

# Puuhapaku, mobile youth work in the city of Kemi

## **Name of the organisation**

Kemin kaupungin nuorisotyö

## **Website of the organisation**

<http://www.kemi.fi/palvelut/nuorisotyö/>

## **Location of the organisation**

Oklaholmankatu 16, 94700 Kemi, Finland

## **E-mail address of the organisation**

[matti.molander@kemi.fi](mailto:matti.molander@kemi.fi)

---

## **Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work**

- Participation of young people in activities (planning, preparing, carrying out, etc.)
- Participation of young people in decision making
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Active citizenship/activism
- Arts and culture
- Sports
- Outdoor activities
- Safe/secure youth work environment
- Digital and information literacy
- Cross sectorial cooperation
- Lobbying/advocacy for youth work

## **Good practice category**

## **Good practice aim & purpose**

We wanted to increase youth work mobility and reach young people who are otherwise excluded from youth work services. And also to make youth work more visible for everyone. We wanted the youth workers to be more accessible for the young people, and to organize youth work to places where there is none. We also wanted to go and see the places where the youth spends their time and see the young people that does not, for one reason or another, want to come to youth houses but does not necessarily have nice places to hang out at. So we wanted to also gain their trust and let them decide what activities they would like for us to organize, and give them credit for coming up with their great ideas and let them get involved in the planning process and execution of those activities and events. And for us to be able to take a youth center where ever the young people wanted the youth center to be at. One of the main purposes was to also be able to do more with our already existing cooperation partners and to be able to get more cooperation partners to work with.

## **Good practice description**

*Please describe your good practice based on the above given information (Explain your practice as*

*such, in 'technical' terms and as clear and simple as possible.)*

Puuhapaku is mobile youth work method which has been developed from the beginning to meet the needs of young people. Puuhapaku enables youth workers to go where the young people are, whether it's at parks, shopping center or at the streets. In puuhapaku (which is a van) we have all we need to put up a youth center where ever we want to, and for this purpose we often use other youth work cooperation partners spaces all around the city.

In the summer time we mainly stay outdoors and we have all kind of sport equipments that the youth wants to use. Every year we buy several new things what the young people have wished for. We want our activities to stay fresh and that's why we aim to develop and improve our good practice all the time based on the youth's needs and the things that they have asked for. We have been able to reach so much young people that has been excluded from all of youth work's services. By going to the youth's hang out places takes youth workers out of their comfort zone and kind of lets the youth make up the rules for the interaction between them. But it also gives so much; by seeing the young people in their "natural habitat" youth workers can learn so much more about the youngsters and what they really like to do and spend their time with.

*Please describe eventual challenges and problems related to the creation, implementation, and/or running of your good practice? (Explain the eventual difficulties that you have come across, so that others know what to think about if they want to implement your practice.)*

At the very beginning the first challenge for us was to convince the committee of culture to invest financially on a whole new way of doing youth work. At first summer we got to use city's old van to do mobile youth work and the results convinced the management that we're on to something with this. We started the mobile youth work during the summer season only. For our second summer season we leased a new van for us to do mobile youth work, and then decided to carry on with mobile youth work through the autumn, winter and spring too. With that in mind, the major challenge was to find as many cooperation partners as possible, so we could use their already existing workspaces as youth centers during the colder seasons. In the beginning, the activity had to be advertised a lot directly to the youth, so they would know who we were and what do we do. So we started by going to all the city's schools and got ourselves, our social medias and the van well known. It was also a challenging to find the flexibility required by the nature of the activity within the city organization.

*Please give the names, roles and tasks of eventual partners involved in the creation, implementation and/or running of your good practice.*

Most of our partners offers us their working spaces for use as a youth centers. We cooperate with many different types of youth work, such as church youth work and third sector organisations. It's very important to have cooperating partners for the mobile youth work to be running as smoothly as possible. This also gives us the ability to react quickly; for example if a store management calls us about some kids hanging out at the shop or possibly disturbing the other customers, we can go there and have a chat with the youth and work together to find something else for young people to do. We have used many different indoor locations all around the city near the places young people likes to hang out at. For us the most important partners has been (and still are) church youth work, schools, library and various organizers of youth hobbies and events.

*Please give an overview of the resources needed in order to establish and run your good practice.*

*(Please describe the human, financial and other resources that are needed. Please also explain if you have got external financing from sources available for others, and if so, from what funding scheme(s).)*

In all its simplicity the most important things for running a mobile youth work like puuhapaku is to have motivated and flexible employees, some sort of a van and stuff to be able to put up a youth center wherever, whenever. Or at the summer time to have some kind of sound system for playing music, different kind of sport equipments and time to hang out and face the youngsters.

### **Good practice result & concrete effects**

*For young people:*

Mobile youth work has made the youth workers to be more accessible to young people. Also it gives more flexibility for the youth center activities to be arranged in different locations and in multiple ways. We have enabled diverse activities for young people who would not otherwise have the opportunity to do those things.

*For youth workers:*

More flexibility and mobility for the everyday work. It's the best feeling ever to be able to react quickly when the young people want to do something they really enjoy! Also to be able to make youth work more visible for all the citizens.

*For your organisation as such:*

As a rather small city this gives us a great opportunity to do youth work practically anywhere.

*For youth work in general:*

New ideas and totally different way of doing youth work even more based on the youths opinions.

*For society/your community in general:*

Young peoples parents and almost any citizens are happy to see youth work on the streets, meeting up with the youngsters, organising events and things for the young people to do. In some places people give us positive feedback, because they feel that the disruptive behavior of the youngsters has decreased.

### **Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work**