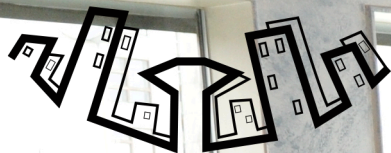


Vva ry



Advocating for homeless people through peer work in Finland

February 3rd 2021,
Riikka Tuomi

Housing First Europe
Hub Workshop

Sulollessa
Suomessa

No Fixed Abode NGO

- founded by homeless themselves in 1986

- Not committed to any political parties or religious agendas but aims to influence Finnish housing policies together with other stakeholders.
- Housing is a basic human and social right.
- Homelessness is not a question of an individual quality. It's a question of circumstances that can be changed.
- Peer support is the basic strength. Expertise and caring for other people gets better when there are hired people with experience in the staff.
- Today 25% of paid staff at No Fixed Abode has experience on homelessness.



My work as an expert by experience

- KEIJO-project: a long-period rehabilitative education model for ex-offenders and people with alcohol or drug addictions
<https://keijo0.webnode.fi/briefly-in-english/>
- Networking with organizations has been very important during my time in training and at work.
- The importance of housing.

Background of Peer Work

No Fixed Abode (NGO) has a special focus on promoting participation and empowerment of homeless people:

- Asukki Magazine (since 1987)
- Renovating a property in Vartiosaari – rented from the City of Helsinki. Substance-free place for leisure and rest (since 1989)
- Yökiittäjä - Outreach work at night time (since 2006)
- Center of Peer Support VEPA (since 2008)
- Nigh Café Kalkkers
- “Night of the Homeless” - the biggest event in Finland that gathers organizations that works to reduce homelessness, poverty and social exclusion (since 1999)





“Nothing about us without us”

Kokema - Experts by experience as trainers and mentors

- **Kokema is based on the work by experts by experience.** Those who are presently experiencing homelessness and those who have experienced homelessness will be involved.
- Workers and people with experience are invited as experts to train researchers, as well as professionals in social and health care and in the construction sector.
- Building a trust-based relationship with homeless or formerly homeless
 - > grassroots surveys and interviews
 - > snowball effect
- Experts by experience have gathered the views of homeless people and people with experience in homelessness to be used in all planning concerning services for homeless people



A peer support worker helping the residents of supported housing in coping with everyday life and as an intermediary between service producers/officials and the resident

Helpline / advice service worker

A peer instructor in a working pair model: An expert by experience & social work professional form a team → to benefit from each other's knowledge & competences

Lecturer by experience: lecturing to social work professionals, practioners & students of her/his own experiences

Permanent member of policy and working groups which plan and develop homelessness services

A builder of a network of 'freelancer EbEs' with other homeless or people who have experienced homelessness

A community worker: Assisting the residents living in the poor quality and risky neighbourhoods to collect and promote their requirements for improving the housing conditions

A civic activist taking part along the professional workers in the preventing activities, i.e. motivating and supporting residents to prevent eviction

A peer researcher: conducting interviews, interpreting responses together with a researcher trained professional

“Not just a tick in a box!”



ENGAGING PEER SUPPORT WORKERS IN THE WORK COMMUNITY

- Ensure the equal treatment of peers with other employees and participants of the organization.
- Preparation of the staff for inclusion of peers in the work community e.g. by informing them about aims, input and the added value.
- Ensure that peer support workers voice will be heard in staff meetings and they will not be left out of joint decision making, and welcome peers into the team.
- Offering peer support worker an opportunity to get training and/or otherwise ensure that s/he will be provided with adequate information and tools to carry out the job.
- The management's strong support and comprehensive interest in the life history.
- Management need to support peers in forming groups of peer support workers.



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Thank you - Kiitos!

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