



Denmark 2005

## Preventing and Tackling Homelessness

Summaries of Four Case Studies on Homelessness in Denmark



on behalf of

 European Commission  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities





## Summaries of four case studies on homelessness in Denmark

### *Introduction*

This document contains four case studies on different establishments for homeless people in Denmark.

These case studies are:

- Ellehjørnet in Valby (a "freak house" complex)
- Lærkehøj in Frederiksberg (a home shelter)
- Lindevangen in Frederiksberg (a home shelter)
- Mændenes Hjem in Vesterbro (a home shelter)

The case studies give a good insight into the different approaches to different types of homeless people, and can be seen as an introduction to the different site visits that will take place during the peer review meeting in Copenhagen (26-27 April 2005).



## **Ellehjørnet in Valby**

*Ellebjergervej 84, DK-2500 Valby*

Ellehjørnet lies on a heavily trafficked artery into Copenhagen, but is partly sheltered by a rampart. The complex is isolated by the railway on one side and a petrol station on the other. The City of Copenhagen took the initiative to establish Ellehjørnet, which is run by the social caretaker who also runs Krattet. A housing association is in charge of the renting, carried out according to general renting principles. The houses have been occupied since May 2002.

The complex consists of 10 detached prefabricated wooden houses, along with a common house, containing a kitchen, a common room and an office for the social caretaker.

Six of the houses are 30 m<sup>2</sup>, while the other four are 40 m<sup>2</sup>. Both types of houses have a living room with a kitchen nook and a small bedroom. Every house has a bath and toilet. All houses have roofed terraces with access from the living room – the terraces face away from the common area and can therefore be used ‘privately’.

Overall, the target group encompasses people who do not want or are unable to live in a normal home, particularly people with various misuse problems.

Six men and four women live in the houses. Six of these ten have lived there since the project started, while the other four have lived at Ellehjørnet for 1-1\_ years. Seven of the residents have various misuse problems, most in the form of multiple substance misuse. The other three residents primarily suffer from mental problems. Half the residents previously lived on the street, while four come from the hostel at Gammel Køge Landevej. The residents range between 36 and 60 years of age.

A social caretaker has been connected to the project, and divides his time between Ellehjørnet and Krattet. The social caretaker explains that he acts as a liaison between the three parties, viz. the partners in the form of the local authority, dentists, doctors, etc., the housing association and the residents.



The work mainly consists of creating contact with the residents and seeking to establish a relationship of trust. The object is to stop the downward spiral in which many of the residents are caught. The caretaker emphasises that dialogue and personal attention are the formula for success.

The caretaker and the partners stress that this offer has enabled them to keep the residents in a home for an extended period. For many of the residents, this represents the first time in many years that they have a fixed point in their lives, and they highlight the sense of security that having their own place to live gives them.

However, the residents complain that they do not have a washing machine and dryer at their disposal.



## **Lærkehøj in Frederiksberg**

### **Lærkehøj's overall goal**

is to provide temporary or long-term accommodation for homeless or socially marginalised people with misuse problems and/or mental illnesses.

### **The shelter**

The shelter has existed since September 2002 and is located in a new, modern building at Lindevangs Alle no. 9 in Frederiksberg.

The shelter has 26 rooms, 18 of which are single rooms with separate bathroom and toilet. The other 8 rooms have separate bedrooms, while two residents share an anteroom, bathroom and toilet.

### **Price (2005)**

DKK 76.00 per day inclusive of breakfast, linen, TV and laundry access. DKK 48.00 per day for benefit claimants under the age of 25.

### **Meals**

The canteen serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Lærkehøj sets store by offering healthy and varied food at reasonable prices.

### **Lærkehøj's target group**

Lærkehøj's target group comprises homeless men and women, characterised by – besides having special social problems – being alcohol or drug misusers, and/or mentally ill.

### **Support services**

At Lærkehøj, we want to meet all residents in a spirit of openness, confidence and respect.

