

Local Pilots, Virtual Tools - Experiments of Health Promotive and Inclusive Services in Different Settings in the Western Uusimaa Region

Hanna Tuohimaa, Elina Rajalahti, Anne Makkonen, Liisa Ranta,
Ulla Lemström, and Aila Peippo

Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Lohja, Finland
{hanna.tuohimaa, elina.rajalahti, anne2.makkonen, liisa.ranta,
ulla.lemstrom, aila.peippo}@laurea.fi

Abstract. In this paper we want to present five concepts for wellbeing related services and activities that have been piloted in the Western Uusimaa region as examples of ways of bringing health and wellbeing to different settings and different user groups. The pilots have been conducted for children in the kindergarten and secondary school, for adults in the health centre and for the unemployed in a variety of every day settings. We also want to present how local experiments can be put into wider use by virtual means and present the concept of the virtual wellbeing backpack family. The paper is based on work done in Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) in a subproject of a cross regional project Pumppu funded by the European Regional Fund during 2011-2014.

1 Introduction

Sustainable living environments meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, as the Brundtland's Commission stated in their report [1]. The needs of the present and the needs of the future require different things of the living environment, with environmental sustainability more concerned with the needs of the future while social, political and economic sustainability more concerned with the needs of the present [2]. To fulfill the Brundtland's Commission's definition of sustainable development, all the perspectives are needed.

In this article, we are discussing the social sustainability perspective of sustainable living environments especially from the perspective of the ability of the living environment to foster health and enhance healthy living. Health is defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” [3] and health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health” [4]. We share this understanding of health as a holistic concept taking into consideration both physical aspects as well as mental and social aspects. Following Antonovsky's salutogenic model [5] we see

health as a continuum where both improvement and deterioration are always possible. We acknowledge that health promotion is not merely disease prevention and that we need to see people as they are, complex living beings with certain risks as well as assets in their life making it either a bit easier or more difficult to feel well and be happy. Although we also acknowledge the role of governments in tackling poverty, unemployment and other social determinants of health, in this paper we want to focus on the role of services in supporting wellbeing and enabling movement towards health.

The paper is based on work done in Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) in a subproject of a cross regional project Pumppu funded by the European Regional Fund during 2011-2014 (A31860). The project partners developed wellbeing services in a citizen centric manner with service providers from both the public, private and the third sector in four regions in southern Finland. All the subprojects had their different focuses (person centred planning, service structure development, technology usage and service vouchers). In our subproject our focus has been on developing services and activities for health promotion and for enhancing inclusion in society in the Western Uusimaa region. The uniting theme in all the subprojects was citizen centrism and seamlessness of care and shared workshops and benchmarking visits were organized on these themes.

In the subproject of Laurea UAS, our main interest has been in finding ways to motivate and empower the individual in his/her life for actively pursuing health related goals through developing better services and supportive activities and enhancing the health literacy skills. In our vision health promotive services are seamlessly connected and easy to access with personal health goals as the starting point and information and support available throughout the personally tailored service path. Health literacy is seen not as merely basic literacy skills but also as an interactive process of participating in changing circumstances and the critical ability to evaluate information and gain greater control of one's life [6].

The settings approach of health promotion focuses on transforming the places or social contexts in which people engage in their daily activities into supportive, health promotive environments [7]. In the project, we wanted to take health issues to the everyday settings of the residents in the area, to kindergartens and schools for example. We wanted to enhance the collaboration of different service providers and other actors in the region in matters related to wellbeing. At the same time we also wanted to define the role of the UAS as a health promoter in the region. Laurea UAS works according to the Learning by Developing pedagogic model [8] where students work in projects in close collaboration with local partners conducting real life research, development and innovation (R&D&I) tasks. The tasks offer students authentic working life experiences and bring about learning opportunities for all the parties involved. At the same time the region and its residents benefit of the end results, in this case of the new services.

In the project, we have taken a wide definition of wellbeing services. Our main goal has been to find ways to support wellbeing and promote health in the salutogenic sense [5], with a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. The human being is seen as an empowered, functioning individual, involved in diverse social relationships. We