The problem with asylum-seeker dispersal: transitions, structures and myths

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Aims

To consider whether initial failings of national dispersal policy were merely transitional.

Methodology

The article is based on an ethnographic study of asylum seekers and residents in Hull, and draws on two pieces of research funded by Save the Children in 2000.

Key issues

The article presents findings on the implementation of dispersal, practical support possible among social networks, issues of social tension related to dispersal and support systems. Dispersal is seen as unlikely to work in a relatively economically depressed and ‘monocultural’ place like Hull.

Conclusions

Declining rates of ‘drift’, whereby asylum seekers voluntarily leave dispersal sites, may indicate improvements. Significant changes are needed to improve quality of life for asylum seekers, including: the abolition of vouchers, improvement of clustering, and dealing with the quality of provision from private contractors.

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