We offer basic support, care and qualified identification of the individual resident's overall social situation and desires for the future. Each resident is allocated a contact, who functions as an anchorperson throughout the resident's stay. Residents' active participation and inclusion in all decisions on their situation is given high priority.



The residents' council helps residents gain influence on their everyday lives at Lærkehøj, and they can also participate in the daily chores and become involved in activity planning.

### **Housing allocation**

Lærkehøj sits on the local authority's housing allocation committee, and in relevant cases, Lærkehøj prepares written assessments of the residents' ability to live in their own homes and makes housing recommendations.

### **House rules and guidelines**

We work with a few, but simple rules. Breaches entail quarantine.

### **Rules**

No violence or threats of violence, no trafficking in drugs or stolen goods, no illegal weapons.

### **Guidelines**

Consuming alcohol or taking drugs in communal rooms is prohibited. Prostitution is prohibited. Generally, residents must show regard for other residents, neighbours and staff, and this includes tidying up communal rooms. If shelter rooms or fixtures are vandalised, the perpetrator will be held financially liable. Guests and children are not allowed in the house, nor are pets.

### **Facts on the Night Shelter Café**

The Night Shelter Café is part of Lærkehøj. Four support workers work in the Night Shelter Café, two on each nightshift. These employees are also responsible for supervising the shelter at night.

By agreement, Lærkehøj's social and health employees can also help Night Shelter Café users.

The Night Shelter Café is open nightly from 11.30 pm - 7.45 am.



## **Lindevangen in Frederiksberg**

### **Lindevangen's goal**

is to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people and socially marginalised groups.

Homeless people should be understood as people with a multitude of serious social problems, the lack of a dwelling being only one of many.

### **The shelter**

Lindevangen has existed since 1970, and is domiciled in a big, old house dating from 1876, situated at Lindevangs Alle 7.

The shelter has 26 furnished rooms, including one for emergency purposes. Four rooms are dedicated to parents with child/children. The others are single rooms. Bathrooms and toilets are shared.

### **Meals**

The residents make their own food in Lindevangen's communal kitchen.

### **Lindevangen's target group**

Men, women and families with special social problems who do not have or cannot stay in their own homes and who need support and help in changing their situations.

Severely socially marginalised people can be admitted with a view to assessing their ability to reside in their own homes.

### **Referral**

If a person is interested in moving into Lindevangen, he or she can personally request referral or be referred by the social services authorities, the hospital sector or another public body.

We do not have waiting lists, but refer residents when we have or expect soon to have a vacancy.

If no rooms are free, the referred person must telephone daily until a room becomes vacant.



The referral phase determines whether the applicant fits into Lindevangen's target group, and if so, he/she is approved and can move in. In extraordinary cases, other individuals may be admitted, if this is deemed necessary. Families with children can make an agreement on fixed-term stays.

### **Consent declaration**

When a resident moves in, he/she fills in a consent declaration allowing Lindevangen to co-operate with other partners involved in the resident's situation.

### **Action plan**

Within the first month of a resident's stay, Lindevangen must offer to convene a co-ordination meeting of all relevant partners involved in the resident's situation. This meeting is meant to ensure that local authority caseworkers subsequently draw up a social action plan in co-operation with the resident.

### **Action and payment commitment**

Lindevangen primarily admits residents of the City of Frederiksberg, but if citizens from other local authorities are admitted, the resident's local authority must submit an action and payment commitment. Citizens from other local authorities can be admitted for short, limited periods.

### **Support services**

At Lindevangen, we want to meet all residents in a spirit of openness, confidence and respect.

Lindevangen bases its work on the principles of helping residents to help themselves, and co-operation strategies thus focus on helping residents to eventually gain the ability to re-establish their own lives. Each resident is allocated a contact, who functions as the anchorperson throughout the resident's stay. A residency plan is prepared in co-operation with the resident, based on the problems outlined in the referral phase.

Lindevangen has an independently functioning residents' council, responsible for convening monthly meetings of all residents. Residents can influence the planning and realisation of activities, as well as equipment purchases for communal rooms. A staff representative is attached to the council, charged with aiding and promoting the work of the residents' council.



