Spreading the 'burden'? A review of the policies to disperse asylum seekers and refugees

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Aims

The book compares dispersal policies in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The UK section looks at national policy and provides some regional examples, including an overview of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust report on dispersal in West Yorkshire.

Key issues

The book provides a comparative analysis of European state policies relating to the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees. It provides an account of how and why three EU member states introduced dispersal policies; describes the mechanisms

employed to achieve dispersal; describes the intended and unintended outcomes that have arisen, critiques national policy and draws attention to good practice and challenges some of the key philosophies that underpin dispersal. The chapter on the UK provides an historical overview of immigration to Britain; sets the context of UK dispersal by discussing previous dispersal of ethnic minorities and refugees [including Bosnian dispersal to West Yorkshire and elsewhere]; and describes and assesses the current programme to disperse asylum seekers. Early dispersal and aspects of the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act are described and discussed, and reactions to dispersal from key existing studies and refugee organisations are outlined.

Conclusions

Dispersal is less about the prohibitive expense of clustering or putting too much strain upon local services than it is about soothing the fears of white voters who want to feel that immigration, and who is allowed to live in ‘their’ cities, is under control.

Recommendations

The book provides a series of solutions to make the clustering of refugees and asylum seekers seem less threatening based around relegitimising asylum seeking; changing the tone of national debate; managing the media; promoting the positive value of asylum seekers; changing public perceptions through the educational system; community involvement, active

engagement and sponsorship policies and easing local pressures.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
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Housing and welfare
Dispersal
Housing patterns
NASS
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UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element
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