

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

Asylum Seekers in Scotland inquiry

Notes from informal engagement session

Maryhill Integration Network Tuesday 6 June 2023

Theme – Health (including mental health)

Group one

- So much support groups available for women – empowering for women
- Not seen an organisation supporting only for men. Do not know where to direct men for support
- Ran from violence, instability. Came here to get help. Women will always create spaces for other women.
- Young men in particular find it hard to ask for help.
- Can't go to university – stay indoors.
- Mental health – Asylum Seekers going through difficult things.
- Went to GP – had to show ID, this causes anxiety
- There are not enough safe spaces to access health care
- Approach from the receptionist at GP practice towards people in the asylum process. Come to the GP as a patient, not an Asylum Seeker, treat us as a human.
- Education – addressing systemic racism
- Education, inform, acting as an ambassador to help get refugee voices heard, much bigger issue.
- Feel helpless, issue of GPs and Asylum Seekers being moved around. When you are feeling traumatised, dealing with GPs and having to move around to another location.
- Having to change GPs constantly.
- Having to move around when you have experienced trauma, lots of people end up not talking.
- Lots of people being denied healthcare, as they are unable to express themselves. Language barriers.

Group two

- Despite physical challenges, walked as did not know about transport.
- Having a booklet might help
- Face to face drop in sessions

- Constantly moving, might not read leaflets
- Many people do not know GPs are free, not clear on how to access/ awareness to healthcare
- Home Office do not move quickly enough
- Drop Ins to know your options
- Individuals do not know how to advocate themselves
- Asylum Seekers in Glasgow/Scotland should all be able to access healthcare support that is available to them
- Discharged from hospital, no one to help
- Asylum Seekers facing many mental health issues
- (Delay in the Asylum Process) is causing many people issues with their mental health.
- Not sure if you are going to get a job, no purpose, waiting for a decision.

Group three

- Waiting times for different medical appointments causes worry for partner. Waiting for responses for long times.
- Feeling really stressed, money not enough.
- Money – transport, food, want to join ESOL Classes. Do not give you a bus pass, can't go to classes, just sitting in the house, can't go anywhere, feeling stressed.
- Just managing, no money to go out.
- Don't know who to talk to, want to be able to go to places.
- Scottish Refugee Council – supports with applications to Food Banks.
- Three and a half years and still waiting
- Being able to move around is important for your mental health
- Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) – Community groups to support individuals
- Waiting times for decisions from Home Office affects your mental health.
- Third Sector organisations/groups that can help individuals speak to GPs.

Group four

- When living in hotels, getting a GP appointment was much easier. You would call GP on the same day and get an appointment.
- When in temporary accommodation, getting GP appointment was not as easy
- No available appointment on the same day, call again, no appointments, GP practice was very busy.
- Child was unwell, could not get an appointment with GP.
- GP from one place to another varies
- Child unwell, waiting for call back from GP, three hours later, no call back from GP. Did not receive a call until later in the afternoon. Can manage this if it is adults, but when it is your child, they should be given priority from the GP.
- Dental Appointments – give appointments in advance, then they would cancel the dental appointment the second time, waiting for six months, feel frustrated.

- Optician – pay part of your eye healthcare, very expensive.
- Dental appointments Terrible experience with GP, went to dental hospital instead.
- Support to access mental health does not exist. Working for two years to access community mental health support
- 90% or more of people are already traumatised
- Experience PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) – did not have access to psychiatric support for three years. No system for support for this.
- We do not know what mental health support is.
- Every problem that exists in Glasgow trebles in rural areas, no access to support/therapy. This does not exist.
- Home Office/Mears – More we talk to them, the more we are depressed, run away from them.
- People living in hotels in rural areas are isolated.
- Airdrie, only asylum seekers in that town, no charities to help. Lots of Charities in Glasgow.
- How do Asylum seekers access mental health? When they arrive here, they expect to work, not able to work, sitting at home, not able to socialise or access ESOL classes.

Themes from round table discussion

MSPs

- Every word on your asylum seeker journey counts
- Practical – free bus travel, would help with mental health
- Access to mental health services, PTSD/ trained counsellors
- ESOL– accessible to all, pathway to go to your solicitor, speak and understand the language
- Mother and Baby – Differences in standards between you as a parent, state treating children, different rules for the state
- Dignity, Fairness and Respect. There is a lack of this in how people are being treated and the Scottish Government could do better.

Participants

- Accessibility – ESOL Classes are there, but they need to be able to access them and also have a space to practice their English.
- Translation (Every word counts) in Asylum Seeker process. Translating needs to be correct, they need to be able to do this well.
- Hotel Accommodation – Have a watchdog for the accommodation, comfortable place.
- Received support from external organisations such as Maryhill Integration Network (MIN) and Refuweege.
- Lack of respect in accommodation, Mears, how they access the flats, people's privacy.

- Interpreters – (no regulations) – given such powers, can set, make or break a person’s journey. No consequences for interpreters. Big obstacle for people, they need to have had training.
- Migrant Help – not doing this. In most cases, they cannot help, only get help from third sector organisations. Not getting help from Migrant Help, feel like they are another level of Home Office.