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Homeless in Europe

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**Participation of People
Experiencing Homelessness:
Sharing the Power and
Working Together**



FEANTSA

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, ruth.owen@feantsa.org.

Participation of people experiencing homelessness: Sharing the power and working together

The concept of participation denotes the full inclusion of those affected in decision-making processes. In homelessness, participation refers to the effective involvement of people experiencing homelessness in service provision, as well as in decision making processes affecting services. Participation is an issue of growing importance in relation to homelessness. This is closely related to the evolution of rights-based approaches, which assert homeless people's right to be involved in decisions affecting their lives. Such thinking challenges the notion of homeless people as passive consumers of services and views them as key stakeholders whose views are of central importance. The rise of participation is also linked to some extent to the issue of quality in homeless services. The drive towards quality assessment and the notion of users' entitlement to quality can be seen to create openings for service users to be heard.

Empowerment can be described as a process by which people enhance their capacity to make informed choices and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. Participation creates opportunities for empowerment by creating space for building self-confidence and relationships, development of skills and networks, and the acquisition of responsibility. This aspect of participation is increasingly understood to be very powerful in facilitating people with experience of homelessness to create positive change in their lives.

There is considerable diversity in the extent of participatory practice at European, national, local and service-level. In some European member states, the participation of people experiencing homelessness in the services that they use has become a legal obligation and is highly formalised at multiple levels. In other instances, participation has a less robust framework and occurs in a more ad hoc fashion. There are many forms of participation and participatory practice – from working with individuals in an empowering way, to participation at service level, to the establishment of service user organisations and the political participation of homeless people. There

is also some ongoing debate concerning the barriers to participation and how and to what extent they can be effectively overcome.

Participation has become a key theme¹ in FEANTSA's work over the past five years and was designated the annual theme for 2009². This edition of *Homeless in Europe* is published in the framework of this annual theme. The articles present a range of examples of participatory practices that currently exist in and beyond Europe. They do not seek to provide a complete overview but to highlight some pertinent and diverse examples of the ways in which participation can be implemented – highlighting challenges, and suggesting ways to overcome these as well as highlighting positive outcomes.

Silke Paasche, FEANTSA Policy Officer begins by taking a look at participation of service users in FEANTSA. She presents an overview of FEANTSA's work on participation. She then summarises some of the issues and discussions arising from FEANTSA's 2009 conference "Sharing the Power - Working Together: Participation as a tool to solve homelessness" about the role of participation in the wider context of EU exchanges on homelessness and the work of FEANTSA. The article sets forth a range of questions that FEANTSA will have to address in determining a way forward for participation of service users. Alongside her article is a summary of outcomes from the European meeting of homeless service users that took place at the conference.

Secondly, Andy Williams, Client Involvement Manager from the London-based organisation St Mungo's provides an account of the process that this organisation went through in order to establish an effective service user involvement strategy. He charts the development of *Outside In*, St Mungo's client representative group - celebrating their successes as well as highlighting the challenges involved and the ways in which these challenges were managed.

1 For more information on FEANTSA's work on participation see: <http://feantsa.horus.be/code/EN/theme.asp?ID=34>

2 For more information on the annual theme see: <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/theme.asp?ID=40>

The articles in *Homeless in Europe* do not necessarily reflect the views of FEANTSA. Extracts from this publication can be quoted as long as the sources are acknowledged.



The next article looks at establishing a service user organisation at national level. Ask Svejstrup, Head of the Secretariat at SAND (the Danish service user organisation for homeless people) examines the development of the organisation in a national context where service user participation has a legal basis. He focuses on the challenge of reconciling the role of a professional secretariat, without direct experience of homelessness, with the representation of homeless people.

Participating in the arts or in sports activities can empower people experiencing homelessness by supporting the development of skills and self-confidence. Leonardo Tancredi, Editor of the Italian street paper, *Piazza Grande* provides a thorough analysis of the recent Homeless World Cup, which took place in Milan in September 2009. His article demonstrates the empowering effect that participation in such an event can have for the participants. At the same time, he takes a critical view of aspects of the event - drawing attention to its failure to challenge stereotypes or policies which threaten to deny the fundamental rights of homeless people in Italy.

The arts in particular can be credited with helping people with experience of homelessness to express their views and concerns. Izumi Sakamoto, Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Toronto, presents an example of Collaborative Arts-Informed Research on Homelessness from Canada. She describes a collaborative, participatory research approach, where peer-researchers contribute as experts on their own lived experience, as well as "cultural brokers", well-placed to draw on the experience of other homeless people. She demonstrates how arts-based research may allow people experiencing homelessness to document and express their ideas and their perspectives effectively.

Next, Joe Hall and Alistair Story present the *Peer to Peer* project from the UK. This is a highly innovative project, which involves people with experience of homelessness and/or drug and alcohol use as peer educators in tuberculosis control activities. The article demonstrates clearly the specific skills that people with direct experience of the issues at stake can bring to the table and the value of this contribution.

Rob Jezek, Director of Het Projektburo in the Netherlands provides insight into participatory work with young homeless people. He details examples of advice, consultancy and research activities where young homeless people are involved in the design and implementation. He draws on these experiences to summarise some of the key elements required to facilitate the participation of young people experiencing homelessness.

Lastly, Samuel Le Floch, European Affairs Officer for French FEANTSA member, FNARS presents an account of a two day national citizen participation event organised by a collective of organisations in October 2009. The event involved more than 700 people; users of homeless services, elected representatives, social workers and others who gathered to exchange views and pool experience of local participation. Following the event, a 'letter from the future' was produced, anticipating the participation of users in the coming years. It is reproduced in the article and offers an inspiring vision for the future of participation.

As always, FEANTSA would like to extend its sincere thanks and gratitude to the contributors to this issue of the magazine.



Promoting the participation of service users: the role of FEANTSA

By **Silke Paasche**¹, *Policy Officer and Coordinator of the Participation Working Group, FEANTSA*

“Sharing the Power – Working together: Participation as a tool to solve homelessness” was the motto of this year’s FEANTSA European Conference². On this occasion more than 300 participants; service providers together with service users and other experts, came together in Copenhagen on the 23rd of October 2009 to discuss key questions around participation and homelessness and exchange good practices.

The European Conference was certainly an important milestone for FEANTSA’s work on participation. The questions raised during the two plenary sessions and ten different workshops will require a thorough discussion and follow-up and this article aims to provide some framework for this. However, the conference was not FEANTSA’s first initiative on participation but rather the result of several years of preparation and debate around participation and empowerment within the network.

When FEANTSA adopted its Statement of Values in 2005, the rights of service users, including the right to participate in decision making that affects them, were clearly highlighted. At the same time FEANTSA, together with its UK member *Off The Streets and into Work (OSW)*³ consulted member organisations on existing participation practices in the different countries. The results were drawn together in the report “Involving Homeless People in Decision-making affecting the Services that they use”⁴.

Since 2006, FEANTSA’s participation working group has brought together experts from different countries twice a year in order to increase our expertise in the area of user participation and facilitate the exchange of good practices. The working group has prepared several tools that are aimed at supporting organisations wanting to develop participation.

The group began its work with agreeing on a common understanding of participation and the values that underpin it. Participation can be defined as the effective involvement of service users in the provision of services as well as decision making processes affecting these services. The FEANTSA statement of Shared Values for Participation⁵ distinguishes tokenistic (i.e. only symbolic, superficial) forms of participation from approaches promoting a genuine involvement of users as an integral part of service provision and design. The statement sets out principles for effective service user participation as well as indicators to measure it. The four key principles are:

- Participation of people who are homeless is a visible commitment that is properly resourced
- People’s involvement in participation is valued
- All people who are homeless have the opportunity to get involved
- Policies and standards for the participation of people who are homeless are in place, evaluated and improved

The working group also developed a Participation Toolkit⁶. The toolkit highlights that participation is not a one-size-fits-all methodology that can be easily applied. Participation questions traditional ways of working and implies moving from doing things “to” people to doing things with people. It is a process that will include risks and require time and perseverance. The toolkit shows why it is worth investing this time and energy and provides practical advice on how to develop participation and how to deal with potential challenges and barriers. Complementary to the toolkit, the working group set up a compendium of interesting practices regarding service user participation on the FEANTSA website⁷. The compendium provides access to various information resources, such as handbooks on service user participation, peer research and self-organisation of service users.

Recently, the group finalised the document “Empowering Ways of Working”⁸. Empowerment can be defined as a process that enhances the capacity of individuals and groups to be informed, make choices and transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. The paper aims to provide a better understanding of empowerment in homeless services and includes recommendations on how to promote empowerment for service providers, service users, funding authorities as well as policy makers.

The main target group of the tools described here are FEANTSA members and their local members who directly work with people experiencing homelessness. This focus on the local level of direct service provision was also reflected in the conference programme in Copenhagen, which mainly looked at local projects of participation in different areas such as health, housing, homeless services and employment. There seems to be a general consensus within FEANTSA that we have an important role to play in facilitating these exchanges of local and to a certain extent national participation initiatives at a European level.

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2 The presentations of the conference are available on FEANTSA’s website : <http://feantsa.horus.be/code/EN/pg.asp?Page=1195>

3 OSW website: <http://www.osw.org.uk/>

4 <http://www.feantsa.org/files/Participation/Participation%20Audit/EN%20participation%20Final%20Report.pdf>

5 http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Working_Groups/Participation/2009/Policy_docs/Final_Shared_values_participation_EN.pdf

6 http://www.feantsa.org/files/Participation/policy%20statements/EN-Final_toolkit.pdf

7 <http://www.feantsa.org/code/en/pg.asp?Page=808>

8 http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Working_Groups/Participation/2009/Policy_docs/091019_document_empowering_ways_EN.pdf



But the conference in Copenhagen and the debates around participation have also raised questions about the role of participation in the wider context of EU exchanges on homelessness and the work and lobbying of FEANTSA. What could or should be the role of service users within FEANTSA? Should service users be directly represented in the activities or statutory bodies of FEANTSA, such as the Administrative Council⁹? What would be the added value of more direct service user involvement?

To launch a longer-term reflection on this topic, FEANTSA organised a workshop at this year's General Assembly, directly after the European Conference. The workshop showed that positions regarding service user involvement in the work of FEANTSA at EU level vary.

For some, FEANTSA as an organisation cannot and should not claim to represent service users directly because it is and should remain an organisation of service providers for homeless people. From this perspective there is an inherent conflict of interest in the service user – service provider relationship that cannot be ignored and might negatively impact on the capacity of FEANTSA to develop common positions. Service users and their organisations should therefore set up their own (national and European) networks and it should be the role of FEANTSA to support this process.

Others believe that the distinction between the service providers on the one hand and the service users on the other hand is less profound. While it is true that service users and service providers may have divergent interests and perspectives, they share the common goal of ending homelessness and should therefore work as much as possible together within the same organisation.

Another and probably the biggest group of FEANTSA members have no clear view on the role of service users within or outside of FEANTSA yet. Some of this group might believe that FEANTSA's path in relation to service user participation should be both promoting the creation of service user organisations outside of FEANTSA and facilitating the participation of service users directly within the network where this seems appropriate and useful.

In addition to this general question about the role of service users, there is discussion about the ways participation within FEANTSA could be organised. In principle, FEANTSA already allows service user led organisations to become members. FEANTSA has argued in the past that user organisations can become members in their capacity as a provider of advice, advocacy and other forms of support to people experiencing homelessness. There is therefore no general barrier for the representation of user organisations on the Administrative Council of FEANTSA or in the different working structures, such as the working groups.

However, in reality there are few organisations of service users who have the capacity to be engaged

and apply for membership. Some members would therefore like FEANTSA to become more pro-active and promote the involvement of service users through their organisations but also as individuals who can contribute a specific form of expertise. But if service users do not represent a user organisation, in what name would they speak? And who will select people and on the basis of what criteria?

