

Development of boys in the suburb

Name of the organisation

Kooperativet Fjället

Website of the organisation

www.fjallet.org

Location of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Inclusion
- Gender
- Youth work in urban areas
- Recognition/validation of learning

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Kooperativet Fjället have identified the need to work on the social and personal development in boys in the suburb to challenge destructive masculinity norms, stereotypical gender roles and macho ideals.

Guydinner #Killmiddag is a concept we are working with which was developed by "Make Equal", which is an organization that works with practical equality work. We at Fjället work with guy dinner so that guys can develop their ability to express feelings and reflect together in a safe environment through group discussions based on different themes such as friendship, sexuality, violence, crime, love, the future, equality.

Guy group is a concept that we have developed ourselves. In a guy group, a limited number of guys participate in various collaborative exercises and workshops and work actively to create a better version of themselves. During the guys' group, upcoming guys' dinners are also planned, where the guys plan the next dinner and come up with a theme and questions for group discussions. The boys have their own budget of SEK 7,000 SEK/semester to plan the dinners and make activities of their choice. To highlight the boys' learning and personal and social development, we use the ELD method, Experience learning description.

Good practice description

In the suburb in north of Gothenburg where Kooperativet Fjället is located, there is a great need to work with boys, based on the fact that stereotypical gender norms are very prominent in the whole area. In addition to the fact that this is an obvious problem for all gender equality work and human rights issues, an unsafe and inhospitable atmosphere is easily created at the youth center, which in turns excludes girls and as well boys with alternative non-normative masculinities.

Much research has also shown that stereotypic gender norms are the basis for gangs and criminality. We therefore see our work with the boys as part of safety-creating work as well as violence prevention.

In the boy group, boys learn how to cooperate with others through cooperation exercises and team building games which enables them to trust each other in a fun and relaxing way. The boys also learn how to evaluate the sessions together and to high light good things they themselves have done and also highlight others. This is very important and demands training due to the fact that those boys rarely talk good about each other, but rather the opposite – they usually violates each other and talk down on each other. We have learned through various community accounts and reports that it is often a strategy in the suburbs to keep each other down. The aim would be preventing others from succeeding. In this way, everyone is kept at the same level and there is no risk of standing out like the unsuccessful ones. In that way, everyone becomes complicit in a collective failure, which is why it is so important to break the cycle of forced failure and start to talk about the merits and competences instead.

In the boy group the next Guy dinner is planned by the boys, which generates “youth produced time” in our web based system for follow up and documenting youth work- The Logbook.

In the Guydinner #Killmiddag boys sit and and discuss together different topics such as friendship, sexuality, violence, criminality, love, the future, equality, school. The important thing is to create a safe environment and make sure that no one is laughed at or ridiculed. Boys are able to open up and discuss innermost thoughts and feelings. This is a way to actually talk about such issues that boys rarely talk about in the daily life. The leader makes sure to open the discussion in a serious and safe way, making sure that everyone understands that what is shared in the group should not be talked about outside the group.

Good practice result & concrete effects

The results we see after using the methods described above are that the guys have gotten better at spending time together without offending each other. They have also become better at expressing feelings and listening to each other. The guys have been able to talk about topics and feelings that they don't do on a daily basis and in the open business.

The boys have also gotten better at not taking up so much space in the open activity and at interacting and respecting girls better. What we see is that girls and boys have started hanging out together, which they didn't do before. All in all we have been able to create more gender balance in the youth center and the boys shows less stereotypical masculinity and macho norms. In the gender segregated boy activities we have also been able to increase boys youth produced activities by introducing planning, preparing, implementing and follow up of activities.

We can clearly see the improved statistics on boys youth produced activities since the start of the concept, not only because boys plan and “produce” the Guy dinners but also because boys have raised their self esteem through the non-formal learning high lighted by ELD.

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work