

# A Home of Your Own

Housing First and  
ending homelessness  
in Finland



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## FOREWORD

# A Book That Is Truly Needed

In October 2007, a working group of four experts submitted their report on homelessness to Finland's Minister for Housing. The report was called Name on the Door, and it proposed launching a national programme for eliminating long-term homelessness by the year 2015. The working group stated that

*“this requires adopting the Housing First principle, where a person does not have to first change their life around in order to earn the basic right to housing. Instead, housing is the prerequisite that allows other problems to be solved”*

This became the principle on which the Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness, launched in 2008, was built. Its results have been manifested in recent years in a reduction in both homelessness and long-term homelessness. The Housing First principle quickly made a breakthrough and became the established starting point for social work on homelessness. The atmosphere was favourable to the paradigm shift. Many actors already had experience of work based on the Housing First philosophy. The principle, as we understand it in Finland, has in a short time become a common national strategy and way to act, and its importance is unquestionable.

The idea for writing this book came to us in the autumn of 2016, when our calendar began filling up with foreign visitors, and inquiries about the Finnish model were clogging our email. We noticed that we were answering similar questions over and over again: How is the support for the residents organised? Who pays the rent? What exactly is a supported housing unit? Why was there a desire to get rid of shelters? We decided that we might as well put together a handbook on Finland's Housing First model for professionals in the field as well as policymakers.

This book describes, as pragmatically as possible, the Finnish way of reducing homelessness, the special characteristics of the Finnish Housing First model, as well as its differences compared to the American Pathways Housing First model. For us, Housing First is a living and evolving model, an approach to doing work on eliminating homelessness. We hope that this book will be useful and brighten up the day of everyone who in their own country, in their own city, does work on eliminating homelessness and wants to make use of the Housing First model and our experiences with applying it.

In Helsinki, 2 June 2017

Juha Kaakinen

CEO, Y-Foundation



## 1

# Why Housing First?

Finland is the only country in Europe where the number of homeless people is on the decline. This is not a coincidence. Since the 1980s, the state, volunteers, municipalities and NGOs have been working with determination to reduce homelessness. Of particular importance is that in the 2000s, the state has launched and funded programmes aimed at reducing homelessness, which have in particular tackled the situation of the most vulnerable long-term homeless. With the help of the programmes, organisations and municipalities have, for example, provided new housing for the homeless and reformed the services aimed at them. All of these actors have wanted the same thing: to humanise the life of the homeless.

The state's firm guidance turned reducing homelessness into a shared goal. The process went on despite the economic recession that began in 2008, during which cuts were made to many other services provided by society. First and foremost, however, it all required a complete reversal in how homelessness was thought about: the whole system was built on the basis of the *Housing First* principle.

Above all, Housing First is a principle. It is also an operating model, an ideology and a way of thinking. The Housing First principle is guided by the notion that having a place to live is both a human right and a basic right. All the work done for homeless people starts from the assumption that the first support measure should be the provision of housing. The work can be organised using different models and by providing different kinds of housing, but housing is always the top priority.

As recently as the 1980s, a homeless person in Finland could only get a home once they had demonstrated their social acceptability. Often this meant abstaining from intoxicants. As a result, a homeless person would end up going round in circles with a permanent dwelling being nothing but a distant dream.

In the Housing First model, a dwelling is not a reward that a homeless person receives once their life is back on track. Instead, a dwelling is the foundation on which the rest of life is put back together. When a person has a roof securely over their head it is easier for them to focus on solving their other problems. This shift in thinking particularly changed the lives of those long-term homeless people who had been in the most difficult position of all. This group includes people recovering from substance abuse and mental health issues, for example. Applying the model has reinforced the idea that they too can manage in a regular rental apartment if they receive the right kind of support. For one person, a lease and safe apartment of their own is enough support, whereas another may also need various support measures in daily life.

Housing naturally cannot be provided unless apartments exist. It has been important for the implementation of the model that more affordable housing has come on the market. Constructing and purchasing new, affordable housing was one of the most important goals of the Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness (PAAVO I, 2008–2011). Municipalities, cities and

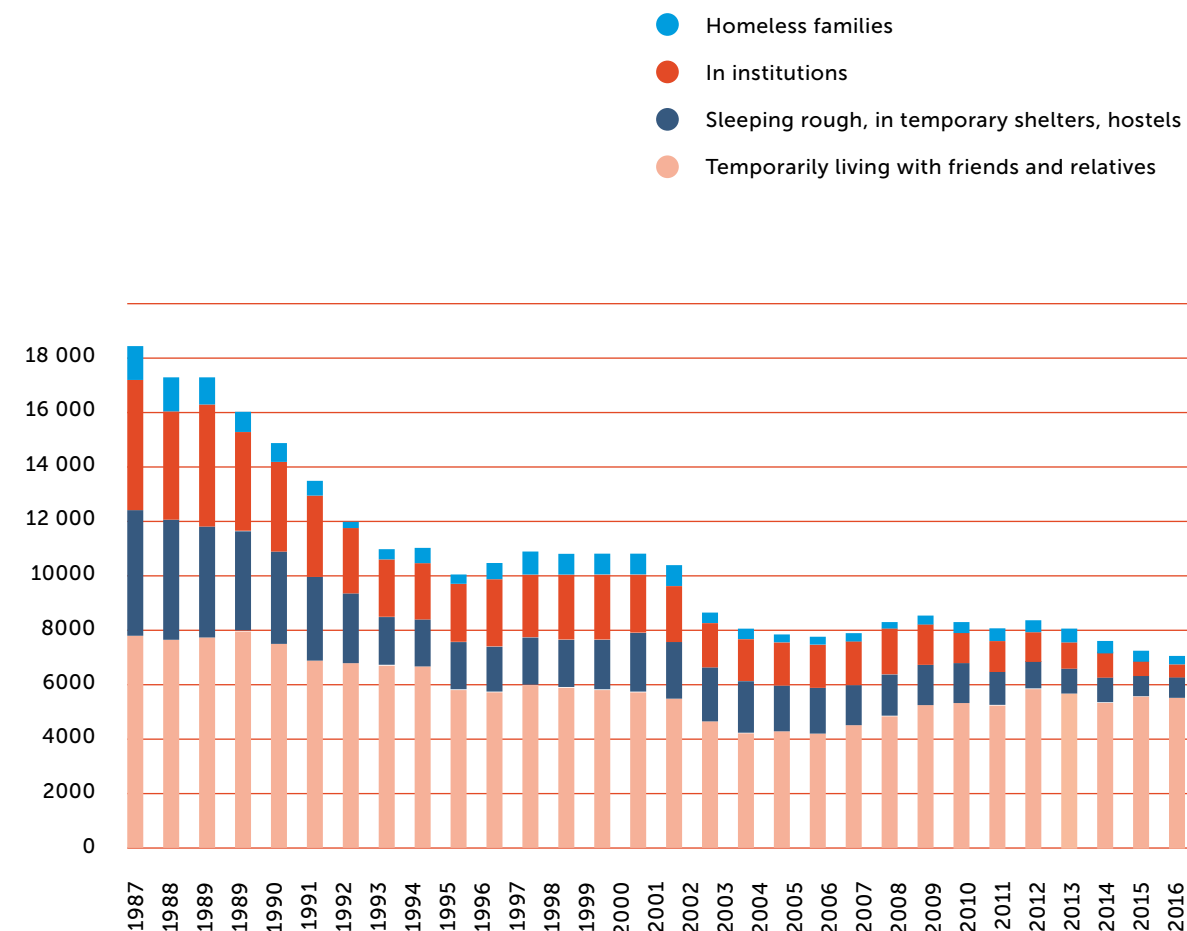


FIGURE | Number of homeless in Finland 1987–2016

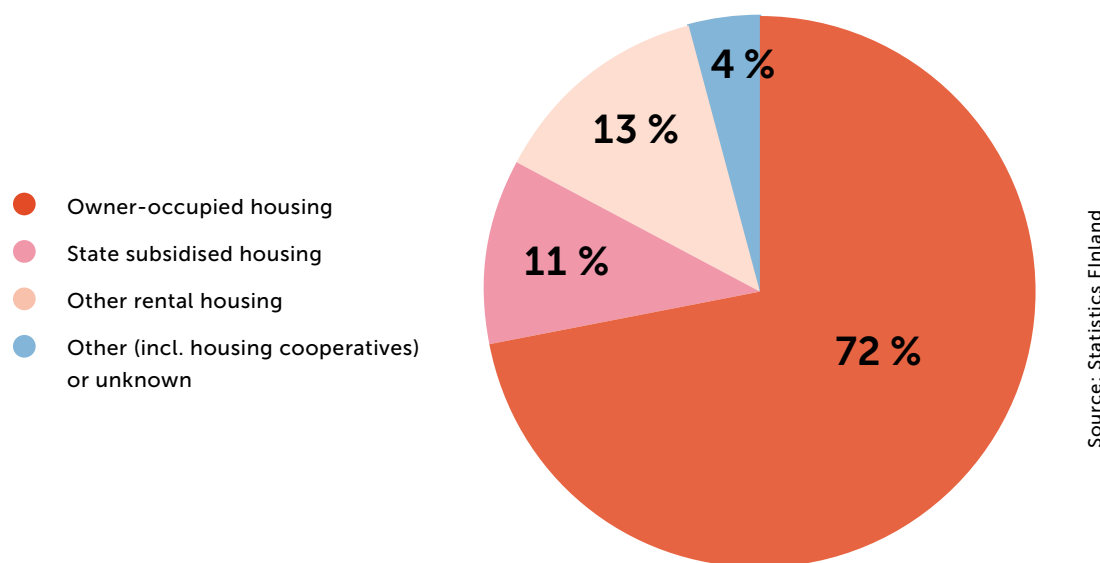
Source: The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland

other organisations bought and built housing but the state also supported housing production. (The PAAVO programmes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.)

The Housing First principle produces results. In addition to benefiting individual homeless people, the principle benefits society as a whole. In Tampere, for example, the supported housing unit in Härmälä reached almost 250,000 euros in

savings in one year thanks to the model. The savings in terms of the services needed by one person can be up to 9,600 euros a year when compared to the costs that would result from that person being homeless. Additionally, housing one long-term homeless person saves about 15,000 euros of society's funds per year. The most important thing, however, is that since 1987 about 12,000 people have received a home.

*Distribution of dwelling population by dwelling management type*



**FIGURE |** *The housing stock in Finland*

## Distinctive features of Finnish homelessness

Over 60 percent of Finland's homeless people live in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Since most work is available in the metropolitan area, migration is mainly directed towards it. Homelessness is also centred in other large cities.

The vast majority of the housing stock consists of owner-occupied apartments, which not everyone can afford. Similarly, the structure of the housing stock does not meet people's needs. In the metropolitan area in particular, homes being constructed are too large and too expensive in comparison to people's needs.

Finland has a social benefits system, which helps ensure that a person does not immediately end up on the streets after becoming unemployed or seriously ill. For instance, it is possible for people living in Finland to apply for social assistance or housing allowance. Health care is also free or affordable for everyone. The challenge with the forms of support is that a person has to know how to apply for the help they need by themselves. They might even have to apply for social assistance one month at a time, every month.

The Housing First model in Finland has taken into account the existing social benefits system so that it is utilised as much as possible. Service providers help clients with getting access to assistance and services provided by the state or municipalities.

The Housing First model is based on understanding homelessness extensively. So, it does not only apply to sleeping rough and it is not a problem that can be solved within just one sector. Having a broad definition of homelessness enables all the actors who the phenomenon concerns to participate in preventing and solving it. The actors usually involved are the state, municipality or city

## KEY CONCEPTS

### Who is homeless?

In services adhering to the Housing First principle, a homeless person refers to anyone who does not have their own rental or owner-occupied dwelling. Defining who is homeless is still difficult because people's situations vary. At worst, a homeless person sleeps rough on the street. Many, in turn, live temporarily with their relatives or friends. This kind of homelessness may not even appear in the statistics, in which case the phenomenon is called hidden homelessness.

In Finland, the most comprehensive housing statistics are collected by The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland. In their statistics *homelessness is divided into five categories*:

1. Those living rough, in stairwells, shelters, etc.
2. Those staying in night shelters, accommodation establishments
3. Those living in various institutions
4. Released prisoners who do not have housing arranged
5. Those in insecure accommodation, e.g. temporarily with friends or relatives

## GOOD TO KNOW

### How does the Finnish model differ from the American Pathways Housing First model?

The Finnish Housing First model was born around the same time, but separately from the Pathways Housing First movement that started in the United States. The models have two key differences: In Finland, the residents pay the rent themselves. Just like any other Finn, they can apply for housing allowance and other support if they are not capable of paying it themselves. In the United States, in turn, 30 percent of a resident's income automatically goes towards the rent and the landlord or organisation that has arranged housing bears the responsibility for paying the rent.

Another difference is in how support is arranged for the residents. Unlike in the United States, in Finland a large multi-professional group is not automatically put together beforehand for treating a resident. Support is instead offered for residents according to their needs, making use of the services that already exist in society. This is possible due to the high standard of social and health services.

(and within it social security and/or health care, for example), companies, organisations, property companies, property owners and property developers. The actors vary according to how the services have been organised in each particular city.

Defining homelessness in a broader sense helps recognize and consider all different paths that can lead to homelessness. A person can end up homeless due to several reasons, such as substance abuse or illness, for example. A homeless person may be a young secondary school student or an alcoholic senior citizen.

Broadly defined homelessness is also easier to prevent than just street homelessness. Since 2016, preventative work has been a specific emphasis in all work on homelessness in Finland, and cross-sectoral cooperation is the most effective way to do it.

## The Housing First philosophy: *four principles*

The goal of the Housing First principle can be summarised in two sentences: The services operating according to the Housing First principle do not want to get rid of their clients. Instead, the purpose is to provide clients with a permanent dwelling – that is, a home.

Work done according to the Housing First model is guided by four principles:

### *1. Housing enables independent lives*

The person who is homeless can go straight to living in a rental apartment without temporary arrangements. Health and social problems are addressed when housing is permanent and domestic peace is guaranteed. For some, the best model for independent living is an ordinary rental apartment, for others it is a supported housing unit where support is available around the clock.

### *2. Respect of choice*

The client has the opportunity to choose from treatments and services. If the client does not want to completely give up intoxicants, they are not forced into doing so. Instead, a sufficient goal is to reduce the use of intoxicants and the harm caused by psychiatric symptoms so that the client will be able to live in their home. The services supporting recovery are constructed so that they respect the autonomy of the resident and strengthen their participation.

### *3. Rehabilitation and empowerment of the resident*

Staff meet and treat the client as an equal. Interaction with the client aims at building trust and an atmosphere of communality, which help the client to rehabilitate and empower themselves on their

own terms. The aim of dialogue and interaction is always to find solutions to the client's situation together with them. This requires stripping away the employee's position of power and adopting a new approach to work. The resident is consistently given positive feedback on even the smallest of everyday achievements.

### *4. Integration into the community and society*

In Housing First work, the resident gets help to make their dwelling feel like a home. A home is a prerequisite for the resident being able to organise their own life and to feel involved in it and their environment. Having their own lease, for example, creates a feeling of permanence and thereby helps to feel connected to wider society. The resident is supported in keeping in contact with immediate networks such as their family. In supported housing units, systematic neighbourhood work (see pages 81–83) is done with residents.

In addition to the aforementioned principles, a sense of community is also a strong guiding value of Housing First work in Finland. Many housing units have made the living community their starting point, involving and empowering the individual through a strong sense of being a member of it. (Community work is discussed in more detail on pages 27–28.)



## 2

## How Was the Housing First Model Born?

Long-term work on homelessness has been done in Finland for decades. The state became involved in combating homelessness in the 1950s. In 1949, the Housing Production Commission Arava was established to provide low-interest loans for housing production. Today, the loan system is maintained by ARA, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland. (ARA's grants are described in more detail on page 68.)

The elimination of homelessness was mentioned for the first time in the government programme in 1987. Since then almost all governments have stated the reduction or elimination of homelessness as their goal. This has also produced results. However, in the mid-2010s it was noticed that long-term homelessness was not decreasing even though homelessness in general was in decline. The National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness were therefore launched, providing homes for the most challenging group of homeless people.

One of the most important ways of reducing homelessness has been to produce affordable housing. New financial instruments were developed in 1980s to provide affordable housing. In 1985 the state started to finance buying shares in housing companies from the free market. In Helsinki, for example, the city's housing acquisition company acquired a considerable amount of apartments. Nonetheless, producing affordable housing has remained one of the biggest challenges.

Until 2008 Finland mostly had a staircase model in use for the work on homelessness, where the

homeless person moved from one social rehabilitation step to another, with an apartment awaiting on the highest step. This model is not functional in the long run, however. It is easy to stumble on the steps, in which case the apartment will remain a dream. The model can also be considered inhumane for a good reason, since receiving a permanent dwelling requires a lifestyle change. In addition, the model proves costly, because long-term homeless people living in temporary accommodations place a burden on the special services of health and substance abuse care. The time was right for a completely new approach to work on homelessness: the Housing First principle. It turned the whole situation around and quickly started gaining ground.

A strong political will has made the application of the Housing First approach possible. Different sectors have set about solving the problem of homelessness through cooperation with each other. Governments, regardless of party composition, have stood behind the principle. Research has also been an important part of the Housing First work. The functionality of the principle has been constantly tested through different assessments and studies.

Housing policy based on the principle was first proposed in 2007 by the so-called working group of four experts appointed by the Ministry of the Environment. The members of the working group represented different sectors of society: the then director of Helsinki's social services Director **Paavo Voutilainen**, Bishop **Eero Huovinen**, the



*"Prepare to meet your God," painted on the wall of Pursimiehenkatu 10 shelter in Helsinki in the 1920s.*



© Y-Foundation

*Shelter in central Helsinki, 1953.  
In the 1950s officials campaigned  
against people moving to the Helsinki  
metropolitan area if they had no place  
to live in the city.*

*An overnight shelter in a bomb shelter  
under Diana Park in Helsinki city  
centre operated from 1945 to 1954.*



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Y-Foundation's CEO at the time **Hannu Puttonen**, as well as Medical Doctor and renowned civic activist **Ilkka Taipale**. The Y-Foundation's current CEO **Juha Kaakinen** acted as secretary together with **Anu Haapanen**, now the Director of Civic Work in The Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses. The working group's *Name on the Door* report defined the Finnish Housing First principle as follows:

*"Solving social and health problems is not a prerequisite for arranging housing, but instead housing is a prerequisite that will also enable solving a homeless person's other problems."*

Since 2008, Finnish work on homelessness has been largely based on this exact report. The Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness (PAAVO I) was drafted on the basis of it. As a result of the programme implemented during 2008–2011, work on homelessness moved away from the staircase treatment model and the closing down of shelters began.

In the first stage, ten cities (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku, Lahti, Joensuu, Jyväskylä,

lä, Kuopio, Oulu) where homelessness was the greatest problem committed to the programme. The Ministry of the Environment coordinated the implementation, and various organisations and service providers were also involved.

The aim of the National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness was to halve the number of long-term homeless people by producing 1,250 homes, supported housing apartments and care facilities and by strengthening the prevention of homelessness. The number of support staff grew, housing was built and structural changes took place in the cities participating in the programme. The most important change was the move to lease-based housing in the solving of long-term homelessness. Long-term homelessness fell by 1,345 persons, or 35 percent, between 2008 and 2015. In some cities long-term homelessness was even halved.

In order to implement the Housing First model the structure of homelessness services had to be changed. This meant, for example, establishing housing units with around-the-clock presence of staff trained in the caring profession. The state provided financial assistance to support the changes, paying half of the 200 new employees' salaries.



# TIMELINE OF HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND

1880

- 1883 *Helsingin Vieraskoti* (Helsinki Guest House) begins its activity in a closed movie theatre. Dubbed the chapel of the wretched, its seats provide the homeless with a place to sleep until the actual overnight shelter is completed.
- 1889 The Salvation Army begins operating in Finland.

1890

- 1893 Finland's first overnight shelter opens in Helsinki, on Pursimiehenkatu 10. The overnight shelter founded by *Helsingin Vieraskoti* still serves the same target group, now following the Housing First principle.

1900

- 1908 The Salvation Army opens its first overnight shelter in Finland in Helsinki. Men can earn their keep in the overnight shelter by working in the woodyard attached to it.

1910

## HISTORICAL EVENTS HOMELESSNESS AND THE LAW

- 1809–1917 The Grand Duchy of Finland – an autonomous part of the Russian Empire
- 1883–1936 The vagrancy decree. A vagrant, i.e. someone living an antisocial lifestyle can be assigned e.g. to forced labour or the military.
- 1883–1987 The vagrancy law. Vagrants are registered into the vagrant registry. They can be issued orders e.g. on their place of residence.

- 1917 Finland becomes independent
- 1918 Civil war between the Reds and the Whites



## GOOD TO KNOW

### Three perspectives of the *Name on the Door* report

1. **THE ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE** means that homelessness has to be eliminated because human dignity belongs to everyone. A home is a human right.

2. **THE LEGAL PERSPECTIVE** emphasises, for example, that according to the Constitution of Finland (731/1999, 19.1§), anyone who is unable to acquire the necessary security for a dignified life is entitled to essential subsistence and care. In addition, public authorities must provide adequate social and health services for everyone (19.3§). It is also the task of public authorities to promote everyone's right to housing and to support people in arranging housing independently (19.4§).

3. Eliminating homelessness is also a worthwhile investment in terms of the **SOCIAL ECONOMY**. The report states that the economic conditions for eliminating long-term homelessness were better than ever (in 2007).

