Dear Convener,

Call for views on destitution and asylum in Scotland

Please find below an officer response to the questions asked on the above.

As a public service provider, what support are you able to provide to asylum seekers and what are the main barriers to providing support?

The only additional support we currently provide is ESOL classes, access to a telephone translation line and language support in Schools. We also fund a multicultural association and Citizens Advice Service to provide advocacy and social support to foreign nationals. We would provide housing advice and support, education and social work support as we do with any person. Our barriers to providing anything additional to asylum seekers are funding for additional services, the rurality of our region which means services are not evenly spread out across the geographical area, lack of a community for asylum seekers to integrate into.

We’d also like to hear about how a person’s need for support is assessed and what would make this assessment process easier, please make reference to any policies and procedures within your organisation.

We have not had any Asylum seekers therefore have no specific policies apart from access to telephone translation and ESOL

If your area does not have experience of asylum seekers, it would be helpful to know what policies, guidance or procedures are in place or being developed to address support for asylum seekers.

Nothing specific has been developed as yet. We would however use the Syrian Refugees model as a good practice starting point. It relies on volunteers and befrienders to combat negative community reaction and to support families to integrate. However if asylum seekers were unaccompanied children our social work services would be unable, with current funding constraints, support them easily. Much work would need to be done with host communities to ensure a warm welcome into a rural area with little current exposure to people from other countries.

I hope this is helpful.

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