Another difficulty is linked to communication. It is already challenging for members from non-French or non-English speaking countries to become involved in the network. This language barrier might become even more important with service users. FEANTSA also has no direct communication link with service users as it is a federation of regional and national networks which makes it very difficult to reach this audience and inform them about FEANTSA and its activities. There is a risk that FEANTSA might develop tokenistic forms of participation that are not adapted to what service users would like to contribute.

It is important that FEANTSA remains vigilant about purely institutionalised, superficial forms of participation with no or limited added value. However, FEANTSA should not forget its commitment to service user participation and should critically ask itself if it is willing to apply the motto of the conference to its own work and “share the power”; and institutional participation can be a very meaningful element of this. Many of the barriers to user participation mentioned above will be valid for any network that would like to engage more with its members. Questions of communication, language barriers and certainly also budgetary constraints have to be taken into account but can hardly be used as a justification for keeping the status quo.

Although no consensus might be reached in the shorter term on what way FEANTSA should go in relation to service user participation within the network itself and its advocacy work at EU level, it is important that FEANTSA has this debate.

The service users who were present at the conference in Copenhagen already presented some of their ideas. They met in an informal setting on the Saturday morning and shared experiences and good and bad practices around participation in the area of homelessness. A summary of the outcomes of this meeting is provided at the end of this article. The participants opted for the pragmatic approach and used the opportunity of their gathering to launch the informal network of service users called “HOPE” (HOMeless PEople). For the moment, HOPE is not more than an e-mail distribution list. It seems, however, that the service users see a role for FEANTSA to support this network, either as an independent structure or within the organisation.

FEANTSA will take up this challenge and have a thorough discussion about its strategy forward in relation to service user participation in general and within FEANTSA as a European organisation in particular. On FEANTSA's side, it will be the role of the participation working group together with the AC to steer this process and make concrete proposals.

FEANTSA should not forget its commitment to service user participation and should critically ask itself if it is willing to apply the motto of the conference to its own work and “share the power”

⁹ FEANTSA's Administrative Council (AC) is comprised of one member organisation from each country in the European Union where FEANTSA has a full member organisation.



It became very clear that the users want to be involved. They wish to take responsibility for their own lives, and because they have extensive knowledge of the structures behind homelessness, they wish to be included in processes on a political level too; let homeless people be part of solving homelessness!

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES OF SERVICE USERS MEETING IN HJEMLØSEHUSET, COPENHAGEN 24TH OF OCTOBER

By **Sofie Bay-Petersen**, *secretariat, SAND (national homeless service user organisation in Denmark)*

44 attended the service user meeting in Hjemløsehuset, where SAND is based.

Ask (Head of SAND's secretariat) welcomed everybody to Hjemløsehuset. One of the aims of the service user meeting is to meet and discuss homelessness throughout Europe. As an introduction we started imaging the room as a map of Europe – and stood in our own countries. People were then asked to introduce themselves, say where they came from and where they were based. Very different situations in the various countries - there was only one service user from the entire UK – and only because he had been paid for by FEANTSA. In Norway there are no user organisations for homeless people, only for drug addicts. But since 60% of the homeless in Norway are drug addicts there are similar interests. From Poland there were representatives from a Polish service user organisation - founded in January - the first initiative of its kind in Poland.

After a short break, the participants were asked to give examples of good practice – as well as negative examples when it comes to participation. They were also asked to consider: "If you were the minister of social affairs – what would you do to change the lives of homeless people?"

GOOD PRACTICES

It became very clear that the users want to be involved. They wish to take responsibility for their own lives, and because they have extensive knowledge of the structures behind homelessness, they wish to be included in processes on a political level too; let homeless people be part of solving homelessness!

There was a lot of talk about dignity when it came to discussing the good practices. Respect from society is key - be it from fellow citizens, service providers etc. If there is no respect, then there is very little dignity. This means no confidence and that nobody wants to participate; you basically give up fighting for yourself. Then the shelter ends up as an end station.

Also the free heroin distribution in Holland was mentioned. It is dignifying that you can get hold of the heroin through legal channels, and no longer have to resolve to crime in order to merely function.

User run shelters were another example of good practice. Other examples included:

Denmark: If you are living in the street and you are looking for help – it is actually possible to find it.

Belgium: Info stands – where to find help when you are homeless, a school for experienced experts

Germany: The general feeling is that there is a basic level of participation locally.

BAD EXPERIENCES

The bad experiences were often centred on the lack of involvement and respect. People had experienced rules rather than rights when living in a shelter. In

the real "horror scenarios", no social work is done - a bunch of papers is filled out, and that is it. The feeling of being a 2nd class citizen is damaging and kills all initiative from the service user. This feeling is especially predominant in Eastern and Southern European countries. There was talk of exclusion and a need for a change of culture in some countries where the participation is very poor. Prejudice was mentioned. Not everybody sees the potential of other people. Sometimes you are met by a social worker who sees you as a case and not as a person. Participation facilitator should be a profession!

Other examples of bad experiences:

Belgium: Not enough shelters. Dozens of people and not enough places to sleep. People run around looking for a place to sleep.

France: No money for client counselling

Holland: Little money is spent on homelessness in general.

"IF I WERE A MINISTER..."

A common response was that they wanted to set up more supported or alternative housing, so people could get out of the shelters and get on with their lives. However, there was some opposition to the Housing First way of thinking, as it is not certain that people want to be housed first and foremost, other aspects of their lives might need to be taken care of first. You need not only a house - but a home. The issue of loneliness was raised. Everybody needs to feel safe. You can be homeless within your own four walls.

"It should be impossible for people to lose their homes and thereby their registration including bank account, passport etc."

"More power at local level"

"Give people their own voice to articulate and intervene".

"If I were a minister in Denmark – I'd jump in a lake and drown myself"

HOPE (HOMELESS PEOPLE) -

A network for service users in Europe

The service users are poorly represented in FEANTSA. There is no network or homepage for service users in Europe. A request to FEANTSA for financial support (or from the EU) for a European network for service users, starting with a web page and meetings was made. This would be a forum to exchange experiences and ideas. A meeting in 2010, the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion was suggested. An initiative group/steering group for the European service user network should be set up, and start working on the idea. We have already created a network for us present here today. All names and mail addresses have been collected and will be sent round sometime next week.



Developing a client-involvement strategy: St Mungo's experience of establishing the client representative group *Outside In*

By **Andy Williams**¹, *Client Involvement Manager, St Mungo's, UK*

THE CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING *OUTSIDE IN*

St Mungo's² is London's largest charity for homeless men and women, with 40 years of expertise in the sector. A new role of Client Involvement Manager was created within the organisation in 2004. St Mungo's decided to create this role because the organisation recognised that traditional forms of client involvement – resident meetings, surveys, resident representatives – were not working very effectively. The aim was therefore to find a way of giving a voice to clients who may not have used these methods of representation and to create an involvement strategy appropriate to our client group. Initially, the post was for one year. It became permanent and a deputy post was developed, as we learned that long-term thinking is required for client involvement to be effective. I successfully applied and my initial task was to develop the first Client Involvement Strategy. We were committed to basing this on what our clients wanted to prioritise, not the wishes of the organisation. In partnership with Groundswell³ (a user-led organisation) we went through a process of peer research, training and action planning days with our clients. The result was a clear vision of how our clients wanted to get involved. Our clients - aged 18-65+, a quarter women, many with complex needs - were ambitious. They wanted ownership of St Mungo's client involvement mechanisms. They wanted their own representative group; run by clients, for clients. They wanted to run their own meetings, ending the dependence on staff to facilitate consultation. As a response, *Outside In*, St Mungo's clients' representative group was established. We also developed the Peer Facilitators Course that gave *Outside In* members the skills and confidence to organise and run their own meetings.

THE PROCESS AND THE RESULTS

We started from scratch with an open meeting of ten clients interested in establishing a representative group. They visited several of our residential projects to consult with fellow clients and establish the group's identity and purpose. From the outset they were

clear on their relationship with St Mungo's; "we're independent but it's a partnership". In the group's early stage, giving clients ownership of the process was key. The group made two initial demands of St Mungo's. Understanding that to be influential, they would require contact with the key decision makers, they requested regular meetings with the Directors. Also, in order to be well-organised, they requested office space and IT resources. Both these requests were met and during 2005 the group began to gather momentum and develop trust in working with St Mungo's.

Outside In now meets with the Directors every six weeks. This meeting is key to the group's success and effectiveness. *Outside In* members facilitate and set the agenda for these meetings. This has allowed our clients to debate genuinely, at a senior level and to influence the organisation's priorities. The Directors also enjoy these meetings - it gives them an insight into the reality of our clients' experiences and they are challenged in a positive and constructive way.

The key to these meetings is ensuring that *Outside In* represent the wider client group's issues, rather than any personal agenda. This is not easy; St Mungo's is a large, complex organisation with over 1,500 residents at any one time, over 90 residential services, plus numerous specialist services. However, using a variety of activities the group consults widely across our client group; running meetings in residential projects, organising and running social events, informal drop-ins, in-depth peer research projects, etc. At their monthly open general meeting the group will reflect on their recent activities and the themes will emerge that become the agenda they take to the forum with the Directors. As the group has evolved they have become more skilled at strategically presenting issues to the Directors. *Outside In's* mission statement, code of conduct, ground rules and membership criteria have allowed it the structure and organisation to be effective. Their greatest strength is that they are genuinely client-led. This removes the barriers that

Our clients - aged 18-65+, a quarter women, many with complex needs - were ambitious. They wanted ownership of St Mungo's client involvement mechanisms. They wanted their own representative group; run by clients, for clients.

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³ Website: <http://www.groundswell.org.uk/>



The challenges to setting up the group have been numerous and ever-changing. At the outset, if we had thought too much about the potential risks or problems we would never have got started or made any progress.

sometimes prevent effective engagement between clients and staff. Clients feel confident talking to *Outside In* members and are instinctively trusting and open. This means that when *Outside In* feedback to staff they are representing the reality of our clients' experience.

The Peer Facilitators Course has become the group's core training. The eight sessions cover; communication skills, assertiveness, confidence and how to utilise these skills as an effective facilitator. This course has evolved and in reality is now as much about supporting clients' personal development as it is about creating effective facilitators.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

The challenges to setting up the group have been numerous and ever-changing. At the outset, if we had thought too much about the potential risks or problems we would never have got started or made any progress. The initial challenge with *Outside In*'s founder members was to gain their trust. Was this tokenistic? What were St Mungo's motivations? Granting the group regular and meaningful access to the Directors quickly established trust and convinced clients that our motivations were genuine. You need a "quick win" to gain trust. The dynamics of the relationship between the representative group and staff can be complicated, but it is crucial to get them right. Firstly, there is the staff member working most closely with the group. Their role is to be supportive and enabling; helping the group be organised, assisting their processes and helping them understand how St Mungo's operates. However, they must never set the group's agenda and priorities. On occasion this staff member may need to step in to resolve internal politics or prevent one member from dominating by reminding them of the bigger picture and the group's primary aims. This is possible if the group has a clear and concise mission statement, code of conduct and trust the member of staff. The wider staff group did have initial concerns about the role of *Outside In*. It was a significant change giving clients such responsibility and access to senior staff, and this did create some anxiety when *Outside In* visited services. In truth, this has taken time to overcome, partly through the group's achievements and also through improving

staff understanding of client involvement through training. Once members of staff have a clear and positive understanding of the group's role, they are part of the partnership and help to recruit and promote *Outside In*'s events.