The PAAVO II programme was launched as soon as PAAVO I ended in 2012. The cities committed themselves to the programme with new letters of intent and an eleventh city, Pori, joined. The programme continued the work to increase the number of apartments meant for supported housing and to solidify the new structures in the work on homelessness. In 2012–2015, shelters were given up for good. (The closing down of shelters is described in Chapter 4.)

An international research evaluation of the homelessness programmes was conducted in 2014. The researchers noted that the permanent decline in long-term homelessness stemmed from an effective and comprehensive cooperation strategy. At the same time, the evaluators encouraged Finland to invest in the prevention of homelessness in the future. The focus has now shifted to precisely that. The goal of the Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland (2016–2019) is to link the work on homelessness more extensively to the work on preventing social exclusion on the basis of the Housing First principle. To put it more simply, this means ensuring that housing is secured whenever the client is met in the service system.

The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland has two central goals. The first is to strengthen the prevention of homelessness. The second is to ensure that the recurrence of homelessness is prevented. In other words, people are helped to hold on to their homes.

FIGURE | Timeline of homelessness in Finland



1970

1970s

Housing and marginalisation begin to be linked to each other in public discussion. The residents of overnight shelters are discussed in a housing policy report for the first time.

1979–1999

Lepakkoluola is closed and replaced by the Kyläsaari treatment centre. In addition to a shelter, the treatment centre operates as a detox and rehabilitation unit, which continues operating in the premises until 1999.

1980

1983

Decision making over housing issues is transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of the Environment.

1985

The Y-Foundation is founded.

1986

Vailla vakinaista asuntoa (No Fixed Abode NGO) is founded by the homeless themselves.

Late 1980s

The first day centres for the homeless are opened.

1983–2009

The Sahaajankatu shelter is the first and last shelter built by the city of Helsinki.

1987

The UN's International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Statistics on homelessness begin to be systematically compiled in Finland. Ending homelessness is mentioned in the government programme for the first time.

1992–1993

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute is the first service provider to adopt the Housing First principle in their first housing unit.

1990s

Structural change of mental health services. Care begins to be introduced into the homes of rehabilitees, following the principle of mobile mental health work and institutions start being closed down.

1999

Housing advice services are opened in Helsinki.

1990

1990–1993

The Finnish economy is in a recession and recovering from it will last until the late 1990s.

1995

Finland joins the European Union

2000

2000

New constitution. It defines as the task of public authorities to promote everyone's right to a dwelling.

2002

Finland adopts the euro

2007

Name On the Door report is published. The Housing First principle begins to be implemented.

2007

With the EU's freedom of movement, the Roma beggars arriving from Romania and other travellers present a new kind of challenge for housing services.

2008–2011

The Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness, PAAVO I.

2009–2011

Shelters are shut down. Old shelters are refurbished into housing service units.

2012

The Salvation Army's shelter on Alppikatu in Helsinki begins operating according to the Housing First principle.

2012–2015

The reduction programme of long-term homelessness, PAAVO II.

2016–2019

The action programme for preventing homelessness, AUNE.

2010

2008–2009

Economic downturn in Finland. Although less money is available, there is a political will to reduce homelessness.

2015–2016

European refugee crisis. A record number of 32,476 asylum seekers arrive in Finland in 2015. Only a small number are granted asylum, so the amount of undocumented migrants without housing grows.

2020

2015–2016

European refugee crisis. A record number of 32,476 asylum seekers arrive in Finland in 2015. Only a small number are granted asylum, so the amount of undocumented migrants without housing grows.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

HOMELESSNESS AND THE LAW

1883–1887

Vagrancy law

1976

Law on improving the housing conditions of the Roma minority. Municipalities are obliged to fix the housing situation of the Roma and compile annual reports on it. They can also apply for aid for this purpose.

1985

Law on improving housing conditions. The law defines the tasks of municipalities in tackling homelessness.

1987

The vagrancy law is repealed

1987

Substance abuse care law. The aim is to prevent and reduce substance abuse and the harm associated with it, as well as to promote the functional ability and safety of the substance abuser and their close relatives.

HOW WAS THE HOUSING FIRST MODEL BORN?

KEY CONCEPTS

The Y-Foundation

The Y-Foundation was founded in 1985. The basic idea of its operation was to acquire small rental apartments for single homeless people from the existing housing stock on the free market. Today the foundation also builds rental housing and is the fourth largest landlord in the country.

The letter “Y” in the foundation’s name originally came from the Finnish word *yksin* (alone), which referred to the foundation’s mission to help those who are alone get an apartment. Nowadays, the Y comes more from the word *yhdessä* (together), which refers to the foundation doing work on homelessness in cooperation with other actors.

**Kela**

The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) is a state institution that manages the basic social security of people living in Finland. Kela operates under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament and its task is to secure the basic livelihood of the population, promote health and support independent survival in different life situations. Kela’s customers are all those who are covered by the Finnish social security system, living in Finland and abroad. Kela grants, for example, housing allowance, student financial aid and social assistance. (Housing-related financial support is described in more detail on page 64–67.)

**ARA**

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, ARA, is an office operating under the Ministry of the Environment. ARA promotes affordable housing. Non-profit organisations can apply for grants, subsidies and guarantees from ARA related to housing and construction so that they can achieve affordable rental rates. ARA also controls and monitors the use of the ARA housing stock and collects and maintains statistics on homelessness.

Shelter

A shelter is a type of temporary dwelling. Lodging in a shelter is based on the Act on Accommodation and Food Service Activities, which means that the law guarantees the rights of the host but not the rights of the resident. A person staying in a shelter does not have a permanent room or lease of their own.

Supported housing unit

A supported housing unit is a form of housing where each resident has their own lease for their own permanent apartment. Living in supported housing units is communal and staff is present around the clock. Typically, a supported housing unit resembles an apartment building with common living areas.

Living in a supported housing unit is regulated by the Act on Residential Leases, among other things, which guarantees the rights of the tenant. The Social Welfare Act in turn regulates the support given in connection with housing. Compared to a shelter, a supported housing unit provides privacy: a resident’s home in a supported housing unit is a private space, which is not the case in shelters.

Scattered housing

Scattered housing is rental housing that is based on the Act on Residential Leases. A former homeless person lives in a normal rental apartment, which is located in the middle of so-called ordinary housing. Scattered housing apartments are acquired from the city’s rental housing stock, for example. It is essential that the apartment can be rented out to a resident for an affordable price and support can be provided for them at home.

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# 3

## A New Approach to Work: From Knowing Better to Open Dialogue

Transitioning to the Housing First model required those working on homelessness to adopt a new kind of orientation to work. The transition does not happen instantly but is instead a process. The model challenges the work on homelessness is on all levels:

### 1. The state level

The state has actively directed work on homelessness in Finland towards a Housing First-based model with the programmes it has set up. It has simultaneously supported the work financially.

### 2. Municipalities and cities

Housing services have had to be rethought and put out to tender again. City officials have to be more attentive than before when a homeless person comes to seek help. The aim is to secure a dwelling as soon as they are met in the service system.

### 3. Service providers

Clients are provided with tailored support. Figuring out what kind of support a person needs in order to live successfully is done at the same time as finding a suitable dwelling for them. Tailoring the support for everyone individually, coping with setbacks and tolerating uncertainty is important.

### 4. Employees

Employees must have obtained at least a Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care. Employees with professional training also have to learn the new approach to work.

### 5. Residents

Employees in housing services no longer provide direct answers but instead solve problems together with the resident. In some cases residents may have difficulties seeing themselves as actors who have control over their own affairs.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### Community work

Community work has traditionally been used as a form of therapy in substance abuse care and psychiatry. It has also been used in work done on youth homelessness in Finland. Making use of the community became part of the work on homelessness when the Housing First model began to be implemented. In many units it is already the fundamental basis of operation, whereas some units have only started practising it.

#### COMMUNITY WORK PRINCIPLES:

- The community acts according to the rules it has set itself
- The community itself makes sure the rules are followed
- Shared issues are agreed upon in community meetings, for example
- The community and work community are not hierarchical or authoritarian
- The aim is to strengthen the human agency of the community's members so that they need less external support

In community work, the community serves as a training ground that helps its members get a handle on life again. The staff act somewhat like role models in the community and provide residents with the support they need, while also being a part of the community. In a familiar and comfortably sized community, residents can practise their social skills, participation, responsibility and trust. If a person has been homeless or in a shelter cycle for many years, it can be difficult for them to start living alone and taking care of their own affairs.

The community helps with a variety of issues. Those who have lived alone without social relations or whose relationships have been very limited can become empowered. It is easier to

learn to manage the symptoms of an illness or the withdrawal symptoms of intoxicants with peer support. In a symptom management group, a person can let their peers know if they are not doing well at the moment. In large units in particular, peace is effectively ensured when the community itself makes sure the rules it has set are followed. If someone breaks the rules, not only do they get reproached by staff but also by other residents.

As the trust between community members grows, the staff also get to become deeply involved in the residents' lives.

*"I've not yet been involved in childbirth, but all other major life events have become familiar",* says one of the employees describing the work.

When the residents feel like they are in a stable and safe environment, traumas that they have previously not had the time or space to process can surface. Staff have to accept that a resident may do something that does not promote their rehabilitation: relapse into using intoxicants, behave violently or neglect their treatment programme. In such cases, the staff cannot use disciplinary measures but come to an agreement on how to proceed through dialogue with the resident.

Official and unofficial discussions are an important part of cooperation. Staff have to listen attentively to what is going on in the community, what kind of support it needs at the moment, and whether some operating procedure needs to be changed. Many units regularly organise community meetings. Their purpose is to give a voice and decision-making power to everyone.

Community work is a continuous process and the work method changes with the flow of everyday life in the community. Staff has to keep actively thinking about which matters should be settled by the whole community and what can be left up to the staff.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### How did the Finnish Salvation Army start community work?

When the Finnish Salvation Army was setting up the first supported housing units adhering to the Housing First principle, staff were taught the basics of community work. In one unit, the staff was trained in the principles of community work as part of apprenticeship training. In another, the training was done together with residents during a one-and-a-half-week induction period as the unit opened.

Community work methods such as group interviews were deployed in recruitment. This ensured that the people selected had the necessary competences to operate in accordance with the principles of community work.

All of the supported housing unit's residents may not want to take active part in the community. In such cases it is important that the staff commit to the principles of community work. This prevents them from slipping back into the old authority-centred work approach.

The Salvation Army strengthens the community-centred approach to work by, for example, rotating the chairperson and secretary roles in employee meetings. The employees have practically no secluded working spaces. They also agree on their shifts by themselves instead of the manager assigning them.

### Work-counselling

Supported housing unit staff are regularly provided with supervision and training, as well as support for coping at work. Work-counselling supports well-being and professional skills in areas of work where employees experience an unusual amount of stress for one reason or another. It consists of dialogue between the employee and a supervisor.

Counselling is led by a trained external supervisor and it has clear goals: typically to help the employee cope, support professionalism, help deal with challenging work situations and feelings, increase happiness at work and help evaluate their inner resources. Counselling can be done as group counselling, individual counselling or as counselling of the entire community. Typically, there are 1–2 hours of counselling at a time about once a month. Counselling for managers can be tailored separately so that issues common to managerial work can be addressed.

*If someone breaks the rules, not only do they get reproached by staff but also by other residents.*

## GOOD TO KNOW

### Community living does not suit everyone

Rules, restrictions, restlessness and the stigma attached to living in a supported housing unit can bother people who live in a supported housing apartment. In a study, the most dissatisfied residents say they only live in a supported housing unit because they have no choice. In their opinion, the profile and reputation of a supported housing unit stigmatises all its residents despite the fact that they are all individuals with their own stories to tell.

Residents who are dissatisfied with the housing are also characterised by a strong experience of “I don’t belong here” that results from the associated stigma. A resident may shun their place of dwelling, its other residents and want to get away from the forced social reference group and residential environment that they themselves have not chosen. For example, when the experimental supported housing project in Sällikoti in Helsinki was assessed in 2007–2011, many residents expressed their hopes of moving into their own apartments. They described their situation in Sällikoti as an unpleasant but necessary temporary step.

## 4

## Getting Rid of Shelters

One of the most significant ways in which Housing First has improved the lives of the homeless is by replacing shelters with more permanent and humane living arrangements. There are still a few emergency shelters available for those suffering from a temporary housing crisis, but spending night after night in them is no longer considered a sustainable solution. For example, in Helsinki there were 600 beds in hostels and shelters in 2008. Now, eight years later, there is a service centre with 52 beds for emergency use.

This chapter explains how this transformation was achieved by looking closely at two different supported housing units: the Alppikatu 25 shelter for men in Helsinki was among the first shelters transformed into supported housing units. The story of the mental and physical transformation illustrates the systematic transition that took place in the whole country.

Unlike Alppikatu 25, Väinölä in Espoo was built and designed to be a supported housing unit. Life in Väinölä will also be described in detail.

Year	Supported housing	Independent rental apartments	Hostels and shelters
1985	127	65	2,121
2008	552	2,033	558
2016	1,309	2,433	52

Source: Kaakinen 2017

**FIGURE |** Housing options for homeless people in Helsinki

## The transformation of Alppikatu 25

Helsinki's largest shelter at Alppikatu 25 was refurbished into a supported housing unit during 2009–2011. The desire to improve the conditions of people living in shelters and provide them with dwellings with leases of their own was the driving force behind the transformation. The guideline was to provide everyone with something better.

A new phase began in autumn 2007. **Eero Untamala** had just started as the manager of the Alppikatu shelter when he received a phone call. The City of Helsinki was preparing to close down its shelters.

The call came as a relief: a renovation was long overdue. However, undertaking the transformation was not a simple task and the decision required much discussion within the Salvation Army. Renovating the shelter into a supported housing unit ended up costing the Salvation Army about six million euros. The financial risk was alleviated by the fact that they could apply for a low-interest state loan from the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland to cover the costs.

This was not just a renovation, however, but a transformation of the entire way of doing work on homelessness. The programme set by the government aimed to discontinue shelters in all ten cities participating in the programme. The City of Helsinki was also preparing for a radical transformation. The life of Alppikatu as a shelter

would come to an end and it would be replaced by something better: a home instead of a place to sleep.

## Life in the Alppikatu shelter

The shelter had been operating at the same address since 1937. There was little room and cigarette smoke filled the building. Doormen kept order and presided over all the issues of residents together with the shelter manager. Many of them were not professionally trained. Living in the shelter was regulated by the Act on Accommodation and Food Service Activities, which protected the rights of the host. According to the law, a doorman had the authority to check residents in and make decisions over them being checked out. You could not enter the shelter if you were intoxicated. Consequently, men often spent their nights outdoors.

Discipline worked in the sense that there were few fights, but it did not help the residents with getting a grip on their own lives. The doorman's job was to maintain order, not to help anyone towards a better life. This was because the shelter was meant to serve as temporary accommodation. But that was not the case in reality. People spent years in the shelter. One resident lived in the shelter for over 30 years. Another, in turn, would always pay for their housing for a year in advance. It was not even close to a temporary shelter.

Residents needed an accommodation recommendation from the social services office, which

*The fact that a lot could be adopted from the Salvation Army's original mission statement from the 19th century also helped in adjusting to the change.*

proved they had been assigned to the shelter. The nightly rate for living in the shelter was about 10 euros and it had to be paid in advance. Residents paid the fee themselves if possible. If they did not have the money, the social services took care of the payment. The work of social services also included making a housing and service plan for the residents. Whether or not the plan was made depended largely upon the residents own initiative. If the resident themselves did not make sure a service plan was made for them, it would remain undone.

## **The physical and mental transformation took years**

The preparations for closing down the Alppikatu shelter and renovating the building took three years. The renovation itself lasted for a year and a half. The staff made it clear to the residents from the beginning that Alppikatu would be emptied and a permanent home would be arranged for everyone. This promise could be made because the City of Helsinki's social services for the homeless was strongly committed to it. Social workers who were well informed about homelessness sought out apartments for everyone.

It was not just a physical renovation. It was also a mental one. Especially for the staff, who had to begin putting the Housing First principle into practice after the transformation. One of the Salvation Army's main missions is to save people from the curse of alcohol, so it was difficult for the employees to come to terms with the fact that residents would no longer be required to abstain from intoxicants. Eventually an understanding was reached when it was realised that the new model could help those homeless people who did not adjust well to shelters. They had been coming to shelters in increasing amounts in recent years. The fact that a lot could be adopted from the Salvation Army's original mission statement from the 19th century also helped in adjusting to the change. Helping the poor and marginalised of society remained as the principle behind the work.

Most residents of the Alppikatu shelter moved into a new type of housing unit operating under the Housing First principle in one night. Sixty-six former residents of Alppikatu moved into a newly founded supported housing unit in Helsinki's Pitäjänmäki due to the renovation. Each one received a 36–47-square-metre apartment of their own, with their own lease. The people who had moved to Pitäjänmäki were somewhat perplexed. *"I can see that's my bed over there, but where will all the other six men who could fit here sleep?"* Eero Untamala recalls one man saying as he opened the door to his new home.

## **Preparing for the transformation**

### *1. A common goal was set*

Providing everyone with something better was adopted as the guideline for the transformation.

### *2. The transformation was implemented little by little*

The practices at Alppikatu were already changed prior to the renovation. The residents were included in the work and the rules were updated. The rules were no longer just prohibitions but rights as well, followed by responsibilities.

### *3. The residents were included*

In meetings held in each floor, the residents got to participate in the planning and implementation of the changes. The residents suggested acquisitions and small repairs and received a small amount of money for carrying them out. Hearings and information sessions were organised for the residents and staff, and they got to revise plans for the upcoming Alppikatu supported housing unit. A floor warden was chosen from among the residents. Their task was to teach newcomers the house rules and help them adjust to the unit.

### *4. Checkout policies were reviewed*

A resident who was intoxicated or had broken the rules was no longer just thrown out, but instead directed to treatment or other form of support if needed.

### *5. Staff were trained*

The shelter staff were encouraged to undergo licensed practical nurse training. Providing staff with an educational pathway was a way of getting them to commit to the change. They were promised that those who underwent additional training would have a job in the new housing unit.

### *6. New employees were hired*

Preparing for the transformation, and ultimately the transformation itself, was mainly done by the existing staff. The staff changed through a natural cycle. When a doorman retired, a licensed practical nurse was hired in their place.

## Alppikatu 25 as a shelter and as a supported housing unit

### AS A SHELTER DURING 1936–2008:

- Sleeping space for about 250 men
- 69 two-person rooms
- Eight 10m<sup>2</sup>-sized 3–4-person rooms
- 70 single-person rooms after the renovation in 1975
- Shared kitchen, lounge and bathroom areas for up to 40 residents
- A cafeteria downstairs, which provided free morning tea and cheap lunch during weekdays
- 7 doormen

### AS A SUPPORTED HOUSING UNIT FROM 2012 ONWARDS

- 88 residents
- 81 apartments
- Apartment size 19–36m<sup>2</sup>
- The apartments are accessible and they have a kitchen, a sleeping area and a living room
- Residential floors have common rooms, laundry rooms and communal kitchens
- Canteen downstairs run by the residents
- 22 employees. Trained professionals in social work and health: nurses, practical nurses, a physiotherapist, social welfare supervisors and employment coaches as well as a doorman and a secretary. They work in shifts so that someone is on duty around the clock.

## The captains of the Flying Dutchman

The Alppikatu shelter, like other shelters, was meant to serve as temporary housing.

*“We often did not know where a large part of the people leaving the shelter ended up. Some would come back from time to time, until they left again or had to leave for one reason or another”, describes Eero Untamala.*

Untamala calls these wandering residents the captains of the Flying Dutchman. These men did not adjust to life in the shelters and were therefore doomed to drift between different temporary solutions, without a final port to sail to. The “captains” who were destined to fail in the world of shelters ultimately benefited the most from the transition to the Housing First model. The new model provided tools for helping them.

The captains’ social skills were weaker than those of the other shelter residents. In many ways, a shelter can be compared to a prison community. The Alppikatu residents would talk about the shelter’s different parts as “tiers” or “floors”, as is common in prisons. In practice, the caretakers were in a similar position of power to prison guards. The residents did not have the chance to influence matters and subcultures formed in the shelter. Those who were able to settle into a hierarchical system and be part of a subculture did well in the shelter. Often they were people who had become accustomed to life in prison or some other institution, as well as people with substance abuse problems and had belonged to

one subculture or another. In the final years of the Alppikatu shelter, however, more and more captains had been coming in. On top of that, the shelter community pulled everyone in the wrong direction. It made people become attached to subcultures, not society.

