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# An exploration of factors affecting the successful dispersal of asylum seekers

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Home Office Online Report 50/05

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# An exploration of factors affecting the successful dispersal of asylum seekers

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# Introduction

This summary report presents findings of a study into factors affecting the successful dispersal of asylum seekers, which was undertaken over a three-month period between January and April of 2004. Dispersal (i.e. the placing of asylum seekers in different regions) is managed by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). Successful dispersal was defined in terms of a number of factors including: incidence of verbal harassment, racial harassment and physical assault of asylum seekers; quality of life of asylum seekers; and the provision of information and briefing for asylum seekers both before and after dispersal.

The study included statistical analysis of secondary data, qualitative research interviews and focus groups. The statistical analysis is based on a small number of incidents of harassment and assault of asylum seekers which was the data available at the time; accordingly the numbers reported are small and the results should be seen as exploratory.

## Key findings

- Local authorities with a higher proportion of dispersed asylum seekers tended also to have higher proportions of vacant housing stock and residents in social grade (SG) E (i.e. on state benefit, unemployed or in the lowest grade jobs). Furthermore, a higher proportion of dispersed asylum seekers, residents in SG E and vacant housing stock in a local authority were all significantly associated with an increased likelihood of incidents of harassment and assault of asylum seekers.
- All the interviewed stakeholder groups indicated that NASS has made substantial improvements to dispersal processes over time, but they would welcome increased dialogue with NASS on the selection of dispersal areas, saying this would ensure that local knowledge of dispersal area characteristics and other local issues can inform strategic decisions on dispersal.
- Better communication between stakeholders, NASS and asylum seekers is seen as critical to the improvement of dispersal. Respondents called for: more consistent and comprehensive induction for asylum seekers before and after dispersal; advanced notice to stakeholders such as the health agencies on asylum seekers' needs; and appropriate information about asylum seekers for host communities.
- Variations in standards of accommodation and support services were a concern for stakeholders and asylum seekers. Variation was often attributed to differences in the details of NASS contracts with various accommodation providers, which in turn provided scope for variation in the interpretation and application of contracts. Stakeholders called for more detail and standardisation in NASS contracts, and for NASS to explore better ways of monitoring standards of accommodation.

## Aim

The aim of the study was to identify characteristics of local areas and dispersal processes that might affect the successful dispersal of asylum seekers. It was intended to inform the development of the NASS 2005 accommodation strategy.

## Rationale and scope

In order to explore as wide a range as possible of factors affecting successful dispersal, the study was designed to identify the range of experiences of dispersal in selected areas, and also assess the extent to which certain types of dispersal experience had occurred nationally. This design enables specific local issues that affect dispersal to be identified, and also allows more widely applicable conclusions to be drawn, based on studying the national experience. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used.

Within the limited resources and time for the study it was not possible to consider issues beyond the stated aims. In addition, owing to differences in methodologies for measuring deprivation in England,

Wales and Scotland, Scottish and Welsh local authorities could not be included in the study within the time available.

## Method

The study utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative analysis focused on 77 local authorities in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands and East of England regions. These local authorities had the greatest concentration of dispersed asylum seekers as a proportion of their resident populations (in the fourth quarter of 2003) and were thought to provide the greatest scope for studying the range of experiences with dispersal. Fourth quarter 2003 data were the most reliable available when the analysis was undertaken.

Success of dispersal was judged, in the quantitative analysis, by the number of incidents of verbal and racial harassment and physical assault of asylum seekers, for the whole of 2003, that had been reported to NASS in each local authority (low values representing successful dispersal). Incidents used in the analysis relate to harassment and assault of asylum seekers by members of the public. The numbers of incidents were adjusted to reflect the actual numbers of dispersed asylum seekers in each local authority. These variables were particularly appropriate for studying relations between asylum seekers and host communities. Variables that were included in the analysis to determine their effect on success of dispersal included the size and density of the resident population; unemployment rate; extent score (how widespread high levels of deprivation are in a local authority district); level of funding allocated to local authorities by the ODPM Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to tackle deprivation; and the proportions of: minority ethnic residents; vacant housing stock; dispersed asylum seekers; residents in SG D (i.e. semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers) and SG E; employment-deprived residents and income-deprived residents. These variables were identified through consultation with NASS and stakeholders and were based largely on the 2001 census and the ODPM Multiple Index of Deprivation 2000.

