

Position of Employability Priority Groups in Edinburgh –
Refugees and Asylum Seekers

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(this research project was compiled by Robbie Pye an intern with Capital City Partnership during 2010; if you require more information on this work or the work of the Job Strategy Team, please contact Capital City Partnership on 0131 270 6030)



Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Definition

A refugee is defined as someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UN Refugee Convention, 1951). A refugee is granted refugee status after a successful asylum application.

An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for refugee status in the UK, but has not yet received an outcome.

Those classed as destitute were those with "currently no access to benefits, UKBA support or income, and either street homeless or staying with friends only temporarily" (Asylum Support Partnership, 2009).

Outline

Once asylum has been granted, refugees are meant to become assimilated into the general population and should not feel compelled to disclose their refugee status (Scottish Refugee Integration Forum, 2005). This creates difficulties when it comes to assessing the employment status of refugees.

It is estimated that there are about 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland, with the vast majority in Glasgow. This is due to the way in which the British government disperses asylum seekers, who are given no choice over where they are sent. Between 3000 and 5000 are asylum seekers, and the remainder are refugees (COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership, 2007; Stewart, 2009). Usually asylum seekers are not allowed to work. However, a small number can apply for the right to work if their application for asylum takes over 12 months. Research also indicated that about one third of refugees have been involved in voluntary work (COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership, 2007).

There are a number of asylum seekers living in destitution. In Scotland and Northern Ireland 569 people visited Asylum Support Partnership agencies for advice, of which 52% were classed as being destitute (Asylum Support Partnership, 2009).

Scope

Previous estimates put the number of refugees in Edinburgh at 750 and the amount of asylum seekers at 234. However, the Edinburgh Refugee Centre closed in 2008 due to a drop in the amount of asylum seekers in Edinburgh. More recently, research by Stewart (2009) estimated there to be about 75 asylum seekers in Edinburgh, with the vast majority of asylum seekers in Scotland in Glasgow (5,010). Furthermore, it is unknown how many are of working age.

Employment

About 29% of refugees are in employment, 15% are in education and 4% in training (COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership, 2007)

Barriers to Employment

Refugees and asylum seekers commonly face the same barriers as other ethnic minorities. However, they may also face several additional barriers:

- Traumatic experience before coming to UK
 - Further linguistic barriers
 - Difficulty proving identity and qualifications due to lack of documents
 - Need for additional training or retraining
 - Lack of knowledge of UK job market
- (Scottish Refugee Council, 2010)

Overlaps

Lack of information regarding overlaps.

- In 2008 there were 14 asylum seekers and 18 refugees recorded in state schools in Edinburgh.
 - High level of mental health needs among destitute asylum seekers, both present before asylum process and exacerbated by their destitution.
- (Dumper, Malfait and Flynn, n.d; Scottish Government, 2008b)

Services

Several of the services listed in the previous section (ethnic minorities) also provide help for refugees and asylum seekers.

Refugee Survival Trust – acting through partner agencies such as the Scottish Refugee Council, Careers Scotland and colleges and universities the Refugee

Survival Trust issues grants to help combat destitution and aid refugees and asylum seekers into employment or education.

Immigration and Asylum Support Team – a specialist City of Edinburgh Council Social Care Department team that provides assistance to asylum seekers, EU nationals and refugees who have been granted leave to remain.

Research Issues

- No data available detailing overlaps between refugees/asylum seekers and most other target groups
- Difficulty detailing employment rates due to lack of available data