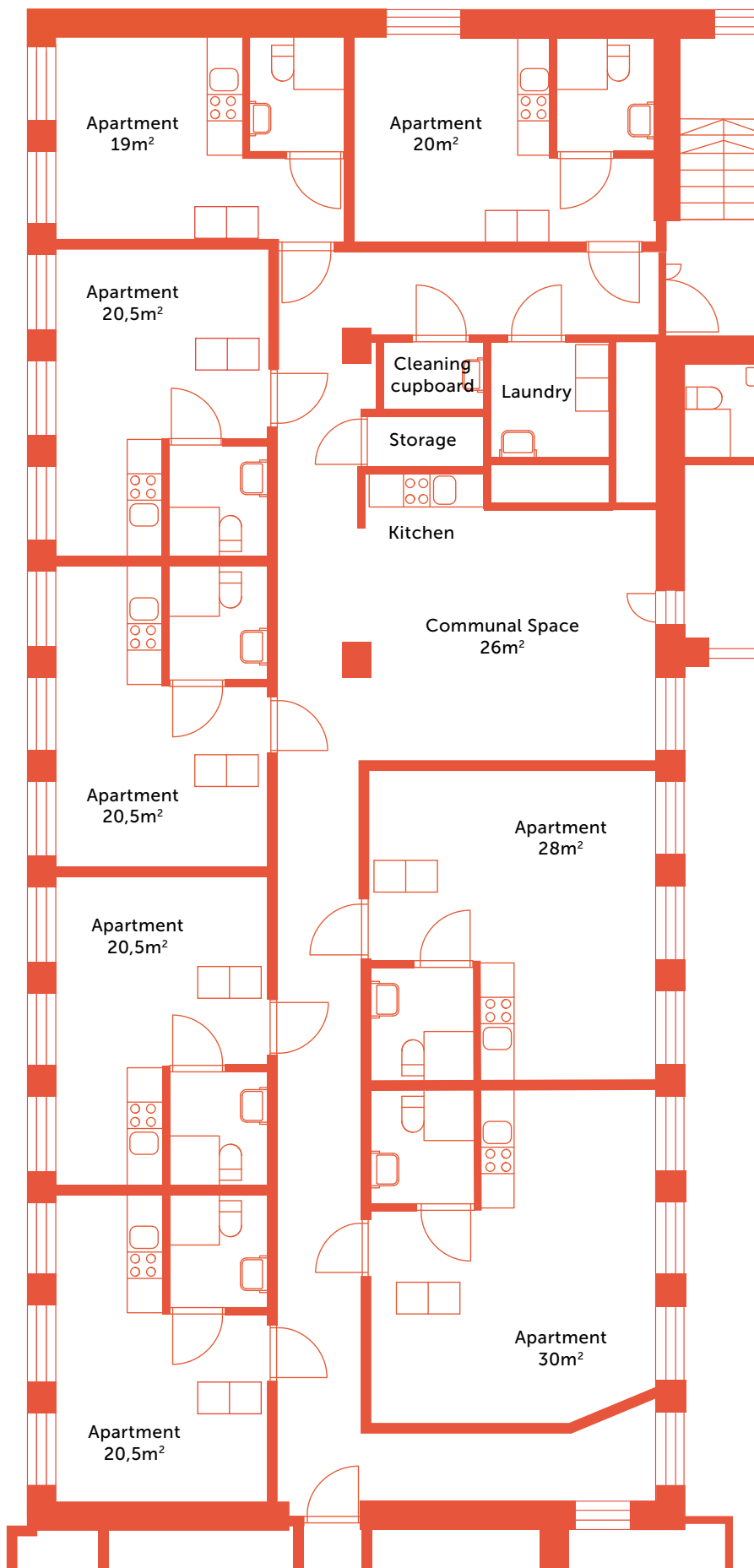
Yet in a sense, the community was exactly what saved the captains. Transitioning to the Housing First principle did not only mean closing down shelters but also founding supported housing units. People in supported housing units also live in communities and there was a danger of subcultures forming once again. This is why community work was quickly introduced. (Community work is described in more detail on page 27.)

*The “captains” who were destined to fail in the world of shelters ultimately benefited the most from the transition to the Housing First model.*



**ALPPIKATU 25****2nd FLOOR**

Residential Floor

**1st FLOOR**Staff Areas  
Canteen  
Meeting Places**BASEMENT**Recreationed Spaces  
Workshop  
Sauna  
Storage**FIGURE |** *Alppikatu housing unit floor plan, Residential Floor***Alppikatu 25 after the transformation**

Today the only reminders left of the old Alppikatu 25 are the building's exterior and location. Everything inside has changed: the people, spaces and the operational culture. The building is no longer a shelter but a block of 80 apartments. The new residents moved into this Alppikatu supported housing unit in December 2012.

The City of Helsinki's Homeless Support Unit selects the residents of Alppikatu 25. The staff support and if necessary, direct people to home care, health services, substance abuse care or mental health services, for example. Making sure that a person manages to hold on to their apartment is also important.

The former shelter for men now also houses women and couples. The residents are in charge of cleaning the house themselves, looking after its yard and shovelling snow in the winter. They also do a large part of the building's small repairs. There is a regular need for repairs since at times going may get pretty rough at the unit. The home is personal and permanent and the staff can only interfere if there is a risk of a serious incident.

Everyone has keys to their own apartment. The key is a smart key, so if it gets lost it is easy to replace with a new one, and the old one can quickly be made unusable. Residents can get in through the entrance around the clock, but outsiders can only visit in the company of a resident. The staff restricts and supervises children's visits to make sure they are safe.

**GOOD TO KNOW****Where did all 236 residents of Alppikatu 25 move to?****66**

The Salvation Army's supported housing units.

**27**

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute's supported housing units.

**54**

The City of Helsinki's halfway houses.

**9**

The City of Helsinki's rental apartments.

**2**

Kovaosaisten ystävät ry's (NGO) halfway houses.

**28**

Temporary housing, such as a reception unit. The majority of these 28 were immigrants whose residence permit processes were still ongoing.

**50**

Other supported housing units, found a dwelling on their own or left the shelter before it was closed down.



## Life in a supported housing unit – case Väinölä

The Väinölä supported housing unit is situated in a beautiful location by a lake in Espoo. Stairs behind the house lead from the barbecue area to the beach. When the City of Espoo began planning the Väinölä supported housing unit in 2012, it did its background research thoroughly. There is already a supported housing unit called Kuninkaankallio in Espoo, which houses people with multiple severe problems. The city wanted to make Väinölä a complementary partner for this unit, so that the city could offer different options for the homeless.

Unlike Kuninkaankallio, Väinölä was never intended to house those with serious substance abuse issues. The starting point for living there was for residents to commit to working towards a life free from substance abuse. The unit's facilities and functions were designed with this in mind. When the unit was opened, residents and staff set common ground rules in their very first community meeting.

The City of Espoo produced a detailed description of what services have to be offered in Väinölä for the competitive tendering of the service provider. These included, for example, making use of community work (see page 27) and organising low-threshold work activities (see page 85) for the residents. No one is forced to get involved with the community but it is strongly encouraged.

There are residents from different countries in the supported housing unit. When moving into

Väinölä, each resident signs a support contract along with the lease. In it, the resident agrees to strive towards a substance-free lifestyle if that has been a problem for them and to make themselves a service plan together with the staff. The key word here is 'together'. The staff do not act as authority figures, but instead the whole community works together for the good of the residents.

Before the final decision over moving in is made, residents go to Väinölä for an interview and to get to know the place. This allows both the future resident and Väinölä's community to get to know each other. The aim is to choose residents who will benefit from the low-threshold work activities. This means the resident is motivated to work towards a better life and is physically fit to work.

Several men dressed in safety vests or jackets walk by during the visit to Väinölä. One of them is holding a snow shovel with which he sets off to clear the snow from the terrace. All of them are residents of Väinölä. When working outdoors they wear safety clothing so that the neighbours can recognise them. When the neighbours get used to seeing the same people taking care of the environment, prejudices disappear and a good neighbourly spirit arises. There is very rarely any negative feedback from the neighbourhood.

*"I've been the director of Väinölä for three years, and not once time have we received a call from the neighbours saying our residents have been a nuisance. Especially those residents who collect litter get a lot of positive feedback for keeping the environment clean", says the Unit's Director, Pilvi Cole.*

**LEFT** | From the outside, the Väinölä supported housing unit looks just like an ordinary Finnish apartment building built in the 2010s.





*A view from Väinölä. Since it is winter, the rowing boat used by the residents for their fishing trips has been put into winter storage.*

Imagination is the only limit in developing low-threshold work activities. In spring 2017, for example, Väinölä's residents were running a trial production of the log baskets they were making for sale. In many supported housing units people can participate in low-threshold work activity as long as they are fit to work, but in Väinölä participation while intoxicated is not allowed. The residents themselves keep an eye on people's sobriety. If a resident is repeatedly intoxicated, or asks for help themselves, the staff and resident think about potential solutions to the situation together.



*"The most important thing about a home is that it feels like home."*



*This home's resident keeps track of the sunrise every day from his favourite place on the sofa.*

*"For quite some time now I've woken up before sunrise and written the times of the sunrise down. The sunrise is magnificent. It's an uplifting moment when it rises from behind the window there. After that I usually go back to sleep, otherwise the summer days in particular would be too long."*





**LEFT** | This Väinölä apartment's most impressive piece of decor is a second-hand one. "I found this Finnish flag from a former office building and placed it on that wall there."



"I've been listening to a lot of music from an early age. I even played the drums at one point. Prog, heavy metal, rock. I've got the complete collection of Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd on my computer. I often sit in my leather chair and watch movies or listen to music."



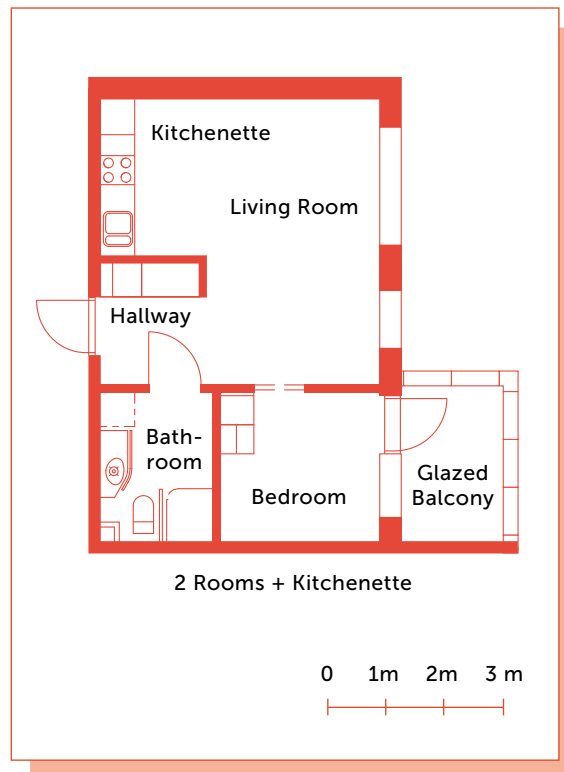
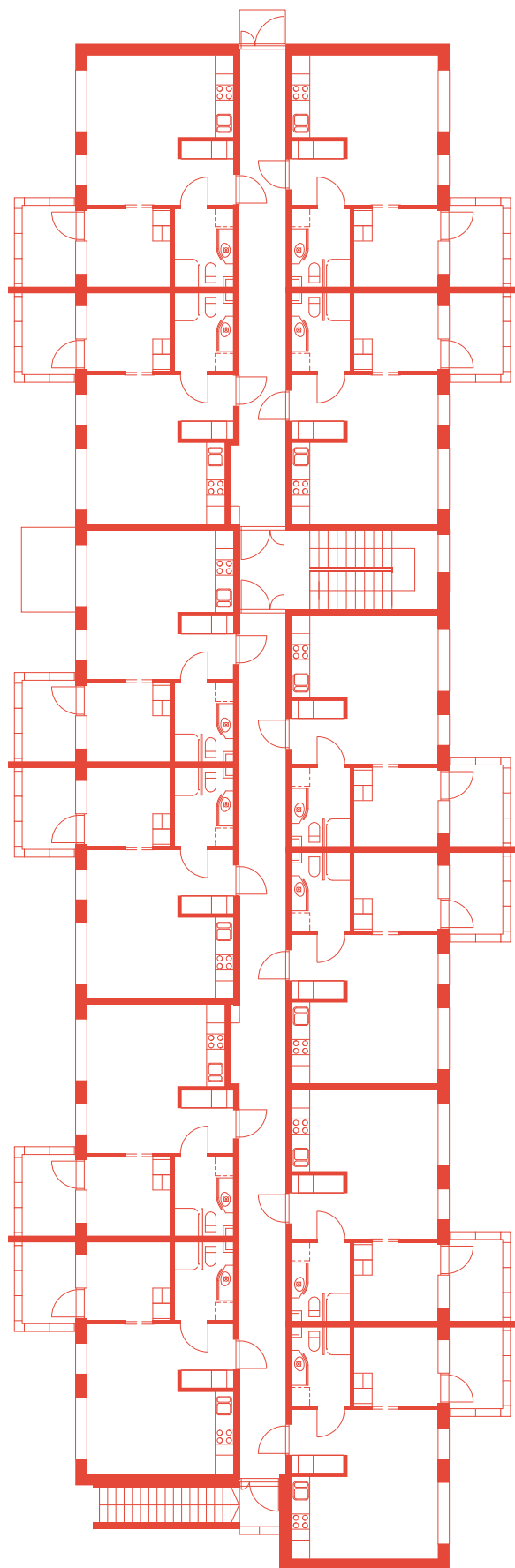


*“For me, the essential things at home are a music and home theatre system and the computer connected to them. Not a day goes by without music. It’s a bit of a sanctuary for me.”*



*This Vainölä resident listens to a lot of Finnish music, especially the singer Topi Sorsakoski.*





**FIGURE |** Typical Väinölä apartment

**FIGURE |** Väinölä supported housing unit floor plan, Residential Floor

### *Väinölä supported housing unit in numbers*

- Built in 2014
- 33 apartments: thirty-one 36m<sup>2</sup> studios, two 50m<sup>2</sup> two-room apartments
- 35 residents
- Average age of residents: 50 years
- 11 employees: a unit director, 8 licensed practical nurses, a low threshold work activity coordinator and a low threshold work activity coach.
- In spring 2017, two of Väinölä residents had a day job, a few were in pay subsidy supported work and two were studying.

#### **ALL APARTMENTS HAVE:**

- A glazed balcony (where smoking is allowed)
- Air conditioning
- Laminate flooring
- A bed
- A table
- Two chairs
- Fireproof bedding
- Fireproof curtains

#### **If necessary, the resident can also get:**

- A saucepan
- A plate
- A spoon
- A knife
- A fork
- A glass

**INCLUDED IN RENT:** Internet and water, but as in almost all Finnish rental apartments the electricity contract is made by the tenant.

All apartments are accessible for people with disabilities.

*A sturdy lock was recently removed from the communal sauna's changing room door. The Väänölä residents decided at a community meeting that there was no need for it, since other people's sauna times should be respected regardless.*



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## GOOD TO KNOW

### Finnish sauna culture

Finland is a country with over 5 million people and over 2 million saunas. Finns think of saunas not as a luxury, but as a necessity. Most apartment buildings either have a shared sauna where residents can reserve weekly sauna times or individual saunas in each apartment.



## A home where someone supports you

When discussing residents' issues with them, the staff at Väinölä aim to do it in their homes. A home provides security, so instead of the resident having to leave their home the counsellor comes to them. For example, the counsellor will accompany the resident to the doctor's if necessary.

Using intoxicants in common areas of the unit or bringing them there is forbidden. This also applies to common garden areas. Residents are free to do what they like in their own homes – within the Act on Residential Leases regulating rental housing in Finland, of course.

For the residents, the apartments are homes, but due to safety regulation requirements some things in Väinölä resemble institutional housing. The apartments have sprinklers and fireproof curtains, for example, and the apartments are connected to an automatic fire alarm system. Each apartment can be fitted with a security alarm system and a panic button, which residents can push to alert staff. Pushing the button connects the alarm to the staff's phone.

Staff is present in Väinölä around the clock to ensure the safety of the residents. There is camera surveillance in the public spaces of the house. The cameras only have to be relied on when something has happened that needs to be checked on the security footage. These kinds of situations are rare. Väinölä also cooperates with a security company. A security guard can be called if necessary. Staff also have panic buttons at their disposal, which alert a security guard at nighttime and in daytime the alarm goes to the unit's other phones.

Although the staff have received training in the care profession, health care services for the residents are not provided in the supported housing

unit but by the health centre. If necessary, nurses of other Salvation Army units are available but the goal is for residents to use social services just like everyone else. Counsellors can help residents book a time from the health centre and help them get there, for example. Likewise, they assist with other issues such as trusteeship or applying for benefits.

In 2017, three years after the supported housing unit was opened, fifteen of the original residents of Väinölä still live there. Many have moved to live in ordinary rental apartments, and two of the original residents have passed away.

Väinölä can be a home for life, or a pit stop for people who are moving from homelessness towards ordinary living. Some people's conditions may have surprisingly worsened as they have moved to Väinölä. Once long-term homelessness is over, the resident gets to breathe a sigh of relief. That is when illnesses may strike or be detected. Help is always near in Väinölä. That is also why the thought of moving somewhere else can feel difficult, especially for those who are not so young anymore.

But many people still wish to move on from Väinölä. They have received the necessary amount of support for their life management so that they have the courage to begin life in an ordinary rental apartment. The most important thing is that the residents themselves get to decide when they move out. Residents are encouraged to strive forward but there is no emphasis on the need to move out. A resident needs sufficient time to rebuild their life in a stable environment after going through a difficult period. If and when the resident is ready for it, they can move out. Any solution can be the right one as long as it is made by the resident themselves.

THE Y-FOUNDATION	THE CITY OF ESPOO	THE SALVATION ARMY
<i>Had Väinölä constructed. As the owner of the property Y-Foundation is responsible for the management of the property.</i>	<i>Rents the building from the Y-Foundation. Rents the apartments out to residents chosen by the city's department of social services. Conducted the competitive tendering process of the service provider.</i>	<i>Won the competitive tendering process and therefore provides the services in Väinölä. Pays the employees' salaries.</i>

*Three actors, one supported housing unit*

## KEY CONCEPTS

### Community meeting

In the units that use community work methods, one of the most important everyday practices are community meetings in which all the major decisions concerning the unit and its residents are made. Staff and those residents who wish to attend take part in the meetings. Sometimes the meetings are about revising house rules, sometimes decisions over new purchases are on the agenda. The principle is that the staff does not make decisions concerning residents before discussing with them first. The idea behind it is a thought that arises from the principles of community work (see page 27).

## KEY CONCEPTS

### Service plan

A service plan is made for each resident with the purpose of supporting the resident towards goal-oriented action and life management. It is made in cooperation with the resident, floor counsellors and a social worker. The plan is updated at least every six months. In addition to life management, the plan helps staff provide the kind of guidance and support that the resident needs.



*There was some confusion with laundry times, so Väänölä community meeting decided to put a new booking system in use.*





MALE, 58

## “Things are good as they are”

I lost my own apartment in 2010 because of alcohol. I initially spent a month in hospital because of health problems. From there, I was directed to a supported housing unit meant for substance abuse rehabilitees for six months. After that I lived in a unit with social services meant for the long-term homeless for four and a half years. I was the only resident who did not need help with making it through everyday life. Eventually, the social workers also started to wonder why I had been placed there. I then moved into a halfway house for substance abuse rehabilitees.

Now I have a 36.5-square-metre studio apartment in Väinölä. You can't even compare it to the places I lived in before. They did not feel like home. In the housing unit with social services, you marched to a routine: you had breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and supper. In halfway houses you lived in dorms and there were curfews. What having my own apartment means to me is that I don't have to be on my toes all the time. I have a roof over my head.

I enjoy being in Väinölä. I don't particularly need any help with living, but I think it's good that staff will call or visit if a resident hasn't been seen for three days. It doesn't bother me that someone can enter my apartment, but I do know that it bothers some people.

The best thing about my apartment is that it's really quiet here. The neighbours don't bother me. There's enough space – one person doesn't need any more. I've received a disability pension for ten years. At home I watch TV, listen to music and browse the internet. I spend a lot of time on my computer, because I do genealogy and read all kinds of things related to music.

Every now and then in Väinölä I participate in work activity packaging reflectors, and I go to the common areas for my morning coffee and lunch. If I don't feel like being alone in the evenings, there are always people to chat with in the common area.

I get along well with the other residents; I've made friends here. We talk about all sorts of things and watch TV together. Of course, not everyone will even come and talk when there is no common language to communicate in.

I haven't had any alcohol for over five years and am a support person for a few friends. I hope that in the future my health will stay stable at the least, if not improve. I want to stay and live in Väinölä, I don't have any urge to leave. Things are good as they are.”



## FEMALE, 59

## “I’m someone again”

“I could never have imagined that I would become homeless. In the summer of 2014, they started renovating the facade of the building in Espoo where I had a city rental apartment. I have asthma, so I couldn’t stay there. I decided to end the tenancy. I thought I would find a new apartment by the autumn. I lived with my friends for the summer. When I couldn’t find a flat, I was offered a temporary place through the social services office.

Even though I had a roof over my head, I was officially homeless. That made everything feel uncertain. I felt like I was a second-class citizen, a reject. I started blaming myself and wondered if I could have done something differently. Society treats homeless people in a certain way. When they ask for your address at the bank, for example, their attitude changes once you give them a poste restante address. I think that’s unfair. Why does society stigmatise the homeless, when many of them can’t do anything about their situation?

I was officially homeless for eight months. Then I was offered an apartment in Vainölä. Moving to Vainölä was tough because I was used to living alone. It took months until I got used to the other people around me. When I heard their stories, I understood that many others had it worse than I did.

I lived in Vainölä for almost a year, but I wanted to get my own place. I sent an application to the Y-Foundation, and two months later I was offered an apartment.

This is the best apartment I have lived in. I have two rooms with laminate flooring, and the apartment has a sauna and a glazed balcony. The apartment building is quiet and my neighbours are friendly. One of them gave me a good shoe rack since mine was shaky.

An apartment means security – now I have a home to return to. I feel important again now that I am responsible for my own life. I am someone again, I am me. I feel that I have to take care of my own business now. I can’t wait for the tenth of May. That’s when I’ll get a permanent lease. We initially signed a one-year lease with the foundation, just to make sure that everything goes well.

