



Social services on both sides of the border/
The North Karelian Society for Social Security

Low threshold approaches and services in Finland

2014

Low threshold in Finland

- The need: Normal thresholds to the society and/or to services possibly tend to be too high. Or at least they are considered as too high.
- Not many studies on low threshold issues so far → Neither proper definitions or classifications nor models

Low threshold

- The concept has many meanings
 - Easy access and use both physically and mentally
- The first low threshold services in Europe were created for drug addicts in the early 1990´ s. NGOs were the first to act.

What people are wishing for low threshold places?

- place situated in their everyday surroundings
- easy-going place to stop by and socialize
- reading newspapers, having access to internet
- counselling in social and health services
- helping filling in forms
- discussion
- meeting peers

Variation in staff

- volunteers
- peers
- multi-professional personnel, social and health care
- mixture of previous models

Types of low threshold approaches

- Meeting places
- Self help services
- Low threshold in public services

→ Often mixed and cannot be strictly divided into these types

Meeting places

- Aims
 - to create and strengthen community spirit
 - to strengthen participation
 - to offer meaningful activities
 - to offer peer support

Meeting places

- Principles
 - easy and simple access
 - confidentiality
 - anonymity
 - open-access, free of charge
 - no classifications based on age, diagnosis, life situation
 - no need to make an appointment beforehand

Examples of meeting places

- Living rooms for citizens
- Day care centres
- Family houses
- Community houses, village houses
- (night) Cafes

Self help services

- Health kiosks
 - no staff
 - promoting health services, peer groups etc. with various health promotion materials and leaflets
 - often in meeting places or in halls of public offices
 - free to enter
 - possibility to measure e.g. blood pressure
- Public health kiosks
 - in people's daily environments
 - professional staff may be available
 - minor procedures e.g. measuring blood pressure

Low threshold in public services

- The public sector is interested in low threshold services because of the advantages
- Quite a big developing challenge
 - training and changes in working orientations are needed → a new way of working, e.g. meeting customers outside of the office
 - new attitudes towards customer participation

Advantages of low-threshold places and services

- For the society (1/2)
 - reach those in need and those in risk
 - satisfy people's needs in time
 - health promotion, preventive help, earlier detection
 - savings in public costs, higher efficiency and cost-efficiency
 - light administrative structure
 - fewer customers to visit health clinics, to see a doctor

Advantages of low-threshold places and services

- For the society (2/2)
 - customer-orientated attitude
 - new models for cooperation with citizens
 - new models and ways to the cooperation between the state/municipality, NGOs, other organisations
 - services available also in rural areas, remote villages (e.g. services on wheels)
 - gives a broad view to the needs of citizens
 - information about the gaps in services
 - better understanding for developing services

Advantages of low-threshold places and services

- For citizens
 - free and easy access regardless of timing or residence
 - accessible and attainable
 - flexibility
 - anonymity, no shame, no stigma
 - no appointment
 - counselling that may help forward in everyday life
 - offers social support, peer help, activities, friends
 - focus on the customer