

The Finnish National Homelessness Strategy

An International Review

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- Brought together academics from Finland, Sweden, the UK and USA: Riitta Granfelt, Marcus Knutagård, Nicholas Pleace and Dennis P. Culhane
- Two visits to Finland by international component of the team
- Talked to policymakers, central and local government level, homelessness service providers and homeless people
- Visited services
- Reviewed available data



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- Finland is perhaps the best example of a truly coordinated National homelessness strategy
- Bringing together homelessness NGOs, Y Foundation, municipal and central government
- Response has also been comprehensive, alongside the focus on long-term homelessness:
 - Development of preventative services and successes in homelessness prevention
 - Specialist services for particular groups, e.g. young people and former prisoners
 - A range of supported housing services alongside Housing First

- The Finnish Homelessness Strategy is more coordinated and comprehensive than equivalent strategies in Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States
- Responses to long-term homelessness have also been more variable in these three countries, when compared to Finland
- While not all homelessness has been ended, the reductions in homelessness achieved in Finland compare very positively with evidence of increases in many other countries in the EU

- Substantial success in reducing long-term homelessness
- The most individually, socially and economically damaging form of homelessness has been reduced
- This has not been accomplished on the same scale elsewhere, though not unprecedented, e.g. London
- Use of Communal/Congregate models of Housing
First contentious but effective?

- Now spreading across European Union
- Guidance being produced by FEANTSA
- Fidelity not possible in terms of detailed operation, adaptation to circumstances very different from North America
- Some Finnish Housing First is congregate /communal, large, dedicated apartment blocks, 80+ apartments
- Criticised as not allowing social integration, separate blocks keep formerly homeless people separate from society, lots of high need people together means management problems
- Experience in Finland suggests that while there can be both these issues, it is actually possible to manage them
- Would higher fidelity be more effective? Maybe, maybe not...

- Increasing affordable housing supply is key to reducing and preventing homelessness
- High pressure housing markets, e.g. Helsinki City, are a particular concern
- Partnership working with social housing providers is crucial, e.g. municipalities and the Y Foundation, both in homelessness prevention and reduction
- Models such as local lettings agencies from the UK and their equivalents can enhance access to private rented housing

- Prevention needs to identify people at risk of long-term and recurrent homelessness
- Services like Critical Time Intervention and Housing First can be used to prevent long-term homelessness among high need and vulnerable groups of people
- Indebtedness can also be a route into homelessness and can be counteracted
- There is scope to explore using lower intensity models of support to both prevent and reduce homelessness

- Housing is not enough to solve homelessness.
- Have to think about social integration, an emotionally rewarding personal life, work, education, training or something positive to give structure to life and being part of a community. Evidence points to social integration as the best way to reduce and prevent homelessness.
- There is scope to improve the evidence base on services effectiveness and cost effectiveness, further exploring the best solutions to homelessness for Finland.

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Thanks for listening

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EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS