

“I am making my own recovery program” – combating marginalization through community work

Topic/Theme

People recovering from dependence treatment are in a marginalized position to the work force, housing market, economically and in the welfare system. But even more, they are marginalized in terms of autonomy, both from own experiences and from the general view of “the drug addict” both in common and by professionals.

Norwegian government calls for extended volunteerism and user participation in social work and social policy. The coordination reform has decentralized responsibility for recovery after treatment for substance misuse. This correspond well with the traditions of community work. At the same time austerity policies all over Europe threatens to increase the marginal position of disadvantaged groups like former substance misusers.

The project

The project is a service user lead, temporary housing project for people with a substance abuse career. The project includes a volunteer centre, a dormitory and social entrepreneurship projects providing work and activity. The aim of the project is to develop new methods of dealing with recovery, change society’s picture of the resources of people with a substance abuse career and the participant’s life situations.

This case study aims to explore professional practice and develop practice-based knowledge on how aspects of community work and development can be an approach solving social problems on multiple levels (so-called “wicked problems”) and reduce the level of marginalization. By this service development, including working with user control, housing, social entrepreneurship and communication strategies at the same time new methods have been explored and developed.

Methods

The research design is developed in collaboration with professionals, user representatives and other stakeholders (mode 2 research). Data is gathered by participatory observation, interviews and document assessment over a period of 2 years, covering project initiative, planning, and implementation.

Community work in Norway has in general been focusing on neighbourhood approaches. To meet the political challenges of social work in the future and challenge the position of marginalized groups in the society, the position and role of community work through communities of interest needs to be addressed, explored and developed further.

marginalization, drugs, mental health, social entrepreneurship, community work

Audio or Video System