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Living in group homes - the right to activities and participation

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Introduction: “Full and effective participation and inclusion in society” is one out of eight general principles of The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Participation and inclusion in society means the opportunity to involve in daily activities in the home, at work and in leisure time, together with other people in the society where one lives.

Objectives: This paper will elucidate how individuals with physical or mental health problems, aged 18-67 and living in group homes, experience possibilities of participation in desirable everyday life activities, and discuss findings in relation to all people’s right to live active lives.

Method: The current paper is part of a bigger project examining providers, leaders, users and relatives’ experiences with extensive services in 15 group homes. In the current study, two group homes are included.

The study has an action research design. Data collection methods consist of participating observations, focus group discussions and individual interviews with residents, parents, staff, and the leader. Data analysis employs a thematic approach.

Results: Preliminary findings reveal that the main challenges for participating in desirable activities and work are related to organizational structures and finances in the services. Number of staff, shift and working hours are important barriers to spontaneity and individual choices in everyday life, as going shopping, café visits, visiting friends etc. Activities outside the everyday routines require carefully planning.

Conclusion: The participant’s experiences of lacking possibilities of living active lives seems to be in conflict with authorities ideals of inclusion and participation in society.