it for us in the music room. But the music teacher was no good – she didn't understand us and she wasn't a good teacher so I didn't go to music lessons very often.

Dinnertime was at about 5 o'clock. Sometimes it was the same food as lunch and sometimes it was different. After dinner everyone would go to the Gym to play volleyball or handball. Other people would watch TV and some people would go to bed or go and chat with friends. Then at 10pm 'attendance' would be taken again and we would be counted again to make sure no one had escaped. After that the night shift would come on and they would check the rooms during the night by coming into the rooms.

Usually I would stay up watching TV until 1 or 2 or 3 o'clock because I couldn't sleep. People snoring would keep me awake.

Every day was just the same, you are just kept waiting. Everyday some new people would come in, some people were deported, some people would go to court to get bail and some would come back again.

Every Tuesday and Thursday there'd be a bail hearing in Glasgow and everybody would watch to see who had got out and who had come back and everyone would get excited about this."

• Detention damages people

Detainees can be kept in detention for months and even years without any idea of when they may be released. The effect of this on their mental well-being can be extremely destructive especially if the person has experienced detention and torture before arriving in the UK. The uncertainty of their situation, not knowing when they may be released and being detained in an establishment where many people are being forcibly removed from the UK has a significant impact on the mental health of people detained in detention centres in the UK.

"In 2005, in a six-month period, doctors from the organisation, Medical Justice (MJ), examined 56 asylum seekers in four UK detention centres, or shortly after their release. Their findings agreed with those reported by Medecins sans Frontieres and the British Medical Journal; "detainees, particularly those held for long periods, suffer from profound hopelessness, despair, and suicidal urges.... In many of these patients, both medical and psychiatric needs were frequently not adequately addressed. Such neglect violates the European convention on human rights and other agreed international obligations with respect to medical care".

The Home Office 'Operational Enforcement Manual' states that "where there is independent evidence that they have been tortured", people should normally be considered suitable for detention in "only very exceptional circumstances". This is because incarceration of torture victims is known to constantly re-traumatise people psychologically. More than 20 detainees seen by Medical Justice doctors gave a history of torture and had physical signs "consistent with" or "typical of" torture, by the definitions of the Istanbul

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Protocol on the Reporting of Torture. In no case were these patients aware of any effort by the Home Office to investigate this, even when it had been appropriately reported to Home Office officials and doctors.

At least 33 patients seen by MJ doctors fulfilled ICD10 criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or depression. Many had either harmed themselves or made determined attempts at suicide. Official guidance that people with serious health problems including mental illness, should not normally be detained, was not followed by the Home Office for these patients. Indefinite detention is particularly damaging to people's mental health: the constant threat of being sent back to a place one mortally fears, with no end in sight, leads to high rates of depression and suicidal behaviour. There is a whole system in place, so called "SASH" (suicide and self-harm), in each detention centre, to try to manage and contain the high levels of suicide risk among detainees.

Many detainees allege assault during the removal process. In cases handled by civil action lawyers, injuries have ranged from swellings and bruises, to fractured finger, nerve damage from handcuffs, sexual assault, urethral/groin damage, cracked shoulder, serious head injury and exacerbation of mental health problems. In December 2004, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, published a report: "Harm on Removal: Excessive Force against Failed Asylum Seekers", detailing that out of 14 cases they examined, there were indications that 12 asylum seekers had been subjected to excessive and/or gratuitous force in the removal process."

(Medical Justice, 2006)

In Dungavel there has been at least one suicide and a number of attempted suicides.

