



OutCry!

END IMMIGRATION DETENTION OF CHILDREN

[Web view version available here](#)

OutCry! campaign update - December 2009

Dear Geoffrey,

Can you believe it's nearly Christmas already? We can't. And knowing that for some children, Christmas will only mean more days in detention is making us all the more determined in demanding that the government end the immigration detention of children and families now. This month, you can help us by sending one more Christmas card – to Phil Woolas MP, the Immigration Minister. You can also read yet more evidence showing that detention is intrinsically harmful to children, as well as further criticism of the Government's policy from the Home Affairs Select Committee. And finally, you are invited to a very special event in January. Read on...

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Take action – send one more card!



One More Card

This Christmas OutCry! is supporting the **'One More Card'** initiative. Did you know that each family sends an average of 76 Christmas cards each year? We are simply asking that everyone sends one more – to Immigration Minister Phil Woolas MP – asking him to end the immigration detention of children and families.

[Have a look on our website for Phil Woolas' address and tips for drafting your](#)

Christmas message.

Yet more evidence and criticism...



The mental and physical health difficulties of children held within a British immigration detention centre: a pilot study.
Published in *Child Abuse and Neglect: the International Journal*, September 2019

Executive Summary

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Introduction:

Current British law allows for families with children subject to immigration control to be detained for indefinite periods of time. Detention can take place when the family's claim for asylum or other legal right to remain in the UK is determined, and if the claim is refused, until their removal from the UK (HMGO, 2019). The British government's duty of care for families with children has been underlined by government's obligations for treating international standards relating to the treatment of children as set by the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Currently Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre is the main centre used for - and previously one main base, social workers delivered by Penfold and Social Services to conduct independent welfare assessments.

Following an inquiry into the quality of health care at Yarl's Wood, it was reported that HM Prison and Probation Service that "underpinning systems were inadequate and the health care service was not geared to meet the needs of those with various health problems or the significant number of detainees held for longer periods for administrative reasons" (detention was used less to be sentenced to their sentencing (HMGO, 2019)).

To date, only three studies, all conducted in Australia, have focused on the well-being of children held in immigration detention centres. One of these studies (Mares & Lunt, 2008) focused on a sample of detainees who had been in detention for over a

In our last newsletter we told you about the publication of independent medical research showing that detention is intrinsically harmful to children. **[“The mental and physical health difficulties of children held within a British immigration detention centre: A pilot study”](#)**, the first study of its kind in the UK, concludes that **detention is “harmful to children’s mental and physical well-being”**. On 10 November, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund hosted a well-attended launch event for the research, where the audience heard from the study’s authors Dr Ann Lorek and Dr Kimberly Ehntholt. You can read about **[the event on our website](#)**, and the **[full research report](#)** is also now available.

And, as if that evidence is not powerful enough to cause the Government to change its inhumane policy, on 9 December the Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health, Royal College of Psychiatrists and Royal College of General Practitioners will launch a joint briefing paper ***“Significant Harm: the effects of immigration detention on the health of children and families in the UK”***.



Sunday also saw the publication of the **[Home Affairs Select Committee’s report on the Detention of Children in the Immigration System](#)**. The Committee had heard evidence from The Children’s Society and Bail for Immigration Detainees. In response to the report, Amanda Shah, Assistant Director of Policy for BID, said *“We are glad that the Home Affairs Select Committee has recognised that Yarl’s Wood is ‘essentially a prison’”*, but she also said that *“we don’t think the recommendations in their report go far enough.”* You can read **[our full statement on our website](#)**.

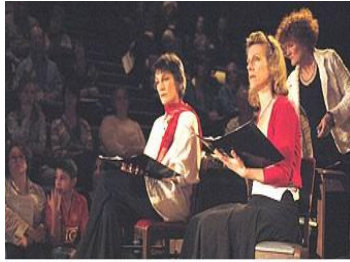
...As detention continues



Home Office

Meanwhile, the release of the Government’s **[quarterly immigration statistics](#)** on Thursday last week showed that a total of 315 children were held in immigration detention between July and September this year – 240 of them under 11 years old. This is an increase from the 235 children who were detained between April and June, and shows the Government is likely to detain around 1,100 children this year, unless we persuade them to stop. OutCry! deplores the continuing use of immigration detention for children and calls for the Government to urgently review this damaging policy.

‘Motherland’ performance in Bedford



In 2008 **Women for Refugee Women** produced “Motherland”, a uniquely moving and powerful evening, directed by Juliet Stevenson. Motherland tells the stories of women and children held in Yarl's Wood detention centre. It played at the Young Vic theatre in London in March 2008 and in November 2008 was performed in Parliament to MPs and peers. On 14 January 2010 it will be performed at **The Civic Theatre in Bedford**, near to Yarl's Wood detention centre, with the support of local MPs Alistair Burt and Patrick Hall.

Thank you for your support, and have a happy Christmas! We'll be back in touch in the new year with more news and actions you can take to help end the immigration detention of children.

Camilla Engeset
OutCry! national co-ordinator

P.S. Don't forget to keep spreading the word about OutCry! We need as many people as possible to join the campaign at www.outcrycampaign.org.uk.



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