From the very start it was clear that the clients getting involved were very passionate about the group and representing their peers. The most active members were beginning to commit a lot of time, more than we expected. Some were approaching their role as a job. This raised lots of concerns. What was the reward going to be? Were people going to get "burned out"? We also had concerns about creating "professional homeless people" trapped in these roles. For the group to have any longevity, we needed to find solutions. There had to be benefits and rewards for getting involved, beyond the altruistic benefits of helping others. As the group evolved and people successfully moved on, it became apparent that there were numerous rewards for getting involved with *Outside In*. People have made lasting friendships from their involvement with the group; they start to gain their support from friends rather than professionals. Vocationally, *Outside In* has had a massive impact on people's lives. Initially, involvement increases confidence and self-esteem by giving clients a sense of ownership, belonging and doing something meaningful. All members are registered as volunteers with St Mungo's and receive training tailored for their *Outside In* roles, as well as having access to staff training. We also link all members in with our Employment Team so they can transfer their skills and experience into gaining work. The key to the ethos of the group is that membership is always temporary and involvement is a stepping stone to longer term goals. People naturally reach a point where, to continue their personal development, it is time to make the next step and progress from the group. We actively encourage this. The wide range of activities and training an *Outside In* member would have been involved in over a year or so can provide more than enough information to fill an application form and gains them a reference. This is a significant achievement for someone who may not have worked for several years, if at all. Involvement with *Outside In* can be genuinely life-changing. To date, fourteen members have used their involvement



to gain employment. Getting involved with *Outside In* can be the key part to a client's recovery. We believe that long-term, this is more rewarding for clients than making the small, tokenistic payments that might be possible within the benefits system.

THE IMPACT OF *OUTSIDE IN*

The impact of *Outside In* on St Mungo's cannot be underestimated. We now have a successful apprentice scheme that trains clients to become project workers over a 12-month contract. This is an example of one of many changes resulting from *Outside In's* forum with Directors. *Outside In* has proved to staff that client involvement can work and that we should be ambitious with our clients and not set limits to what they can achieve. In short, they have helped to mainstream client involvement at St Mungo's and made staff believe in it. *Outside In* has also helped establish client involvement within residential projects, by showing clients how to run meetings, ask for what they want and offer inspiration. *Outside In* influences all aspects of the organisation; inducting new staff, delivering training, running policy focus groups, sitting on a variety of working groups, etc. *Outside In* is involved in all of our peer research. With *Outside In*, we train clients to develop research questionnaires and interview clients. We've used this approach to look at issues such as harassment and bullying, women's experiences of our services and mental well-being. These investigations have had a massive impact on our strategic approach. One of *Outside In's* most recent achievements has been developing the *Ten Times Better* peer support groups. These are essentially self-help groups, facilitated by *Outside In* whereby clients set their own achievable goals every week over ten sessions. These groups have enabled clients that may have been perceived as not being ready to make positive changes to take ownership of their recovery. *Outside In* has helped us develop our Client Involvement Toolkit, a good practice manual that our services use to implement effective involvement throughout all aspects of their work.

THE FUTURE FOR *OUTSIDE IN*

One of the keys to *Outside In's* success was that St Mungo's was committed to supporting the group but had no agenda for them. That was for our clients to decide. When we started the group we had no idea what was going to happen next. Four years later, the group have been involved in more activities and achievements than it is possible to list. They have run several successful conferences, spoken at the House of Commons (the democratically elected house of the UK Parliament), visited Madrid and been shortlisted for a *Chartered Institute of Housing award for Client Involvement and Empowerment*. In light of this, it is very hard to predict *Outside In's* future. As the group is now established and has a successful record, we have committed more resources to supporting them so that they will continue to grow and become more influential. The group is already starting to widen their scope beyond St Mungo's, to influence government thinking and the wider homeless sector. I can see this continuing. They recently ran a successful workshop at a national Client Involvement Conference with Homeless Link (a national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies in England).⁴ Increasingly, *Outside In* are starting to network with clients and staff of other organisations, sharing their ideas and achieving greater influence.

Outside In has proved to staff that client involvement can work and that we should be ambitious with our clients and not set limits to what they can achieve.

4 Website: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>



The right to participate: Setting up a national service user organisation in Denmark and negotiating issues of professionalization and representation

By Ask Svejstrup Laurberg¹, *Head of secretariat, SAND, Denmark*

SAND did not emerge overnight but was the result of a group of homeless people's wish to make a change for themselves, the way they were treated, and not least, a change in the political and social climate at the time.

SAND – The Danish national organisation for homeless people was founded in spring 2001. It is an organisation for homeless and formerly homeless people and its aim is to raise awareness of the excluding mechanisms in society and set focus on the problems that homeless people face. SAND did not emerge overnight but was the result of a group of homeless people's wish to make a change for themselves, the way they were treated, and not least, a change in the political and social climate at the time. In this article I will try to outline the development of SAND and highlight the balance between giving a voice to service users and talking on behalf – as an employee - of the service users.

In Denmark we have today 64 temporary shelters (known in Denmark as section 110 shelters) for homeless people. Representatives from the tenants' councils gather in the eight regional SAND committees. The regional committees work on a local level and several have close connections with local politicians, and are asked for advice when decisions within our field need to be made.

SAND's board consists solely of service users and all regional committees are represented. The board lay out the overall strategy of the organisation in collaboration with the secretariat, and set up various working groups, e.g. women and homelessness, international issues, alternative housing etc., in which all volunteers are welcome to participate.

The secretariat is the umbrella covering all the regional units and helping out where needed. We arrange regional meetings for the committees, we provide information and knowledge and we arrange education and courses for our volunteers and other homeless people who might be interested. In addition, we publish a monthly newsletter which is distributed to all hostels throughout the country.

Approximately 150 people who are presently or formerly homeless volunteer at SAND. Employed at the secretariat are four people, none of whom have a service user background. Within the past 10 - 15 years, the political agenda in Denmark has been characterised by a growing interest in, and an increasing demand for user involvement in the public sector. In the domain of social policy this saw the former

Social Assistance Act replaced in 1998 by three new acts: the Active Social Policy Act, the Social Services Act and the Legal Protection Act. Common to these acts is that they are designed, among other things, to ensure user involvement in public provision for society's most vulnerable groups. The introduction of these acts saw the requirement for user involvement become a reality; a requirement which actors at all levels engaged in social policy work must observe and act in conformity with.

Under Section 16 of the Social Services Act², local authorities are required to lay down guidelines to ensure that residents at Denmark's Section-110 accommodation facilities are guaranteed influence on the organisation and utilisation of the facility's provisions, services and other conditions of significance for residence and daily life at the facility (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006: 30). In addition, Section 4 of the Legal Protection Act³ is intended to ensure that each individual resident has the opportunity to get involved in programming his/her stay at the Section-110 accommodation facility, and the subsequent stages the resident undergoes after staying at an accommodation facility (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2000).

Even though it was stated in law that users should participate in decisions regarding their own life and the daily life in hostels, this was not the general picture in the late nineties. Studies indicate that user involvement at hostel-level is fraught with conflicts and dilemmas arising out of discrepancies between the management's and the residents' wishes and needs (Tilia 2002). In order to get the process going, the Ministry of Social Affairs made a contract with The Centre for Social Work, giving them the task of supporting the service users to gain influence on homeless services and policy. They took their starting point from initiatives that had emerged; the street paper – Hus Forbi, the homeless radio, the user councils at the hostels and the regional councils for homeless people in Copenhagen, Århus and Odense (the three largest cities in Denmark). By gathering the participants in these different initiatives and at the same time getting service users together on project days and courses, they slowly made the foundation for the establishment of the service user organisation for homeless people called SAND (Beldring, A. and Leth, N., 2004).

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2 Section 16 of the Social Services Act: "the municipal authority shall ensure that the users of services under this Act are able to influence the organisation and use of those services. The municipal authority shall set out written guidelines for the user influence." (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2006: 30)

3 Section 4 of the Legal Protection Act: "The citizen shall have the opportunity to contribute to be handling of his case. The local authority and county shall coordinate the processing of client cases in such a way that citizens are able to avail themselves of this opportunity." (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2000).



THE DILEMMA OF PROFESSIONALIZATION OF SAND

SAND started as a movement from below: a significant voice from homeless people demanding to be involved in decisions regarding their own life, in decisions on an institutional level and on a political level. At the same time it was, and still is, dependant on a formal structure to support the organisation and on support from a professional level. The dialectical relationship between service users and professionals is necessary to drive SAND forward. Maintaining the right balance, however, between professional support and the promotion of people experiencing homelessness' own thoughts and wishes is also the biggest challenge for SAND.

In order to gain political influence SAND has a secretariat to help them formulate and promote their political statements. The employees also take the lead in fundraising, in the activities that gather and recruit homeless people and in setting up new partnerships in the homelessness arena.

"An expanding and strong secretariat is a necessity for external success, that is; politically. User organisation is fragile... because homelessness is often temporary. And so is being active in SAND actually. Even though many of the active members of SAND are formerly homeless, they join for a period of time – and then they are gone. They can also fall back into some of the problems that made them homeless in the first place. There is a fragility which means that it is necessary to have a strong secretariat" (interview with Elbæk from the Ministry of Social Affairs (Laurberg, A.S. 2007))

The professionalization of SAND is a development demanded by the service users as well as the Ministry of Social affairs, the local and national politicians and other organisations in the homeless sector. There is an implicit risk in this setup that the professionals will make the politics on behalf of the homeless people and thereby disconnect the homeless people from the process, alienating them from what is meant to be their organisation.

"The overall dilemma for SAND is perhaps that every time SAND concerns themselves with the service providers and the social systems, it is necessary that they concern themselves with the members if they still want to represent them and not lose their legitimacy. You could say that the external and the internal are proportional to each other" (Rambo 2005: 69)

SERVICE USERS' INFLUENCE ON THE SERVICES

The dependency on professionals is also visible in the homeless services. SAND initiates democracy and user involvement in services. To do that, cooperation with the providers is necessary.

In the services for homeless people, there has always been an imbalance in the power relation between the service providers and the service users. It was the absence of influence that made the service users organise themselves in the first place. Even though the inequality between the service users and the staff has decreased in the past 20 years, it is still crucial for the establishment of user councils or promoting participation in the hostels, that the management has a positive attitude towards involving service users in decision-making processes. It is almost as vital that the staff adopt a positive attitude; that they aid and support the service users; that they facilitate them to participate in ongoing debates at the hostel and support the development of a democratic culture at the service (Bumble, S.H. and Laurberg, A.S, 2007).

On the one hand the service user can only – due to the imbalance in the relationship – grasp the opportunity for participation if they are 'invited' to participate. On the other hand, the only real and profound involvement from the service users comes from sincere interest in the development of the service and in the daily life at the service. The same conditions can be applied on a political level.



Some of the founding fathers of SAND at SAND's 5th anniversary in 2006



HOW TO SOLVE A DILEMMA?

A dilemma does not have a solution. You can only take steps that make the dilemma less dominant or take actions that prevent the downsides of the dilemma escalating. SAND is aware of its dilemma. At the secretariat we are professionals – none of us have a user background - we act as professionally as we can, and we cooperate with the staff and management at the hostels. However, we will not allow our own 'professionalism' to alienate the homeless people – our members - from the organisation that is meant to be their own.

At the secretariat we often discuss what role we shall take in order to support service users' organisation and how to make sure that we formulate instead of dictate their wishes and demands. At SAND's board (which consists entirely of service users) we work on how to recruit members to SAND or how to get service users to take part in SAND's project days, courses and national meetings.

To improve communication between the inhabitants at the hostels and SAND we launched a monthly newsletter in June 2007. It is sent to all the service users at the hostels in Denmark, and they are invited to contribute with articles, stories etc.

In the secretariat as well as in SAND's board we are very aware of the leading role the service users have to play in order to assure that SAND continues to represent the perspective of people experiencing, or with experience of, homelessness. In the past, there has been conflict between the board and myself on different matters. For example a few years ago, I would have liked the secretariat to move away from the day centre where we have our office and into an office with the street paper 'Hus Forbi'. I had made the formal arrangements and we were ready to move but the board would not accept the decision. In this situation, as on other occasions, the board did not hesitate to state that it is them that sets the agenda and has the final word on any matter.

To ensure that the board's participation and leadership we have 6 – 8 board meetings every year and every 3 – 4 weeks I write 2 pages to update the board on matters of importance.

But no matter how hard we try, and no matter how aware we are of the dilemma, it will always be difficult to represent others in a real and reliable manner. This applies to (formerly) homeless people who are active in SAND, as well as to the employees. If you have an addiction or are mentally fragile, it does not make the task any easier. In SAND as in any other organization, it is often those with the biggest resources that take the lead. In order to secure the legitimacy of SAND and make sure that all the homeless people in Denmark support SAND – maybe only by heart and not necessarily by hand – or at least feel represented, we always have to put ourselves in the position of the most vulnerable homeless person we know and be aware of the fine balance between support and paternalism.