There is a risk of ecological errors in this analysis, because local authority populations are heterogeneous in terms of the variables studied. For example, it cannot be assumed that every resident of a deprived area is deprived since deprivation may be concentrated in particular sites – this means that the conditions in areas where asylum seekers are accommodated may be quite different from those in the local authority as a whole. The risk of ecological errors could be minimised by basing this analysis on smaller areas, for example wards within local authorities. However, data on incidents against asylum seekers were not available at ward level.

Correlation and regression techniques were used to explore relationships between variables. Analysis using bivariate correlations was first used to explore relationships between all the variables and the incidents of abuse. Based on an assessment of the significance of these correlations and discussions with NASS and stakeholders, some variables were eliminated from further work while other variables – Government Office Region (in which local authorities are situated) and the proportion of residents aged 65 plus – were introduced.

The principal technique used was Poisson regression analysis based on those variables thought most likely, after the bivariate analysis and discussions, to have an impact on the incidents of abuse, namely the proportions of: minority ethnic residents; vacant housing stock; dispersed asylum seekers; residents aged 65 plus; residents in SG E; and the Government Office region. This technique enables all the factors under study to be taken into account simultaneously.

Each independent variable (e.g. percentage of asylum seekers, SG E residents or minority ethnic residents) was divided into levels using the most appropriate cut-off point derived from the distribution of the data. For example, the percentage of vacant housing stock was used to divide areas into two groups, namely those with less than four per cent and greater or equal to four per cent vacant. Note that this cut-off is statistically derived and might be different for a different study. The analysis thus defines a reference group, in comparison to which the Odds Ratio (OR) is then calculated. The OR represents the relative risk (compared to the reference group) of, for example, verbal harassment incidents. The OR is adjusted, meaning that it is a comparison of two categories of each variable after controlling for other variables in the model. The confidence interval describes the uncertainty surrounding the OR: the effect is statistically significant if the confidence interval is entirely less than one or entirely greater than one. The Poisson regression was based on a stepwise approach by forward selection (initial selection of the best predictor of incidents of abuse based on the bivariate analysis and at each subsequent step

choosing a predictor to improve the model). This research summary presents detailed findings only for those characteristics significantly associated with all types of incidents.

The qualitative research was based on 38 semi-structured interviews and four focus groups (with 10-12 participants in each), which were used to explore the range of experiences with dispersal. Eighty respondents were recruited with the assistance of the NASS Regional and Consortium Managers in the North East, North West and West Midlands, all regions with significant dispersal. Success of dispersal was judged by the reported quality of life of asylum seekers and information and briefing for asylum seekers both before and after dispersal. In order to maximise chances that respondents reflected a wide range of experiences with dispersal, they were sought from all the main groups involved in or affected by dispersal, consisting of representatives from NASS, Regional Consortia, local authorities, the voluntary sector, accommodation providers, asylum seekers, refugees, host communities and others. Notes and transcripts were produced from interviews and focus groups, and thematic analysis undertaken to draw out common themes and areas of difference.

## Results

### Factors that contribute to the successful dispersal of asylum seekers

The quantitative and qualitative research both indicate various factors associated with successful dispersal of asylum seekers. These factors tended to cluster along the following lines: (a) characteristics of dispersal areas; (b) aspects of dispersal processes; (c) information needs of asylum seekers and stakeholders; and (d) standards and service levels for provision of accommodation and support services for asylum seekers. Each of these is now discussed.

### Characteristics of dispersal areas

Statistical analysis indicates that local authorities with a higher proportion of dispersed asylum seekers tended to have higher proportions of residents in SG E and more vacant housing stock. This is shown in Table 1. However, in virtually all local authorities the number of dispersed asylum seekers, as a proportion of the resident population, was below the maximum recommended by NASS of 0.5 per cent (one in 200). Only two local authorities had 0.5 per cent or more dispersed asylum seekers. The highest number of dispersed asylum seekers in a local authority was 3,210.