I’m retired but I have a tremendous amount of things to do! Lots of people take naps, but I don’t have enough hours in the day for that. I’m studying upper secondary school courses. I’m especially interested in psychology and philosophy. We get together with my friends every few weeks to talk about literature, history and politics. Writing is important to me and I would like to write an autobiography some day.”





MALE, 18

## “Even cleaning feels different”

“I got my own room for the first time in my life when I moved into my own flat a bit over two months ago. Previously I’ve lived at my mum or dad’s with my siblings. Sometimes there were even four of us siblings under the same roof. For the last three years we lived in a two-room apartment with my dad and little brother.

I’ve seen how my friends have struggled with finding an apartment. I’ve heard how hard it is running from one apartment viewing to another and still always getting a no. People tend to be pigeonholed when looking for apartments, and many people probably have prejudices against a young single guy. Of course landlords want the most reliable tenants possible.

I got into the A Home that Fits project which combines work and housing for young people. I live together with a flatmate in an apartment rented out by the Y-Foundation and we do 20 hours of work in the project each month. Our job is to help the area’s inhabitants with their daily chores. We go to the store with the elderly people next door or help them use a computer.

My flatmate and I didn’t know each other beforehand but we get along well. We have a 60-square-metre apartment with our own rooms, a shared kitchen and a bathroom.

The first four nights in the new flat were pretty exciting, when I was sleeping in an empty room in a sleeping bag on a mattress. If you don’t have anything of your own in a home, it doesn’t feel like one. But I settled in quickly once I got some furniture and dishes. I got a wide bed since I finally have room for one.

For the first time it feels like I have my own things. It was fun to notice how even cleaning feels different now. In my childhood home it felt like compulsory housework, but now it feels like leisure time when I’m cleaning and listening to music in my own flat.

I don’t spend a lot of time at home because I have a lot to keep me busy. I’m studying to be a youth and leisure instructor, and I do organisational and voluntary work with young people and children. I organise camps, workshops and events.

I think that if life is a journey, an apartment is a pit stop, a place to rest. I want to live by the idea that home is where the heart is. The feeling of safety and warmth can be found somewhere else than at home, too.”



MALE, 44

## “No one gets sober when they are homeless”

“My housing situation has been quite the roller coaster ride. Every once in a while I meet a woman, move into her place and then stupidly terminate my own lease. And when we’ve eventually broken up, I’ve been the one who’s had to leave. Over the years, there have been periods when I’ve been living in parks, public toilets, stairwells and paper recycling bins. At times I lived in a car.

A few years ago when I broke up with my girlfriend, I bought a tent and a sleeping bag and moved into a park located on a hill for the summer. The best spot in Helsinki, my friends called it. I took down the tent every morning and went to the nearby boat terminal to shave my beard and brush my teeth. I cooked in a disposable grill. During the day I would go around looking for empty bottles in waste containers to recycle for money. Sometimes I found things to sell. I often found food too.

I lived in a Salvation Army housing unit for some time. Then the social work field instructor wrote me a letter of recommendation for the Y-Foundation. I got my current 46-square-metre two-room apartment in less than a year.

At the moment I’m unemployed. I’ve previously worked in restaurants and done social work. I would like to go back to work, but it is difficult due to my back pain. I’m waiting to go into surgery.

Looking back, the times I spent homeless seem pretty wild. At worst, I would leave a bar dressed in a suit and tie and go sleep in a paper recycling bin for the night. Homelessness does have its charm, however. You’re not tied down to anything. But it’s very demanding. You have to always think about where you’re going to sleep and wash. Violence is a part of life too. I was mugged once, and got badly beaten up.

The toughest was a winter when we lived in a park with friends. We had mattresses under tarps in the bushes and there could be up to six of us sleeping in a public toilet. It had a roof, but it certainly wasn’t warm. I still keep in touch with those friends. Most of them have got roofs over their heads now.

Homelessness also meant daily alcohol use. It was not so much about getting drunk, but a way to pass the time. When I’ve had an apartment, I’ve spent several months without drinking. You can’t get sober when you’re homeless, no one can.

I enjoy being at home. But I’ve always liked outdoor life. I wouldn’t go camping in the centre of Helsinki anymore, but I’m looking forward to the summer and going hiking in nature. Now, if I have an argument with my girlfriend I can just go to my own apartment. It’s easy to leave when I have keys of my own in my pocket.”



MALE, 48

## “I got really lucky”



“I moved to Finland from the United States in 2009. Back there I had a nice apartment and a successful business. When the financial crisis hit, I knew things were going to be bad in America for a long time. My father is from Finland so I did some research and found out there was a market for my business. I left a lot of things behind me, but I would not have been able to live with myself if I hadn’t tried it.

I got my business up and running and everything was going well at first. I even paid back half of the loan in advance. Then the financial crisis hit Finland and affected my business. I had an expensive apartment in Helsinki and I spent a lot of money on fixing my car. I had some problems with a couple of my employees. Then summer came along and suddenly there was no work – in America summer was one of the busiest times and it didn’t occur to me that during summer the whole of Finland stands still. I needed the money that I had paid back to the bank.

So the business went down and I got evicted from my apartment because of circumstances that were just out of my control. It felt like a nightmare, so surreal. I had to move my things to my employee’s house and go live in a hostel.

My secretary at the time told me about the Y-Foundation. I got really lucky, because it only took about a month and a half to find an apartment. I suffer from back pains caused by an old injury, so I needed a place on the bottom floor and a working elevator. This place had everything. It was such a salvation out of the blue. I have been here for over three years now. The neighbourhood is incredibly sedate and I have the nicest, quiet neighbours. There is a new sauna downstairs. I just love to sit there for a long time. It helps heal the pains. I actually was a big sauna fan even before I came to Finland.

After I left America, the rents skyrocketed. Now there are tent cities everywhere, with even veterans living there. Finns would never let that happen to their own. The only thing I miss about America is the food!

Despite everything, I have never regretted coming to Finland. I am much happier than a couple of years ago because I don’t have to worry about ending up on the streets. My injuries are slowly healing up.

There are many businesses that I would like start up. I make an excellent American-style pizza and I would love to start a pizza parlour. Now I am working on the business plan. Having this apartment has provided me the ability to return to normal life and start planning the future again.”



## 5

## Housing-Related Financial Support in Finland

Many types of support are available for housing in Finland. These examples illustrate the types of support people can get.



### JOBLESS JOHANNA

- Lives in a rental apartment.
- Receives unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are dependent on, among other things, Johanna's employment history (time in employment and duration of unemployment) and whether she belongs to an unemployment fund. An unemployment fund is often an organisation working in liaison with a trade union, and it answers for the unemployment benefits of its members under certain conditions by paying an unemployment allowance that is proportionate to a person's earnings.
- Since Johanna's unemployment benefits are small, she also receives general housing allowance.
- If Johanna still does not have enough money to cover her necessary expenses, she can apply for social assistance. Social assistance has to be applied for separately each month. It is a last-resort form of support and so all the income and assets available to the person or family affect its amount. Before applying for social assistance, a person has to apply for the primary benefits they are entitled to. Social assistance can only be used for expenses defined in the Act on Social Assistance.



### SIMO THE SINGLE FATHER

- A father of 1- and 2-year-olds, looks after his children at home.
- Lives in an owner-occupied apartment.
- Receives home care allowance and child benefit.
- If the children's mother does not take care of their maintenance or pay child support, Simo is entitled to receive a maintenance allowance from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland.
- Since Simo's benefits are not enough to pay the family's housing expenses he also receives general housing allowance.
- If Simo still does not have enough money to cover his basic expenses, he can apply for social assistance.

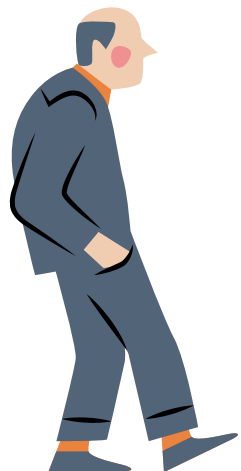
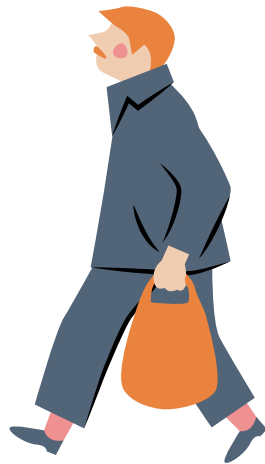


### STEFAN THE STUDENT

- Receives student financial aid, which includes a study grant and student loan guarantee.
- Receives general housing allowance.
- Does part-time work as a florist's assistant during peak times. Can earn small amounts of money without it affecting the amount of support he receives.
- If Stefan still does not have enough money to cover his necessary expenses, he can apply for social assistance.

**LOW-INCOME LASSE**

- Lives in a rental apartment.
- Is employed as a part-time warehouse worker, but the salary is not enough to pay his rent.
- Receives general housing allowance, the amount of which is determined by the joint income of Lasse and his live-in partner.
- If Lasse still does not have enough money for his necessary expenses, he can apply for social assistance.

**DANIEL THE DISABILITY PENSIONER**

- Lives in a rental apartment in a supported housing unit, with his own lease.
- Receives disability pension.
- Because Daniel's benefits are not enough to pay the rent, he also receives pensioners' housing allowance.
- If Daniel still does not have enough money for his necessary expenses, he can apply for social assistance.

**GOOD TO KNOW****Maintenance charge in owner-occupied apartments**

In Finland, limited liability housing companies usually own dwellings in apartment buildings and terraced houses. When a person buys an apartment there, they become a shareholder in the limited liability housing company. The maintenance charge is a payment that the stakeholder is required to pay the company to cover its maintenance expenses.

**PIRKKO THE PENSIONER**

- Lives as a widow in an owner-occupied apartment, so she only has to pay the maintenance charge.
- Receives earnings-based pension.
- Receives pensioners' housing allowance because her pension is not large enough to cover the maintenance charge.
- If Pirkko still does not have enough money for her basic expenses, she can apply for social assistance.

## 6

## Actors and Money in the Housing First Model

Housing First work is cooperative work. Even the way in which housing policy is organised in Finland leads to the need for the involvement of several actors. Apartments are being built by cities, private companies and other organisations.

Cooperation that extends over sectoral boundaries is important also in terms of reviewing costs in reducing long-term homelessness. For example, increased costs in arranging housing often mean savings elsewhere. Research has shown that providing a stable home for a long-term homeless person increases costs in the short-term but cuts costs in the long-term. Living on the streets technically costs society nothing, but rough sleepers usually place a burden on expensive emergency acute services such as the police and hospitals.

Finland traditionally has a wide non-profit and voluntary sector. Various organisations such as the Y-Foundation have long been involved in the work on homelessness. The role of the third sector has been irreplaceable. The organisations' share of housing production was agreed upon as the National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness (PAAVO I and II) were being implemented. The state's strong guidance and the budget it allocated for reducing homelessness helped different actors significantly reduce homelessness together. Producing affordable housing is the most important way of reducing homelessness. For example, various cities and other organisations in Finland have constructed affordable state subsidised apartments.

### *How does the state support the construction of affordable housing?*

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) has a major role in the implementation of homelessness policies. ARA awards subsidies, grants and guarantees related to housing and construction.

They are:

*A state guarantee and interest subsidies for building social housing.*

*Investment subsidies for improving the housing conditions of groups with special needs, for example, homeless people, disabled people and students. The subsidy is 10–50 percent of the approved investment costs.*

*Grants for housing advice services (a maximum of 35 percent of the costs).*

*These actors reduced homelessness together during 2012–2015 (PAAVO II)*

### THE STATE

The Ministry of the Environment put into action and coordinated The Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness.

The letter of intent between the state and cities on the implementation of the programme was signed by:

- The Ministry of the Environment
- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health
- The Ministry of Justice
- The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA)
- Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY)
- The Criminal Sanctions Agency

### MUNICIPALITIES

11 Finnish cities where homelessness was the worst problem: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Lahti, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Joensuu, Kuopio, Turku and Pori. They all drafted their own operational programmes in which the objectives and measures were tailored to correspond to the national programme's aims.

### NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

Implemented separate projects as part of the programme. The projects aimed to improve the housing situation of released prisoners and prevent youth homelessness, for example.

### GOOD TO KNOW

#### The floating support service LIITU

LIITU is a service model developed by the city of Pori. In LIITU two psychiatric nurses and two practical nurses operate in a mobile service team. The team travels to residents in scattered housing homes. The LIITU team monitors how the clients are doing and encourage them to engage in meaningful activity. They support the clients' daily life, such as keeping the apartment clean, taking care of personal hygiene and nutrition. LIITU offers its services, for example, to people in challenging life situations and those who have just moved into their own apartment. Cities can arrange floating support themselves or buy services from other service providers.



## HELSINKI | Population 635,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>750 dwellings or supported housing apartments for the long-term homeless</p> <p>Housing in shelters to be discontinued by 2013</p> <p>In addition, various projects to support work on homelessness</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>424 dwellings were completed in supported housing units</p> <p>Various organisations allocated 226 dwellings for scattered housing</p> <p>285 youth dwellings were completed</p> <p>382 evictions were cancelled</p> <p>Shelter housing discontinued</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 24% from 2008 to 2015</p>

## VANTAA | Population 219,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Acquiring 85 dwellings</p> <p>100 newly built dwelling places</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>A total of 136 dwellings were completed in two supported housing units</p> <p>Organisations allocated a few dwellings for scattered housing</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 11% from 2008 to 2015</p>

## ESPOO | Population 274,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Settling 225 homeless people into the social rental housing stock annually</p> <p>Constructing 125 dwellings and organising support for the long-term homeless</p> <p>Among other things, three plots of land were also allocated to rental housing for young people</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>118 apartments were completed in supported housing units</p> <p>70 youth dwellings were completed</p> <p>455 dwellings from the city's limited liability rental housing companies were allocated for homeless</p> <p>Other organisations allocated 120 dwellings for scattered housing support use</p> <p>178 evictions were cancelled</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 36% from 2008 to 2015</p>

## TAMPERE | Population 228,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>120 dwellings for the homeless from the city's social rental housing stock</p> <p>106 dwellings or supported housing apartments for the long-term homeless</p> <p>Also developing the housing services for, among others, young people, substance abuse and mental health rehabilitees and those entering supervised probation</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>26 dwellings were completed in supported housing units</p> <p>The city and other organisations allocated 271 dwellings for scattered housing</p> <p>32 evictions were cancelled</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 74% from 2008 to 2015</p>

## LAHTI | Population 119,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Providing 58 dwellings or supported housing for the long-term homeless</p> <p>Shelter housing to be discontinued</p> <p>Additionally, increasing the efficiency of the social rental housing stock in housing the homeless and investing in the prevention of homelessness by employing housing advisors, among other things</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>92 dwellings or dwelling places were acquired for the long-term homeless</p> <p>The city allocated 123 and other organisations 191 and the city allocated 123 separate dwellings for scattered housing use</p> <p>Shelter housing was discontinued</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 71% from 2008 to 2015</p>

## TURKU | Population 187,000

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Allocating 20–30 dwellings or supported apartments annually for the long-term homeless or those under threat of homelessness</p> <p>The main focus was on preventing youth homelessness and improving young people's life management</p>
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	<p>Organisations and the city's limited liability rental housing companies allocated 203 separate dwellings for scattered housing use</p> <p>The TALK project was implemented, which developed young people's independent living after institutional or family care and instilled functional models into the work on homelessness</p> <p>Total number of long-term homeless fell by 49% from 2008 to 2015</p>

**JYVÄSKYLÄ | Population 138,000**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Acquiring 12 dwellings for long-term homeless young adults Also strengthening preventive measures and support services in scattered rental housing, among other things
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	16 dwellings were completed in supported housing units 12 dwellings specifically allocated to young long-term homeless people The city's limited liability rental housing companies allocated 178 dwellings for scattered housing Other organisations allocated 15 dwellings for scattered housing support use Total number of long-term homeless fell by 40% from 2008 to 2015

**JOENSUU | Population 76,000**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Among other things, launching the Housing Support Point, preventing youth homelessness, housing released prisoners and providing more housing advice
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	18 apartments in the Housing Support Point were renovated for the long-term homeless The city's limited liability rental housing companies allocated 110 dwellings for scattered housing Other organisation allocated 17 dwellings for scattered housing support use 7 evictions were cancelled Total number of long-term homeless fell by 74% from 2008 to 2015

**KUOPIO | Population 117,000**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Providing 55 apartments for the long-term homeless Producing youth housing on two plots of land Implementing a project aimed at young people who use intoxicants
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	45 dwellings were completed in supported housing units 45 separate dwellings were allocated for scattered housing 46 evictions were cancelled Total number of homeless fell from 2008 to 2015, but long-term homelessness increased by 36%

**OULU | Population 200,000**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Among other things, creating and implementing an operating model for housing guidance and advice, developing preventive measures and providing novel housing solutions targeted at the long-term homeless
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	21 supported dwellings in youth housing were allocated for young long-term homeless people In addition, housing advice was introduced and a project that helped people hold on to their dwellings despite substance abuse problems was implemented Total number of long-term homeless fell by 68% from 2008 to 2015

**PORI | Population 85,000**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Allocating 60–80 dwellings for the long-term homeless from the rental housing stock Transforming the shelter for men into a supported housing unit Also increasing housing advice, among other things
<b>FULFILMENT</b>	13 evictions were cancelled The shelter was closed down and replaced with a supported housing unit In addition, two daytime support units and the floating support service LIITU were founded. Total number of long-term homeless fell by 51% from 2008 to 2015

As an example of the cooperation, the letter of intent between the state and the city of Helsinki (2012–2015) to eliminate long-term homelessness can be found in the appendices (pages 112–127).

**FIGURE |** Where did the money come from during 2012–2015?

THE HOUSING FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRE OF FINLAND, ARA		
<b>22 M€</b> <i>in investment grants for the modification of shelters and separate projects, among other things</i>	<b>2,2 M€</b> <i>in housing advice grants</i>	
THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH, STM		
<b>10 M€</b> <i>for the wage costs of support staff</i>		
FINLAND'S SLOT MACHINE ASSOCIATION, RAY		
<b>65 M€</b> <i>Total contribution to the programme exceeded 65 million euros, of which:</i>		
<b>32,3 M€</b> <i>in housing advice grants</i>	<b>14,5 M€</b> <i>in investment grants for constructing youth apartments</i>	<b>18,6 M€</b> <i>in operating grants for development projects, for example</i>

Source: Statistics Finland

**FIGURE |** How much money (€) the state allocated to cities for hiring support staff during 2012–2015?

	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
<b>Espoo</b>	1,170,000	920,000	920,000	235,000	3,245,000
<b>Helsinki</b>	1,178,000	1,320,000	1,320,000	465,000	4,283,000
<b>Joensuu</b>	68,500	80,000	80,000	61,000	289,500
<b>Jyväskylä</b>	26,667	50,000	80,000	50,000	206,667
<b>Kuopio</b>	46,000	78,000	159,000	53,000	336,000
<b>Lahti</b>	37,000	37,500	38,000	22,000	134,500
<b>Oulu</b>	37,000	80,000	80,000	53,000	250,000
<b>Tampere</b>	85,000	0	160,000	110,000	355,000
<b>Turku</b>	74,000	76,000	76,912	0	226,912
<b>Vantaa</b>	13,950	184,500	340,000	195,000	733,450
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,736,117 €</b>	<b>2,826,000 €</b>	<b>3,253,912 €</b>	<b>1,244,000 €</b>	<b>10,060,029 €</b>

Source: Karppinen &amp; Fredriksson



## KEY CONCEPTS

## RAY, Veikkaus and STEA

RAY (short for *Raha-automaattiyhdistys*, Finland's Slot Machine Association) was the national non-profit gaming company in Finland. In 2017, the previous three operators Fintoto, RAY, and Veikkaus merged into a single gaming company owned by the Finnish State, Veikkaus Oy.

RAY was a gaming and slot machine monopoly whose proceedings went to domestic charity causes such as social welfare and health. Today Veikkaus games are estimated to generate nearly one billion euros per year.

The Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) manages the funding granted for projects that are non-profit by nature and promote health and well-being using the gaming revenue of Veikkaus Oy.

## KEY CONCEPTS

## FEANTSA and the Housing First Europe Hub

**FEANTSA** is the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless. FEANTSA brings together non-profit services that support homeless people in Europe. It has over 130 member organisations from 30 countries. Finnish FEANTSA member organisations include the No Fixed Abode NGO (Vailla vaki-naista asuntoa ry) and the Y-Foundation, The Helsinki Deaconess Institute and The Finnish Youth Housing Association NAL.

**THE HOUSING FIRST EUROPE HUB** is a joint venture of the Y-Foundation and FEANTSA along with more than 15 partners. It is a European platform that aims to further develop and promote the Housing First principle in Europe. The Hub also shares learning and promotes up scaling the Housing First.

## KEY CONCEPTS

## The Networking for Development Project

A network approach has been used since the beginning in the development of the Housing First work. In cities, people worked in local networks, or networks were formed by people working on the same themes, such as youth work. In 2013, the Networking for Development Project was set up for coordinating national development of the Housing First.

The project brings together actors doing the Housing First work. The shared network aims to spread information, skills and know-how. In its first phase in 2013–2015, Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY) funded the project. Now, the project operates with funding from the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA), which is granted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Initially, the main goal was to strengthen the role of non-governmental organisations in developing services for the homeless and to clarify and establish the Housing First principle. Since then, the project has become an aggregator of the Housing First development work. The goal is to have as wide a platform as possible for connecting different experts.

