Still destitute: a worsening problem for refused asylum seekers

YHRMP ID
91
Author(s)
Lewis, Hannah

Aims

This is a report of findings from the 2009 destitution survey in Leeds which aims to underline the continuing needs of destitute asylum seekers and to provide data for those who seek to change government policy.

Methodology

A four week survey of destitute clients approaching four agencies in Leeds and 13 interviews with representatives from refugee agencies and statutory providers and interviews with representatives of four refugee community organisations.

Key issues

High levels of destitution continue to be a problem among asylum seekers in Leeds. The number of visits to four agencies increased. Destitution happens at all stages of the asylum process; most of those surveyed were refused asylum seekers. Administrative delays worsen destitution. The number of people destitute after being processed by the New Asylum Model increased. Entitlement to apply for support does not mean entitlement to receive support. Families and children are destitute, many for one or two years or more. Destitution is serious and prolonged: there was an increase in instances in rough sleeping and many individuals had been destitute for a year or more. Most came from just four countries [Zimbabwe, Iran, Eritrea and Iraq] were there is ongoing conflict and unrest. Voluntary, charity and faith resources are pushed to the limit - restricted resources forced two projects to temporarily close in 2009. Incidents of aggression and violence caused by increasing levels of desperation from prolonged and worsening destitution have become increasingly commonplace for frontline staff.

Conclusions

Destitution is linked to country of origin: people most likely to have difficulty in arranging return are most likely to be destitute for extended periods. Long-term destitution causes frustration and worsening health and mental health symptoms. Voluntary, charity and faith resources to support destitute people are at breaking point.

Recommendations

Recommendations are aimed at the government and statutory bodies working with asylum seekers. End the destitution of asylum seekers and refugees at all stages of the asylum process. Give asylum seekers the right to work. Overhaul the whole system: efforts to improve the existing system have not worked. Create an arms-length body to make asylum decisions. Grant temporary leave to remain to people who cannot return through no fault of their own. Abolish Section 4 support, make continuation of support automatic on refusal of an asylum claim. The local authority and refugee supporting agencies should share information and practice to safeguard families and children from destitution. Allow religious, social networks and family to be recognised as meaningful connections for refugees in need of housing.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Refused asylum seekers
Topic
Destitution
Housing and welfare
Mental health
Welfare entitlements
Place
Leeds
West Yorkshire
Year
2009

Resource Type
Report
Publisher
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Published Location
York

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/still-destitute-worsening-problem-refused-asylum-seekers*