Beyond the edges of healthcare provision: refused asylum seekers and access to healthcare

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Aims

This briefing paper [Number 11] forms part of a series produced by Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers [PAFRAS]. This paper focuses on the provision of medical assistance in the form of primary care access, available to refused asylum seekers.

Methodology

The content of the paper is derived from interviews or conversations with people who use the PAFRAS drop-in centre based in Leeds, United Kingdom.

Key issues

The paper reports that asylum seekers have particular health care needs associated with their experience and having to flee persecution. Refused asylum seekers, compared to those waiting for a decision on their asylum claim, in receipt of Section 4 support or refugees, were the least likely to be registered with either a GP or a dentist. Those who have been refused asylum are often reluctant to approach health facilities for fear of deportation, they are unfamiliar with the British welfare system and the nuances of health care provision and often assume that all NHS care has been withdrawn from them. Evidence also shows that some experience racism from their GPs. Similar issues apply equally to access to a dentist.

Conclusions

The paper concludes that government policy in terms of the low level of access to primary health care and the denial of particular forms of secondary NHS care, confines refused asylum seekers to the periphery of healthcare provision. The report suggests that what currently exists is a two-tier system of healthcare.

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Refused asylum seekers
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