Five organisations are involved in the Networking for Development Project's work. Each has its own area of responsibility

that is determined by their primary area of expertise. The Y-Foundation is responsible for the coordination of the project. Its area of expertise is related to leasing apartments. The No Fixed Abode NGO is specialised in expertise by experience, the Rauma Region Street Mission in the floating support, the Helsinki Deaconess Institute in community work, neighbourhood work and young people with multiple challenges and the Finnish Blue Ribbon in meeting homeless people with multiple problems. The network is open to anyone who wishes to join.

The network developers organise trainings and seminars free of charge. Co-creation and learning by doing are central ways of operating. Themes for the training sessions are chosen based on whichever topics the network deems important, such as rental housing legislation. Pilot projects are launched to find new solutions for preventing homelessness. For example, multidisciplinary floating support work and evaluating social work done on homelessness have originally evolved from pilot projects.

The Networking for Development Project participates in international cooperation through the Y-Foundation's networks and the Housing First Europe Hub.

*“The most valuable thing is raw data from the field.”*

## Experts by experience help on all levels

In service design, the client’s perspective is usually the main focus. This hasn’t been the case in the work on homelessness: the service users, i.e. homeless people, are a target group who do not pay for using the service themselves. This means services can easily end up being produced on the terms of a service provider or service buyer. Homeless people are often thought of as recipients of assistance and that they should humbly accept all help they are offered. This is a problem that has been tackled in Finland with experts by experience i.e. people who have personally experienced homelessness in one way or another. Generally, they have moved forward in life and got an apartment, so homelessness is part of their history. Being an expert by with experience demands a certain degree of commitment to the work, which can be difficult if the person still lacks an apartment of their own.

When the National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness was set up, people with lived experience had a seat on the steering committee. The point of view of people with firsthand experience of homelessness is crucial for building the right kinds of services.

When cooperating with other experts, people with lived experience do meaningful work and have a feeling of involvement and empowerment. At best, this has inspired them to also work in other spheres of social work.

*“People who have been homeless for a long time are typically a group who, do not vote or aren’t otherwise active politically, so taking on the role of experts by experience is a way for them to use their voice”,* says **Jussi Lehtonen**, Supported Housing Manager of the organisation of the homeless, No Fixed Abode NGO.

In Finland, the No Fixed Abode NGO has been working with people with lived experience for a long time. The organisation was founded by the homeless themselves in 1986. The organisation employs experts by experience, as well as peer instructors in housing support work. It has also studied and helped establish the use of experts by experience through various projects.

Although the primary role of people with first hand experience is to bring knowledge and insight into the work on homelessness, expertise by experience includes much more than simply answering queries, such as cooperating with authorities or attending working groups where work on homelessness is planned.

*“The most valuable thing is raw data from the field. If a formerly homeless person trains as a licensed practical nurse, for example, the training immediately changes their way of thinking. That is why it is important to always hear out those who have the latest experiences of what it means to be homeless in Finland and what measures will take things forward”,* says Lehtonen.

The life situation of people with lived experience can be fragile and the role can be a new one for them. It is therefore important to offer them support in the form of supervision of work, for example (see page 28).

Expertise by experience is being implemented internationally by the European network of experts by experience, HOPE (Homeless People). The European umbrella organisation of work on homelessness, FEANTSA, also aims to make use of expertise by experience and highlight its importance.

## GOOD TO KNOW

### Types of experts by experience

#### REPRESENTATIVE A FORMERLY HOMELESS PERSON’S POINT OF VIEW:

Bringing their point of view to trainings, meetings or working groups, among other places.

#### A TRAINED PERSON WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE:

Participates in, for instance, the city’s working group on homelessness or housing. Gets paid through an organisation.

#### A PEER INSTRUCTOR:

A formerly homeless person who works as a support worker in housing services, and is usually partnered with a professional. Gets paid by the housing service provider.

## 7

## Housing First, but What Comes Next?

In the Housing First model, housing is the first step towards a better life but the real work begins once housing has been secured. In addition to housing, residents receive the support they need to help them become a part of society again. At the same time an effort is made to strengthen both the residents' grip on their own life and their participation in society.

Support can be provided at home, both in an ordinary rental apartment and a supported housing unit. Staff in a supported housing unit can be reached around the clock. For those living in scattered housing, one important support provider can be a housing advice service that directs people to social services when necessary.

*A peer support person can act as an interpreter between the authority and the resident.*

### Forms of support work

Neighbourhood work and low-threshold work activity are just one form of support work offered to supported housing unit residents. Providing the resident with tailored support after housing has been arranged is an essential part of the Housing First principle.

*In supported housing units, the support provided for a resident* is determined by what has been written down with them in their service plan. The support needs are reviewed at regular intervals. (The support received by residents of the Väinölä supported housing unit is described in detail on page 50.)

If the residents who need support live in scattered housing, *the support will be provided to them at home if necessary*. For example, it can be agreed that a support worker or registered nurse will visit them regularly. In some cases, scattered homes have been placed close to or connected to supported housing units, in which case the unit's support is nearby and available.

The ultimate goal of all support is to help residents get the kind of grip on life that enables them to survive by using the same services that society provides to everyone. *Strengthening the residents' agency and involvement in their own lives* is central to support work in the Housing First model. That is why the resident and the staff plan the forms of support together. When providing support, the aim is to not do things for

the residents but to help them do things themselves, with the exception of medical and health care, of course.

*Peer support* is a good way to strengthen the residents' involvement in their own lives in such a way that they do not experience feelings of inferiority. Support can be provided, for example, in peer support groups or a designated person can act as a peer support person. A peer understands and knows how to offer support in a different way than a professional. A peer can also speak the same language as the resident. Sometimes workers may resort to using professional jargon, in which case a peer support person can act as an interpreter between the authority and the resident.

*Housing advice* has been proven to be an effective way of helping residents hold on to their apartments or to get one. A housing advisor can help with problems such as paying the rent and applying for support. Housing advice can be organised by the municipality or an organisation, for example. (Housing advice is described in more detail on page 87.)

### Neighbourhood work promotes integration

In Finland, substance abuse and mental health rehabilitees' institutions, for example, have traditionally been located far away from densely populated areas. As a result of the Housing First model, when institutions have been closed down and the approach to work has shifted towards home-based floating support work, rehabilitees have begun to appear in places where other people also conduct their daily business. The same applies to supported housing units set up for the long-term homeless.

Not everyone has liked the development and at times the so-called NIMBY phenomenon (not in my backyard) has raised its head. Many accept the units in principle and consider providing help and housing to be a good thing – as long as the units are not built in their own neighbourhood. Residents of the area may become worried about what sorts of side effects the upcoming supported housing unit will bring to the neighbourhood. Will the neighbourhood become dangerous or less peaceful? Will the properties lose their value?

When Finns have been asked what group of people they do not want as their neighbours, people with substance abuse disorders top the list. They are followed by alcoholics, people who have committed homicide and mental health rehabilitees. Neighbours of supported housing units often fear that the environment will become restless and unkempt. The so-called neighbourhood work



has been developed in response to the concerns of neighbours. In practice, neighbourhood work means creating and maintaining neighbourhood relations. The goal is to integrate the supported housing unit into the area through the work.

The experiences of neighbourhood work in Finland have been positive. That is why it is still being developed in different areas. In Helsinki, for example, the Ruusulankatu supported housing unit for people with substance abuse problems, which was initially heavily opposed, has now been largely accepted by its neighbours thanks to neighbourhood work. After the first three years of its operation the fears and disturbances of the environment have significantly decreased. Neighbours have also given positive feedback on the fact that they are being heard. The residents have also said that they find neighbourhood work meaningful.

When a new supported housing unit opens, it typically takes about two years for the area to get accustomed to the unit and its residents. It takes about the same amount of time for the unit's residents to adjust well to the environment.

Neighbourhood work is not only done for the sake of the neighbourhood. It equally benefits the supported housing unit's residents. The work helps them feel at home and like they belong in the environment. It can also be thought of as integration, as the purpose of it is to increase the residents' sense of belonging to society. Some municipalities in Finland have a requirement in their competitive tendering process for supported housing units to do neighbourhood work.

Ideally, neighbourhood work is started even before the unit opens. It is important to get in contact with all the area's actors at the start of the activity or before it begins. Important contact information should be distributed to, for example, the area's bulletin boards, convenience stores or electronically through property management agencies. It is also a good idea to have an information session before the start of the activity where those interested can come to listen and talk about the upcoming activity. At the beginning of it, neighbourhood work is done more intensively so the neighbourhood can see that it works.

Neighbourhood work is not one rigid model that has to be strictly followed, but the methods can and should be adapted to the environment.

*Ideally,  
neighbourhood work starts  
before the unit opens.*

## What is neighbourhood work in practice?

### 1. THE TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION

Information can be transmitted from the unit to the neighbourhood by organising open door events or neighbourhood meetings in the unit.

### 2. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Stereotypes don't gain ground if the area's residents get to know each other as fellow human beings. Becoming acquainted with each other increases mutual understanding. Staff should encourage residents of the supported housing unit to interact openly with the rest of the neighbourhood.

### 3. PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION

The key to neighbourhood work is that the residential area, its pleasantness and security, are looked after together with the neighbourhood and the area's residents and other actors such as entrepreneurs and authorities. Partners for cooperation can be churches, residents' associations, kindergartens, schools, and companies.

### 4. LOOKING AFTER THE SECURITY OF THE AREA

The unit's staff can also intervene in disturbances that have not been caused by the unit's residents but by their friends. Cooperation with the police is important. Before the unit is opened, it is a good idea for the police to map the unit's premises and floor plans and to understand what kind of residents are moving into the unit. It is also a good practice for the police to have a universal key to the unit in their possession in order to save time in serious situations.

### 5. LOOKING AFTER THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Picking up litter in the neighbourhood is an extremely valued form of neighbourhood work. Looking after the pleasantness of the neighbourhood also means that the residents themselves do not leave litter behind. The residents can take care of the neighbourhood's green spaces as well. This includes going on walks around the neighbourhood, which can be done by residents or staff.

All observations from the walks (e.g. drug syringes discovered, detected disturbances, contact from the police) are documented with an observation form. This also helps evaluate and develop neighbourhood work.

## How the Helsinki Deaconess Institute does neighbourhood work?

The Helsinki Deaconess Institute has supported housing units all over the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Here is how they do neighbourhood work.

**1. EMERGENCY PHONE.** There is an emergency phone for neighbourhood work, which staff respond to around the clock, every day of the year. When the phone rings, staff will go take a look on foot at what is going on if necessary and think about solutions. An effort is made to immediately answer the concerns of the area's residents and businesses. The staff and residents figure out what is going on, return to the issue and explain how the issue was solved.

*"The neighbourhood has been happy with the phone and that we react immediately",* says Senior Advisor **Juha Soivio**.

**2. MEETINGS.** The unit organises open door events and neighbourhood meetings. In addition, residents and staff regularly meet with authorities: police and city authorities, representatives of local companies and bus companies, says Soivio.

*"We meet with representatives of bus companies for the reason that our residents may be loud on buses or hang out on bus stops, which confuses other locals. We try to find solutions to this together."*

**3. NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKS.** The supported housing unit's residents interact with its neighbourhood on a daily basis. Designated neighbourhood workers make their rounds every day, joined by residents as part of their low-threshold work activity. Together, they walk certain routes, collect litter and exchange pleasantries with the locals.

*"The residents can be nervous about the walks. They often know that they are not welcome or wanted. Many have had positive experiences, however, when they have built up the courage to come along. They have been flattered and pleased that they have been greeted as people."*

The idea is to be visible and easy to contact, including in situations that are not related to disturbances.

*"We get to tell people about what we are doing, and hear what the neighbourhood is talking about or concerned about. This way we can also anticipate events",* Soivio says.

## Low-threshold work activity connects people to society

The work activity organised in supported housing units is low-threshold work activity. This means that no employment contract is made and residents can participate in the activity when they want and are able to do so. Nominal compensation can be received for the work activity. The low-threshold work activity is thus part of the support and assistance that residents receive.

Low-threshold work activity provides structure to the daily life in supported housing units. Work activities often include cooking, maintenance work on the property or in the neighbourhood, or handicrafts. Low-threshold work activity aims to make use of the residents' skills and interests: an avid gardener can take care of the property's plants, and an IT wizard can give lessons for the other residents.

The activity makes people committed and teaches them perseverance. At the same time, residents get the experience of being a part of something and having something meaningful to do. Low-threshold work activity can also rehabilitate participants towards working life. (The low-threshold work activities done in the Vainölä supported housing unit are described on page 39–40.)

## GOOD TO KNOW

### Best practices of neighbourhood work

It is advisable to share the supported housing unit's contact information with the neighbourhood. The phone number can be the unit's emergency on call number, for example. If something happens, the area's other residents are relieved to know they have someone to contact. It is important for calls and enquiries to be answered promptly.

It is useful to put together a cooperation network of the residents' associations and the housing companies' boards. The network is regularly informed about the unit's issues and invited to participate in the activity.

One neighbourhood was concerned about a supported housing unit being built near the school and the children's bus route. The residents of the supported housing unit, in turn, dressed in safety vests and kept watch on the bus stop used by the children, looking after their safety and making sure everyone got to school on time.

A park near another supported housing unit created constant concern for the area's locals. The park had become a drinking spot for the unit's residents and used drug syringes were found. The unit made a maintenance agreement on the park with the city, according to which the unit's residents clean and maintain the park twice a week as part of the neighbourhood work.

## 8

# Preventing Homelessness

The 2008–2015 National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness also focused on preventing homelessness. Since the measures worked for long-term homelessness, it made sense to move to preventing homelessness even more strongly. This was also recommended in 2014 by the international research group's evaluation of Finnish work on homelessness.

In June 2016, the Finnish government accepted the Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland (AUNE). The programme is being carried out together by the state, cities, organisations and service providers and it will continue until 2019. The aim is to continue reducing homelessness on the one hand by preventing homelessness, and on the other hand by preventing the recurrence of homelessness. A national action plan is needed for despite the good results already achieved in reducing homelessness, at the end of 2016 in Finland there were still 6,650 single homeless people and 325 homeless families.

Preventing social exclusion and homelessness go hand in hand. Both require cross-sectoral cooperation. This cooperation has to not only be multidisciplinary but also receive sufficient resources. If the housing, social, health and labour market services each operate strictly within their own sectors, a homeless person may end up going back and forth between services without receiving help for their most critical problem – in other words, left without housing. There must also be sufficient affordable housing or low-threshold multisectoral services available. The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland attempts to address these needs.

## How to get properties to the homeless?

Many property owners are wary of the idea of renting their property to homeless people. These two pilot projects seek new solutions to the problem.

**THE RISK INSURANCE PROJECT** develops solutions similar to household insurance together with insurance companies for those who are not able to get a home insurance, usually due to their bad credit history. It is meant for residents living in supported housing units. One pilot solution is a model where insurance is taken out by the landlord instead of the tenant. The insurance covers wilful damages caused to fixed furnishing as well as damages caused to a third party through negligence, such as water damages that fall outside the housing company's property insurance. The Risk Insurance Project is run by Viadia Pirkanmaa.

**THE INTERMEDIATE RENTING PILOT** was an experiment carried out by the Y-Foundation, Ministry of the Environment and a few Finnish cities. The foundation rented apartments from private owners and rented them forward to apartment seekers designated by the city's social services. Residents had a normal lease under the Act on Residential Leases and at the same time committed to support and early intervention. The main challenge of the pilot was to find small apartments with reasonable rent.

## KEY CONCEPT

### Housing advice services

Housing advice has proved to be one of the most effective ways to reduce homelessness. It can prevent both homelessness and its recurrence. An important milestone was reached at the end of the 1990s, when pioneering city housing advice services were opened in Helsinki. Their activities were carefully documented in the beginning, and many other Finnish cities modeled their own services after them later on.

Anyone can reserve an appointment with a housing advisor and receive advice in things like problems with paying the rent, the potential threat of eviction or applying for social support. In addition to cities, housing advice is organised by companies providing rental housing and organisations such as the Finnish Youth Housing Association and the Y-Foundation. Several organisations and cities also offer similar advice services.

## KEY CONCEPT

### Financial and debt counselling services

Financial and debt counselling services help private citizens to manage their finances and debts. The services assist them in finding solutions related to their finances and in making applications. These services are provided by cities.

The Guarantee Foundation is a national social security organisation that helps people in debt spirals and financially difficult situations. People can apply for a small loan from the foundation for one-time expenses or household purchases, for example. People can also apply for loan guarantees with which a large loan can be obtained from the bank to pay off the small individual loans of people in debt spirals. This is often sensible, as the interest cost of one loan is more reasonable.



**KEY CONCEPT****Ohjaamo one stop guidance centres**

An Ohjaamo is a low-threshold one stop guidance centre meant for 15–29-year-olds. Young people can go to the guidance centre without reserving an appointment and receive advice for questions related to studies, well-being and looking for jobs.

## Goals of the action plan for preventing homelessness in Finland

### 1. Reducing homelessness

All sectors are investing in the prevention of homelessness, as stated in the government action plan for preventing homelessness in Finland. Co-operation between sectors is also being increased. This is done in order to prevent homelessness from occurring and to reduce the number of homeless people despite the state's economic situation.

### 2. Reforming the service system to make it more customer-oriented and preventive

Social services are being reformed. In practice, reforms are required in ways of thinking and cooperating, the service structure and resource allocation. Efforts are being made at the local level to build services that cross sectoral boundaries. Tailoring of the solutions that are the solutions to be encouraging for the client is adopted as the starting point. Various preventive measures are being tested at the national level and the best of them will be spread to cities.

### 3. Cost savings

In 2015, the City of Helsinki's housing advice saved approximately 1,5 million euros of the city's rental housing companies' costs, when, for example, evictions and residents' back rents were reduced.

## How Finland prevents homelessness

### 1. The housing supply is being increased and made more diverse

By 2019, at least 2,500 new dwellings or housing places will be allocated to the homeless or groups at risk of becoming homeless. New types of construction and pilot projects to develop dwelling types are being launched for young people, students and asylum seekers who have been granted residence permits.

### 2. Cities are implementing prevention strategies

The six cities participating in the programme are adopting strategies or plans by the end of 2017 to prevent homelessness. The strategies are being implemented using ARA funding, ESR funding granted by the European Commission and the six cities' funding.

### 3. Special attention paid to quota refugees and asylum seekers who have received residence permits

The housing wishes and housing readiness of quota refugees and those who have received residence permits are examined immediately at the reception stage. They are provided with information about housing. If necessary, the transition from reception centres to independent housing is ensured through support services, such as housing advice. Each municipality further determines the measures taken in their area.

So far, the impact of asylum seekers and those who have received residence permits on the hous-

ing market and especially on the state-subsidised rental housing stock has remained small. In acute situations, people who have received residence permits have primarily acquired housing from the non-subsidised market.

### 4. Preventing the threat of households with financial difficulties losing housing and making access to housing easier for those who have lost their credit rating

A model is being created in which financial and debt counselling services for young people will be available, for example, for two days a week in the Ohjaamo one stop guidance centres. The possibility of including teaching or learning materials related to housing and finances as part of school's curricula is being investigated.

More financial advice and easy-to-use financial management tools are provided to households. A new model for small social loans and a new kind of risk insurance model for providing insurance cover similar to household insurance for people who have lost their credit ratings are being developed and looked into.

### 5. Housing advice is being expanded

The Ministry of the Environment and ARA are promoting the expansion of housing advice into all large cities and their peri-urban municipalities. Whether evictions could be prevented by intensifying cooperation between the debt recovery office, social welfare authorities, as well as financial and debt counselling actors is being looked into. The aim is for the housing advice centre to receive information in advance if persons under 25 years of age are threatened by eviction. A housing advice and information model aimed at immigrants is being developed in cooperation with immigrants.

## 6. Housing support is being centralised in low-threshold service points

Services related to young people's housing are being made a part of the Ohjaamo one stop guidance centres for young people's services. Housing is also being taken into account in the low-threshold services for immigrants and those with mental health and substance abuse disorders, and the client will be directed to housing support services if necessary.

## 7. The housing social work approach is being strengthened

Finland is planning a regional government reform, which will influence the organisation of social and health services. The seamless cooperation between substance abuse, mental health and housing services will be strengthened at different levels in connection with the reform. Housing social work training will be introduced as part of education in the fields of social services, health care and youth services.

## 8. The transition from institutions to independent housing is being secured

Cities are appointing personal social workers as necessary for people belonging to groups at risk of homelessness, who will be responsible for the success of the transition away from institutions and putting together an ensemble of services. A certain number of apartments are being allocated to released prisoners. The cooperation between various actors is being developed in order to better support them in finding housing, making a living and living a crime-free life.

*One of the hospital's departments has been closed down and patients are treated at home using floating support.*

## How Finland prevents the recurrence of homelessness

The work on homelessness following the Housing First model has helped a difficult group: the long-term homeless. Yet 5–10 percent of homeless people still drop out of the services for the homeless. So within this difficult target group an even more difficult target group can be found whose homelessness recurs, which in turn creates significant costs for society.

There is a need to find new kinds of solutions to ensure the housing of this group. Experts by experience who have experienced homelessness themselves have helped in finding them. They emphasise the importance of meaningful activity or low-threshold work activities in the recovery process, so that there is an alternative to substance use and inactivity in daily life.

### 1. A stronger role for experts by experience and residents

The role of experts by experience as educators and mentors is being improved and their work-counselling and training is being developed. They will be included and roles will be tailored for them in home-based multidisciplinary support teams, among other things.

