Meeting basic needs? Forced migrants and welfare

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Aims

The research aimed to explore the extent to which forced migrants' basic financial and housing needs are being met.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 forced migrants [5 refugees, 7 asylum seekers, 6 people with humanitarian protection and 5 failed asylum seekers] and 11 key respondents involved in the delivery of welfare services between January and June 2004.

Key issues

Benefit rights are linked to socio-legal status creating a tiering of entitlements for different groups of forced migrants. For the majority of forced migrants, welfare had been reduced to little

more than subsistence level. Destitution of forced migrants ineligible for public welfare was a concern and increasingly the charitable / voluntary sector and other forced migrants have to fill gaps in provision. Refugee community organisations [RCOs] are a potentially valuable resource which offer mutual, emotional and practical support, but their existence is precarious. Housing issues raised included the adequacy and standard of accommodation, finding new accommodation in the short transition period on gaining refugee status, and widespread homelessness among failed asylum seekers and reliance on other forced migrants.

Conclusions

Statutory provisions are failing to meet the basic housing and financial needs of many forced migrants. The burden of providing basic welfare is increasingly on charities, churches, RCOs and other forced migrants.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Refused asylum seekers
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Policy
Destitution
Refugee community organisations
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West Yorkshire

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