



GPs at the Deep End

Pioneer Scheme Day-release programme

Wednesday 10th May 2017

Horselethill Road, Glasgow

Asylum Health Bridging Team

With Greg Higgins

Background

The UK takes roughly 28000 asylum seekers each year. At present Glasgow is the only area of Scotland which takes in asylum seekers, taking about 10-12% of the UK total – roughly 1500 people each year. There are arrangements in place for Edinburgh, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire to start housing asylum seekers also; however there is no date for when this will begin.

The Asylum Health Bridging Team (AHBT) began in 2012 after a reorganisation where the Asylum budget was removed from the Homeless budget. At first, the AHBT mostly saw families through their service but this changed to mostly single males before more recently becoming families again. At present 60% of the asylum seekers in Glasgow are families with the other 40% being single males. There was a recognised need to support Asylum seekers arriving in Glasgow as prior to their input only around 40% of asylum seekers would register with a GP, however a dedicated project on the Southside of the city saw 90% registering with assistance.

When the AHBT started they were based in the Red Road Flats in the Springburn area of the city. This was because initially all asylum seekers were housed there before being dispersed to other areas of the city. The AHBT converted a flat into a clinic and began to see people there. When based at the Red Road Flats the AHBT had a link with Fernbank Medical Practice who would register people. Greg reports that when the AHBT was based in the Red Road Flats the service they were able to provide was better. Also, as all asylum seekers were initially housed here there was much more of a community feeling. People would set up English classes and there were good links with local church groups.

After the closure of the Red Road Flats the AHBT was homeless for a period of time, moving from Hunter St to Maryhill Health Centre, then back to Hunter St before settling in their current home in Cessnock near the Home Office. Now all asylum seekers are given temporary accommodation in G51 before being dispersed throughout the city. They are only meant to stay in the temporary accommodation for 21 days but this is often much longer. At present 260 people are currently waiting dispersal to other accommodation and this has been a steady amount for the past 2 years. When in the G51 area asylum seekers are initially registered with Dr Mair's practice on Paisley Rd West.

Current situation

Serco currently hold the contract for providing accommodation for asylum seekers. They have a contractual obligation to provide healthcare. If the accommodation provided is more than 2miles away from a GP practice then they must provide transport. Due to HMO licencing in Scotland being stricter than that in England more families are now being settled in Scotland as they are able to house larger number of single males in the one accommodation in England. However this can mean that people originally housed in England can be relocated to Glasgow and because they are not 'new' asylum seekers the AHBT is not informed of their arrival and they are left to access health care alone.

The AHBT currently sees around 85% of new arrivals. Due to the numbers, they first do a brief intervention with families and if any health problems arise, families are offered a full appointment for review. At the brief intervention they will be offered BBV screening and have a routine set of observations done. They also perform a basic child health assessment and can then link into Health Visitors in the G51 area as there is no HV within the AHBT.

The AHBT has clinics daily and the initial assessment covers BBV, basic health questions and current medications and covers a mental health assessment and enquires about FGM. They are able to generate CHI no's for people receiving BBV testing and will have the results of this within 3-5days. They have input from a SNIPs midwife every Wednesday and have input from the Sandyford for sexual health and rape support one session each week. They have 2 CPNs who offer 3 mental health clinics each week. They provide follow up even after dispersal for normally around 3 months however are able to provide longer support in more complex cases. They are also able to link into Anchor, Rape Crisis and TARA (Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance). TARA offers support for victims of trafficking and provides a safe house for 28 days before people then move into the asylum system.

Other services providing support for asylum seekers:

- *Migrant Help* – won the Government contract to help process people's asylum support application (was previously done by Refugee Council) - see at least twice, start asylum application, help with accessing money once asylum claim in process (e.g. new ASPEN cards (Asylum Support Payment Enablement))
- *Red Cross* – based at Cambridge St, CRYVALIS programme for 18-24 y/o, women's support, young person's groups 18-21, family tracing service which can trace people registered as refugees anywhere in the world and people registered as asylum seekers anywhere in Europe, young mum's groups
- *Rape Crisis* – based in Bell St, have ethnic minority service
- *Integration networks* – throughout city: North; Govan; Pollok; Cranhill; Maryhill
- *Local churches* – provide English lessons among various other things

For more details on the process of applying for asylum and the system involved please see the excellent booklets available on this link: <http://www.migranthelpuk.org/get-help-and-advice/i-am-seeking-asylum-in-the-uk/>. They are available in multiple (15) languages.