### 2. Providing abstinent housing services throughout the country as well as services that allow the use of intoxicants

Cities are making sure that housing services that allow the use of intoxicants, as well as abstinent services, will be available throughout the country, not just in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

## 3. Supporting the employment of the formerly homeless

The organisations and service providers that organise support services for the homeless are implementing the TOIMEKAS project (funded by STEA) together. In it, a model encouraging low-threshold work activities and meaningful everyday activity is being created for the housing services of the long-term homeless and related emergency services. The model is being disseminated in those municipalities that are committed to working on homelessness. The project supports the participation of the formerly homeless, improves their abilities to find employment, and investigates the welfare traps related to advancing on the employment and education path and seeks solutions to them.

## 4. Support at home is being developed

Multidisciplinary floating support work models are being tested in interested cities. Financial and debt counselling is being made part of the support work.

Floating support work has been developed as a pilot in the Aurora Hospital in Helsinki. One of the hospital's departments has been closed down and patients are instead being treated at home using mobile support. The results of this floating support team's operation and their usefulness in preventing the recurrence of homelessness will be assessed together with the City of Helsinki.

## 5. The "small homes" model as a solution for the most challenging group of homeless people

The so-called small homes trial is being carried out in interested cities. In it, 5–10 small separate dwellings are built in a communal format for clients who for one reason or another have not

had success with the current dwelling types. A support service suitable for the dwelling type is being developed at the same time.

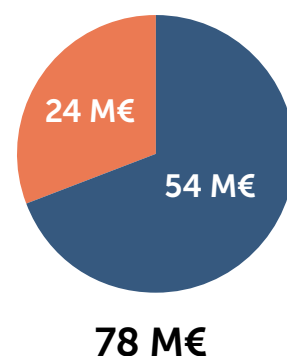
#### 6. 'Home for the night' providing emergency housing and service counselling for young people is being developed in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area

New kinds of solutions are being sought for ensuring the overnight safety of young adults and that they get service counselling in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The authorities, young people and the actors running emergency youth shelters and emergency housing are investigating the possibility of starting the operation of a youth night shelter.

**FIGURE |** *How is the action plan funded?*

Service development and coordination work is about **24 MILLION EUROS**

Investments (housing construction, acquisition and rental) are about **54 MILLION EUROS**



Source: Ministry of the Environment

The cost estimate of the entire programme is **78 MILLION EUROS**

#### *The funding comes from multiple sources:*

STEA's estimated share is about **23,6 MILLION EUROS**

The cities' estimated share is about **6 MILLION EUROS**

In addition: project funding, investment and development grants, ministries' budget funding and other financial instruments.

#### *The state will participate in the funding as follows (million euros):*

	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. Special groups' investment grants for homeless housing projects	8,5	8,5	8,5	8,5
2. Subsidies for housing advice	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4
3. Support for the programme's management, coordination and trial and development work	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1
<b>The total funding of the programme in the Ministry of the Environment's administrative sector</b>	<b>9,0 M€</b>	<b>9,0 M€</b>	<b>9,0 M€</b>	<b>9,0 M€</b>

The funding of the programme is done in the Ministry of the Environment's administrative sector in 2016–2019 within the framework of the state budget and budgetary estimates. The aim is to use 8,5 million euros per year for the construction, acquirement and aiding of repair of state-subsidised housing allocated for the homeless, a maximum of 0,4 million euros per year from housing advice subsidies for executing the programme, and a maximum of 0,1 million euros per year in support for the programme's management and trial and development work.



## 9

## Future Challenges

Applying the Housing First model is a continuous process and the work changes all the time. The model will face a variety of challenges in Finland in the future. Perhaps the biggest challenge is the government's social services and health care reform, which has been in the cards for years.

Another challenge is to continuously maintain and develop the Housing First model and inspire people to get involved. The Housing First quality recommendations have been developed to support this work. Their aim is to highlight tried-and-tested and functional forms of work adhering to the Housing First principle to complement and concretise legislation. Above all, the quality recommendations are a tool for developing the activity. (The quality recommendations can be found in the appendix on page 108–111.)

Housing First work in Finland has been carefully documented and research has continually been done to support it. Recently it was discovered from the statistics that women's homelessness has not decreased even though homelessness and long-term homelessness in general have. Consequently, closer attention has been paid to solving and finding solutions to women's homelessness. The same should be continued with other special groups, and solutions that will help that particular target group should always be sought out.

### **The social services, health care and regional government reform challenges the organisation of the work on homelessness**

Depending on the interpretation, the social services and health care reform has been planned already since 2006 and again from 2011 onwards. The aim is to reform the Finnish public administration so that the responsibility for the organisation of social and health services is transferred from municipalities to counties, i.e. to larger units than at present. At the time of writing this book, the latest proposal is for the transition to take place in 2019.

Over the years, the reform has been postponed several times and its contents are still being debated. The cornerstone of Finnish health care has always been a functional public system. The objective of the reform is to provide equal services for everyone. Still, there are some concerns that the reform will lead to the responsibility for services increasingly shifting to private actors and that different services will end up in unequal positions compared to each other. This also applies to the work on homelessness. Some actors are also worried that the reform is being planned with too much focus on health care, leaving social services neglected.

The Housing First model is not yet fully established on all levels of the Finnish work on homelessness. Those involved in the work hope that the multidisciplinary and multi-professional way of organising the work will be taken into account in the planning of the reform.

The work on homelessness requires centralised, national coordination, resourcing and co-development, which the Networking for Development Project represents. (Read more on page 77). Hopefully this type of instrument will play a central role also in the future so that best practices can spread and professionals get support from each other.

At the moment the uncertainty of the outcome of the reform forces actors to adjust their activities according to what the situation looks like at the time. This can be challenging especially when planning for future projects.

### ***Women's homelessness has not decreased even though homelessness in general has.***

### **Homelessness will concentrate in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area**

The ongoing trend of homelessness concentrating in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area will continue. By the end of 2016, about 75 percent of Finland's homeless people were there. There is a difficult employment situation in Finland in 2017 and most jobs are available in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, which pulls in even more people. Immigrants also mainly concentrate there.

At the same time, there is a dire shortage of affordable housing and the cost of living in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is significantly higher than in the rest of the country. The average rent per square metre in Helsinki Metropolitan Area's non-subsidised rental housing is 16,43 euros, whereas the entire country's average is 11,83 euros per square metre.

The prices are most expensive in Helsinki. The rent in affordable rental apartments owned by the City of Helsinki is about 11 euros per square metre, but for apartments rented from the free market it can be up to 20 euros. The difference is due to the rent level not being regulated in the free market. This has attracted real estate investors also from abroad. The City of Helsinki owns about one sixth of the city's housing stock, or about 50,000 dwellings.

It is difficult to solve homelessness if there is not enough affordable housing. The construction of housing in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area is now at a relatively good level, but it usually does not produce results until a few years later.

## Intoxicant use and debt problems will grow

Polysubstance use will increase. Services for the homeless are no longer burdened by alcoholics, but by people with polysubstance abuse problems who often also suffer from mental health problems. They present a different challenge than before to people working on homelessness. This has been addressed by tailoring support for each client and through multi-professional cooperation.

The use of intoxicants often involves getting into debt, but it can also happen without intoxicants. Especially in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, sudden unemployment or illness can easily lead to rent and loan arrears. Arrears can then easily lead to a person losing their credit rating, in other words a so-called payment default entry. It prevents the person from getting a lease or home insurance, for example. A payment default entry makes life much more difficult since, for example, not all mobile phone carriers will provide a plan subscription to someone with an entry. The payment default entry will remain on the person's record for a few years even if the arrears have been paid.

There has been an effort to develop alternative ways for people with debt problems to get a lease or home insurance, which is often a prerequisite for getting a dwelling in Finland. (See The Risk Insurance Project on page 86.)

*It is difficult to solve homelessness if there is not enough affordable housing.*

## The number of undocumented migrants is unknown

A large number of asylum seekers arrived in Finland within a short period of time in 2015, totalling 32,476 during the whole year. Since then there have been more arriving.

Some of those who have had their asylum applications rejected stay in Finland. They do not appear in any registers so it is impossible to estimate their number. Some go live with their relatives or acquaintances but others have no dwelling at all. A special challenge is that people who are in the country illegally are not entitled to any support or assistance. No one has yet solved how they should be helped. Various organisations, municipalities and the Evangelical Lutheran Church have arranged emergency accommodation, and for example the volunteer organisation, Global Clinic, provides health care and legal counselling for undocumented migrants. However, this kind of assistance is insufficient if the number of undocumented migrants grows significantly.

## GOOD TO KNOW

### Women's homelessness

Some of the reasons for women's homelessness not having decreased at the same pace with other homelessness in Finland are the growth of women's intoxicant use and the fact that women have to leave their homes due to domestic violence more often than men. Women's experience of homelessness is typically different from that of men. For example, homeless women feel ashamed more often than men if they have had children to take care of and they have been taken into custody. The majority of homeless people are men, so when women become homeless they end up in a masculine world where they are vulnerable to various kinds of abuse. Hence, women need different kinds of housing support to men. This is called women-specific work on homelessness. For example, supported housing unit for women has been set up and women's homelessness has begun to be studied more closely, and a project for eliminating women's homelessness is currently seeking funding.

## Glossary

**Alppikatu 25.** The largest shelter in Helsinki, run by the Salvation Army since 1936. Nowadays operates as a supported housing unit.

**American Pathways Housing First Model.** See page 14.

**ARA.** The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, ARA, is an office operating under the Ministry of the Environment. ARA promotes affordable housing. Non-profit organisations can apply for grants, subsidies and guarantees from ARA related to housing and construction so that they can achieve affordable rental rates. ARA also controls and monitors the use of the ARA housing stock and collects and maintains statistics on homelessness.

**AUNE** Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019. The Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016–2019 (AUNE) is a government cooperation programme coordinated by the Ministry of the Environment. The goal of the programme is to reduce homelessness in Finland by strengthening the prevention of homelessness and combating the recurrence of homelessness, based on the Housing First principle. The programme includes, among other things, allocating 2,500 new apartments or dwellings to homeless people or people who are at risk of becoming homeless, supporting households with housing problems and improving the insurance coverage of tenants and landlords.

**Community meeting.** In the supported housing units following the methods of community work, all major decisions concerning the unit and its residents are made in community meetings by employees and those residents who wish to attend. The staff do not make decisions concerning residents before discussing with them first. The decision-making power given to residents over their own affairs supports them in becoming attached to shared daily life and teaches them responsibility.

**Community work.** Community work is a method that takes into account the community's resources. In supported housing units, community work means that staff and residents are equal and the work in the unit has not been hierarchically ordered. Decisions concerning the unit are made with the community in community meetings and the community itself makes sure the unit's rules are followed. The central goal of community work is to strengthen the community member's own agency so that they can get by with minimal, if any support.

**Constitution.** See pages 21–24.

**Cost savings and Housing First**  
See pages 12, 21, 68, 88.

**Disability pension.** See page 66.

**Earnings-based pension.** See page 67.

**Expert by experience.** Experts by experience have first-hand experience of homelessness and its side effects, as well as experience in developing services aimed at homeless people. They act as a bridge between the service users and professionals. In the work on homelessness, expertise by experience has been developed especially at the No Fixed Abode NGO.

**FEANTSA.** The Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless is a Europe-wide non-profit organisation combatting homelessness. Its ultimate goal is to end homelessness in Europe. It was established in 1989 and it brings together non-profit services that support homeless people in Europe. FEANTSA has over 130 member organisations from 30 countries, including 28 Member States. Most are national or regional federations. FEANTSA is supported by the European Commission.

**Financial and debt counselling.** Financial and debt counselling services help private citizens manage their finances and debts and plan their finances. The services assist them in finding

solutions related to their finances and in making applications. These services are provided by cities.

**The Finnish Blue Ribbon.** A collaborative network of a hundred member organisations that helps people in difficult situations. The Finnish Blue Ribbon and its approximately one hundred member organisations' area of expertise include substance abuse and gambling problems, addictions, mental health problems, long-term homelessness and social employment.

**General housing allowance.** See page 65.

**Government programme.** The elimination of homelessness was mentioned for the first time in the government programme in 1987. Since then almost all governments have stated as their goal the reduction or elimination of homelessness.

**Guarantee Foundation.** The Guarantee Foundation is a national social security organisation that helps people in debt spirals and financially difficult situations. People can apply for a small loan (see small social loan) from the foundation for one-time expenses or household purchases, for example. People can also apply for loan guarantees from the Guarantee Foundation, with which a large loan can be obtained from the bank to pay off the small individual loans of people in debt spirals. Combining small loans into one is often sensible, as the interest cost of one loan is more reasonable.

**Health care system.** Finland's health care system is based on public health care services, which everyone living in the country is entitled to. Municipalities and joint municipal boards are responsible for the provision of public health care. A municipality can provide the services by itself, together with another municipality, or it can acquire the services from a private company or organisation. Public health care services are funded through tax revenue and customer fees charged for the services.

**Helsinki Deaconess Institute.** The Helsinki Deaconess Institute is a non-profit foundation that complements the public service system. It provides wide-ranging social, health and education services. The institute specialises in the services of demanding special groups in child protection, youth services, housing and

employment services as well as substance abuse and mental health work.

**Helsinki Guest House.** See pages 21–24.

**Hidden homelessness.** Hidden homelessness does not show up in statistics. In Finland, people who do not have their own address or who live temporarily with a friend or relative without a prospective permanent dwelling are also considered as homeless. Although there is an attempt to keep track of them, not all of these homeless people end up in the statistics. Hidden homelessness is a problem that particularly concerns young people and immigrants.

**Home-based multidisciplinary mobile support.** The basic idea of home-based multidisciplinary mobile support is to provide the essential services needed by the client in the client's home, in a so-called normal rental apartment. The support is provided to the client by a team that includes experts from different fields according to client needs, possibly also an expert by experience.

**Homeless.** A homeless person is someone who does not have their own rental or owner-occupied dwelling. However, the situation of homeless people varies greatly. The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (see ARA), for example, has divided homelessness into five categories: 1) those living rough, in stairwells, shelters etc. 2) those staying in night shelters, accommodation establishments 3) those living in various institutions 4) released prisoners who do not have housing arranged and 5) those in insecure accommodation, e.g. temporarily with friends or relatives.

**Homelessness prevention strategies.** A pilot project conducted by the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland, ARA. One of the AUNE programme's key tools for promoting the prevention of homelessness is implementing homelessness prevention strategies in municipalities. In practice this means creating multidisciplinary networks in cities, identifying the paths leading to homelessness as well as the risk groups and shared clientships, and developing and implementing preventive measures as a whole.



**HOPE.** HOPE (short for Homeless People) is a European network of experts by experience that can only be joined by those who have experienced homelessness. HOPE was founded in 2011.

**Housing advice services.** Anyone can reserve a time for a housing advisor and receive advice for such things as problems with paying the rent, examining the threat of eviction or applying for support. In addition to cities, housing advice is organised by property companies providing rental housing and organisations such as the Finnish Youth Housing Association and the Y-Foundation. The first housing advice service was started in the late 1990s by the City of Helsinki.

**Housing First Europe Hub.** The Housing First Europe Hub is a permanent learning platform that helps reform work on homelessness in Europe, coordinated by the Y-Foundation and the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, FEANTSA. The Hub compiles information, experience and research on the application of the Housing First principle and supports development projects.

**The Housing First principle.** The Housing First principle is a model for work on homelessness, whose philosophy is based on enabling the homeless person to live an independent life in their own dwelling. The Housing First name comes from the first task being acquiring housing before other support measures. The key idea behind the model is that solving social and health problems is not a prerequisite for arranging housing, but instead housing is the prerequisite that will also enable solving the other problems of the homeless person.

**Housing First quality recommendations.** Quality recommendations made in 2016–2017 by a broad network of actors doing work on homelessness. The aim of the recommendations is to highlight proven and successful ways of working in accordance with the Housing First principle to complement and concretise legislation. See pages 108–111.

**International research evaluation on homelessness programmes.** An international research group conducted an evaluation of Finland's homelessness policy in 2014. The researchers concluded that the permanent decline in long-term homelessness was

a testament to the effectiveness of a comprehensive cooperation strategy. At the same time, the evaluators encouraged Finland to invest in the prevention of homelessness in the future.

**International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.** See pages 21–24.

**Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland.** The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) is a state institution that manages the basic social security of people living in Finland. Kela operates under the supervision of the Finnish Parliament and its task is to secure the basic livelihood of the population, promote health and support independent survival in different life situations. Kela's customers are all those who are covered by the Finnish social security system, living in Finland and abroad. Kela grants housing allowance, student financial aid and social assistance, for example.

**Kyläsaari treatment centre.**  
See pages 21–24.

**Law on improving the housing conditions of the Roma minority.**  
See pages 21–24.

**Long-term homeless people.** ARA (see ARA), who collects statistics on homelessness, defines a long-term homeless person as someone “whose homelessness has been prolonged or is at risk of being prolonged for more than one year due to social or health reasons or who has repeatedly been homeless over the last three years.”

**Low-threshold work activities.** The purpose of low-threshold work activity as part of housing services is to offer homeless people something meaningful to do, as well as support their participation and improve their employment qualifications. Practical forms of work include running a canteen, repairing premises, neighbourhood work and a repairs group. After securing housing, many residents have a great need for work activity done at a very low threshold.

**Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.** A city office with the task of providing well-being, health and social security for the city's residents. Its tasks include family and social services, health and substance abuse services, as well as hospital, rehabilitation and care services.

**Name on the Door report.** See Working group of four experts.

**Neighbourhood work.** Neighbourhood work means the kind of procedures and methods that integrate supported housing units, mental health rehabilitees' housing units or reception centres operating under the Housing First principle into residential areas. The work includes, among other things, meeting neighbours, cooperation with authorities, maintaining the safety and cleanliness of the residential area, communal events, as well as education and increasing awareness.

**Networking for Development Project.** The Networking for Development Project is a project that started in 2013, which brings Housing First actors together. Its two full-time employees are on the Y-Foundation's payroll and the project's funding comes from STEA (see RAY and STEA). The project operates as a development platform for national Housing First work and distributes information on the best practices of Housing First work.

**NIMBY phenomenon.** The NIMBY abbreviation comes from the words Not in my backyard. The NIMBY phenomenon is referred to when people oppose some construction project that they experience as unpleasant in their neighbourhood. Opposition typically exists against homeless people's housing services. Central to the NIMBY phenomenon is that the opponents basically consider housing for the homeless to be a good thing, but they just do not want them near themselves.

**No Fixed Abode NGO** (Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry). A homeless organisation founded by the homeless themselves in December 1986. The NGO has become an expert organisation and acts in cooperation with, for example, the Finnish National Programme to reduce long-term homelessness. The No Fixed Abode NGO is a pioneer in experts by experience work.

**Ohjaamo one stop guidance centres.** An Ohjaamo is a low-threshold one stop guidance centre meant for 15–29-year-olds. A young person can go to the guidance centre without reserving a time and receive advice for questions related to studies, well-being and looking for jobs.

**PAAVO I and PAAVO II** Finnish National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness. PAAVO I and PAAVO II (2008–2015), the Finnish National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness set by the Finnish state. Two remarkable results were achieved during the National Programmes to reduce long-term homelessness: The Housing First principle became established in the work on homelessness and shelters were replaced with supported housing units based on supported rental housing. Long-term homelessness decreased by a total of 1,345 people (35%) during the programme period.

**Peer instructor.** A formerly homeless person who works as a support worker in housing services, usually partnered by a professional. Gets paid by the housing service provider.

**Peer support.** Peer support is a way to strengthen the residents' involvement in their own lives in such a way that they do not experience feelings of inferiority. Support can be provided, for example, in peer support groups or a designated person can act as a peer support person.

**Pensioners' housing allowance.**  
See pages 66–67.

**Rauma Region Street Mission.** An NGO that runs a day centre, a supported housing unit and a work activities and educational centre in Rauma region. Rauma Region Street Mission is involved in Networking for development co-operation. Its area of expertise is housing paths of the formerly homeless.

**RAY.** RAY (short for Raha-automaattiyhdistys, Finland's Slot Machine Association) was a non-profit gaming company in Finland. In 2017 the previous three operators Fintoto, RAY, and Veikkaus merged into a single gaming company named Veikkaus Oy, owned by the Finnish State. Like Veikkaus, RAY was a gaming monopoly whose proceedings went to domestic charity causes such as social welfare, health, sports, science and youth work. Veikkaus games are estimated to generate nearly one billion euros per year.

**The Risk Insurance project.** The Household Insurance, or Risk Insurance project develops, together with insurance companies, ways of providing insurance cover similar to household insurance for people who have lost their credit ratings. Many landlords require tenants

to take out home insurance as a condition of the lease. Insurance companies rarely provide home insurance if the applicant has a bad credit rating. This can lead to homelessness. A model is being piloted where a dwelling-specific insurance taken by the landlord covers also compensation for wilful damages and third party insurance.

**Sällikoti.** A supported housing unit in Helsinki run by the No Fixed Abode NGO.

**Scattered housing.** Scattered housing is rental housing that is based on the Act on Residential Leases. A former homeless person lives in a normal rental apartment, which is located in the middle of so-called ordinary housing. Scattered housing apartments are acquired from the city's rental housing stock, for example. It is essential that the apartment can be rented out to a resident for an affordable price and support can be provided for them at home.

**Service plan.** A service plan is made for each resident of a supported housing unit, with the purpose of guiding the resident towards goal-oriented action and life management. It is made in cooperation with the resident, floor counsellors and a social worker. The plan is updated at least every six months. In addition to life management, the plan helps staff provide the kind of guidance and support the resident needs, as the resident's support needs and goals have been written down in the plan.