- Tran Quang Tung, a 23-year-old Vietnamese asylum seeker was found hanged inside a toilet at Dungavel on 23 July 2004. He had been detained for 12 months and 'simply gave up hope of ever being released'.
- In early March 2002, a 31-year-old Nigerian asylum seeker, Dotun Adeosun attempted to take his life after receiving a letter from the Home Office telling him he would be deported. Adeosun had to be operated on, after driving a 7-inch iron rod through his stomach. Following the operation, he was returned to Dungavel where he was kept in segregation.
- In August 2004 the Sunday Herald revealed that a 27-year-old refugee priest from Nigeria, John Oguchuckwu, had been sent to Greenock prison indefinitely because he became suicidal after spending eight months in Dungavel.
- In September 2005 Popoola Letsoalo, 30, a Nigerian asylum seeker, attempted to hang himself in a bathroom at Dungavel just hours after he was told he was being moved to London for deportation. Other asylum seekers saved him.

It's been reported that staff at Wishaw general hospital and Hairmyres hospital have compiled a dossier of 'horrific' incidences where asylum seekers from Dungavel detention centre have been degraded and humiliated while receiving treatment.

● The UNITY Centre

The Unity Centre is an independent help centre for asylum seekers in Glasgow run by a collective of volunteers and funded completely by donations from supporters. Located less than 100 metres from the Home Office reporting centre where asylum seeker families are required to report, weekly, monthly or every two months, the Unity Centre helps asylum seekers if they have any problems. Over 1,000 asylum seeker families living in Glasgow have registered their personal details at the

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Unity Centre since it started in March 2006 and since then the Unity Centre has been open five or six days a week between the hours of 10 am and 6pm.

If you would be interested in volunteering at the Unity Centre or would like to help keep the centre open by making a donation please contact us on 0141 427 7992 or by emailing theunitycentre@btconnect.com.

• Scottish Detainee Visitors

Scottish Detainee Visitors (SDV) is an independent charity which provides social, emotional and practical support to asylum and immigration detainees in Scotland. SDV volunteers visit detainees in Dungavel Removal Centre on Monday and Thursday evenings.

We aim to relieve the conditions of isolation and stress experienced by people detained by the immigration service, primarily at Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre, in South Lanarkshire. If you'd like to find out more about SDV or discuss visiting and other ways to get involved, contact our co-ordinator, Kate Alexander on info@sdv.org.uk.

• Visiting Dungavel

Dungavel House Detention Centre
Strathaven
South Lanarkshire
ML10 6RF
Telephone: 01698 395000
Fax: 01698 395067

Dungavel is situated on the B743 between Muirkirk and Strathaven, about 20 miles, or an hour's drive, south from Glasgow city centre. Visiting hours are: 13.30 hrs – 20.30 hrs, seven days a week

You must take a photographic identification such as your passport, ARC card or driving licence.

By Car

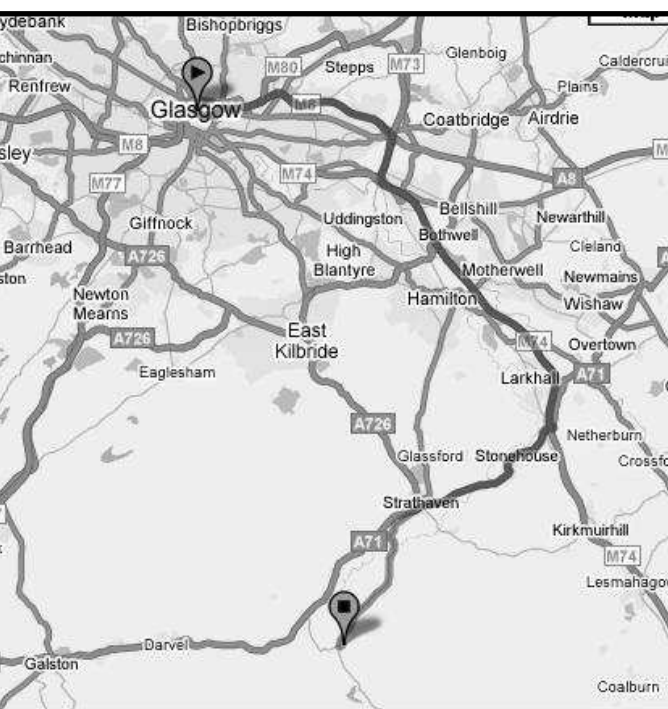
From Glasgow city centre take the A726 via East Kilbride OR the M74 until junction 8 and then the A71 (signposted for Kilmarnock) to Strathaven. At Strathaven take the B743 signposted for Muirkirk for roughly 5 1/2 miles and Dungavel Detention Centre is on the left.