**Table 1: Relationships between asylum dispersal and local authority characteristics**

Asylum seekers (% of population)	Average proportion of SG E residents (% of population)	Average proportion of unoccupied houses (% of housing stock)
Less than 0.05% (1 in 2000) <i>n = 33 authorities</i>	11.9	3.5
Greater than 0.05% but less than 0.33% (1 in 300) <i>n = 26 authorities</i>	14.3	3.9
Greater than 0.33% <i>n = 18 authorities</i>	15.2	4.8

There was no statistically significant relationship between the proportions of dispersed asylum seekers and resident minority ethnic populations. The proportion of resident minority ethnic populations as compared to dispersed asylum seekers was highly variable, ranging from Leicester (36% minority ethnic population and 0.4% dispersed asylum seekers) to Middlesbrough (6% minority ethnic population and 0.5% dispersed asylum seekers).

The above analysis serves to characterise dispersal areas. Poisson regression analyses were then conducted to assess the relationship between a range of key area characteristics and incidents of verbal and racial harassment and physical assault of asylum seekers.

Three dispersal area characteristics were found to be significantly associated with an increased likelihood of incidents of verbal harassment, racial harassment and physical assault of asylum seekers.

These were the proportion of dispersed asylum seekers, the proportion of residents in SG E and the proportion of vacant housing stock. The findings are summarised in Tables 2, 3 and 4, and in the bullet points following each table.

Some characteristics were found to be significantly associated with only some types of incidents. Thus, Government Office region was significantly associated with incidents of verbal harassment and abuse only. The proportions of employment-deprived residents and residents aged 65 plus were each significantly associated with incidents of physical assault only.

**Table 2: Significant relationships between population characteristics and reported incidents of verbal harassment**

Variable of interest – percentage in the area of:	Levels of variables	Average reported incidents	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% confidence interval)
Asylum seekers	<i>Less than 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 42 authorities</i>	0.02	0.02 (0.004-0.08)
	<i>Greater or equal to 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 35 authorities</i>	6.83	1.00
SG E residents	<i>Less than 13% n = 33 authorities</i>	2.50	0.52 (0.34-0.79)
	<i>Greater or equal to 13% n = 44 authorities</i>	8.39	1.00
Vacant housing stock	<i>Less than 4% n = 40 authorities</i>	1.51	0.61 (0.47-0.79)
	<i>Greater or equal to 4% n = 37 authorities</i>	5.26	1.00

- Based on the Adjusted Odds Ratio, reports to NASS about verbal harassment were about 50 times more likely in authorities with 0.2 per cent or more asylum seekers (i.e. one asylum seeker to 500 people in the resident population). This suggests a significantly increased risk of verbal harassment at a figure of 0.2 per cent asylum seekers in the area, well below the nominal NASS maximum of 0.5 per cent.
- Verbal harassment reports were about twice as likely in authorities with 13 per cent or more of their resident populations in SG E.
- Verbal harassment reports were about one and a half times as likely in authorities with four per cent or more of vacant housing stock.
- The highest number of reported verbal harassment incidents against asylum seekers in a single local authority for the year was 35.

**Table 3: Significant relationships between population characteristics and reported incidents of physical assault**

Variable of interest – percentage in the area of:	Levels of variables	Average reported incidents	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% confidence interval)
Asylum seekers	<i>Less than 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 42 authorities</i>	0.02	0.04 (0.01-
	<i>Greater or equal to 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 35 authorities</i>	5.09	1.00
SG E residents	<i>Less than 13% n = 33 authorities</i>	1.00	0.20 (0.11-
	<i>Greater or equal to 13% n = 44 authorities</i>	7.09	1.00
Vacant housing stock	<i>Less than 4% n = 40 authorities</i>	0.96	0.31 (0.23-
	<i>Greater or equal to 4% n = 37 authorities</i>	4.19	1.00

- Based on the Adjusted Odds Ratio, reported physical assault was about 25 times more likely in authorities with 0.2 per cent or more asylum seekers.
- Physical assault reports were about five times more likely in authorities with 13 per cent or more of their resident populations in SG E.
- Physical assault reports were about three times more likely in authorities with four per cent or more vacant housing stock.
- The highest number of reported physical assault incidents against asylum seekers in a single local authority for the year was 38.