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Homeless World Cup 7.0: Lights and shadows of the Italian edition

By **Leonardo Tancredi**¹, *Editor, Piazza Grande, Italy*

Street soccer, soccer played by people who live in the street has arrived in Milan. The seventh Homeless World Cup² (HWC) recently took place in Italy. Five hundred players competed at the Arena Civica in Parco Sempione, Milan from the 6th to 13th September 2009. This article will explore the positive aspects and the limitations of the Italian edition of the Homeless World Cup. It contains extracts from interviews with participants in the Cup, focusing on both the positive aspects of their involvement and raising some questions about the scope, values and implementation of the competition.

It is nothing but football, but you can call it street soccer. The field is twenty-two meters long, sixteen meters wide; four players dribbling opponents, just the way kids do when they play in the street. Homeless football players? It is definitely a clashing image when we think about the millionaire big-boys that parade in front of the sports show cameras, but it is true - people participating in the HWC train all year long without having their own permanent home. The goal of the project is to involve the highest number of players (according to the organisers, one million in seventy-five different nations) and let them experience sport as a tool to improve their living conditions.

According to the HWC data, the event has been a hit. They state that more than seventy percent of players have reached meaningful and positive changes in their lives. Participants have quit drugs and alcohol, changed their housing situation, found a job, gone back to school, restored relationships with family and friends. Some of them have even become professional players or trainers. It started as a game and has ended up having an impact on people's lives.

After seven years the Championship has turned into an institution and the organisers' ambition is to have it qualify as a world-level sport event. In this respect HWC seems successful: besides the four European editions (Graz 2003, Gothenburg 2004, Edinburgh 2005 and Copenhagen 2007), the competition took place in Cape Town in 2006 and in Melbourne in 2008. The Australian edition was the most participated-in, with fifty-six nations taking part.

But the lights of such success throw shadows on some of the decisions taken by the British staff that has been looking after the Italian edition. The Lombardy county town team is the fruit of the work of Milano Myland, an amateur sports organisation engaged in social reintegration of people experiencing homelessness. M., a journalist and volunteer social worker, after having been active for months in the event, decided to quit - disappointed by the turn taken;

"Our original project counted the football contest and many others side events; conferences, public meetings; shows; initiatives that emphasized the relationship with various organisations present in the area with their volunteers, to ensure that homelessness was at the centre of the event. When the HWC came to supervise our job, all this faded into the background and the main issue has been just cancelled from the official programme. All the focus had to stay on the athletic side, the social soul has been deprived of content."

Space for discussion and ethical values has been sacrificed for the sake of the perfect result of the championship. Some inappropriate sponsors (Nike – one of HWC's founder partners, which has been charged by critics with exploitation of child labour and inhumane working conditions) caused a lot of raised eyebrows, as did the official participation of Milan Mayor Letizia Moratti and Defence Minister Ignazio La Russa. "The City policy about homelessness is not really *enlightened*" M. says, ironically "let alone the national one. But HWC staff doesn't care so much about politics, on the contrary they prefer not to make too many troubles [*sic*]. When I wrote in the biographical short stories of homeless players that they had problems in Italy because of the bad immigration policy, HWC said that the goal was not to make an issue about the Italian Government, but just to tell personal stories."

The main cause of concern in relation to the government is the so called "Pacchetto sicurezza" or security package; a national law proclaimed in July that includes the establishment of a sort of homeless database and creates obstacles to the right to residence. In Italy, without legal residence you cannot access documentation, medical assistance, access to social service and so on. So, the law potentially denies people experiencing homelessness access to services and fundamental rights.

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2 The Homeless World Cup is an annual, international football tournament of teams of people who are homeless and excluded.
Website: <http://www.homelessworldcup.org/>



The Army, in fact, played an important role in resolving the accommodation problem for the five hundred participants. The only suitable place was deemed to be a military barracks. After a long negotiation with the Lieutenant General and the Minister, participants slept in military areas, not in barracks but in tents provided by the Red Cross. The living conditions in the barracks provoked disappointment in some delegations. According to Sergio J. Rotman, Argentina's team manager, the Italian edition was probably the poorest HWC he had taken part in;

"The main inconvenience of the accommodation was the long distance between the tents, the baths and the showers. It was also unsuitable for security of personal belongings, as there were no keys to close the tents. And delegates could get tired as there was too much time to travel to the venue. Local managers promised that it would be the best edition of this important event and we are really disappointed. Maybe it was at the bottom of the standard that we could accept."

Different opinions come from Belgium. Helen Blow, team manager, felt that, despite the problems;

"It would be a pity to stress the negative. Each team had its own Red Cross tent, and there were portable showers and toilets as well as an open air bar, tents for relaxation and meetings and internet access, a medical tent and an office tent and a building where meals were served. We were fortunate that the weather was excellent the whole time. The players could use showers in the sports facilities of the Civic Arena, so the portable showers did not get too much use."

The turn taken by the event forced *fio.PSD*³ (the Italian federation of organisations working with homeless) to back away from it. Following a press conference on the 27th July 2009, *fio.PSD* expressed their concern about the organisation and tone of the event. *fio.PSD* was unhappy that there was a lack of focus on social and cultural impacts from the HWC and no reference to the need to tackle homelessness as a shared public responsibility to foster social justice. They felt that the event was presented in a sensationalist fashion, making superficial and sometimes offensive generalisations about homeless people. *fio.PSD* was also dismayed at the involvement of Ignazio La Russa and the decision not to carry out an awareness-raising day alongside the Cup.

The Italian homeless team trainer, winner in Gothenburg and Edinburgh, is Bogdan Kwappik. He is Polish and has been living in Italy for 16 years. He works as storekeeper in a supermarket, doing back-breaking shifts and uses part of his wage to keep up the team. But for him this was not enough, he wanted to go a step further;

"We went to L'Aquila [where in April 2009 there was a terrible earthquake] to look for more players for the Italian national team, you know, at the moment there are thousands of people without a house down there."

Multietnica, this is the name of the Italian team, was born in 2001 as an organisation to uphold the rights of a Roma community that lived in a field in Milan's suburbs. Bogdan and his players decided to finish the training period in L'Aquila, where they were supported by the City Authority, Civil Protection, the Red Cross and other local organisations. Hundreds of people came to try out with Multietnica, it was a great experience.

The team has changed since the last HWC but some of the old members have remained to help Bogdan, above all in scouting work. Bangaly, from the Ivory Coast (nickname "Gigi Buffon"), Gustavo and Ricardo Almua, the ex player from Brazil, go around shelters and immigrant centres to look for people who want to get involved in football. Actually, the Italian team is not so "Italian" because it is composed of players from every continent: a Kurdish guy, a Roma guy, one from Brazil. Patrik, from the Seychelles went, together with Bogdan, to the immigration office at the police station in Milan before the championship started. Bogdan negotiated a residence permit of six months, to give Patrik the chance to look for a job. Bogdan explained;

"The City Authority of Milan requires that all the players must have a residence permit. Usually, every year before the championship, we try to put pressure on the immigration office; what we obtained for Patrik is a small success. Our dream is to have our own social cooperative to give an occupation to homeless players."

3 Website: <http://www.fiopsd.org/>



Multietnica is a mirror of Italian society - much more than the national team trained by Marcello Lippi is. For example, Patrik is 20 years old; he arrived in Italy when he was very young, five years ago, to join his mother. Before arriving in Milan, he used to live in Reggio Calabria in Southern Italy. In the North he worked until he lost his job and, as a consequence, his residence permit. Patrik does not have a house, he moves around from one friend to another. At the moment he lives in Pioltello, a very small village known as "the immigrant capital of Milan". There he met Multietnica in a friendly football game. Jonathan and Anderson are cousins. They come from Peru - twenty and twenty-four years old. The story is the same; no place to stay, just a bag to carry, looking for temporary accommodation. They do not have any contact with social services; the only help they have received was from the team. Jonathan does not play football, but he works for the team as a spokesman and assistant. Anderson is the keeper. He went to school in Milan until secondary level, now he is searching for a job;

"I hope the team will give me the chance to meet people that can help for the job. I need to feel useful, to do something that gives me satisfaction."

These are all young men experiencing homelessness. If things work out, they will enter the statistics as people who improved their lives thanks to the HWC.

In the meantime, Bogdan also speaks quite critically of HWC. Multietnica is waiting for football strips, balls, sanitary equipment, all things that never arrived;

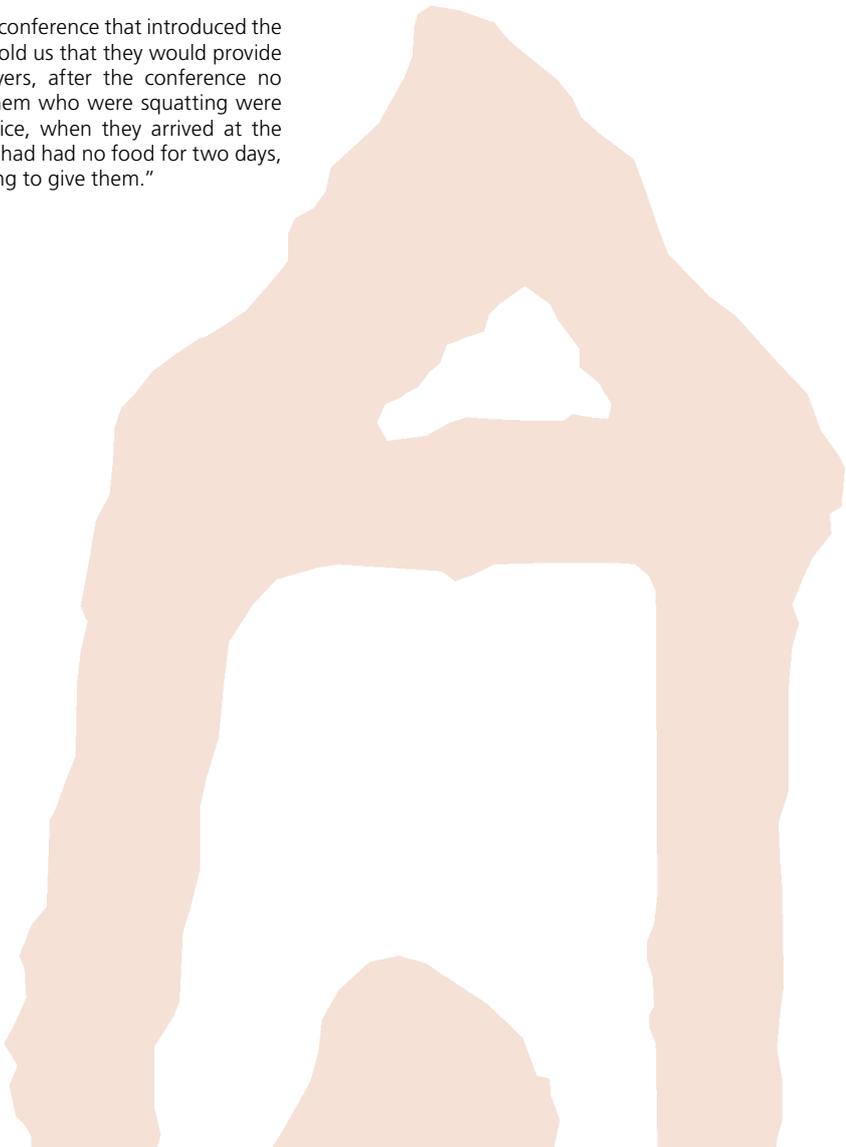
"Before the press conference that introduced the World Cup, they told us that they would provide food for the players, after the conference no news. Three of them who were squatting were sent away by police, when they arrived at the training field they had had no food for two days, but we had nothing to give them."

