

#asunnottomuus
#vvary

*Peer supporters in services for
homeless people*



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Finland

Palazzo Vecchio, 12 th of
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NO FIXED ABODE WAS FOUNDED IN 1986 BY HOMELESS PEOPLE THEMSELVES

Not committed to any political parties' or religious communities' agenda.

Works together with people who use services to find appropriate housing solutions for everyone.

Aims to reduce homelessness and improves the services of homeless people.

Influences Finnish housing policies together with other stakeholders.

Acts as an guardian of interests of homeless people in the third sector.

Is a nationwide organization.



- First ten years volunteers and peers, no paid staff
- First employed worker had experience in homelessness
- Today about 45 employees working in different areas of action, of which 25% have experience of homelessness, including the vicechairman of the board
- Peer support is a strength and a core value of No Fixed Abode

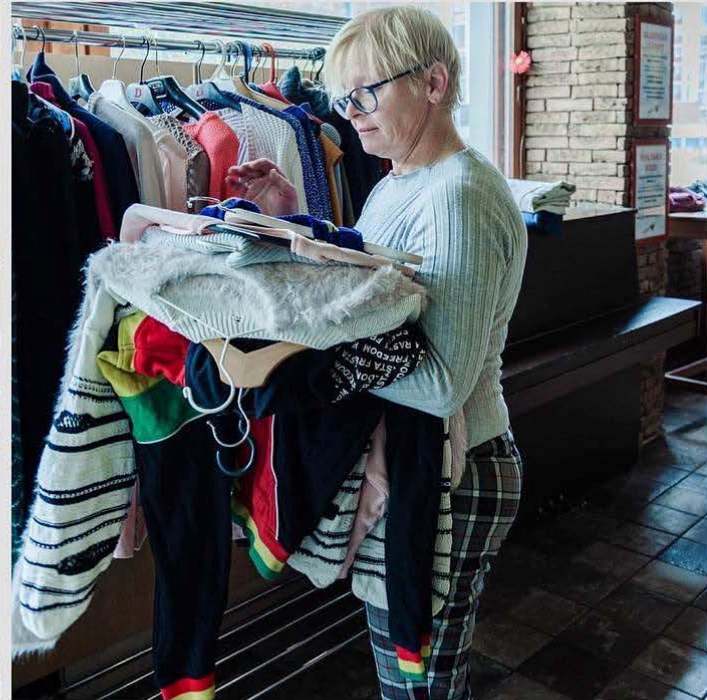
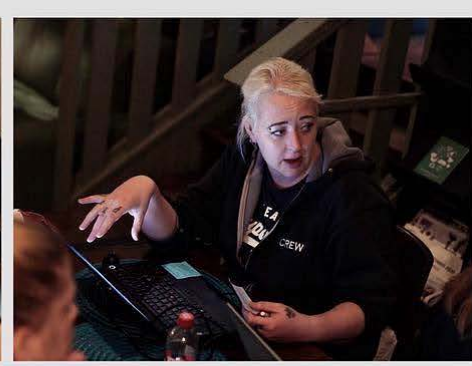
- Peer and voluntary center Vepa is a low threshold center: no limitations to using the services besides being of legal age. Run by a team of peer workers.
- Open Mon-Fri 9.00-16.00 -19.
- Night Café Kalkkers in same premises open in winter time 22-07, based in pair work professional- peerworker.
- Services available also: housing advice, moving support, outreach work
- In No Fixed Abode people are not called service users= visitors, members of the organization, citizens, people without home...



Numbers and action 2024

- In Vepa there were 20 381 meetings with people. Individual help was received by 779 people
- Warm meal was offered 5 times a week, 20112 meals together
- Clothes 7992 ja hygieneproducts 3152
- In Vepa there was held a 25 participatory happenings during the year