**Table 4: Significant relationships between population characteristics and reported incidents of racial harassment**

Variable of interest – percentage in the area of:	Levels of variables	Average reported incidents	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% confidence interval)
Asylum seekers	<i>Less than 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 42 authorities</i>	0.02	0.05 (0.02-0.
	<i>Greater or equal to 1 in 500 (0.2%) n = 35 authorities</i>	6.63	1.00
SG E residents	<i>Less than 13% n = 33 authorities</i>	2.00	0.44 (0.29-0.
	<i>Greater or equal to 13% n = 44 authorities</i>	8.83	1.00
Vacant housing stock	<i>Less than 4% n = 40 authorities</i>	1.98	0.65 (0.50-0.
	<i>Greater or equal to 4% n = 37 authorities</i>	4.90	1.00

- Based on the Adjusted Odds Ratio, reported racial harassment was about 20 times more likely in authorities with 0.2 per cent asylum seekers or more.
- Racial harassment reports were about twice as likely in authorities with 13 per cent or more of their resident populations in SG E.

- Racial harassment reports were about 1.5 times more likely in authorities with four per cent or more vacant housing stock.
- The highest number of reported racial harassment incidents against asylum seekers in a single local authority for the year was 23.

The quantitative analysis did not find a statistically significant relationship between either the proportion of minority ethnic residents in a local authority and the proportion of dispersed asylum seekers, or between the proportion of minority ethnic residents and the incidence of verbal harassment, racial harassment and physical assault of asylum seekers. However, the interviews with stakeholders and asylum seekers allowed for further consideration of this issue. They suggest a widely held view that the existence of a large proportion of minority ethnic residents in a local authority has tended to increase the likelihood of it being chosen as a dispersal area. Although these results are different, it is important to note that the statistical analysis is based on a specific period of time while the views of interview respondents were largely based on their perceptions of dispersal since its inception. Hence it may not be appropriate to make a direct comparison of these results.

Respondents differed on whether using the proportion of minority ethnic residents as a basis for selecting dispersal areas should be considered beneficial for community relations. There was broad agreement that dispersing groups of asylum seekers to established communities with similar characteristics, such as language, could give comfort and support to asylum seekers and ensure that service providers are better prepared with relatively established sets of resources. However, it was also felt that while this may be suitable in the short term, there are questions about long-term impacts on social cohesion, because clustering, especially linguistic clustering, can contribute to an emerging 'ghetto' of asylum seekers and refugees in highly deprived areas. This may in turn hinder refugees' future integration into communities.

There was also a general perception in the qualitative interviews and focus groups that asylum seekers had tended to be dispersed to areas with higher levels of deprivation and vacant housing. This result is in line with the statistical analysis described, and seems to suggest that dispersal would be more successful in more affluent areas. However, in practice, these areas do not typically have sufficient vacant housing available for rent, which could lead to support services being thinly spread over a wider area. Also, it should be noted that during the research, examples were found of successful dispersal in highly deprived areas. These examples suggest that success in dispersal is not only determined by levels of deprivation in dispersal areas but also by whether structures and processes for managing dispersal are appropriate. Success was often attributed to NASS, local authorities, Regional Consortia, accommodation providers, the police and others working together on key issues including: deciding specific local areas suitable for dispersal; monitoring the impacts of dispersal on local services such as schools; monitoring community tension and being responsive to the views of host communities and asylum seekers in this regard and briefing of asylum seekers on arrival in dispersal areas.

## Dispersal processes

All stakeholders indicated that NASS has made substantial improvements to dispersal processes over time, but also identified key issues that need to be addressed to maximise efficiency. These included the following.

- Clarification from NASS about the responsibilities of all those involved in dispersal. Some stakeholders said that, in the absence of clear direction from NASS, they had taken on highly supportive roles, such as co-ordinating and advising on asylum seekers' support needs. There were concerns that this practice led some providers to interpret NASS requirements differently, and this may contribute to wide disparities in levels of support for asylum seekers.
- There are perceived to be significant difficulties in communication between agencies, stakeholders and NASS, which can lead to logistical problems and long delays in dispersal. These include difficulties when communicating with NASS about asylum seekers with acute medical conditions. There was a perception that such information is often not available to service providers at the right time.

Regionalisation of NASS was widely welcomed by the respondents as having the potential to address the issues outlined above. It was felt that, although NASS should provide leadership, it is appropriate to pass some decision making to local representatives and agencies where possible. Partnerships between local agencies were seen by many respondents as a way of promoting successful dispersal and this view was endorsed by the local agencies themselves.

## Information needs

### Information about the dispersal process and dispersal areas for asylum seekers

There was widespread agreement among asylum seekers and support agencies that information provided to asylum seekers, before and after dispersal, is insufficient.