**Shelter.** A shelter is a type of temporary dwelling. Staying in a shelter is based on the Act on Accommodation and Food Service Activities, which means that the law guarantees the rights of the host but not the rights of the resident. A person staying in a shelter does not have a permanent room or lease of their own. Shelters were closed down in Finland as a result of the transformation towards Housing First.

**Small social loan.** A small social loan is a loan meant for the Guarantee Foundation's one-off expenditures or purchases, such as household appliances or a rental deposit. The amount of the loan can be between 200 and 2,000 euros and the payment period is up to two years. The interest rate of the loan (4.5%) is fixed and with no other expenses. The model also includes financial counselling.

**Social assistance.** See pages 64–67.

**Social benefits system.** People living in Finland can apply for social assistance, housing allowance, etc. Health care is also free or affordable for everyone. The Housing First model in Finland has taken into account the existing social benefits system so that it is utilised as much as possible. Service providers help clients with getting access to assistance and services provided by the state. See pages 64–67 for housing-related financial support.

**Social services, health care and regional government reform.** A reform for the reorganisation of social and health services that has been under way in Finland for many years. Over the years, there have been attempts to push through several versions of the reform but the government has not reached a consensus on the contents of the reform. When implemented, the reform will also affect the organisation of services for the homeless.

**Staircase model.** Staircase model. A model in the work on homelessness where the homeless person advances from one social rehabilitation step to another, where the highest step means an apartment of their own.

**STEA.** See page 76.

**Substance abuse care law.** See page 21–24.

**Supported housing unit.** A supported housing unit is a form of housing where each resident has their own lease but living is communal. A supported housing unit typically resembles a small apartment building and it has common areas for all residents, as well as staff present around the clock. Supported housing units were mainly set up to replace shelters.

**Undocumented migrants.** See page 97.

**Unemployment benefit.** See page 64.

**Vagrancy decree.** See pages 21–24.

**Väinölä supported housing unit.** A supported housing unit run by the Salvation Army.

**Working group of four experts.**

A working group appointed by the Ministry of the Environment. The group proposed a homelessness policy for Finland based on the Housing First principle in its *Name on the Door* report in 2007.

**Work-counselling.** Work-counselling supports well-being and professional skills in areas of work where employees experience an unusual amount of stress for one reason or another. It consists of dialogue between the employee and a trained external supervisor and takes place regularly.

**World War II.** See pages 21–24.

**Y-Foundation.** The Y-Foundation was founded in 1985. The basic idea of its operation is to acquire small rental apartments for single homeless people from the existing housing stock on the free market. See page 25.

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## CHAPTER 9

### Interview

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## Images

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## Appendix 1:

### Housing First Quality Recommendations

In the past ten years, the Housing First principle has become the leading approach to dealing with homelessness in both North America and in Europe with Finland being one of the best examples of the comprehensive and successful application of the principle. You can find more information on the principle and its application in Europe, for example, in the Housing First Guide Europe <http://housingfirstguide.eu/website/>

The aim of the quality recommendations is to highlight proven and successful ways of working in accordance with the Housing First principle, to complement and concretize legislation. The key laws guiding the work on homelessness in Finland are:

- Finnish Constitution (731/1999)
- Act of Residential Leases (481/1995)
- Act of Developing Housing Conditions (919/85)
- Social Welfare Act (1301/2014)
- Act of the Status and Rights of Social Welfare clients (812/2000)
- Non-Discrimination Act (1325/2014)
- Personal Data Act (523/1999)
- Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999)
- Act of Private Social Services (922/2011)
- Act of Public Procurement and Concession Contracts (1397/2016)

The first set of guidelines for applying the Housing First principle in Finnish society was created in the Name-on-the-Door project in 2010-2012. The following five tenets were identified as the core of the Finnish housing first model: the philosophy of freedom of choice, differentiation between housing and services, rehabilitation and empowerment, integration into society and the structure of the Housing First model. The need to update and clarify the guidelines was highlighted when piloting floating support work between 2014 and 2015 in a co-operation between the Networking for Development project and the Paavo 2 program. Furthermore, more concrete guidelines were needed for client work on the application of the principle, and the appropriateness of certain tenets was questioned. Due to the feedback received, the process of compiling the housing first quality recommendations was initiated in 2016. The key objective was to update the guidelines to better meet today's needs and to support the application of the principles in practical client work and the planning of services. This further work was based on the outline made in the Name-on-the-Door project.

These quality recommendations were produced between 2016 and 2017 in a co-operation of a broad network of actors. The main forum has been an extensive team of experts in the Networking for Development project, which includes dozens of stakeholders working on homelessness in municipalities, organizations, foundations and with experts-by-experiences from all over Finland. The national Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019 (AUNE) has also been involved in the preparation of these recommendations. AUNE and the Networking for Development project organize peer reviews in which the relevance of the recommendations will be tested and may be further refined. In peer reviews, service providers will have the opportunity to obtain feedback on the realization of the quality recommendations and learn from other actors in the same field of work.

I recommend everyone to familiarize themselves with the recommendations carefully and to utilize them as part of the continuous development of operations. Quality recommendations are, above all, a tool for developing operations.

Jari Karppinen

Programme Director, Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019 (AUNE)

### 1 Structure of the Housing First Model

Clear structures, guidance and management create the prerequisites for systematic and successful operations, the realization of the Housing First principles and the individual needs of clients. The idea of continuous improvement drives the systematic development of operations.

- 1.** The basic mission of the organization is clear to everyone in the organization and the values guiding the work are defined. The basic mission and values support the realization of the housing first principle and guide work in everyday life.
- 2.** Client processes have been described and the descriptions also include practices of co-operation and the responsibilities of the actors.
- 3.** The flats are located in areas with good public transport and as part of the community structure. The space solutions of the units also allow meaningful everyday activities to be carried out.
- 4.** Employee resourcing is determined according to the needs of the clients and enables social rehabilitation of the residents. The person responsible for organizing meaningful activities is named and environmental work (neighborhood work) has resources allocated to it.
- 5.** Personnel have at least a basic social and/or healthcare education and adequate expertise in the performance of their duties. Personnel have access to further training and work counselling. New staff will be familiarized with the principles of the work.

**6.** Pursuit of continuous improvement is an integral part of the work. The service provider collects feedback from clients, stakeholders and staff on a regular basis and the effectiveness of the service is monitored systematically. As part of the experimental culture, new ideas are tested at a low threshold in everyday life and feedback and results are actively utilized in the development of work.

**7.** Services for the homeless are based on client needs. People responsible for purchases ensure that they support the realization of Housing First and consider housing first quality standards.

## 2 Enabling Independent Living

In housing first services, housing is based, per se, on The Act on Residential Leases, and the support services needed by the resident are agreed separately from housing. The goal is to secure housing.

**8.** In housing first the tenant has a lease based on The Act on Residential Leases. In exceptional cases (e.g. assessment units) housing is arranged in a way that better considers the customer's need for services.

**9.** Housing disturbances and other housing problems, such as rent arrears, are quickly addressed and people are supported to resolve the situation.

**10.** A service plan is jointly composed with the resident and it is regularly updated. If needed, the resident will receive service counselling and the personal worker will assist the resident to obtain to basic and/or special services.

**11.** The support service is flexible to the needs of the resident taking into account the equal treatment of the residents and their individual needs.

**12.** The continuation of housing is not linked to the receipt of services. Changes in the need for support do not, in principle, mean exchanging housing, and housing is ensured despite the end of the support.

**13.** Housing social work is also harm reduction. Participation in activities is at the discretion of the resident: the only responsibility that the tenant has is to manage their own accommodation and themselves.

## 3 Freedom of choice and opportunities to influence

The resident can influence decisions about his/her life and give feedback. The feedback processes are clear, simple and reliable and the resident knows how the feedback is handled.

**14.** A resident is always invited to deal with matters concerning him/her.

**15.** The resident can influence the choice of housing (e.g. unit, scattered site housing, unit that allows/forbids the use of intoxicants).

**16.** The resident can influence the choice of services/activities that are most appropriate to him/her and is supported in making the choices.

**17.** The resident knows how to influence the issues of housing and community and the implementation and development of the housing services.

## 4 Rehabilitation and empowerment

Rehabilitation and empowerment take place on a resident's own terms. Housing social work is presence work based on valued and equal encounter. It requires the abandonment of unnecessary power structures both at the organizational and individual level. Supporting rehabilitation and empowerment, the employee's role is to see and acknowledge even the smallest moments of success.

**18.** The interests and goals of the residents are actively discussed with the resident and new perspectives for rehabilitation are sought in dialogue.

**19.** The knowledge and ability of a resident is considered in everyday life and the resident is consistently given encouraging feedback on his everyday activities and successes.

**20.** Appreciation of the mutual trust and community spirit of all actors is reaffirmed. Residents are asked for feedback on a regular basis.

**21.** Residents are encouraged to take responsibility for their own lives whilst ensuring that the resident knows where help and support is available.

## 5 Integration into society and communities

Home is the foundation for organizing life, experiencing participation and becoming part of the environment. Integration into the community starts from involvement in one's own life. Integration is also influenced by the ability to seek and receive help.

**22.** The resident can experience housing as a home, e.g. leases and administrative solutions support the continuity and permanence of housing. Possible changes will be implemented considering the needs of the resident and adequate support will be provided to the resident if situations change.

**23.** The resident receives support in participating in matters relating to his/her own life and in attachment to the surrounding community as well as in strengthening his/her contacts with natural networks such as family members.

**24.** In housing units, environmental work is done systematically and residents play a key role in its implementation. Residents and workers promote tolerance and prevent stigmatization in local communities and nationwide.

**25.** Stakeholders are jointly and actively seeking new opportunities to support inclusion and integration.

## Appendix 2:

### The letter of intent between the state and the city of Helsinki (2012–2015) to eliminate long-term homelessness

The purpose of this letter of intent between the state and the City of Helsinki is to eradicate long-term homelessness through common actions by the state and the municipalities. Similar letters of intent have been drawn up with the Cities of Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku, Joensuu, Kuopio, Lahti, Oulu, and Jyväskylä. The basis for the letter of intent is the programme to reduce long-term homelessness (2012–2015) approved by the Government of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen on 15th December 2011.

The goal of the programme is to eradicate long-term homelessness by 2015, reduce the risk of long-term homelessness by making the use of social rental housing stock more efficient, in order to reduce homelessness, and to create more effective measures for preventing homelessness. The letters of intent create the preconditions ensuring that by 2015, it will be possible to allocate, at least, 1 250 dwellings, supported dwellings or places in sheltered housing, in accordance with the Social Welfare Act (710/1982) and the Social Welfare Decree (607/1983) to the long-term homeless. Of the dwellings, 750 will be allocated to Helsinki and a total of 250 to Espoo and Vantaa. The goal is to implement, at least, 250 dwellings or places in housing units in Tampere, Turku, Joensuu, Kuopio, Lahti, Oulu, and Jyväskylä. The letters of intent are used to define the participation of the parties to the agreement in implementing the measures.

A person regarded as long-term homeless has been homeless or is at risk of remaining homeless for over a year, due to social or health reasons, or has been repeatedly homeless over the last three years. The target groups include among others young people, people with mental health or substance abuse issues, and people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence as homeless.

The letter of intent renews the previous letter of intent for 2008–2011, and it will come into effect after the City of Helsinki has approved it. The Ministry of the Environment promotes and coordinates the implementation of the letter of intent. On behalf of the state, the letter of intent will be approved by the decisions of the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (MSAH), the Ministry of Justice, the

Criminal Sanctions Agency, and the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA). Finland's Slot Machine Association (RAY) will approve the letter of intent in a similar way.

The letter of intent will be valid until 31 December 2015 and it can be revised annually. Starting from 1 January 2012, it is possible to receive funding for projects, in accordance with the programme, provided that the City of Helsinki has submitted the project applications within the deadline required by the funding authorities.

The starting point for implementing the projects included in the letter of intent is housing is based on the Act on Residential Leases (481/1995) and applying the Housing First –principle along with needs-based individual services. The goal of social services for the homeless is to provide a form of housing that corresponds to the individual need for support. The housing-related services must correspond to the quality recommendations of the mental health and substance abuse services by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. When planning and organising housing services, the supervision programme 2012–2014 of the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) concerning housing services for mental health and substance abuse clients and inpatient care for substance use disorders is taken into account. The use of hostels and night shelters in providing housing for the long-term homeless is abandoned, and they are replaced with supported housing and sheltered housing.

The focal points of the reduction programme are the more effective prevention of homelessness, and providing light, flexible support in scattered housing. The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) allocates investment subsidies for special groups to the projects approved into the programme. During 2012–2015, a maximum of 15 million euros/year in subsidies will be allocated.

Municipalities are supported in making housing advice permanent and extending it by allocating state funding through ARA for housing advice or a similar preventative activity at 20 % of the costs. A requirement

for granting the subsidy is that the municipalities have procedures in place, in order to prevent evictions and regarding cooperation in eviction situations that the social services and housing actors have agreed upon together, and that housing advice and housing support as a whole have been included as a part of the implementation plans.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health allocates state funding for the personnel increases required to provide support services to implement the development projects accepted into the programme. For development projects implemented as the cities' own or outsourced services, state funding is allocated for up to 50 percent of the aforementioned labour costs. The funding is paid via the National Development Plan for Social Welfare and Health Care (KASTE Programme) 2012–2015, approved by the Government. The amount of state funding depends on the amount of KASTE funding allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The realisation of state funding requires that the Parliament includes the necessary annual appropriations in the budget. The realisation of funding by the City of Helsinki requires that the Helsinki City Council includes the necessary annual appropriations in the budget. The reduction of long-term homelessness in Helsinki forms one single project, but the decisions on subsidies granted to its sub-projects are made based on applications submitted to ARA and MSAH annually. RAY allocates subsidies to the agreed projects, within the framework of its annual appropriation.

### Measures allocated

**1.** In the project to reduce long-term homelessness during 2012–2015, Helsinki will create a total of 750 dwellings/places in supported housing for the long-term homeless. The appendix presents the sub-projects included in the overall project in Helsinki, and for which applications for state funding are submitted.

**2.** The implementation of the reduction programme in Helsinki is based on the attached overall plan, which includes the use of social rental housing stock in providing housing for the homeless, the need for support and housing solutions focused on the long-term homeless, preventive measures, and the development of housing services for people suffering from substance abuse and mental health problems and the structural changes implemented in them. The overall plan also takes into account the prevention of youth homelessness, as well as the housing and support for people going on parole

or serving a monitoring sentence. In addition, the plan describes the housing advisory services implemented in the city and how the point of view of the tenant/service user is taken into account in developing and implementing services intended for the homeless.

**3.** The letter of intent and the allocation of state funding can be revised, based on the overall plan described above for the years 2013–2015. In cooperation with the cities participating in the programme and the NGOs providing housing services, the Criminal Sanctions Agency will implement a project for creating local practices to ensure housing as well as the support needed for homeless people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence.

### Preventing homelessness

**4.** Out of the housing stock owned by the City of Helsinki or by other non-profit rental housing providers acting as partners of the City, a total of 328 dwellings will be allocated to the long-term homeless so that annually 50 dwellings of the City's rental housing stock are allocated to the homeless who are capable of living independently and the non-profit actors will procure 32 new dwellings per year.

#### **5. Preventing youth homelessness**

In order to prevent youth homelessness and increase inclusion, the City of Helsinki participates in the multidisciplinary youth homelessness prevention project by the Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL). In the project, dwellings are provided for young people, and needs-based housing services are organised through multidisciplinary cooperation.

#### **6. Housing advice**

There are 15 housing advisers in Helsinki. During the programme period, an application for ARA funding is submitted in order to hire 8 new housing advisers.

### Monitoring

The monitoring of the letter of intent is based on a regular information exchange between the state and the City of Helsinki, as well as negotiations arranged at least once per year.

A monitoring and steering group for the programme to reduce long-term homelessness led by ARA will be established to carry out the monitoring, with representatives from the parties to the letter of intent. The monitoring is implemented in the follow-up report



drawn up annually by the end of February. It includes a summary on the progress of the overall project and its sub-projects, the commitment of the costs and funding, and the ongoing and newly started projects in the plan. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for compiling the report. The cities included in the letter of intent are responsible for their own part in organising customer-specific monitoring, together with the service providers, in accordance with the national model drawn up for monitoring the reduction programme. The customer monitoring is implemented through a customer interview carried out in connection with the move and, at least, once per year.

## PROGRAMME TO REDUCE LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS 2012–2015 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

City of Helsinki, Department of Social  
Services 2 Programme to reduce long-  
term homelessness 2012–2015

### 1. Starting points for the implementation plan

#### 1.1 National programme to reduce long-term homelessness 2012–2015

The basis for the implementation plan is the programme to reduce long-term homelessness (2012–2015), approved by the Government of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen on 15th December 2011. The goal of the programme is to eradicate long-term homelessness by 2015, reduce the risk of long-term homelessness by making the use of social rental housing stock more efficient in order to reduce homelessness, and create more effective measures for preventing homelessness.

A person regarded as long-term homeless has been homeless or is at risk of remaining homeless for over a year due to social or health reasons, or has been repeatedly homeless over the last three years. The target groups include young people, people with mental health

or substance abuse issues and homeless people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence.

The starting point in implementing the projects is housing based on the Act on Residential Leases (481/1995) and applying the Housing First principle along with needs-based individual services. The goal of social services for the homeless is to provide a form of housing that matches the individual support needs of the person. The housing-related services must correspond to the quality recommendations for mental health and substance abuse services by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. When planning and organising housing services, the supervision programme 2012–2014 of the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) concerning housing services for mental health and substance abuse clients and inpatient care for substance use disorders is taken into account. The use of hostels and night shelters in providing housing for the long-term homeless is abandoned, and they are replaced with supported housing and service housing.

*The focal points of the reduction programme are the more effective prevention of homelessness, and providing supported housing in scattered housing, based on light, flexible support.*

The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) allocates investment subsidies for special groups to the projects approved into the programme. During 2012–2015, a maximum of 15 million euros/year in subsidies will be allocated.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health allocates state funding for the personnel increases required to provide support services, which are used to implement the development projects accepted into the programme. For development projects implemented as the cities' own or outsourced services, state funding is allocated for up to 50 per cent of the aforementioned labour costs. The funding is paid via the National Development Plan for Social Welfare and Health Care (KASTE Programme) 2012–2015, approved by the Government. The amount of state funding depends on the amount of KASTE funding allocated to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The realisation of state funding requires that the Parliament includes the necessary annual appropriations in the budget.

In Helsinki the reduction of long-term homelessness forms one single project, but the decisions on subsidies granted to its sub-projects are made based on applications submitted to ARA and MSAH annually. RAY allocates subsidies to the agreed projects, within the

framework of its annual appropriation. In the project to reduce long-term homelessness during 2012–2015, Helsinki will provide a total of 750 dwellings/places in supported housing for the long-term homeless. In addition, there is temporary housing with 114 dwellings in use.

In total, the plan includes the construction of 422 dwellings. Out of the housing stock of the City of Helsinki and the owners of non-profit rental housing acting as partners of the City, a total of 328 dwellings will be allocated to the long-term homeless, in addition to the new construction, so that annually 50 dwellings of the City's rental housing stock are allocated to the homeless who are capable of living independently; in addition, the non-profit actors procure 32 new dwellings per year. The appendix presents the sub-projects included in the overall project in Helsinki, and for which applications for state funding are submitted.

*The implementation of the reduction programme in Helsinki is based on this overall plan, which includes the use of social rental housing stock in providing housing for the homeless, the need for support and housing solutions focused on the long-term homeless, preventive measures, and the development of housing services for people suffering from substance abuse and mental health problems and the structural changes implemented in them. The overall plan also takes into account the prevention of youth homelessness, as well as the housing and support needed for homeless people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence. In addition, the plan describes the housing advice services implemented in the city and takes the point of view of the customer/tenant into account in developing and implementing services intended for the homeless.*

#### 1.2. Goals and results of the reduction programme 2008–2011

In accordance with the letter of intent, the goal in Helsinki was to implement a total of 750 dwellings or places in supported housing for the long-term homeless in 2008–2011. In accordance with the implementation plan, the following projects have been commissioned:

In Helsinki the goal set in the letter of intent has been exceeded, when the dwellings procured for the target group and the allocated city rental housing are

(FIGURE, PAGE 116)

taken into account, in addition to the projects in the programme. During the programme period, a total of 832 dwellings have been allocated to the long-term homeless, which exceeds the goal of the programme by 82 dwellings.

In implementing new supported housing units special attention has been paid to their placement in the city structure, open communication and cooperation with the neighbourhood of the units and the local neighbourhood associations. In order to minimise potential disadvantages the workers in the units carry out neighbourhood work.

### Implementation of the programme to convert shelters

Implementation of the programme to convert shelters has progressed as planned. The Rukkila shelter run by Suojapirtti ry has been renovated and taken into use as a housing unit with intensive support in 2011. The operation of the Salvation Army's Alppikatu shelter ended in February 2011, as well as the operation of the Kalevankatu shelter by Kovaosaisten ystävät ry on 5th January 2012. The renovation of the units into supported housing units, based on tenancy, is ongoing. At the moment, there are only 144 beds in shelters and 80 beds intended for temporary emergency housing in use in Helsinki. For the remainder of the shelter places, plans have been made on functional changes and replacing them with supported housing. According to the plans living in shelters will end completely in Helsinki during 2013.

