Where now for justice? Legal Aid in West Yorkshire

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Author(s)
Ray, Laurie

Aims

This briefing paper [Number 14] forms part of a series produced by Positive Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers [PAFRAS]. This paper provides an overview of the access to legal aid for 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, as well as case law and published literature in this field.

Key issues

Since their implementation Legal Aid reforms have placed pressure on providers to reduce their costs at the expense of the

quality of work they do. The setting of a fixed fee at a low level and concentrating the available work in fewer organisations, resulting in the reduction of the number of law firms offering this service, particularly in Leeds, will have implications for asylum seekers' access to justice.

Conclusions

The paper suggests that the recent reforms of the provision of Legal Aid have resulted in some firms with a great deal of experience of this work no longer providing this service, while new untested firms entering the market is a cause for concern. This suggests that the quality of the advice provided is now less important. The paper concludes that the recent reforms in this area and potential challenges in the future only serve to add further disruption and confusion for asylum seekers.

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