- Asylum seekers indicated various areas where information was required, such as: the city or town to which they were being dispersed; approximate duration of the journey there; location of key services and how to access them; local people and customs; type of accommodation; and roughly how long placements might last.
- Stakeholders emphasised the lack of consistent information on the national laws asylum seekers need to abide by, and details of where to go for assistance. The provision of much of this information is covered in accommodation providers' contracts with NASS, since they are often asylum seekers' first point of contact for information. Hence there is either non-compliance or misinterpretation by accommodation providers of their contracts.
- Both asylum seekers and stakeholders perceived that information for asylum seekers is often provided in English, which may not be their first language. Some called for information to be translated into more languages; however, others said that this might not be the solution as fluent speakers of a language may still struggle to read it. The solution was seen in terms of NASS translating information only into key languages and developing other formats for disseminating information.

Induction centres, with standardised induction days and comprehensive packs coordinated by NASS, were widely seen as a good way to achieve effective and efficient information provision for asylum seekers.

### Information for service providers and data protection

- Service providers expressed a strong desire for more information on individual asylum seekers before dispersal, so that they could plan appropriately for them – this includes, where appropriate, details of medical conditions, nationality, religion, language and dependants. The perceived failure of NASS to supply accurate and timely information is said to create substantial logistical problems for providers, when preparing to receive asylum seekers. However, respondents also recognised that NASS can only provide information within the terms of the Data Protection Act.
- The research identified tensions between public and private providers on the issue of information sharing, particularly of sensitive data. Respondents suggested that this could be mitigated by making sharing of information about asylum seekers' records compulsory between the two sectors. NASS or the local authorities were seen as best placed to regulate this process, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.
- Asylum seekers were generally happy for information about them to be shared by agencies, recognising that one desirable outcome of this could be an improvement in the services provided. They did, however, emphasise that information on some aspects of medical status, such as HIV infection, should be held confidentially and known only by the most relevant agencies.

### Informing the host community

Most respondents perceived host communities as having little awareness of the true nature of asylum seeking, as they are often exposed to various myths in the press. There is also thought to be little public understanding of the rationale for the dispersal policy and why particular areas are selected. However, views differed on how best to communicate with host communities.

- Asylum seekers perceived provision of information to host communities about asylum seeking and dispersal as important in countering myths and developing positive relationships.
- Stakeholders recognised these information needs, but said that host communities must be informed in ways that do not increase tensions. Stakeholders believed that too much consultation could actually heighten local fears.
- Local and national newspapers were generally criticised for adversely influencing the reaction to asylum seekers and this was seen as a significant barrier to successful dispersal.

- The local and national political context was also seen as critical to successful dispersal, and there was a widespread perception that a robust defence of dispersal by politicians can increase levels of understanding about asylum seekers.

### Community safety

Community safety was seen as an important factor affecting successful dispersal, with implications for briefing of asylum seekers and decisions on dispersal areas.

- Police and community workers felt that asylum seekers would benefit from education on what was culturally, socially and legally permissible. This information would discourage asylum seekers from engaging in socially undesirable or illegal activities (e.g. carrying offensive weapons in public). It was suggested that this should be provided as part of an initial induction process and then reinforced after dispersal. Respondents from the police noted that, once these issues were identified to asylum seekers, they tended to follow the rules rather than contravene them.
- Police also called for more dialogue with NASS and providers on the implications of placing large numbers of asylum seekers within the same street or small area, as this affected the ability of the police to enforce removal of failed asylum seekers.
- Safety issues were not restricted to the outside environment; there were also safety issues to do with managing asylum seekers' behaviour within accommodation. Police expressed concerns about potential fire hazards such as asylum seekers placing hot cooking pots directly on timber floors for long periods, or heating up stones in ovens then placing them directly on timber floors for use in cooking food.

### Standards and contracts

- Stakeholders and asylum seekers perceived substantial variations in standards of service provision by accommodation providers. This was attributed mainly to the lack of detailed requirements in NASS contracts and/or a lack of compliance by providers. Perhaps as a result, asylum seekers expressed a wide variety of views on the quality of accommodation and housing providers, but several problems were highlighted consistently in relation to private providers. These included poor quality of accommodation such as broken fixtures, damp and vermin infestation.
- Concerns about variation in standards were accompanied by dissatisfaction with the arrangements NASS has in place to monitor standards of accommodation. This was often attributed to NASS's tendency to notify providers in advance when checking accommodation, with the result that in many cases NASS was not presented with an accurate impression of living conditions. Asylum seekers expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with the systems available to report difficulties to NASS – there were often difficulties in making telephone contact, an absence of interpreters and lengthy waits before appointments.