Before the HWC started Bogdan Kwappik entertained the dream of creating the first Italian national street soccer championship. To reach this goal it was very important to obtain what HWC promised: two street soccer fields. His idea was to have a ground in Milan and a second in L'Aquila, so that there would be two centres for street soccer.

The Homeless World Cup is now over. On the 13th September Ukraine raised the Cup, after defeating Portugal 5-4 in the final game. Multietnica is not so satisfied about the championship results: the team could not win the Cup for the third time, but this is not the worst part of the story. Bogdan, Patrik and all the others are still waiting for the street soccer fields and sports equipment that somebody too easily promised. According to Bogdan "All the promises dissolved as a fog. It was important for us to have a network working for social reintegration after the championship, but it didn't succeed and we're just as alone as before."

HWC staff is already working for the next edition in Rio de Janeiro. We all hope that football will keep on being a tool to improve the lives of hundreds of people experiencing homelessness around the world. At the same time, it is a duty not to forget how important it is to challenge stereotypes and make homelessness a priority on national governments' political agendas. The uncritical attitude toward the Italian government, responsible for introducing potentially very repressive policies concerning homelessness and migration, does not go in this direction. It is right to ask for more results from such an expensive event.

"All the promises dissolved as a fog. It was important for us to have a network working for social reintegration after the championship, but it didn't succeed and we're just as alone as before."





Collaborative arts-informed research on homelessness in Toronto, Canada: Mobilizing knowledge with peer researchers

By Izumi Sakamoto¹, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Toronto, Canada

HOMELESSNESS IN TORONTO, CANADA

Homelessness² is a serious and pervasive issue affecting many people in Canada, and Toronto,³ the largest city in Canada.⁴ Statistics indicate that 32,000 different people slept in shelters in 2002, and approximately 6,500 individuals stayed in shelters on any given night in 2006.⁵ Forty-two percent of those identified as *homeless* in the City of Toronto's "Street Needs Assessment" survey stated that they had lived outdoors for two years or more, and eighty-six percent of those surveyed want permanent housing.⁶ People who experience homelessness are negatively affected by intersecting oppressions such as poverty, lack of access to housing, sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and violence.⁷ However, there is a scarcity of literature with respect to the diverse experiences of individuals who are homeless and face multiple forms of oppression. Further, despite the fact that numerous research studies have documented the rapid increase of homelessness to date; few effective interventions have been pursued. There is a pressing need to raise public awareness of the issue and to change social policies.

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH PEERS, AND ARTS-INFORMED RESEARCH

When conducting research with marginalized communities, it is important for researchers (especially those without lived experience of the social issue under study), to ask how best to capture and represent people's experiences without misrepresenting their realities. One response to this question is to conduct research collaboratively with people directly affected by the issue, as promoted by principles of community-based (participatory) research. Another response is to use a medium that is more inclusive of people with diverse identities and experiences, such as arts-informed research. The initiative presented herein used both of these methodologies.

Community-based participatory research (CBR or CBPR)⁸ recognizes the strengths of the community as the core endeavor of research, and promotes the equitable involvement of all partners in the research process in order to make the research more relevant to the community in which CBR is conducted. Consequently, it is inherent within CBR to aim for community or societal change, however small. In recent years, an increasing number of CBR studies with peer researchers have been documented, with attention given to youth (including youth who are homeless), and also adults who are homeless. Peer researchers are defined as those who have lived experiences of the social issues under study (e.g., homelessness). Although the principles of CBR/CBPR do not necessarily call for the participation of peer researchers, it is argued that working with peer researchers in the areas of homelessness is particularly pertinent as they can act as a translator and "cultural broker" between the professional researchers, service providers, and those who experience homelessness. Arts-informed (arts-based) research allows those directly affected by the issue to document and express their concerns and their worldviews effectively.⁹ Since the exclusive use of academic terminology and numbers to describe

Peer Researchers' Panel at the Launch (October 1, 2008)

Photo courtesy of John Bonnar, Toronto Social Justice Magazine, available at: <http://johnb98.wordpress.com/2008/10/02/homelessness-solutions-report-launched/>



1 Email: izumi.sakamoto@utoronto.ca; I was the lead researcher of this *Collaborative*, composed of 18 individuals representing eight research projects and one funding organization. However, what is represented in this article is drawn from our collective work, not mine alone. For a complete list of names and organizations involved, please visit: www.artsandhomeless.com.

2 The City of Toronto defines homelessness as "a condition of people who live outside, stay in emergency shelters, spend most of their income on rent, or live in homelessness." City of Toronto. (2003). *The Toronto report card on homelessness and housing 2003*. Toronto: Author, p. 2.

3 In 1998, the City of Toronto endorsed a declaration acknowledging homelessness as a national disaster.

4 In 2006 Census, Toronto's population was 2.63 million (5.55 million in the Greater Toronto Area). Available at: <http://www.toronto.ca/faq/movingto.htm> (City of Toronto)

5 Khandor, E. & Mason, K. (2007). *The street health report 2007*. Toronto: Street Health; Those who are either at risk of homelessness or are not actively seeking social services are not accounted for in these numbers.

6 City of Toronto, Shelter Support and Housing Administration. (n/d). Frequently asked questions: Because home is where it starts. <http://www.toronto.ca/housing/sock/faq.htm>; Wellesley Institute. (2006). *Toronto's 2006 Street Needs Assessment: Moving to action*. www.wellesleyinstitute.com/files/beyondhomelesscount.pdf

7 Rafael, D. (2008). *Social determinants of health: Canadian perspectives* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press; Sakamoto, I., Chin, M., Chapra, A., & Ricciardi, J. (2009). Transphobia and emotional injury: Elucidating the experiences of transwomen with experiences of homelessness. *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, 5(1), 2-19.

8 Israel, B. A., Schulz, A. J., Parker, E. A., & Becker, A. B. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 19, 173-202; In Canada, CBR is a more common terminology to refer to a variety of CBPR and community-based, participatory action research efforts.

9 Finley, S. (2005). Arts-based inquiry: Performing revolutionary pedagogy. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.; pp. 681-694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



the issue may limit research participants' expressions of multi-faceted realities, arts-based research offers more than one interpretive method for understanding their lives, challenges, and resiliencies. It is widely felt that the creative "results" from arts-informed research (e.g. film, photography) have far greater potential to move people to action than would words in conventional position papers and journal articles.¹⁰ Thus, the use of arts in CBR with peers is significant in the areas where arts-based approaches capture people's lived experiences better, express a more holistic understanding of these experiences and have the potential to inspire people towards social change.

COLLABORATIVE: "HOMELESSNESS – SOLUTIONS FROM LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH ARTS-INFORMED RESEARCH"

In Toronto, there have been several cutting-edge, arts-informed, CBR projects on homelessness involving peer researchers in the past few years. Despite their individual successes, these projects confronted similar limitations: often the results from arts-based research and CBR studies are only appreciated as "local" knowledge without much transferability to other settings; further, it is frequently the case that upon completion of research the scope of dissemination efforts is limited due to funding constraints. Recognizing these issues led eight arts-informed CBR projects¹¹ to come together and draw upon our collective knowledge, resources and momentum to create social change, raise awareness, and address the issues of homelessness in Toronto.

This unique collaboration, *Homelessness – Solutions from Lived Experiences through arts-Informed Research*,¹² included 18 members consisting of peer researchers, community agency staff, funders, artists, academics and two co-coordinators. The collaborative team members were also diverse in terms of race, Aboriginal heritage, sexual orientation, gender identity, and immigration status. Operating from empowerment and anti-oppressive perspectives¹³, the *Collaborative* and its constitutive projects focused on the inclusion of peer researchers and the recognition of them as "experts" on their own lived experiences, with valuable knowledge to address issues of homelessness. Moreover, working with peer researchers who had been trained in CBR through previous research projects was important to the team, because it ensured building on the momentum of their efforts and supporting their livelihood. Peer researchers, as well as other team members, worked together over



Art exhibit

Photo courtesy of Alexis Kane Speer, Centre for Urban Health Initiatives at the University of Toronto.

a 10-month period, undertaking various roles related to the decision-making and implementation of multiple aspects of the collaboration. While salaried professionals were at the table as part of their work responsibilities, peer researchers were paid honoraria for their time and efforts.¹⁴

The peer researchers who became part of the *Collaborative* were originally peer researchers (in some cases they were also called "Advisors" and "Inclusion Researchers") in each of the eight CBR studies involved. The recruitment methods for each of the eight studies varied. For example, in the project which I led, *Coming Together: Homeless Women, Housing and Social Support*,¹⁵ a preliminary qualitative study in the community helped us to identify those homeless women and transwomen known as helpers or informal leaders among women/transwomen who are homeless. We explained what is involved in becoming a peer researcher, and all eight women/transwomen we approached agreed to become Advisory Board members and act as peer researchers in data collection and analysis. These individuals were trained in some of the principles of conducting community-based research and the use of arts in collecting data. One of these women in our project subsequently became a peer researcher to two additional research projects focusing on homelessness in Toronto. This was also the case for several other peer researchers who, in turn, became the peer researchers for our *Collaborative*.

On October 1, 2008, at Metro Hall,¹⁶ Toronto, several hundred people attended the *Collaborative's* launch of a joint art exhibition, policy report and website,

10 Wang, C., & Burrell, M. (1994). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387.

11 All eight projects were community-based research, of which six used arts as central part of data collection and knowledge generation, and two additional projects used arts and graphics for knowledge dissemination.

12 This project was funded by Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Wellesley Institute, and Centre for Urban Health Initiatives at the University of Toronto. The project's organizational partners included Regent Park Community Health Centre, Street Health, Ontario Women's Health Network, Wellesley Institute, St. Michael's Hospital, Sistering – A Woman's Place, the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, and York University. For more information, visit: www.artsandhomeless.com.

13 Gutiérrez, L., & Lewis, E. (1999). *Empowering women of color*. New York: Columbia University Press; Sakamoto, I., & Pitner, R. (2005). Use of critical consciousness in anti-oppressive social work practice: Disentangling power dynamics at personal and structural levels. *British Journal of Social Work*, 35(4), 420-437.

14 The rate for the peer researchers was \$25 CDN plus 2 transit tokens (worth \$5) for a meeting of 1-2 hours (or \$15/hour for their participation, depending on the agency practice). For special speaking engagements or event participation (e.g., the launch), they received \$50 to \$100 for 2-4 hours of participation, the same rate as what we offered for Aboriginal elders and drummers who were invited to perform at the event (all rates are in Canadian dollars).

15 For more information, please see www.comingtogether.ca

16 Metro Hall is one of the central municipal government buildings in the City of Toronto.



Participants across the eight studies indicated that they are routinely excluded from the decisions that affect their everyday lives.

which highlighted the pressing issues of homelessness through arts and testimonials. A highly publicized event, this launch attracted print media and radio coverage and a wide range of participants including politicians, bureaucrats, social service agency administrators, front-line workers, and people who are homeless. The launch started with blessings offered by an Aboriginal elder and singer, and the joint exhibition was organized by the teachings of the Medicine Wheel of the Anishinabe peoples,¹⁷ on whose territory the launch took place. In this case, the Medicine Wheel represents bringing people together to find solutions to homelessness.¹⁸ It was important for us to honour Aboriginal peoples in our exhibit, and raise awareness of “the fact that so many Aboriginal people are homeless in their own “homeland.”¹⁹ The arts modalities/media used by the eight projects included photography, murals, video, light boxes with sound installation, installation of objects and professionally designed posters. Bringing together the artwork from the various projects allowed us to showcase the complexity and multiplicity of personal stories and representations of experiences of homelessness. While people who are homeless may share many experiences, those belonging to certain groups (e.g., young parents) may encounter situations that are different from those faced by other groups (e.g., transwomen). At the launch, seven peer researchers representing the eight projects on display spoke about their experiences of having been involved in arts-informed research/CBR projects and their own personal stories of homelessness and poverty.