### ***Housing allocation***

Lindevangen sits on the local authority's housing allocation committee, and in relevant cases, Lindevangen prepares written assessments of residents' ability to live in their own homes and makes housing recommendations.

### **House rules**

Lindevangen promotes a good, friendly atmosphere between staff and residents and between the residents. We do not tolerate racist statements or other derogatory treatment.

Children have great importance in the shelter and special needs for caring interaction.

At Lindevangen, we do not accept violence or threats of violence. The following rules also apply: No trafficking in drugs or stolen goods, no illegal weapons. No alcohol or drug consumption.

Violation of these rules may lead to eviction.

### **Housing assistance programme**

The housing assistance programme came into existence in 2002. This consists of three employees and is a service offer associated with Lindevangen. Physically, the housing assistance programme staff works from a flat in Christian Paulsens Vej in Frederiksberg.

The housing assistance programme is an aftercare offer, and work is primarily done in the resident's own home.

The programme's goal is to prevent homelessness. The programme helps the individual user to develop his/her own resources to cope with an independent life in his/her own home.

### **Target group**

The programme's target group consists of the clients of the City of Frederiksberg's counselling centre living in their own homes, as well as Lindevangen and Lærkehøj residents who are moving into their own homes.

Single men and women who either need help getting established or being restored to their own dwelling or need to develop their ability to sustain a home.



### **Job training**

A workshop associated with Lindevangen has been set up and is used for job training.

Job training is an offer of activation for social benefit and unemployment benefit claimants. The facility offers a total of 7 places.

The job training facility has two staff – a workshop manager and a vocational teacher responsible for the daily running. The objective of job training is to clarify aspects of future employment which can enable the client to become self-supporting.

### **Target group**

Job training is targeted at social benefit and unemployment benefit claimants who either need individual job training (3 months) or are to be employed in jobs with a wage subsidy (6–12 months)

### **Referral**

Clients can be referred by the City of Frederiksberg's Employment Secretariat or the local jobcentre.

### **Job training offers:**

- Opportunity for the individual to try working in different crafts related to building renovation, for example: joiner / carpenter / painter / pavior / wood preparation
- Caretaking of outdoor areas
- Introduction to computer and acquisition of PC driving licence
- Clarification of the competencies that would improve the individual's future job options
- Possibility of individual counselling and guidance for job hunting and relevant training opportunities
- Forward-looking action plan made jointly with the City of Frederiksberg's job training centre and Lindevangen's social worker
- Professional and social competencies via co-operation on individual tasks, thus promoting an understanding of the significance of a workplace culture and what it means to be able to cope at a work place
- To adapt the job training process specifically to the individual, paying attention to desires and experience



### **Shared housing arrangement**

The 'Terrassen' shared housing arrangement is associated with Lindevangen and is located at Magnoliavej in Frederiksberg. The flat is 190 m<sup>2</sup> with seven rooms, accommodating five residents. Two of Lindevangen's support workers are associated with the shared housing arrangement, handling contact work and administration for a total of 20 hours weekly. Rent (2005): DKK 3,127.00 including heat, electricity and internet connection.

### **Target group**

Men and women – primarily from Lindevangen – in need of long-term stay/transition before being established or re-established in their own homes.

### **Referral**

When the shared housing arrangement has a vacancy, residents of Lindevangen can be referred if they fall into the target group and decide to accept the offer. In special circumstances, clients not coming from Lindevangen may also be accepted.

### **Support services**

The two associated support workers regularly visit the flat once a week or more, if needed. They provide support that helps train residents to function in homes, e.g. cooking, cleaning and household finances. In addition, the work focuses on developing social competencies and supporting residents' individual situations. Residents in the shared housing arrangement can also contact Lindevangen's social worker and other staff.