The role of peer workers at Peer support and volunteering center Vepa



Peer workers are paid staff and equal to professionals

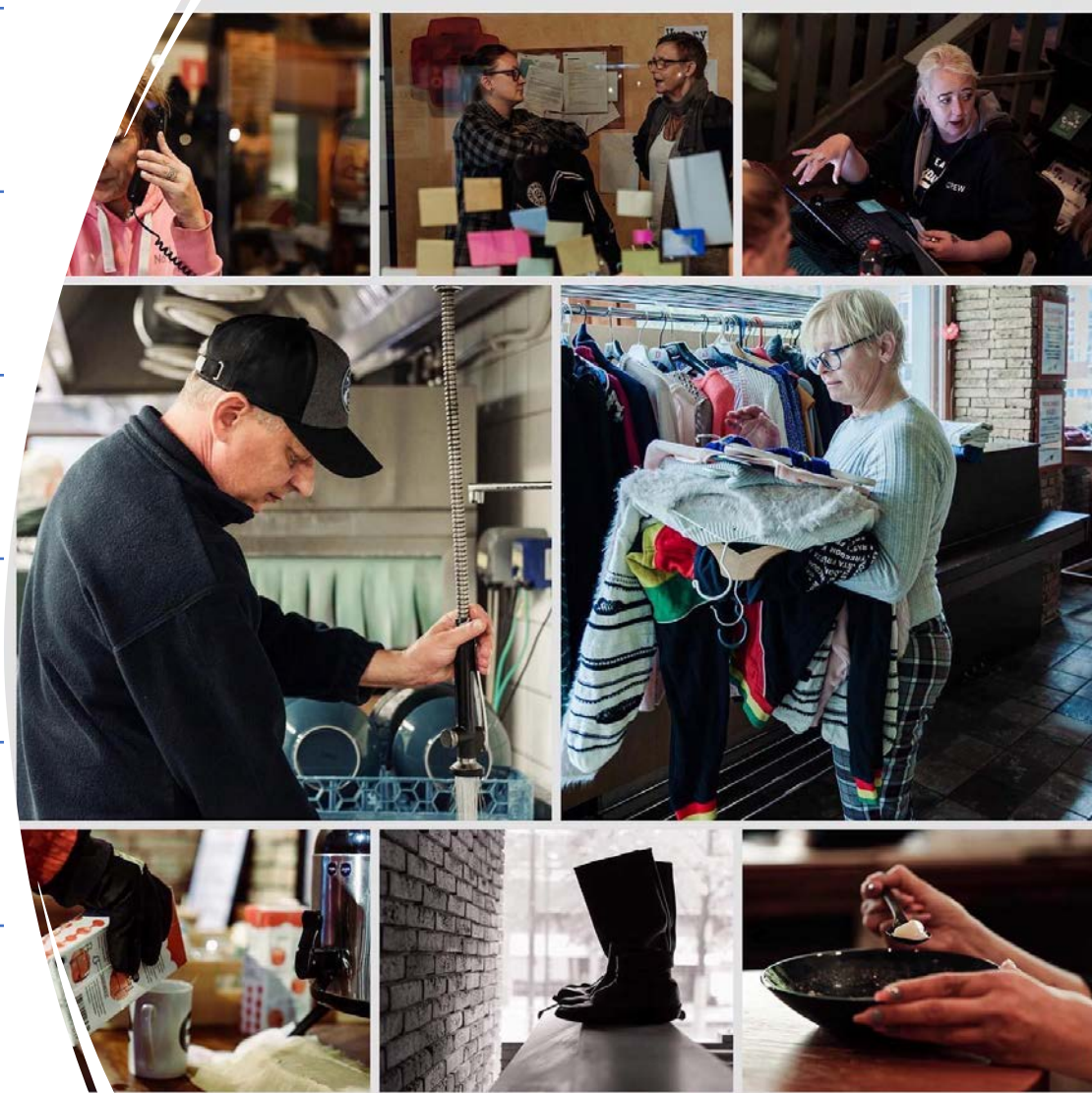
Recruiting: most come through internships or work trial –periods and move on to become employees

Peer workers are offered opportunities for training and studying according to their own interests and background

Support for peer workers focuses on supporting their abilities to work (not a therapeutic relationship)

3 hours weekly for the team to plan their work, reflect and prepare (closed for visitors during that)

2 hours monthly professional guidance for the team



Connecting visitors to services

- Services at Vepa answer to basic human needs: temporary shelter, safety, food, clothing and first aid
- Peer workers meet and greet all visitors: housing situation and needs for services are discussed (at the visitors' own pace)
- Peer workers help visitors to contact and reserve an appointment with professional workers of No Fixed Abode: housing counselor, immigration specialist, floating support, or outside services of visitors' need
- Cooperating partners bring their services to Vepa (i.e City of Helsinki: Housing support office, outreach teams)
- Peer workers work as a bridge between visitors and services

Why do we choose to employ peer workers at Vepa?

- Peers speak the same language as visitors
- Peers have an understanding of visitors' situation and the impact of it on behavior, stress level, ability to function etc.
- Peers are well equipped to handle and prevent conflict within visitors
- Frees the time and resources of professional workers to concentrate on individual work with visitors and carry on longer processes with them



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 eg. 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. “used language”
- 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. Support is crucial!
- The management’s strong support and comprehensive interest in the life history.
- Management need to support peers in forming groups of peer support workers.

Visitor feedback questionnaires 2024

Answers to question:

”Why do you choose to visit Vepa (of all day centers)?”

- *99% of (N=243) of the visitors in Vepa said that the visit was useful for them*
- *77% (N=122) said that the help and support which they got from Vepa helped them to get other social and health services*
- *70% (N=207) of the visitors said they got social support and help for to solve their problems*
- *75% (N=207) felt that their loneliness and social isolation was vanished*
- *69% (N=207) felt that they belonged to the community and felt that their dignity was better*
- *44 % (N=122) of visitors participated in happenings ja*
- *75% (N=122) felt included*
- *26 % (N=248) told that they came to Vepa because of the peers*

Feedback from the visitors of Vepa

- *" I got peersupport, company, food and clothes which was a a big help"*
- *"A possibility to talk to the workers. I got wellbeing from that"*
- *It's easy to talk about issues because the workers have same sort of background"*
- *"I know the workers will help me even through the worst"*
- *"Good staff, good location, safe, peacefull"*
- *"The people working here know a lot of stuff and no how to take a compassionate approach, as they are peers"*
- *"At Vepa people are not labeled."*
- *"I am not lonely anymore."*
- *"The staff here always know how and when to help."*













Näe. Kohtaa. Auta.



Vailla Vakinaista Asuntoa Ry
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#oikeuskotiin



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Kellogg's
All-Bran
REGULAR

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Suloisessa
Suomessa

AISIO

AISIO













***”Homelessness is a situation
and a circumstance,
not a characteristic of anyone.”***

Thank you!

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VVA^{ry}



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