THE NEED FOR INCLUSION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The policy recommendation report, *Homelessness – Diverse Experiences, Common Issues, Shared Solutions*²⁰ synthesized the findings from the eight research projects and emphasized that the face of homelessness is varied and diverse. The four key recommendations are:

1. Ensuring that policy-making, planning and service delivery are inclusive of and accountable to diverse homeless people
2. Ensuring adequate incomes
3. Improving and creating affordable and appropriate housing
4. Creating flexible and responsive health, social and community supports

In addition to the three areas commonly identified as the solutions to homelessness (i.e., incomes, housing, and supports), the report uniquely highlighted the

need for inclusion and accountability (Recommendation 1). Participants across the eight studies indicated that they are routinely excluded from the decisions that affect their everyday lives. Consequently, it is not surprising that participants from all of the projects clearly indicated in their stories and artwork that the systems, services, programs and policies associated with homelessness do not sufficiently address the common or unique needs of diverse homeless people in Toronto. We need to ensure that diverse people²¹ with experiences of homelessness are included in the development and delivery of programs, services, policies and systems, and that these systems are accountable to those they are meant to serve. To date, roughly 1,500 copies of this report have been distributed through printed copies, and more through article downloads. We also believe that the same message we are promoting (“need for inclusion and accountability”) was reflected in our collaborative process by ensuring different voices were included and accounted for, and by making sure that the participation of peer researchers was at the heart of this effort.

REFLECTION ON COLLABORATION

Overall, the collaborative team received overwhelmingly positive feedback on our launch, exhibit and policy report. What made our *Collaborative* successful? Based on the evaluation forms filled out by our exhibit’s attendees, as well as the collaborative team members’ own reflections, several themes have emerged as important ingredients for success: the diversity and multiplicity of views and opinions as represented through arts, stories, and people (including peer researchers); team members’ persistence and willingness in negotiating through difficult collaboration processes; inclusive leadership style (including ensuring a respectful, inclusive environment); and the use of arts. A social work student who was not part of the *Collaborative* conducted an evaluation of the *Collaborative* with group members. These are some of their voices from the video:

“...felt like my knowledge was valued and respected and that’s what brings me to things like this.” (Jim Meeks, Peer Researcher for this *Collaborative*, as well as several other projects such as *Street Health Report*)

“Having many different perspectives at the table just makes the project better – great to see what bringing together different perspectives can do.” (Erika Kador, Researcher at *Street Health*)

17 The Anishinabe (Ojibwe) peoples are indigenous/Aboriginal peoples of North America.

18 Each of the eight projects was placed in a specific direction/location of the circular hall that corresponded with the Medicine Wheel teachings, as each direction of the Medicine Wheel has a different meaning (e.g., the Southern direction speaks to the importance of developing relationships).

19 Sakamoto, I., Khandor, E., Chapra, A., Hendrickson, T., Maher, J., Roche, B., & Chin, M. (2008). *Homelessness --Diverse experiences, common issues, shared solutions: The need for inclusion and accountability*. Toronto: Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, p. 34.

20 See the full reference for footnote #16 (Sakamoto et al., 2008); PDF copy available at: www.artsandhomeless.com

21 In using the term, “diverse people”, we mean various groups of people who have experienced homelessness in Toronto and whose experiences have been represented by one or more of the projects in our *Collaborative*: including women, men, trans people, youth, adults, seniors, Aboriginal peoples, racialized people, young parents, people who use substances, people with physical and mental health issues, and people with disabilities.



THE ROLE OF PEER RESEARCHERS IN KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND MOBILIZATION

It seems that the use of arts was particularly effective because it allowed for the meaningful inclusion of people who are homeless in the research process as peer researchers, and also because the artwork was created by those who have experienced homelessness firsthand. Further, various modalities and representations of arts made it possible to communicate the message of “the need for inclusion and accountability” for diverse voices, without bombarding people with words. Likewise, the majority of the audience members who filled out the evaluation forms mentioned that the personal stories of peer researchers and the artwork created by people who experienced homelessness had the largest impact within our exhibit and/or event. In responding to the question “What will you remember most about the event?” some of the responses were:

- “The voice of homeless people was in the foreground. The variety of arts-based approaches will stay in the mind”.
- “Personal stories/sharing of lived experiences putting faces & lives to the issues”.
- “The power of the arts as a multi-modal form to enable these stories to be heard at different levels”.

The participation of community members and the peer researchers was critical to the success of each of the eight projects, as well as the *Collaborative* as a whole. The participation of peer researchers was not only important for the work of the *Collaborative* and each of the projects that were included, but for the individual researchers as well. At the launch, one of the peer researchers, who is a black transwoman, reflected on her experience:

“So this project was very big, changing my life, I’ve made a lot of friends and I’ve seen what life has to offer. You know I’ve come from being a street worker, a one room apartment, [to] having my own house, having clean clothes, living my own life. I really appreciate they made my life so much different for me,

they would sit and talk with me. They told me that there are other paths in life to take, that made such an impact on me. My family’s very racist [sic.] against my gender, so its very hard to make friends. Like these are my only friends here like Brandi and Leahanne [other peer researchers on Coming Together project] and yeah so, thank you guys you are the best. I appreciate it a lot”. (Tiesha Anderson, Peer Researcher, *Coming Together* project)

The authentic participation of peer researchers was not without challenges. Because our peer researchers are people who have experienced homelessness and continue to experience poverty, the usual ways middle-class professionals collaborate with each other had to be re-examined. For example, instead of using email to send out next meeting dates or revised documents for approval/revision, we had to take into account the fact that not all peer researchers are securely housed and have access to phone or computers. This meant planning things well in advance of deadlines so that each person’s opinion could be reflected in our decision-making process (e.g., For invitation postcard design, peer researchers made an effort to get to public-use computers to check email or go to particular agencies to review versions of documents that needed revision). We also made sure that any jargon and acronyms were clarified, and that refreshments were available at all meetings. At the same time, I would no way assume that we were somehow able to erase power differentials, especially when the lead researcher was ultimately responsible for paying honoraria to peer researchers who were living in poverty. Even with these limitations, peer researchers have told us that they felt their voices were heard and communication methods were accessible to them, and that this was a very meaningful experience for them.

We are currently creating a video capturing the process of collaboration and the benefits of arts-informed, community-based research on homelessness to wider disseminate our research towards the goal of social change. For more information about the *Collaborative* and each of the eight projects, please visit www.artsandhomeless.com.



An authentic voice – TB peer educators

By Joe Hall¹, TB Social Worker and Alistair Story² Clinical Lead, Find and Treat, Department of Health TB Projects, UK

Horace – TB Peer Educator

'Until it happened I never believed I could get TB'

INTRODUCTION

The Berlin Declaration, adopted at the Ministerial Forum on Tuberculosis (TB) in 2007, renewed commitment to tackling TB across the European Union. Delegates from all member states recognised that social and economic factors played a major role in shaping the epidemiology of TB across the Region and that the disease disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations, especially homeless persons. The Declaration stated an urgent need to ensure that those most vulnerable had access to high quality and culturally sensitive TB care and that affected communities should be considered as essential partners in and integrated into TB control.

There are very few examples of initiatives to involve homeless and hard to reach service users as peer educators in TB control activities. Experience from other programmes to address poor physical and mental health and drug and alcohol dependence among homeless people has demonstrated the value of involving peers in the design and delivery of more effective interventions. A peer education approach provides an authentic voice of experience that homeless people are more able to relate to. Shaw et al (2007) found that a peer education approach was effective at challenging misinformation and increasing awareness and knowledge. Peer educators, with first hand experience of having TB, accessing services and taking treatment, have a unique and invaluable insight. This article describes a project in London where peer educators work alongside the *Find & Treat* team³ as essential partners in controlling TB among homeless people and hard to reach groups.

David - TB Peer Educator

"I had been suffering with an enduring cough and dramatic weight loss for many months. After two admissions to hospital I was diagnosed with TB in 2004. Three months later tests revealed I had drug resistant disease. I was on treatment for two and a half years. My TB case worker and a local pharmacist observed me taking my treatment as I had difficulty taking the medication and many different agencies were involved in my care. I was very vulnerable and the project helped me get back into things. Now I'm a peer educator – I get approached by other agencies to give talks, I have new links I can pursue because of the project"

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

London has the highest TB rates among Western European capitals and rates are highest among hard to reach populations, especially homeless people, drug and alcohol users and prisoners. Hard to reach TB patients comprise around one in six of all new cases but account for almost one-third of infectious pulmonary smear positive cases in London (Story, A et al, 2007). Effective TB control in hard to reach groups is complicated by delayed diagnoses, high levels of infectivity and drug resistance, immunosuppression, overcrowded living and poor treatment adherence leading to onward transmission and outbreaks. Homeless persons experience poor access to health care and may delay seeking help as their lifestyle can camouflage TB-related symptoms (Story, A. & Hest, R.V, 2008). TB in homeless persons more frequently progresses to advanced and infectious forms of disease before it is diagnosed.

An evaluation of two years of TB screening with a Mobile X-ray Unit (MXU)⁴ demonstrated that the MXU was able to reach vulnerable populations and identify cases of active disease early but a high proportion of cases referred to local tuberculosis services for confirmation of diagnosis and treatment were rapidly lost to follow up care. In response, the Department of Health established *Find & Treat*; a pan-London health and social care project that works alongside the MXU and frontline services to tackle TB in hard-to-reach groups. *Find & Treat* are a small multidisciplinary team of tuberculosis nurse specialists, social and outreach workers and the key aims include raising awareness of TB, promoting joint working between health and social care services, improving access to screening and treatment and addressing the wider determinants of health faced by hard to reach groups. Promoting the contribution of service users is a key goal of *Find & Treat*. To achieve this goal the TB Peer Educators project was set up in January 2008, initially in partnership with *Homeless Link*⁵ and more recently *Groundswell*⁶.

Find & Treat recognise that people with a personal experience of TB and homelessness and/or drug and alcohol use have a unique ability to convey messages about the importance of screening, diagnosis and adherence to treatment to people in similar situations. The project has recruited, trained and supported seven former TB patients with these experiences to become peer educators. The overall aim of the project is to raise awareness of TB among hard to reach groups and frontline staff, leading to increased uptake of the mobile screening service and improved follow-up care through diagnosis and treatment.

1 Email: joehall@nhs.net

2 Email alistairstory@gmail.com

3 See Find and Treat webpage http://www.findandtreatchest.org/TB_Find_%26_Treat/TB_Find_and_Treat.html

4 See Mobile X-ray Unit webpage http://www.findandtreatchest.org/TB_Find_%26_Treat/How_we_find.html

5 Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for frontline homelessness agencies. Homeless Link has been involved in numerous effective TB initiatives working closely with both the Department of Health and the Health Protection Agency (HPA). <http://www.homeless.org.uk/>

6 Groundswell is the UK's leading user involvement and self-help organisation working in the field of homelessness. <http://www.groundswell.org.uk/>



Josephine - TB Peer Educator

"I had difficulty breathing but put it down to my lifestyle. My health deteriorated and eventually I was admitted to hospital in 2005 with suspected pneumonia. I was discharged with antibiotics. Symptoms persisted and after a lung operation I was diagnosed with TB. Further tests revealed I was resistant to one of the main drugs used so I had to take medication for 1 year. I found that my own experience of treatment and the help I got from Find & Treat helped me to get cured of TB but also helped me turn my life around. The experience of getting ill helped me to stop drinking and using drugs and find a useful part to play in society. With the training and support I've received I've gained confidence and new skills"

BARRIERS TO HOMELESS PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

Finance – Paying peer educators can be very complicated. Challenges include ensuring that benefits are not affected and the fact that most of the peers do not have bank accounts. It was important for us to seek legal advice to ensure that the peers would not lose their housing and income support as a result of their involvement with the project. In many ways the experience of setting up the project highlighted just how difficult it can be for homeless people and people on benefits to usefully contribute their skills and experience to society and how many perverse incentives there are in the system.

Retention – Some peers are quite vulnerable and require a lot of one to one support. There is a need to be flexible about involvement and adapt to changing personal circumstances, allowing peers to come in and out of the project as suits their situation. To maintain engagement, we made use of the Internet to top up mobile phone credit to ensure that they had credit to receive messages and make calls. Appointment reminders and help with scheduling are important. The flexibility of this project and having more than one peer available was essential in ensuring that all commitments to support screening and awareness raising events were met.