## **Mændenes Hjem in Vesterbro**

### **The local environment of Vesterbro**

Mændenes Hjem (Shelter for homeless men) is an institution established in accordance with paragraphs 94, 91 and 88 in the Social Assistance Act. The institution is located in central Copenhagen in the Vesterbro part of town, near the central station. This neighbourhood is seriously burdened by social problems. The area is often categorised as the centre for the sale and use of drugs and prostitution, and it is furthermore an area with a high concentration of people receiving transfer payments (public support). Only limited statistical information is available about Vesterbro, and it does not cover the whole district. But a picture of a somewhat burdened area does emerge: 18% of all Vesterbro inhabitants receive social assistance, as against 13% for the city as a whole. A somewhat lower percentage of people in the area receive an early retirement pension: 6% as compared to 7% for Copenhagen.

Regarding the labour market, Vesterbro also differs from Copenhagen in that 22% of its labour force is unemployed (the corresponding figure for the city as a whole is 15%). The housing in the area is comparatively old: 83% of the buildings were built before 1920, compared to 35% for Copenhagen as a whole. Furthermore it is one of the areas of Copenhagen with the highest rate of flats without bathrooms: only 53% of the flats have their own toilet and bath compared to 79% for the city as a whole. Larger changes are, however, currently taking place in the area: a general process of urban renewal is under way.

The employees at the shelter outline some of the consequences. They write: "Vesterbro is the physical framework for this shelter, Mændenes Hjem. Vesterbro is undergoing a rapid change. Urban renewal is changing the housing and new inhabitants are arriving here. The intensified police activity in the inner centre of Vesterbro has meant that the illegal drug business is moving around within the area. Today the possibilities of hanging around in the streets and alleys are no longer an option for our users. Consequentially Mændenes Hjem often functions as a drop-in, a place to be for a while, a safe haven for the people staying there now and for the people who have previously stayed there."

What is expressed here is a relationship between the standard of living in a given area and the degree of acceptance of deviation within that same area.



There is a degree of scepticism towards the process of city renewal. Does urban renewal lower the acceptance of diversity and alternative living or does it just remove the places where such lifestyles exist?

### **Mændenes Hjem**

Mændenes Hjem was opened in 1960 as a shelter for males. There are 43 beds in the shelter which, with the exception of 13 beds, are placed in double rooms. The 13 single rooms are reserved for persons with particularly serious problems. The price per day is DKK 48 per person for a double room and DKK 75 for a single room. Residents can pay cash or the social worker can pay directly.

The shelter has 15 beds for people with long-term drug problems (price DKK 2,150). Occupancy is managed in co-operation between the staff at Mændenes Hjem and the local social centre. First contact is made to the staff at Mændenes Hjem.

The shelter has also accommodation (the top floor apartment) for eight mentally ill drug abusers, also at the price of DKK 2,150 plus DKK 11,700 for food. Occupancy is managed in co-operation between the local council of Copenhagen and the staff at Mændenes Hjem.

The shelter has three additional functions. It houses a medical clinic staffed by nurses, an all night café and a street team of social workers. Both men and women use these facilities. Mændenes Hjem has an eating place, one can get second hand clothes and has a service that provides free clean syringes for drug users plus free condoms. Finally, people from the shelter distribute the homeless paper *Hus Forbi*.

The users of the institution may be grouped as follows (in 1996):

- 20% had problems relating to the consumption of alcohol
- 60% had problems relating to the use of drugs
- 15% were characterised as mentally challenged
- 5% had other kinds of problems

40% of the entire group were non-Danish.



Two groups are in focus in the yearly report of 1997: The non-Danish and the mentally challenged.

The following nine criteria apply to the people classified as non-Danish:

- they are often between 25 and 35 years of age
- they often have no education
- they often speak poor Danish
- they often use drugs
- they often function badly, socially
- they have, in most cases, never had a connection to the Danish labour market
- they often have only very limited contact with their social worker
- many are burdened with very unpleasant memories about for example torture
- and many are mentally challenged

The following six criteria apply to the people classified as mentally challenged:

- they are often paranoid or schizophrenic
- they often do not receive medical treatment, nor do they wish to do so
- they are often lonely
- they have been hospitalised numerous times
- they are often living in a separate world
- they most often have few contacts with the staff (Olsen, 1997)