Poor health, no wealth, no home: a case study of destitution

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Aims

The research aimed to examine the experience of destitution among asylum seekers living in South Yorkshire in relation to the following issues: family responsibilities; the period of time without government support; use of non-state support such as friends, family and charities; health and wellbeing.

Methodology

- The study took place in South Yorkshire (Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield).
- Participants were asylum seekers using destitution services offered by the Red Cross and partner organisations.
- There were 56 participants (46 men and 10 women, aged between 19 and 55). Participants originated from 25 countries.

- Most of the participants were destitute refused asylum seekers who had been destitute for more than one year.

A mixed methods design was adopted, using a questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

Key issues

Two-thirds of participants reported regular hunger, and a quarter reported experiencing hunger on a daily basis. More than half the participants said their health had deteriorated. More than half those consulted had no fixed address. Participants reported accessing multiple sources of accommodation. Participants reported replying on informal resources such as family and friends for support, however there was inconsistency and uncertainty surrounding these arrangements.

Conclusion

The report concluded that refused asylum seekers are vulnerable, with insufficient resources to meet their essential needs, and that they experience poor health and wellbeing.

Recommendations

Recommendations were made for different bodies:

Charitable sector: build a more robust evidence based to inform policymakers; coordinate activity so that food, shelter and health support are provided more consistently; engage Migration Yorkshire to discuss how best to address the issues.

Elected officials/policymakers: address the impact of destitution on health and wellbeing in the context of the right to health; ensure the Immigration Bill (2015-16) doesn’t contribute to further destitution.

Home Office: make statutory support available to all individuals experiencing destitution; grant limited leave to remain to individuals who cannot be returned; effectively support asylum seekers who volunteer to return to their country of origin.

Department of Health: make primary and secondary healthcare free and available to all asylum seekers regardless of status.

Web Link
https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research-publications
Migrant Group
Refused asylum seekers
Topic
Asylum decisions
Destitution
Housing and welfare
Welfare entitlements
Place
South Yorkshire
Year
2015
Resource Type
Report
Publisher
British Red Cross, London
Published Location
British Red Cross, UK Office, 44 Moorfields London, EC2Y 9AL.

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/research-entry/poor-health-no-wealth-no-home-case-study-destitution*