### Conclusions

The findings are informative but it must be understood that they are subject to a number of caveats.

The statistical analysis is exploratory, and did not aim to indicate a causal link between population characteristics, presence of asylum seekers and incidents against asylum seekers. Furthermore, while the factors affecting successful dispersal were derived from validated data such as the census, consultation with NASS and stakeholders suggests other factors that may be examined by those interested in further research on this issue, for example the length of waiting lists for local services such as schools and hospitals. These should be included in future analysis, preferably at the level of individual wards within local authorities.

The main outcome variables (successful dispersal) also require validation, as they are based on reports to NASS by asylum seekers about perceived harassment and assault by members of the public. The possibility exists that at least some of the observed effects result from variation in reporting rather than variation in incidents. Asylum seekers may have differing levels of confidence in the competence of local organisations in dispersal areas to tackle reports of racist incidents, which may affect the likelihood of incidents being reported at all. For example, increased reports of racist incidents could be due to well developed systems for raising awareness about how to report such incidents. Different categories of harassment and assault are also not necessarily mutually exclusive, so it is possible for the same incident to involve only one, some or all of the categories, which may lead to over-recording of incidents.

The reporting and recording of incidents involving asylum seekers should also be compared with studies of racist incidents affecting the wider population in dispersal areas. This will enable an assessment of the extent to which the numbers of incidents against asylum seekers are in proportion to those experienced by other groups in the wider population.

Further research might also include other issues such as: NASS's processes for selecting asylum seekers for dispersal and identifying suitable accommodation; the role of voluntary sector organisations in facilitating dispersal and possible tensions between this and their advocacy role; and NASS's dispersal policies in relation to cluster areas, children in school, continuity of health care and legal challenges to dispersal.

Despite these limitations, the study clearly identifies a significant association between characteristics related to greater levels of deprivation within host communities and an increased likelihood of poor relations between host communities and asylum seekers. The qualitative analysis also identifies a number of key issues, in particular perceptions about the lack of adequate briefing for asylum seekers both before and after dispersal, and the need for clearer specification in NASS's contracts with accommodation providers, if dispersal is to be successful.

### Key recommendations

- NASS and local agencies should consider supporting further research into the links between successful dispersal and characteristics of local authorities and populations. This research should determine whether the effects found in the exploratory analysis presented in this report are genuine or artefacts of the data used.
- NASS needs to develop systems to ensure that asylum seekers are provided with accessible information before and after dispersal about the geography, amenities, population and culture of dispersal areas. NASS should consider including the provision of such information in its contracts with accommodation providers, as they are likely to have greater familiarity with and access to this information, owing to their proximity to dispersal areas.
- NASS needs to consider appropriate formats for disseminating information to asylum seekers, bearing in mind the wide variation in literacy.
- There should be clearer articulation of what NASS expects the roles and responsibilities of all involved in dispersal to be, so that there is greater consistency in providers' interpretation of NASS's requirements and expectations, thus reducing disparities in levels of support for asylum seekers.
- Education, explanation of the rationale behind dispersal and management of expectations should be a priority for all sections of communities who are to receive asylum seekers, but this needs to be done in a way that does not exacerbate community tensions. Local politicians, the media and police should be included in consultation processes where this is not already being done.
- NASS should consider undertaking unannounced checks of their contracted accommodation and should develop other information sources about standards of accommodation. Experiences of asylum seekers with individual providers could also be captured through a more effective and well publicised complaints system. This could include a telephone line for asylum seekers to report serious complaints directly to NASS.
- There needs to be further consultation on how best to facilitate access to information regarding asylum seekers' health, education and social records before and after dispersal. This is to help service providers to make necessary preparations for receiving asylum seekers. Because of the sensitive nature of such information, a flexible and relatively open system with appropriate caveats is needed.
- NASS should support more active and wide promotion of good practice in dispersal. The research found examples of good practice in the selection of dispersal areas and the provision of information to host communities about dispersed asylum seekers. However, there is a perceived lack of formalised mechanisms to facilitate sharing of information about what different dispersal areas are doing, regionally and nationally. This should be accompanied by systems to encourage and reward success.

Produced by the Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office

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ISBN 1 84473 845 0  
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