Dave – TB Peer Educator

"I wasn't homeless but was drinking on the streets from first thing in the morning till whenever, staying with mates similar to myself. People in our company did a lot of crack, cannabis and pills. Myself I just drank and smoked cannabis. I became very ill through alcohol, got admitted to hospital and was told that if I started to drink again 'start saying goodbye to loved ones'. I was diagnosed with TB while in hospital which was a bit of a knockback. Anyway, I stopped drinking. After my last visit to the TB clinic a member of staff mentioned about a Peer project so I went along. Every time is a challenge on the MXU but rewarding when people do get x-rayed. Of course it makes a difference knowing I've had TB and how uncomfortable it can be talking to homeless people and even friends and family"

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

Objectively evaluating the impact of the Peer educators is methodologically challenging. However, results so far are very encouraging. The MXU screens around 10,000 homeless people and drug or alcohol users in the community every year and peer educators have been instrumental in increasing TB awareness amongst frontline staff and encouraging service users to get screened. They have spoken about their experiences of having TB and the likely concerns among the client group about getting screened at training sessions for frontline staff from over 30 agencies. Staff who attended the training achieved a 75% uptake of screening among their service users versus 44% uptake among those who did not receive the peer training. Peer educators are now also providing one-to-one support to vulnerable patients that are currently experiencing difficulty with taking treatment or completing investigations. Feedback from service users and staff has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The best is having the person who has already had it. They know, they know the beginning symptoms, they know what treatment you need to get, they know where you should go and get it"
Service user

"The peers are much more confident than staff in the reasons for needing to get screened, and are able to articulate this in a succinct and non-alarming way."
Hostel Manager

"If you had people who had actually experienced it... someone that's actually been there"
Service user

Peers have spoken at the Houses of Parliament and at the National (UK) Health & Homelessness Conference and have featured in the *Big Issue*⁷ and the *Pavement Magazine*⁸, raising the profile of TB and generating interest in the project from a wide variety of other statutory and voluntary agencies. Recently the peers assisted in engaging 150 service users in a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) survey. These findings were used to develop resources and training material for the project. A researcher commissioned to undertake focus groups among hostel residents concluded that "...there was an overwhelming consensus on the benefits of peer sessions in increasing awareness".

NEXT STEPS - DEVELOPMENT OF A PEER MENTORING PROJECT

The project advisory group of service users and health and homelessness professionals are working to progress the TB Peer Education project to create a Peer Mentoring Homeless Health Project. The work will focus on improving access to screening and treatment services for TB and blood borne viruses (HIV, Hepatitis B and C) and providing support to enable

Peer educators have been instrumental in increasing TB awareness amongst frontline staff and encouraging service users to get screened.

7 The Big Issue is a weekly entertainment and current affairs magazine sold by a network of homeless and vulnerably housed street vendors in the UK as part of a social enterprise. http://www.bigissue.com/Home_1.php

8 Pavement magazine is a free magazine for homeless people in London and Scotland. <http://www.thepavement.org.uk/>



homeless and other vulnerable people to access a range of health opportunities by introducing them to services and accompanying them to appointments. Peer mentors would be people who have been homeless themselves and experienced health problems, including TB.

CONCLUSION

Representatives at this year's follow up meeting to the Berlin Declaration unanimously agreed that, despite the momentum created by the 2007 declaration, European countries still fell short of their common objectives of controlling and stopping TB. Political commitment to the principle of universality and equity of care is central to tackling TB. We believe service users are the essential partners in TB control and that the TB Peer Education project is a valuable example of the positive impact of facilitating partnership with service users.

We would like to share our experiences and learn from other people involved in peer education activities in the homelessness sector.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about Find & Treat please contact:

- Joe Hall (TB Social Worker) on joehall@nhs.net;
- Alistair Story (Clinical Lead) on alistairstory@gmail.com

For more information about the TB Peer Education Project please contact:

- Steve Bethall (Project Co-ordinator) on steveb@groundswell.org.uk
- Simone Hellenen (Director of Training and Research) on simone@groundswell.org.uk

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Experiences from participation projects involving roofless and houseless young people in the Netherlands

By **Rob Jezek**, *Director, Het Projectenburo¹, the Netherlands*

INTRODUCTION

Young people on the street (including roofless and houseless young people) often have many problems. These problems may include lack of fixed accommodation, lack of money, debts, lack of occupational qualifications and work experience, excessive use of drugs and alcohol, lack of self-confidence and few social contacts outside the channels of young people on the street. Often, so much has already gone wrong in their short lives; at home, at school, on the street and with welfare assistance, that it is almost understandable that they may seem to lack motivation. Furthermore, many of them are right in the middle of adolescence, in search of their identity and prospects for the future, but without the necessary social support. Given this context, people may well ask "And you want to embark on participation projects with them? Ask them to stand up for their own interests in today's complex society?" Yes, that is what we want to do. That is what we are asking.

WHO ARE WE?

We are the staff of Het Projectenburo², a small organisation with a dual purpose: on the commercial front, to carry out advice, consultancy and research activities in such sectors as youth care, addiction care and social support. We perform this task at market rates. On the ideals front, we develop and carry out innovative activities and projects for and by so-called 'marginalised' groups in society: the roofless and houseless, drug addicts, "problematic" young people in neighbourhoods and others. The guiding principle here is that we involve (young) people from the target groups in the planning, development and implementation. They are not the subject of our efforts, but the co-designers and implementers. Our small team consists of a mix of people with educational and professional experience, and people with experience-based knowledge.

We have organised various projects and events over the years, geared towards changing perceptions about roofless and houseless people such as "homeless days", theatre projects, customer-guided research, interest promotion platforms, and so forth. The underlying premise has always been that we offer an organisational framework in which (young) people from the target groups can get down to work on what they consider important and what they are good at.

TWO EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION PROJECTS WITH YOUNG ROOFLESS AND HOUSELESS PEOPLE

I will elaborate here on two recent examples of projects for and by roofless and houseless young people:

- An advice platform for roofless and houseless young people in one of the large cities in the Netherlands (Utrecht);
- An audit project, in which users of support services for young people examine their own support and make proposals for improvements (Amsterdam).

Advice platform for roofless and houseless young people in Utrecht

We have set up an advice platform for roofless and houseless young people at the request of the municipality of Utrecht. This municipality is working seriously on the involvement and participation of "difficult to reach" groups in society. Roofless and houseless people are one of these groups. There are approximately ten institutions in Utrecht that provide guidance and support for this group. Together, they offer multifaceted assistance. On the whole, they endeavour heart and soul to help their clients, but they still scarcely engage in client participation. The municipality of Utrecht would like to be informed about the needs and wishes of the target group, about how they view assistance and their wishes for improvement. The municipality hopes that this information can help it strike a more balanced policy.

We carried out a number of activities in phases to arrive at an advice platform. To begin with, we looked for one or more peers from the target group who could help us with the project from the outset. Because we as an organisation have worked with projects throughout the country, we were able to find one rapidly. Next, together with this young woman, we approached all the guidance and support institutions and informed the directors, staff and the young people of the project. This meant making contact by telephone, sending information, and providing explanations at staff meetings and client meetings, in order to recruit people who wanted to take part in the advice platform. A labour-intensive activity, but such investment is required to obtain wide support for the project.

The guiding principle here is that we involve (young) people from the target groups in the planning, development and implementation. They are not the subject of our efforts, but the co-designers and implementers.

¹ Email: projekt@xs4all.nl Website: www.projectenburo.nl

² Full name: "Stichting Projectenburo Jeugdhulpverlening en Verslavingszorg" [Project Bureau Foundation for Youth Assistance and Addiction Care], established in 1989 in Amsterdam (NL)



The young people involved in the project got down to work from their own perspective.

Ten young people appeared to be ready to join in. The first major activity was to conduct a survey of young people by young people. We drew up a questionnaire together and provided interview training. They then went into the field and interviewed 60 young people from social institutions. One of the young people entered the data into a statistical programme, and then a professional researcher conducted data analysis and reported on the results. The young people featured again prominently when it came to interpreting the data, drawing conclusions and making recommendations. They then went round the institutions to disseminate the results and talk with the relevant aldermen and policymakers of the municipality.

The study led to a number of action points on which the young people could work further, for instance, the charting of community resources for roofless and houseless young people and the creation of a website to that end. Naturally, such general community resources are available in Utrecht, but one way or another they are not geared to these young people. The young people involved in the project got down to work from their own perspective. This phase of the project is still in progress. The result will become visible in 2009.

At the same time, the Utrecht advice platform, which calls itself U-2B Heard, has appeared together with its colleagues from Amsterdam at all sorts of conferences in the Netherlands where the issue of roofless and houseless young people was discussed.

Amsterdam Youth Audit Project, Amsterdam (PAJA)

In 2008, the social organisation "Stichting Volksbond" [People's League Federation] in Amsterdam took the initiative to develop an audit model that young people from care facilities can use to gauge their care, known as the Amsterdam Youth Audit Project. An audit model was developed over one year, by the research organisation and our own organisation (for advice and support of young people). The model comprises the following steps:

- Inform young people and staff at the facilities about the aim of the project;
- Recruit young people;
- Draw up a questionnaire;
- Conduct the survey;
- Process and interpret the research data;
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations (for improvements);
- Discuss the research results and advise the parties involved (audit);
- Allow time to implement the improvements;
- 'Re-examine' the implementation (=actual implementation of the improvements).

A pilot project has been carried out in four institutions. The Verweij Jonker Instituut³ has used these pilot projects as a basis to define a methodology. The young people have made a short instruction film. In the meantime, they have chosen a name for the group: Young Voices 2B Heard.

The aim is to have several care facilities audited so as to refine and improve the methodology. It was interesting to see during this project how seriously the staff of the institutions reacted to the proposals for improvement made by the young people. Sometimes, it took quite an effort to convince them of the need and utility thereof before things got started, but once under way, when they saw the effects on young people, cooperation between staff and young people got better and better.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG HOUSELESS AND ROOFLESS PEOPLE

In looking at the concrete activities carried out in both projects, many social workers or policymakers are bound to think: that seems to be logical, you can do that in no time. The first is correct, the second requires some effort. Because if you want to get - and keep - these young people involved, you must invest a great deal:

- In terms of communication: finding the right tone, providing and conveying information in the right way, staying alert to ensure that they feel at home and that they are being heard (usually expressed non-verbally, i.e. by staying away), etc. What is 'right' is determined by the group of young people you happen to be working with. Nothing is fixed beforehand. Assume that nothing you are used to when working with a group of students applies to or is self-evident for these young people;
- In terms of attention: a great deal of attention must be paid to each individual young person. First, to ensure that they actually show up once they have signed up. Because so many things can happen in-between. This means trying to stay in contact by telephone, SMS, e-mail, by passing by and reminding them about the appointment. It's important not to be disappointed if not many people show up at the first meeting: rely on the network of young people who did show up, and remain optimistic. This means that the supervisor must be easily accessible. This is not a nine-to-five job. You must be available to receive calls outside office hours too. You must react rapidly to an SMS. You must also be prepared to listen to personal stories. At the same time, it is also important to make it clear that you are not taking over what social welfare institutions (are supposed to) do. So

³ Website: <http://www.verweij-jonker.nl/>



make sure you know which institutions the young people are linked with, who their personal supervisor or coach is, and encourage them to provide young people there with the help they need. Do not provide help yourself.

