

## No to Hassockfield

### Briefing

#### Who are we?

- A group of people who are passionate about Immigration/Asylum Detention and stopping Hassockfield Immigration Detention & Removal Centre
- A cross-party campaign including: Julie Ward, Labour MEP for NW England 2014-20; Labour & Lib Dem County Councillors (Durham County Council); a range of people active in their communities working together on the campaign.
- Had 3 well attended public Zoom Meetings and 3 meetings of a core group meeting between these for planning purposes. The core group includes representations from Oxford Against Detention (formerly the Close Campsfield campaign), Detention Forum, Yarl's Wood Campaigners and Duncan Lewis Solicitors
- Linked with other organisations: Women for Refugee Women, AVID, Women's Aid, Migrant & Justice Forum and County Durham People's Assembly Against Austerity

#### Where is Hassockfield?

- 13 miles NW of Durham, and 1.7 miles North of Consett
- On the site of Medomsley Detention Centre, notorious for the abuse of young in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as uncovered in Operation Seabrook begun in 2013

#### What are the plans for the site?

- An Immigration Detention & Removal Centre for c.80 women, similar to Category 3 Prison. These will be women who have served a prison sentence of more than 12 months, or who have broken immigration laws, or their asylum claim has failed

#### Who is in favour of the proposal?

- Conservative MP for North West Durham, Richard Holden is backing it; suggesting that it will create 150 jobs (something later revised upwards to 200) and will bring £10m into the local economy. His description of those to be detained is not a form of language we would use
- Some local people and at least one Independent County Councillor

#### Parliament at Westminster

- A number of Parliamentary Questions have been tabled, in both Houses & cross-party, and a question asked of Priti Patel at the Home Affairs Select Committee
- We have support from a number of Labour and Lib Dem Peers & MPs, with other parties offering support on Social Media (eg the SNP). Alf Dubs spoke to one of our early public meeting, encourage and inspiring us

#### Overview of the issue/why women are in Detention:

- <https://www.refugeewomen.co.uk/stop-the-new-detention-centre/>

#### Agnes Tonah petition against Hassockfield:

- Agnes spoke to one of our meetings about her experience of Immigration Detention, saying: **"This is personal for me. I know how detention destroys a woman."**
- Her petition against Hassockfield, launched on Saturday 27th February 2021, has reached well over 2,900 people and can be found here: [https://www.change.org/p/the-home-secretary-stop-the-new-detention-centre-for-women?utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=custom\\_url&recruited\\_by\\_id=b4d14f00-e64f-012f-a459-40401fa5e37a](https://www.change.org/p/the-home-secretary-stop-the-new-detention-centre-for-women?utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=custom_url&recruited_by_id=b4d14f00-e64f-012f-a459-40401fa5e37a)