Are HIV / AIDS services in Leeds, UK able to meet the needs of asylum seekers?

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Author(s)
Allan, C. L and Clarke, J.

Aims

To determine whether existing HIV / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome [AIDS] services in Leeds meet the needs of HIV-positive asylum seekers.

Methodology

The research was a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with seven service providers and 14 HIV-positive patients at Leeds Centre for Sexual Health, six of whom were asylum seekers.

Key issues

Asylum seekers and UK residents were equally satisfied with HIV / AIDS services at Leeds Centre for Sexual Health. Other agencies such as the Health Access Team and Terrence Higgins Trust had different strengths that provided valuable support of this client group. Unmet needs of asylum seekers were identified, such as specialist services for torture victims and educational opportunities.

Conclusions

Despite the stigma and negative media portrayal of both HIV and asylum seekers, service providers were highly motivated and committed to providing quality services. Current HIV / AIDS services in Leeds are able to meet the needs of asylum seekers. In areas of asylum seeker dispersal with increased case loads, this methodology may inform development of client-centred care networks.

Recommendations

Recommendations are aimed at health services. Current services will need to expand to cope with increased demands. Certain needs of HIV-positive asylum seekers remain largely unmet, including: specialist services for those who have experienced torture, befriending schemes; access to primary health care; training and education; continuing need to address stigma.

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