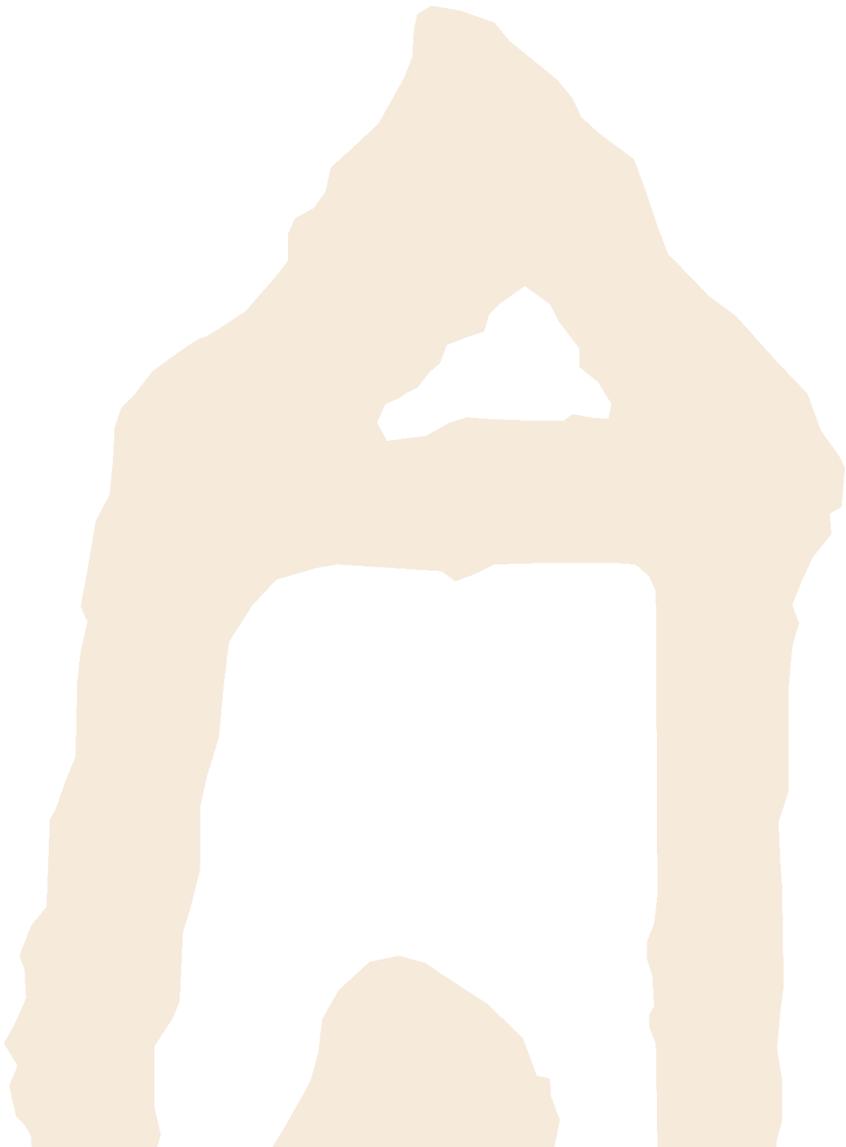
- By paying for productive work. We always pay young people who participate. Our position is: very many policymakers and social workers have difficulties in reaching and getting to grips with these target groups. They apparently lack expertise. Young people from these target groups can create openings. These young people constitute an important intermediary. Their mediation is invaluable. So why not pay a fee for this expertise? After all, policymakers and social workers are paid for their input. And representatives of the people (town council members) can also count on a fee. For the young people, the fee is a (material) recognition of the importance of what they do. Paying the fee creates a (business) relationship, where requirements can be set. And a little extra pay comes in handy for young people, who often have to make do on a minimum income.
- Investment in group training is important. Many young people are isolated with few valuable social contacts. Belonging and being seen are important for them. We always pay attention to group building, e.g. through team building activities, by eating together, by doing nice things now and then, and by making sure that it is clear what everyone contributes to the group (task distribution based on skills).

ANOTHER ROLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The strength of these projects lies largely in the additional role that the young people are assigned. They are no longer help seekers who have all sorts of problems, which they must overcome and at the same time learn all sorts of things. No, they are people who have something to offer, who are held to account, who are part of something that is important for society (i.e. municipalities, institutions). And naturally, it also means assuming responsibilities, and adapting to the other party or parties to a certain extent. Because, if you go to see an alderman, or to an audit interview, and are entirely unprepared or (in an extreme case) under the influence of drugs, you might as well forget about it. You can see for yourself that things go wrong and people will not take you seriously. In so doing, young people acquire a great deal of (social) skills during these projects. They discover that they are capable of doing new things, which they had never expected. They learn from each other, from their supervisors, and from everyone involved during the project. In fits and starts, of course, but who in this world does otherwise?

With thanks to Aziza Oumoussi, Saskia Hockers and Lisa ten Holt and all cooperating young people.

They are people who have something to offer, who are held to account, who are part of something that is important for society.





National citizen participation meetings in Caen, France

By **Samuel Le Floch**, *Policy Officer for European Affairs, FNARS, France*¹

It is not because people struggle to make a living that they put up with their lives. It is not because they are faced with difficult economic and social situations that they cannot express their opinions, or take initiatives and action.

On the contrary, those who deal with them are often impressed by their refusal to put up with such situations, and especially by their capacity to act – something often little known amongst many policymakers and by those not concerned with poverty and the difficulties of day to day living.

How do people faced with economic and social difficulties, beneficiaries of minimum benefits, the unemployed, etc., mobilise with others to take action in their environment, in all the projects in which they can get involved? Why are the recognition and promotion of their action indispensable for a more solidarity-based society?

These questions served as the basis for the first national citizenship meetings held in Caen, Normandy, on 12 and 13 November 2009. Supported by several national networks, (Fnars, Uniopss, le secours Catholique, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross France, Uccas, Advocacy) these meetings were designed to pool and share local participation experiences.

They brought together service-users, beneficiaries of welfare measures, neighbourhood residents, social workers, volunteers, institutional or elected representatives, all of whom took a chance on collective action and co-construction.

Some 700 participants in all, from throughout France met to react and to share their participation experiences. Two thirds of them were users of homeless accommodation facilities, or neighbourhood residents, etc.

The core idea is to start with what already exists and to examine it. A blog was thus started to report on local participation initiatives.² These served as a basis for preparing the programme of the meetings.

The actual meetings employed original forms of coordinating and organising activities in a way that facilitated participation and the co-construction of analyses and points of views, etc.

The first day was devoted to enabling participants to get acquainted and to compare their respective views as to what participation means. Activities included collective creative workshops headed by artists (theatre forum, slam type writing workshop, sculpture and participatory performances, collages, photo language, sound workshop, etc.), and word workshops (role play, moving debate, discussion café, treasure hunt, etc.), working on representations and notions of participation and co-construction by beneficiaries, social workers, and actors from society in general.

The second day was devoted to questioning, based on testimonials and discussions of concrete participation experiences, what co-construction rationales suppose, allow and transform: lessons, brakes and levers. The workshop afforded an opportunity to present concrete participation experiences of residents from the neighbourhood and users of homeless services, to discuss such issues as citizenship, health, interaction with the business world, culture as a vehicle for reconstruction, etc.

The first day was brought to a close by a festive evening during which a choir composed of persons who had lived on the street read out texts written by service users as well as a theatre play written and performed by workers on work integration programmes.

The second day was brought to a close by a more political roundtable to discuss the barriers to the effective involvement of all actors in the decision-making process. What is the role of the beneficiaries, social workers, institutional and elected representatives? What are the proposals and commitments of each for living better together? This roundtable brought together local elected officials, representatives of the municipality, a general council and a directorate general of social affairs, a member of parliament, service users, and social workers.

To initiate the discussion, the coordinators asked the participants to react to a "*letter from tomorrow*" that summarised the discussions during the two days.

1 Email: samuel.lefloch@fnars.org Website: www.fnars.org

2 <http://dire-reagir-ensemble.new.fr>



Letter from tomorrow

"Dear Isidore,

As I promised the last time we shared a beer in Douarnenez, I am writing to tell you about my latest adventures as a participant.

Everything is changing here, you know. We continue to have rows, but we're laying incredible groundwork! It's true that there's time to do concrete things, to take small steps, and go through doors that are half opened without having to force them.

You know that I belong to a social life council, but what you do not know is that things have moved on since we worked in Caen in November 2009. In fact, the social life council of the facility where I was housed joined its counterpart in the neighbourhood to become the social life council of the place where everybody lives!

There are social and medical facilities in the neighbourhood, with social life councils, companies, the social centre; the neighbourhood council turned into the social life council of all actors in the neighbourhood, i.e. residents, professionals, volunteers, elected officials, companies, and users...

All together, we get to undertake study trips (by coach and with a choir!), analyse practices and experiences, hold manual/creative/artistic workshops open to all, as well as project meetings.

To that end, as it was really, but really important, the head of the neighbourhood company had to be trained together with us, and as I was there, I went along too. I ran into the instructor I had when I was at the accommodation and social reintegration centre (CHRS): he's really aged! The good news is that it is not because he is wearing himself out, but because he is really getting older – it's a matter of age, no longer of work!

Yes, there are training courses organised regularly to initiate and get all actors used to taking the floor, chairing meetings, heading projects, etc., so that they can all think together about the issues that concern us all: Who does what? Who decides what? How does it work?

It is a fact that all this makes me understand that each one of us is a piece of a puzzle, and as the puzzle moves, we have decided to help each other!!! Everyone understood that he or she shared in the responsibility, and that together we are strong! We all realised that we had to empower ourselves.

So, following the example of the demonstration of November 2009 in Caen, we created our own slogan and went marching through the streets chanting "give us the means!!" This means also the capacity to participate ... and thus, we all, with our differences, produced our tools to take action together.

We created tools for participation: operating budgets to set up projects; charters that define the rules of engagement and participation; associations of users, associations of residents, associations of users and residents to assert our needs, rights, projects, etc.

We even managed to change the media: they no longer cover only disasters, but come to see and listen to our day-to-day actions, what we do right! I must tell you that this process has not been smooth sailing. We had to proceed step by step and set markers.

We developed methods for holding meetings:

- Regular meetings conducted in a creative manner: visual media, games;
- Moving debate, etc., always combined with a little drink, something to eat, with the rhubarb jam prepared by a resident;
- Principles: one person, one vote; everybody can think; different statuses do not hinder cooperation; everyone must be informed so that the decisions / proposals can be adopted with due knowledge of the facts;
- Rules of the game decided by all residents, users, elected officials and professionals: timetables, agenda, place, duration, etc.
- Professionals who can assume the supervision but who then commit themselves personally;
- Rotating coordination.

But little by little, we understood that softly, softly, catchee monkey... and went to see how others do it.

The dynamism of a facility can stem from a neighbourhood, and vice versa

- We do not stay in our shell,
- We go see elsewhere
- Get new ideas
- Share ideas too
- We open up to the city, the region, France, Europe, the world!

....and we are thinking about going to Mars! And then, we learnt the lesson from the national meetings of 12 and 13 November 2009 about... I no longer know where... But I remember they squeezed us dry!

So we decided to take our time:

- The time to trust;
- The time to dare to speak out;
- The time to express suffering, doubt, fear and anger;
- The time to exchange;
- The time to understand the status and role of each one better;
- The time to build a point of view among ourselves, before unveiling it and discussing it with others;
- The time to argue;
- The time to deal with disagreements;
- The time to change point of view, if we are convinced by others!
- The time to listen
- The time to understand
- The time to build proposals, projects and objects together
- The time to define concrete objectives that concern us
- The time to take the time to design, create, assess – everything in good time!
- The time to recognise the different time and pace of others
- The time to claim from all that all our time is needed to
- Get involved and participate

To participate...

Cannot be decreed / cannot be imposed

It is not noted!

It is at once built amongst ourselves and in comparison to others

To learn to come into conflict without violence

To learn among many ...

These days were a success, in terms of the quality of the presentations and the number and diversity of the participants. These days afforded people an opportunity to speak and to reduce the distance that at times exists between those who are not used to meeting face to face. Everyone was able to speak and discuss. This shows the value and urgency of continuing the work so that all can take the floor and participate in the life of their neighbourhood or widely in the public discussion. To succeed, appropriate tools must be created so as to make such participation really effective.



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The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

To that effect, PROGRESS purports at:

- providing analysis and policy advice on employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in employment, social solidarity and gender equality policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large.

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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