By bus

Bus number 255 departs Buchanan Bus Station every 15 minutes between 8.50 and 12.06 and will take you to Hamilton Bus Station. The journey takes just over one hour so you should get the 11.30 bus to connect with the 13.00 bus to Dungavel.

Buses for Dungavel leave from Stance 15 at Hamilton Bus Station at these times:

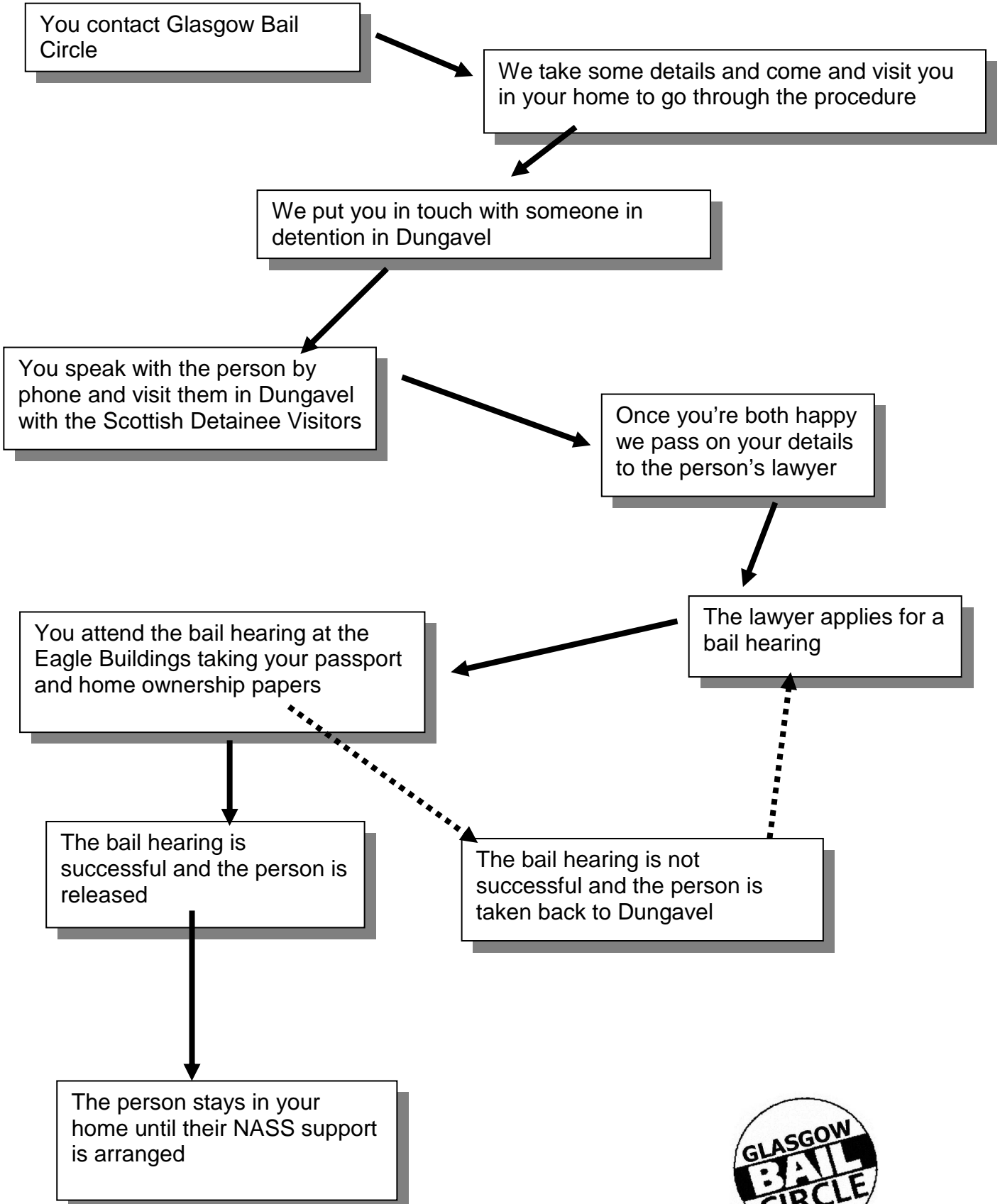
13.00
16.00
18.45



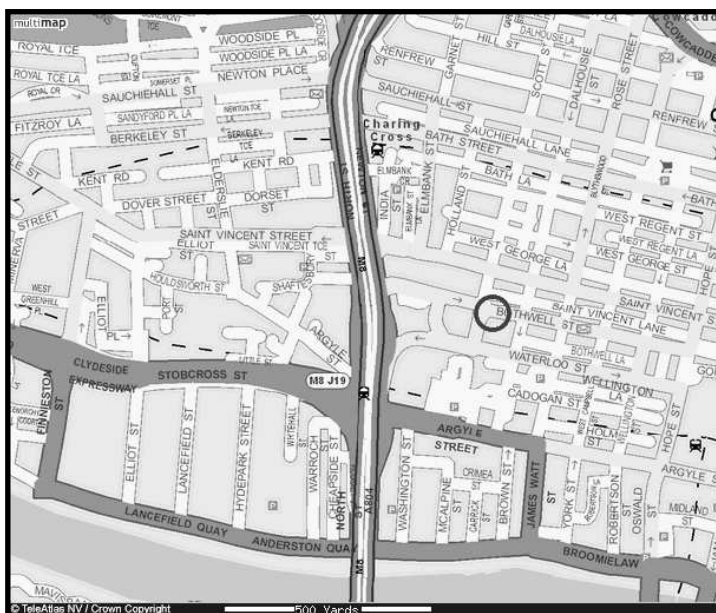
Buses return to Hamilton Bus Station from Dungavel at:

15.30
18.15
20.30

• **Glasgow Bail Circle Flow Chart**



- **How to get to the Eagle Buildings**



Immigration Tribunal
 Floor Four
 Eagle Building,
 215 Bothwell Street
 Glasgow
 G2 7ED

The Eagle Buildings are the tall buildings on the corner of Bothwell Street and Douglas Street near to the city centre exit of the M8. The Immigration Tribunal is held on the 4th floor.

- **Detention in the UK**

Home Office snap shot figures show that on **31st March 2007**:

- **2,060 people were detained** under UK Immigration Powers. (This excludes people detained in police cells and prison establishments. The Home Office says that these statistics are unavailable. Previous Home Office statistics show that on 24th June 2006 the following prisons held 10 or more detainees: Doncaster, Wormwood Scrubs, Highpoint, Wandsworth, Pentonville, Bedford, Elmley and that 175 detainees were held in unspecified 'other prison establishments'.)
- **1,435** of these detainees had sought asylum at some stage.
- **83%** of detainees were **male** (this is down from 88% on 24th June 2006).
- **50 children** under 18 years old were detained on 31st March 2007. 40 of these children had been in detention for less than one month, 10 for between one and two months. Official figures show that around **1860 children** were detained in 2005
- A total of **29,210 people left detention** (excluding Oakington and Harwich) in 2005 (the figures for 2006 were not published at the time of writing). Of the 16,805 asylum detainees leaving detention, 9,975 (59 per cent) were removed from the UK, 5,720 (34 per cent) were granted temporary admission/release and 1,090 (6 per cent) were bailed. Of the 1,860 minors recorded as leaving detention (excluding Oakington and Harwich) in 2005, 1,580 (85 per cent) were asylum detainees. 95 per cent of minors who left detention in 2005 had been detained for 29 days or less.