

Outreaching as a youth centre

Name of the organisation

Vagevuur

Website of the organisation

www.vagevuurvzw.be

Location of the organisation

Kazernestraat 7, 9160 Lokeren, Belgium

E-mail address of the organisation

info@vagevuurvzw.be

Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Inclusion
- Non-formal education/-learning
- Safe/secure youth work environment

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Vagevuur worked out an outreaching therapy program for youngsters in Lokeren. The aim is to lower clear obstacles towards mental health care for young people. Because of a lack of space in mental health care but also the taboo on talking about your issues, access to mental health care seems to be unattainable for a lot of young people.

Therefore: Vagevuur hits the streets of Lokeren with a team of outreachers and therapists. They talk to youngsters, invite them to activities in the youth centre and to talk about deeper issues they are struggling with.

Besides working with youngsters, the youth worker also serves a signal function towards policy makers.

Good practice description

By hiring a first line psychologist as outreach, Vagevuur seems to clear some obstacles at hand.

Next to talks about mental health, the psychologist also works with youngsters in free time leisure activities and fun and games. This builds recognition and trust, which leads to easier talks about other issues at hand.

A basic position of trust and equality between youth worker and youngster, lowers thresholds in working together on mental wellbeing. This method and way of working is carried out as fundamental in working with youngsters and spread in the broader network in which Vagevuur is represented.

It has been quite a long pathway to get to this point, with the therapist first joining forces on a voluntary level, but soon being overrun by questions, hired with project funding as a temporary colleague. It is only by recognition of Vagevuur as an OverKop hous (i.e. a centre where youngsters can join in leisure time but also find a therapist) that Vagevuur was able to provide structural funding for this programme.

Good practice result & concrete effects

- more talks about mental health
- broader perspectives on working with youngsters
- faster signaling of youth (work) issues
- faster policy responses

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Youth workers