Dispersed: a study of services for asylum seekers in West Yorkshire December 1999 - March 2001

YHRMP ID
146
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Aims

To provide an overview of services and support asylum seekers dispersed to West Yorkshire to help develop new initiatives, inform planners, strengthen networks and to contribute to change in inefficient or inequitable components of dispersal.

Methodology

Data was gathered through 65 interviews with professionals and community representatives working with asylum seekers, attendance at meetings and a conference, interviews with 27 asylum seekers, and from secondary sources.

Key issues

The report reviews services in West Yorkshire against Audit Commission good practice guidelines on implementing dispersal. Findings are presented on how dispersal works [arrival, process, arranging dispersal], on asylum statistics, on organisations and services in West Yorkshire, on types of service provision and on asylum seeker responses to different aspects of the dispersal process. The report discusses problems in communication with NASS, experiences of racial harassment, differences between local authority and private sector housing, English language provision, and interpreting.

Conclusions

Dispersal can be an effective means of providing services and support to asylum seekers. However, gaps and shortcomings in service provision include inadequate resourcing for public services, risk of poor legal representation, the voucher system, and quality of housing.

Recommendations

Recommendations on improving legal representation, abolishing the voucher system and consultation with local agencies are aimed at the Home Office and NASS. Other recommendations on the role of reception centres, health services, supporting community organisations, and improving English language provision are aimed at local statutory and voluntary sector

bodies.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Topic
Housing and welfare
Dispersal
NASS
Place
West Yorkshire
Year
2001
Resource Type
Book
Publisher
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/dispersed-study-services-asylum-seekers-west-yorkshire-december-1999-march-2001*