Housing First and ending homelessness in Finland
Melbourne 7.8.2018
Juha Kaakinen, CEO
Finland
338.424 km²
Population 5.5M
Helsinki 645.000

Victoria
227.416 km²
Population 6.2M
Melbourne 4.8M
It has been done before

• 1945-
• In a few years
• 420,000 Finnish war refugees rehoused permanently
The birth of Finnish homelessness

- Single men, veterans living in shelters operated in bombshelters in Helsinki
- The last underground shelter was closed in 1954.
Bat cave

• A shelter in Helsinki for 500 homeless men 1967–1979
• 1979–1999:
  • youth culture centre
  • Rock radio station
Founding bodies of Y-Foundation

• Five largest cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere and Turku
• Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland
• Finnish Red Cross
• The Finnish Association for Mental Health
• Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
• Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT
• The Finnish Construction Trade Union.
Homeless people vs. number of our apartments

- Single homeless people
- Y-Foundation's apartments
What we wanted to do and achieve

• To halve long-term homelessness by 2011 and end it by 2015
• Conversion of all shelters and dormitory-type hostels into supported housing units
• Reinforcing Housing First approach as a mainstream organizing principle for housing and support services for homeless people

Quantitative targets*:
• 2,500 new apartments, supported housing units or care places in 10 (2008–2011) / 11 (2012–2015) major cities

*Targets of the National PAAVO Programme 2008–2015
What have we done

• Housing:
  • Over 3.500 new apartments built / purchased for homeless people

• Services:
  • 300 new professional support workers in housing social work
  • Housing advice services have been upscaled nationwide

• Housing First principle (as we understand it) has been established
• Shelters/hostels have been replaced by supported housing units
Housing First in Finland

• Name on the Door – report:
• “Solving social and health problems is not a prerequisite for arranging housing, but instead housing is a prerequisite that will also enable solving homeless person’s other problems.”
Housing First in Finland

- Housing as a basic human and social right
- Housing in normal surroundings/permanent homes
- Own independent rental apartment either in scattered housing or in a supported housing unit
- Own rental contract (normally for unlimited time)
- Adequate support if needed and wanted
- Autonomy/ unconditionality
- Normality
Support in Housing First

• Intensive case management
• Use of basic social and health care services
• Personnel ratio: 1/10 in scattered housing
• Max 5/10 in supported housing units
Forms of Support

- In supported housing:
  - Community work
  - Low threshold work/daily activities

- In scattered housing:
  - Detoxification at home
  - Tailored harm reduction support for people with drug addiction
  - Floating support team for people with recurrent psychoses
Väinölä

- Supported housing
- 33 apartments (35 tenants)
- Opened 2014
- Built by Y-Foundation
- Leased to City of Espoo
- Support provided by Salvation Army (11 co-workers)
Alppikatu 25

• Opened in 1936:
  • As a shelter 250 bed places

• Since 2012:
  • Supported housing
  • 81 independent rental apartments
  • 88 residents
  • Apartment size 19–36 m²
  • On site personnel by Salvation Army
  • 22 employees
# Housing options for Homeless persons in Helsinki

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Supported housing</th>
<th>Independent rental apartments</th>
<th>Hostels and shelters</th>
<th>Social housing apartments</th>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2.121</td>
<td>35.404</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>2.033</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>68.881</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1.309</td>
<td>2.433</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>67.764</td>
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</tbody>
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You can’t have Housing First without having housing first.
Jallukka

- Social housing by Y-Foundation and Elmu-Foundation
- 74 apartments
- 25 reserved for low income rock musicians and people in music industry
- Training facilities
- Sauna, cafe/lunch restaurant
Social housing in Finland

• 13% of the total housing stock
• 20% in new housing areas
• 8,500 new units started in 2017 by city housing companies and non-profit NGOs
• State guaranteed loans for 40 years, state subsidies if the interest rate is over 2.5%
• Affordable rent (construction site on public land)
• Social housing is a necessary social infrastructure
What have we achieved

• Homelessness has decreased:
  • In recent years Finland has been the only European country where homelessness has decreased
  • 2017: 6,615 single homeless persons, 214 families
  • Wide definition of homelessness: 84% living temporarily with friends and relatives
  • 1,538 women
  • 1,585 young people (under 25 years)
  • 1,742 immigrants
  • From 2008 to 2016: long-term homelessness has decreased with 1,589 persons (35%)
Costs 2008-2015

Housing
• ARA (The Housing and Finance and Development centre)
  • 84 M€ grants for building (max. 50%)
  • RAY/STEA National Lottery
  • 87 M€ grants for buying flats
• Cities and NGOs
  • Approx. 84 M€ low rent loans for building
  • Approx. 87 M€ loans for buying flats
  • Total costs: 382 M€ (400 M€)

Support
• Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Development
  • 20 M€ grants for salary costs of support
• Cities and NGOs
  • 20 M€ for support work
Costs 2008-2015

- Costs savings approximately 15,000 €/person/year when a homeless person gets permanent housing in supported housing unit.
- An evaluation by the Technical University of Tampere
- Cost savings mainly from reduced use of special health care, institutional care etc.
- Housing a homeless person with support is an investment that pays back in max. 7 years.
- Cost savings get bigger in the long run and when a homeless person needs less support or returns to employment.
What next?

• 2016–2019: National Programme for Homelessness Prevention
• Prevention strategies for cities
• Upscaling housing advisory services:
  • 80 housing advisors prevented in 2017 2,871 evictions
• NGOs and cities working together to develop women specific services and housing solutions
• From functional zero to absolute zero:
  • Government has made a decision of principle to halve the existing homelessness before 2022:
  • Target group: people living temporarily with friends and relatives
  • Proposed measures: 5,000 new apartments, social housing in new housing areas from 20% to 30%
What’s needed to end homelessness

- Political will (action oriented not media inflated)
- Think big and do it, together
- Ambitious plan with concrete measurable goals
- HF with affordable social housing
- Less talk more doing
Culture / process / timespan

Talking
- Talk
- A proposal
- Legislation
- Talk
- Financial plan
- Talk
- Implementation

A need / a problem
- Research

Doing
- Talk
- A plan
- Decision
- Action plan
- Building, support
• As many as possible
• As soon as possible
• Let’s get everybody in
• Let’s end homelessness for good,
• together