The social an economic experiences of asylum seekers, migrant workers, refugees and overstayers

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Aims

The research aimed to provide data on the social and labour market experiences of new arrivals in Barnsley to inform both the creation of resources to assist new arrivals and the development of a new integration strategy.

Methodology

The research, commissioned by ‘Investing in a Multi-Cultural Barnsley’ and conducted between July 2005 and November 2006, took a multi-method approach, combining semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 48 asylum seekers, migrant

workers, refugees and overstayers; interviews with 24 representatives of community groups, labour market agencies and statutory bodies; and 113 questionnaires with migrant workers, asylum seekers, refuges and overstayers.

Key issues

The report presents findings on access to support services; housing, schooling, healthcare and relations with the local community; qualification, skills and employment; and the realities of work and experience of labour market exclusion. These include quantitative analysis of survey findings, case studies, and qualitative material. There is relatively widespread use of formal support services by asylum seekers and refugees, but use by migrant workers was more limited. There are some key differences in eligibility to, access to and experiences of housing, health, schooling and relations with the local community according to immigration status. There was a high level of education, qualifications and skills among respondents, though most were employed in low skilled, labour intensive and low value added employment suggesting a widespread mismatch between experience and current employment and significant underutilisation of skills. Asylum seekers’ exclusion from the labour market created frustration, powerlessness and a desire to make a contribution.

Conclusions

The report offers a number of conclusions, which include; the social and economic experiences of new arrivals vary markedly by immigration status; change in status has profound effects creating insecurity, anxiety and uncertainty; the development and sustenance of both formal and informal networks of support are vital to the integration of new arrivals.

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