Asylum seekers' experiences of the New Asylum Model. Findings from a survey with clients at Refugee Council One Stop Services

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Aims

To conduct a snap shot of the experiences of asylum seekers whose claims were being decided in the New Asylum Model [NAM].

Methodology

110 questionnaires were completed by clients on a one to one basis, with assistance where necessary from Refugee Council staff in 8 offices around the UK, 20 August – 4 September 2007.

Key issues

The questionnaire found some good features within the NAM as well as areas of concern. People were not always able to name their Case Owner and some had trouble contacting them. The one to one link does not always work in practice. The speed of the process means some felt they had not had adequate time to get information to present their case or that they had not had an adequate hearing. Significant numbers of people are not able to access advice before their asylum interview. Some respondents struggled to meet reporting requirements due to lack of funds to travel or difficulties in taking children with them.

Conclusions

The reports suggested that the system should improve as Case Owners and others become familiar with the new processes, but that there are numerous areas for improvement which should be monitored.

Recommendations

The report offers a number of detailed recommendations to the Borders and Immigration Agency [now known as the UK Border Agency] about NAM policies and procedures. These cover issues including: contact between the Case Owner and client; speed of the process; legal representation; flexibility, especially to the needs of women clients; reporting requirements; child care; and homelessness while waiting for integration arrangements.

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