### Youth homelessness

Preventing youth homelessness has been carried out in cooperation with the Housing Division of the Real Estate Department of the City of Helsinki. Supported housing for youth in child protection after-care services and the places to practise independent living after foster care has been increased. In addition to the dwelling, in supported housing of after-care services and in places for practising independent living, a young person has systematic support from social counselling for living and independence.

Year	Name	Number of places	Target group	Service provider
2008	Suutarinkoti	25	Homeless people suffering from mental health problems	Lilinkotisäätiö
2009	Service Centre for the homeless, Hietaniemenkatu 5 reception unit, day centre	52 rooms	Men and women with substance abuse and mental health problems	City of Helsinki
	Roihuvuori service block, Roihuvuorentie 3	30 service housing	People under 65 years of age with heavy support needs	City of Helsinki Palveluasunnot Oy
	Roihuvuori supported housing, Roihuvuorentie 3	22 supported housing	Young people, intoxicant abuse rehabilitees	City of Helsinki Palveluasunnot Oy
2010 – 2011	Auroratalo Helsinginkatu, Alppikatu 2	125 service housing	Supported and intensive supported housing men and women with substance abuse and mental health problems	Helsinki Deaconess Institute
	Pitäjänmäentie 12	111	Long-term homeless, men and women with substance abuse and mental health problems	The Salvation Army
	Rukkila Kartanonkaari 29	21	Young people in need of intensive supported housing	Suojapirtti ry
	Pessi 2, Mäkelänkatu 50–52	41	Men and women with substance abuse and mental health problems	The Finnish Blue Ribbon Foundation
	Dwellings procured	275	People in need of supported housing, long-term homeless	Y-Foundation Kovaosaisten ystävät ry NGO City of Helsinki City
	Rental housing allocated on the recommendation of the Department of Social Services	130	Long-term homeless moving into independent living	City of Helsinki Real Estate Department
Total		832		

The Department of Social Services has been able to purchase supported housing services for young people in discretionary after-care from the Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL) in the framework of the program to reduce long-term homelessness. In this way it has been possible to prevent the homelessness of, roughly 30 young people and to support their independent living. At the same time a structural change in child welfare services has been implemented when being able to offer supported housing instead of a more intensive placement in an institution.

### Procuring housing services

The City of Helsinki has been a pioneer in applying SGEI service procurement, in accordance with EU legislation to housing services for the homeless. Following the decision of the municipal social welfare board, the public service obligation was entrusted to seven service providers, with which the city will make/has made long-term agreements on providing services. SGEI procurement ensures the six long-term development of services, as well as their economic transparency, to the benefit of the City.

### Name on the Door project

Together with the Cities of Espoo, Vantaa and Tampere, as well as the Helsinki Deaconess Institute, Vailla vakinaista asuntoa ry, and Silta-valmennus ry, the City of Helsinki has participated in a project for developing services for the homeless that is partially funded by Tekes (The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation) and coordinated by SOCCA (The Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area). The development theme for the Helsinki sub-project has been emergency housing and, related to this, the multiprofessional work at reception units, among other things. The service models generated by the project have been collected on the [www.asuntoensin.fi](http://www.asuntoensin.fi) website.

### Housing advice and results

Housing advice as a permanent form of work began in the Department of Social Services of the City of Helsinki in 2006. There were five housing advisers in the real estate companies. The activities expanded, when the Department of Social Services hired seven new housing advisers and a housing adviser in charge in 2009 and three new housing advisers in 2011. There is 1 housing adviser in charge and 14 housing advisers in Helsinki. In developing the activities of housing advisers, the special characteristics and needs of different areas have been taken into account, which has created different functioning regional operating models. Regardless of the operating model, housing advice has been able to prevent evictions and homelessness. Savings have been gained for the tenant, the social administration and the real estate companies. In two years 148 evictions were cancelled from court and there were 3,682 payment plans made. According to the housing advice effectiveness analysis by the Urban Research Unit, the number of evictions was reduced by 32 % in real estate companies that used the services of housing advisers. The cancellation of 148 evictions generated over 6 million euros in savings in public finances.

### International cooperation

The implementation of the reduction programme in Helsinki has generated a great deal of international interest. Among others, representatives of the cities of Paris and Amsterdam have come to learn more about the implementation of the programme. Representatives of the City Helsinki have also participated in the peer reviews arranged in Amsterdam and Gothenburg by the HABITACT city network.

## 2. Long-term homelessness in Helsinki 2012

Thanks to the measures of the programme, the number of the long-term homeless has clearly begun to decrease. At the end of 2011, it was estimated that there were 1,240 long-term homeless in Helsinki, while in 2008, the estimated number was 1,591. The real decrease in long-term homelessness is even greater, because the statistics for 2011 include 700 people living with relatives and friends listed as long-term homeless, even though not all of them require support, according to the definition of long-term homelessness. Temporary and repeated

homelessness has increased, which also increases the risk of long-term homelessness. Both the downturn of the economic situation and the development of the rental housing 7 market, as well as migration to the capital city area, can be seen behind the phenomenon. It is also clear that an increasing number of the homeless are people whose only problem is the lack of a reasonably priced rental flat. There are also more young people under 25 and people with an immigrant background among the long-term homeless.

A change occurred during the last year of Paavo I in the background of the homelessness of the long-term homeless. Many of the so-called hardcore of the long-term homeless had found housing. Approximately 58 % of the applicants had been homeless for over a year (approx. 67 % in 2010). Based on the applications, it is possible to cautiously estimate that the number of new homeless people seems to be increasing. Most of the homeless had either an acute substance abuse problem or a background with substance abuse. Most would benefit from a living environment that supports abstinence. Most of the homeless can manage in supported housing or housing with support and only a small number needs intensive supported housing or service housing.

More housing units for the long-term homeless will be completed, which will hopefully help with the long queues. What is worrying is the significant growth in the waiting list for small flats. The inhabitants cannot move quickly enough into living independently from supported housing, the housing services of substance abuse care, or supported housing, which in turn lengthens the queues to other housing services. This part of the service chain is not operating efficiently enough.

Customer groups that are difficult to place include mental health patients with a negative attitude towards treatment, and customers that suffer from different kinds of behavioural disorders and are not suited to congregate housing.

The greatest need is still for supported housing for middle-aged customers with substance abuse problems, and for independent small flats for those who can manage relatively independently. Services should also be allocated to young people under 30 years and women. According to ARA's statistics, the number of homeless families is also increasing. Based on estimates there are approximately 200 homeless families in Helsinki.

The Department of Social Services is starting an assessment project on the housing needs of families; 225,000 euros/year of project funding has been reserved for the project.

### 3. Preventing long-term homelessness

Housing advice is an effective way of preventing homelessness. The model developed in the Department of Social Services of the City of Helsinki has been proven to work well, and it can be copied throughout the country. The housing social work must be the responsibility of professionals in social services and be carried out under the Department of Social Services. It is essential to create an extensive cooperation network. Housing advice does not yet cover the whole Helsinki area, but the goal is to expand the activities by two housing advisers/year.

### 4. Preventing youth homelessness

In order to prevent youth homelessness and increase inclusion, the City of Helsinki participates in the multidisciplinary youth homelessness prevention project by the Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL). In the project dwellings are provided for young people, and needs-based housing services are organised through multidisciplinary cooperation. It must be ensured that youth housing is actually used by all kinds of young people, not only by students. On the other hand, there are many young people in Helsinki who study in vocational education and do not have permanent housing, because the student financial aid they get does not cover the high costs of living in the capital city area.

The Department of Social Services has an outsourced service agreement with the Finnish Youth Housing Association (NAL). The Department of Social Services purchases supported housing services for young people with the outsourced service agreement. The Department of Social Services works in close cooperation with the housing authorities of the city, in order to increase the number of the City's rental housing, so that a young person living in an after-care supported housing can move into a city rental flat at the right time, freeing up supported housing for young people with a greater need for support. 200,000 euros/year have been reserved for the project in the social administration budget. The Department of Social Services has 8 flats for emergency housing for homeless families with children. In connection with the emergency housing for families, a social counsellor works together with the family to provide support in resolving the situation and finding permanent housing. Emergency housing is intended

for short-term housing. This service cannot support children with families that need strong, comprehensive support in life management.

### 5. Housing for homeless people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence

In cooperation with the cities participating in the programme and organisations providing housing services, the Criminal Sanctions Agency will implement a project for creating local practices to ensure housing and necessary support for people going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence. Housing for people on parole is challenging. People often contact the Department of Social Services at a short notice, which makes it difficult to arrange a place to live. Another challenge is that even if the social services are contacted early, it is not possible to keep a place waiting and empty for long.

People going on parole or serving a monitoring sentence are expected to participate in goal-oriented activities and be abstinent. In connection with housing, this often requires arranging intensive support.

The Kriminaalihuollon tukisäätiö foundation (a non-profit after-care organisation) has specialised in organising supportive housing services for homeless released prisoners. Among other things, the foundation organises housing training, supported housing, housing advice, and other necessary support services for people on parole or serving a monitoring sentence. At the moment the foundation has 32 places in shared flats and supported housing in Helsinki.

During the programme period, the City of Helsinki participates in the Saattaen vapauteen (Escorted to freedom) project, which ensures a supported housing pathway for homeless inhabitants of Helsinki on parole or serving a monitoring sentence to move into supported housing or other housing via the foundation or other service provider organisations after the criminal sanction is over. The project procures new small flats for the foundation's supported housing activities and arranges housing advice, as well as the necessary support services.

In connection with the project, the City of Helsinki and the Kriminaalihuollon tukisäätiö foundation will draw up a partnership agreement on developing a housing pathway and organising the necessary services. The purpose is to develop housing training for the target group, the necessary housing advice, and forms of support and other guidance. The development project is carried out during the years 2013–2015.

### 6. Developing housing services for the long-term homeless

In the City of Helsinki, the number of people in need of different kinds of housing services is significantly higher than in other municipalities. For this reason, the housing services have also been organised in a different way compared to other areas.

The substance abuse care housing services are only intended for the homeless customers. Generally, a person with a home uses the rehabilitating institutional services of substance abuse care, and can only become a customer of the housing services in exceptional cases. Housing services are provided as the City's own services, and they are procured, as needed, from the framework agreement partners. In 2011, there were 361 people who lived for 58,990 days in the housing services. The goal is to reduce the use of substance abuse care housing services and to profile new supported housing units, so that abstinent housing is a possibility for those who want it.

In accordance with the division of work agreed in Helsinki, the Health Centre arranges rehabilitating housing and the Department of Social Services arranges supported and service housing for mental health clients. The services are not restricted to the homeless, but they are organised, as needed, for all mental health clients in Helsinki. In Helsinki there are also an increasing number of customers under 65 years of age with multiple problems who are in need of service housing. The customers often suffer from brain damage, dementia, etc. Housing services for people under 65 years of age with multiple problems are organised for all people who need them; the person does not have to be homeless. From the point of view of Helsinki it is important to continue to separate the different customer groups, so that it is possible to ensure housing services for the most marginalised. Profiling the city's own housing services directed to the homeless (supported, intensive supported and service housing in a housing unit, supported housing, and housing in small flats) will be continued and the service chain will be developed during the following period. The development work is done together in a network formed by the tenants, the Department of Social Services of the City of Helsinki, and the service providers, with the goal of spreading good practises and acting as a forum for learning from others.

## 7. Participation of clients/tenants

The Department of Social Services of the City of Helsinki implements the procurement of housing services for the long-term homeless as a public service obligation. The service description specifies cooperation with the neighbourhood. Housing units must have a written plan on neighbourhood work, which describes how the cooperation with the neighbours and actors in the neighbourhood and the unit is arranged, among other things. Feedback from the neighbourhood must receive an immediate reaction and response. The staff must take to the streets and use their rounds to reduce any possible harmful effects caused by the unit. In the housing units feedback is collected regularly from the clients, and the operation is developed together with them. Representatives of the tenants also participate in the cooperation network of supported housing.

## 8. Other projects

From the point of view of the service system, the most problematic group of long-term homeless are the customers with a so-called double diagnosis who suffer simultaneously from both substance abuse and mental health problems. Many also suffer from different kinds of somatic illnesses (diabetes, long-term ulcers, epilepsy, dementia associated with substance abuse, etc.). Active participation of health care is needed for the successful housing of this group of customers.

The treatment of patients with a double or triple diagnosis requires special expertise, which health stations generally do not have. As a long-term homelessness project, the health station department of the Health Centre has proposed a trial of two positions for doctors to be placed in the Terve Kotikuntoutus (Healthy rehabilitation at home) work group operating in the interface of social and health care services; the work group is administratively a part of the city centre health stations in the health station department. The project costs are 200,000 euros/year.

The Department of Social Services strengthens the coordination of the social administration and housing by hiring more personnel for the placement activities. The costs are 135,000 euros/year.

## 9. Project plan 2012–2015

Year	Name	Number of places	Target group	Project implemented by	Investment costs (M€)	ARA share 50% (M€)
2012 July	Kujan-Katti Ruusulankatu 10 Helsinki 26	99	Men and women in need of supported housing.	The Finnish Blue Ribbon Foundation	12,6	6,3 ARA
2012 November	The Salvation Army/Alppikatu housing unit, Alppikatu 25 Helsinki 53	80	Men and women with substance abuse and mental health problems that have severe difficulties finding housing, released prisoners	The Salvation Army	10,2	5,1 ARA
<b>Total, 2012</b>		<b>179</b>			<b>22,8 M€</b>	<b>11,4 M€</b>
2013 January	Vanha Viertotie 22 Helsinki 35	116	Men and women in need of supported housing	KOy Helsingin Palveluasunnot	6,2	3,1 ARA
2013 January	Arvid-koti/ Kalevankatu 19 Helsinki 10	32	Men in need of supported housing, released prisoners, the elderly	Kovaosaisten ystävät ry	6	3 ARA
2013 January	Siltamäki Service Centre, new building, Peltokyläntie 4–8 Helsinki 74	20 sheltered housing	People under 65 years of age with heavy support needs	KOy Helsingin Palveluasunnot	2,3	1,2 ARA
2013 April	Haaga Niemikotisäätiö	25	Men in need of supported housing, released prisoners	Y-Foundation	4,5	2,2 ARA
2013 December	Concept competition plot/ Rafael	50	Homeless men and women in need of different levels of support		6	3 ARA
<b>Total, 2013</b>		<b>243</b>			<b>25,0 M€</b>	<b>12,5 M€</b>

Producing small flats	Number of places	Target group	Implemented by	M€	M€
	128 residents 32 residents/year	Rehabilitated men and women with severe difficulties in finding housing	Y-Foundation, Kovaosaisten ystävät ry	17,4	8,7 RAY
	200 residents, 50 residents/year	Rehabilitated men and women	Of the city's rental housing stock		

*TOTAL IN 2012–2015, DWELLINGS: 750.*

*In addition, the Junailijankuja housing unit is in use as temporary housing with 114 places.*



**NEED FOR MORE PERSONNEL/KASTE FUNDING 2012**

*The implementation plan includes the projects that have started during 2012:*

Unit	Time period	Labour costs	MSAH share 50 % (M€)	
Kujan-Katti	1 October – 31 December 2012	330,000	165,000	
Junailijankuja housing unit (temporary housing unit replacing Kalevankatu)	1 January – 31 December 2012	1,697,250	848,625	
Alppikatu housing unit	1 November – 31 December 2012	97,151	48,576	
Housing support (families)	1 January – 31 December 2012	225,000	112,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Placement and coordinating housing	1 January – 31 December 2012	135,000	67,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Health station department/ Doctors	1 January – 31 December 2012	200,000	100,000	Project by the City of Helsinki
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,684,401 M€</b>	<b>1,342,200 M€</b>	

*Year 2012: a total of 2,684,401 euros, of which the share of MSAH is 1,342,200 euros.*

**2013**

*The implementation plan includes the projects that have started during 2012:*

Unit	Time period	Labour costs	MSAH share 50 % (M€)	
Kujan-Katti	1 October – 31 December 2013	1,270,000	635,000	
Junailijankuja housing unit (temporary housing unit replacing Kalevankatu)	1 January – 31 December 2013	1,697,250	848,625	
Alppikatu housing unit	1 November – 31 December 2013	582,906	291,453	
Housing support (families)	1 January – 31 December 2013	225,000	112,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Placement and coordinating housing	1 January – 31 December 2013	135,000	67,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Health station department/ Doctors	1 January – 31 December 2013	200,000	100,000	Project by the City of Helsinki
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,110,156 M€</b>	<b>2,055,078 M€</b>	

*The implementation plan includes the projects that have started during 2013:*

Unit	Time period	Labour costs	MSAH share 50 % (M€)	
Kalevankatu / Arvid	1 January – 31 December 2013	510,070	255,035	
Vanha Viertotie 22	1 January – 31 December 2013	360,000	180,000	
Siltamäki Service Centre, new building	1 November – 31 December 2013	277,574	138,787	Project by the City of Helsinki
Haaga	1 January – 31 December 2013	252,000	126,000	
Rafael	1 January – 31 December 2013	83,000	41,500	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,482,644 M€</b>	<b>741,322 M€</b>	

*Year 2013: a total of 5,592,800 euros, of which the share of MSAH is 2,696,400 euros.*

**2014**

*The implementation plan includes the projects that have started during 2012 and 2013:*

Unit	Time period	Labour costs (M€)	MSAH share 50 % (M€)	
Kujan-Katti	1 January – 31 December 2014	1,270,000	635,000	
Junailijankuja housing unit	1 November – 31 December 2014	1,697,250	848,625	
Kalevankatu / Arvid	1 January – 31 December 2014	510,070	255,035	
Alppikatu housing unit 1	1 January – 31 December 2014	582,906	291,453	
Haaga 1	1 January – 31 December 2014	336,000	168,000	
Housing support (families)	1 January – 31 December 2014	225,000	112,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Placement and coordinating housing	1 January – 31 December 2014	135,000	67,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Health station department / Doctors	1 January – 31 December 2014	200,000	100,000	Project by the City of Helsinki
Vanha Viertotie 22 1	1 January – 31 December 2014	360,000	180,000	
Siltamäki Service Centre, new building	1 January – 31 December 2014	277,574	138,787	Project by the City of Helsinki
Rafael	1 January – 31 December 2014	622,500	311,250	
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,216,300 M€</b>	<b>3,108,150 M€</b>	

*Year 2014: a total of 6,216,300 euros, of which the share of MSAH is 3,108,150 euros.*

2015

The implementation plan includes the projects that have started during 2012–2014:

Unit	Time period	Labour costs	MSAH share 50 % (M€)	
Kujan-Katti	1 January – 31 December 2015	1,270,000	635,000	
Junailijankuja housing unit	1 November – 31 December 2015	1,697,250	848,625	
Kalevankatu / Arvid	1 January – 31 December 2015	510,070	255,035	
Alppikatu housing unit 1	1 January – 31 December 2015	582,906	291,453	
Haaga 1	1 January – 31 December 2015	336,000	168,000	
Housing support (families)	1 January – 31 December 2015	225,000	112,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Placement and coordinating housing	1 January – 31 December 2015	135,000	67,500	Project by the City of Helsinki
Health station department / Doctors	1 January – 31 December 2015	200,000	100,000	Project by the City of Helsinki
Vanha Viertotie 22 1	1 January – 31 December 2015	360,000	180,000	
Siltamäki Service Centre, new building	1 January – 31 December 2015	277,574	138,787	Project by the City of Helsinki
Rafael	1 January – 31 December 2015	622,500	311,250	
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,216,300 M€</b>	<b>3,108,150 M€</b>	

Year 2015: a total of 6,216,300 euros, of which the share of MSAH is 3,108,150 euros.

### NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL / FUNDING FOR SUBURBS

Unit	Project	Employees		Labour costs (M€)	ARA 20 % (M€)
2012	Housing advice services	2 new	City of Helsinki	72,562	14,512
2013	Housing advice services	2 new	City of Helsinki	145,124	29,025
2014	Housing advice services	2 new	City of Helsinki	217,686	43,537
2015	Housing advice services	2 new	City of Helsinki	290,248	58,050
<b>Total</b>				<b>725,620 M€</b>	<b>145,124 M€</b>

## 10. Steering and monitoring of the programme

The monitoring of the letter of intent is based on a regular information exchange between the state and the City of Helsinki, as well as negotiations arranged at least once per year. A monitoring and steering group for the programme to reduce long-term homelessness led by ARA will be established to carry out the monitoring, with representatives from the parties to the letter of intent.

The monitoring is implemented in a follow-up report drawn up annually by the end of February, which includes a summary on the progress of the overall project

and its sub-projects, the commitment of the costs and funding, and the ongoing and newly started projects in the plan. *The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for compiling the report.*

The City of Helsinki is responsible for its own part in organising customer-specific monitoring, together with the service providers, in accordance with the national model drawn up for monitoring the reduction programme. The customer monitoring is implemented through a customer interview carried out in connection with the move and at least once per year.

# A Home of Your Own

Housing First and  
ending homelessness  
in Finland

Since 2008 the national homelessness strategy in Finland has been based on the Housing First model. The idea of Housing First is simple yet radical: to give people permanent housing and the support they need as soon as they become homeless. The model works – Finland is the only country in Europe where the number of homeless people is on the decline.

*A Home of Your Own* – Housing First and Ending Homelessness in Finland describes the model in detail. It also gives a voice to the people who now have homes in supported housing units or scattered housing. The book has been written for decision-makers and professionals to provide them with tools and inspiration for improving the lives of the homeless in their home countries.

*A Home of Your Own* was published by the Y-Foundation, one of the key national developers of the Housing First principle. The Y-Foundation offers affordable rental housing and encourages public discussion on themes related to homelessness.



Y-FOUNDATION

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