



**Fostering  
Social  
Justice**



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## **TOOLS AND METHODS**

**Boys and Girls Houses**

**Finland 2022**



**IFS FOSTERING SOCIAL JUSTICE**

## TOOL'S SUMMARY

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|--|---|
| <b>Tool/method name</b>  | <b>Boys and Girls Houses</b>  |
| <b>Tool/method summary description</b>                         | <b>Setlementti Loisto</b> provides a space for boys and young men aged 10-28 with activities tailored to their needs, starting points, a space to reflect, make new friends and support to overcome life challenges in a safe environment. Girls are not left behind. Loisto provides a space called "Girls' House" to anyone aged 10 -28 who identifies as a girl or woman or thinks about girlhood. |
| <b>Country observed</b>  | <b>Finland</b>  |
| <b>Year observed</b>   | <b>2022</b>   |
| <b>Programme area</b>  | Social inclusion, migrant integration, gender sensitivity and diversity, empowerment.   |
| <b>Tool type</b>   | Facilitation technique, guidelines, peer support.   |
| <b>Specific topic</b>  | Social inclusion through reflections, leisure, and hobbies, finding own worth and value in the community, self-growth, and empowerment.   |
| <b>Beneficiaries of tool:</b>                                  | Open to boys, girls, young men, and women aged 10-28 from all backgrounds.  |
| <b>Can this tool be applied to other beneficiaries: yes/no</b> | Yes   |
| <b>What type of beneficiaries: ALL, or specific ones?</b>      | All if well adapted to the need and context.  |
| <b>If specific ones, which?</b>                                |   |

## Tool full description

The Boys' and girls' houses are easily accessible spaces for boys and girls aged 10 – 28. The Boys House offers support and activities tailored to the boys' needs and is a starting point for them to reflect and grow. In this space, they create friendships, get help with different life challenges, and participate in meaningful activities in a safe space.

The Girls, or anyone who identifies as a girl, on the other hand, have a space for leisure, hobbies, help and support, and reflection during difficult times in their lives. It's a place for them to hang out and participate in different groups. Here you share and learn about girlhood and womanhood, experiences, and thoughts, and it's an excellent opportunity to meet girls and women from all ages and backgrounds.

## Context

The Boys and Girls House is a first in the Capital of Helsinki. The idea behind this concept is that not every youth spaces are attractive to all. Some young people do not see those spaces as sufficiently safe, and others think they do not fit their profiles. The Boys' and Girls' Houses work with youngsters aged 10-28 with various needs and situations such as gender, identity, social and individual identity and more. The Boys' and Girls' Houses provide a safe place to hang out, freely express themselves, share concerns, receive peer support, and learn to manage their emotions better. The Houses offer different kinds of counselling and guidance. This visit is in the context of social inclusion/immigrant/youth integration and support.

## Could it be used in other contexts? If yes, which ones?

People of all ages need a safe space where they feel safe, accepted, and offered opportunities to reflect, grow, learn or be. The idea can be used to fit all kinds of target groups in any given community. The first Girls' and Boys' Houses started in the City of Helsinki, but now it has widely spread in various neighborhoods in Finland. And having a discrimination-free space where you are listened to is special.

## What is innovative about this method or tool?

The Boys and Girls Houses touch difficult areas of people's lives. What makes the concept innovative is that the trained professionals in the Houses can quickly get help for the users. The girls' Houses, for instance, have groups that manage groups such as sexual health, sexual violence, cultural sensitivity, young mothers, open café, and other groups. This is where you can be you and where there is space to reflect on who you are. Everyone is allowed to be their own precious self.

*Sain puhua ja minua kuunneltiin. Minut otettiin todesta.*

...

“I was allowed to speak, and I was listened to. I was acknowledged.”

## Detailed Methodology

The Boys and Girls Houses are part of Loisto Settlementti ry an NGO established in 1974 as Kalliolan Nuoret ry (Kalliola Youth Association). Their main work is social youth work with gender and culturally sensitive approach. They are independent in political or religious standpoint but are active in society level. Loisto settlementti has around 50 employees and different units around the great city of Helsinki.

Loisto's values diversity, communality, is committed to better the situation of those in weaker positions, and trust individual's resources. Their activities are mostly open community evenings, group activities, individual support, and some workshops.

The steps to join the services are:

- Contacting the service by phone, email or filling a form
- Agreeing on a meeting time know more about the service.
- Telling about as much about yourself as you feel necessary.
- Discussing the activities best suitable to the one person
- Agreeing on the next meeting time

The services here are not advertised as they are well known by families, schools, and social services, but they do out-reach activities from time to time.

## Comments from participants

*"The Boys and Girls Houses seem to be a safe place for all ages and takes into account gender diversity."*

*"The Girls and Boys Houses are safe spaces for the vulnerable or people who need to be protected physically and emotionally."*

## Specific advice for staff/volunteers/adult educators

Sometimes this service requires working with professionals, social workers or authorities in some situations that cannot be handled by the support system in the Houses.

## For more resources and information



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<https://tyttojentalo.fi/> Girls' House.