



Abstract Nr: 265

Abstract Text:

Villa Voortman, a meeting house in the city.

Villa Voortman is an open meeting place in the city of Ghent. It provides services for vulnerable people with a dual diagnosis who, for many reasons, do not connect with standard provisions. They have difficulties in several areas such as serious psychiatric and legal problems, addiction, stigma and homelessness.

Villa Voortman practices harm reduction and provides asylum or refuge - a warm place where people feel welcome and accepted. The focus is on meeting with respect for everyone's identity. It is a permissive, non-compulsive, 'open waiting' environment, which enhances personal growth and relationships and, thereby, attaches importance to empowerment. It is a place where people can develop themselves through artistic workshops and other activities offered by artists, volunteers and the visitors themselves. We advocate social inclusion and improved life perspectives by supporting inclusive citizenship, with respect for the individuality of visitors.

Under the motto: "minimum structure, maximum responsibility", in which equality, participation, consultation and destigmatisation are central, relationships with visitors are slowly built up. In this way, they become more and more people with a story to be heard, which leads to solidarity and desire, and to a gradual return to the society from which they were excluded.

Author:

Dirk Bryssinck

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**