

Conversation cards

Quality in the shelter



This fan was made possible by the Valente quality workgroup as part of the First a Home program

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A dialogue on: Quality in the shelter

Conversation cards for clients, colleagues, and the organization



Why do we have these cards?

These cards are used to initiate discussions about what is going well and what could be improved. The themes are based on the client journey: starting from the initial reception and stay at the shelter, and extend to their future perspective.

Our Vision on Quality

- The person comes first
- Genuine attention, without judgment
- Personal agency and future-focused mindset
- The power of listening

How can you use the cards?

The cards can be used during residents' meetings, team meetings, conversations with partner organizations, or one-on-one meetings.

Set of 14 discussion themes

- 1 accessibility/findability
- 2 arrival/calming down
- 3 furnishing and homeliness
- 4 personal attention/professional or buddy
- 5 practical support
- 6 structure and daily routine
- 7 safety/expertise about security
- 8 housing agreements vs. controlling practices
- 9 employee attitude/human image
- 10 customized care/diversity
- 11 expert by experience
- 12 personal agency
- 13 daytime activities/participation
- 14 perspective

These themes are aligned with existing frameworks and were developed based on focus groups, client experiences, and quality standards.

Do you experience sufficient opportunities to spend time alone when you wish to?

Is enough attention given to clients' privacy?

1

Why are we doing this?

The foundation of good social shelters and their quality standards must begin with the clients. It's essential that they feel heard and seen, as this enables them to begin their recovery journey. After all, they are the heart of our shelters.

If we truly want to make a meaningful impact, we must define minimum quality standards from the client's perspective.

The accompanying conversation cards have been developed to initiate discussions about quality, with clients, colleagues, and the organization. They are based on themes that are considered essential from the client's point of view, such as safety, structure, homeliness, expert by experience, perspective, daily activities, diversity, accessibility, personal attention, basic staff attitudes, living arrangements, and personal agency.

These themes are rooted in the different stages of clients' recovery journeys. They begin with access to and reception at the shelter, continue with the experience of staying at the shelter, and extend to the prospects and opportunities after leaving the shelter.

2

Our vision on quality of care

In our initial shelter services, the person comes first. We approach clients with genuine attention and without judgment, recognizing them as whole individuals with strength and potential rather than as a collection of limitations or problems. We provide a safe, welcoming environment where clients can feel at home and begin to regain a sense of direction.

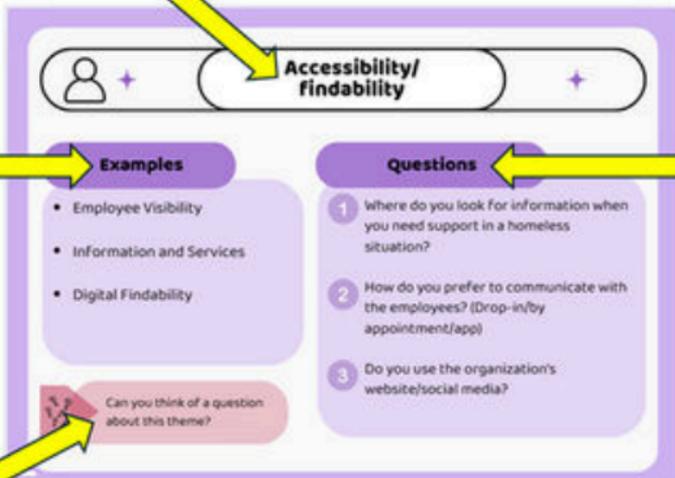
Our support is close, personal, and recovery-focused, guided by the principles of personal agency and a future-focused mindset. We believe in the power of listening, in acknowledging each person's story, and in exploring together what is possible. We reject stigma and stand alongside our clients.

3

How do you use the conversation cards?

The themes presented on the cards emerged from focus groups and lived experiences of clients, combined with findings from previous research and existing quality standards. The cards are designed to make it easy to start meaningful conversations about important topics. For example, they can be used in residents' meetings, team meetings, conversations with partner organizations, or one-on-one meetings. The blue cards are intended to facilitate dialogue with colleagues and policymakers, while the purple cards are designed to support conversations with clients.

You can find the theme here



You can also discuss an example

You can choose a question from the list

Maybe the other person has a good question?



Accessibility/ Findability



Examples

- Visibility of staff
- Information and resources
- Digital findability

Questions

- 1 Where would you seek information when you need support in a homeless situation?
- 2 How do you prefer to communicate with the employees? (Drop-in/by appointment/app)
- 3 Do you use the organization's website/social media?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Accessibility/ Findability



Examples

- Visibility of clients
- Information and resources
- Digital findability
- Collaboration

Questions

- 1 How does the organization ensure that homeless people can find you?
- 2 How does the organization ensure that clients have easy access and appropriate information?
- 3 How often do clients use your organization's website or social media, and what is the purpose of your website and social media?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Arrival/ calming down



Examples

- Initial reception
- Information and explanation
- Initial contact with the counselor

Questions

- 1 How was your first day at the shelter?
- 2 Did you receive enough practical information when you arrived? For example, meal times, house rules, etc.
- 3 Did your first period at the shelter help you feel more relaxed?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Arrival/ calming down



Examples

- Initial reception
- Information and explanation
- Initial contact with the counselor

Questions

- 1 Is there a warm, personal welcome (no bureaucratic or distant start)?
- 2 Are the client's stress, tension, or confusion taken into account?
- 3 Is information provided in clear, understandable language (possibly multiple languages)?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Furnishing and homeliness



Examples

- Separate departments
- Clean sanitary facilities
- Safe drug consumption rooms
- Positive living environment
- Privacy

Questions

- 1 How do you experience the use of alcohol or other substances in the shelter? Do you feel safe in this situation? Does it bother you, or not?
- 2 Do you feel at home in the shelter?
- 3 Do you feel you have sufficient opportunities to be alone when you wish?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Furnishing and homeliness



Examples

- Separate departments
- Clean sanitary facilities
- Safe drug consumption rooms
- Positive living environment
- Privacy

Questions

- 1 Are the basic facilities in order? Are they clean and homely?
- 2 How do you ensure separate departments in the shelter when multiple target groups are present?
- 3 Is sufficient attention given to clients' privacy?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Personal attention/ professional or buddy



Examples

- Trust in counselors or key contacts
- Attention to personal stories and individual needs
- Availability of a consistent professional or buddy
- Recognition of emotions and individuality
- Time pressure vs. genuine attention

Questions

- 1 Do you feel seen and heard as an individual?
- 2 Do you feel there's room for your story to be shared?
- 3 What helps you feel truly understood?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Personal attention/ professional or buddy



Examples

- Building a trusting relationship
- Presence of a consistent contact person
- Continuity of contact
- Recognition of emotional needs and personal story

Questions

- 1 Is there time and space for genuine connection?
- 2 Is the person behind the care needs acknowledged?
- 3 Is attention paid to their life story, emotions, and individuality?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Practical support



Examples

- Assistance with applying for basic services, such as DigiD, ID card, and GP appointments
- Administrative and financial support
- Assistance with appointments

Questions

- 1 What practical help do you need in your daily life?
- 2 Do you receive enough support with issues that are important to you right now?
- 3 Are there things you would like to do yourself (again)?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Practical support



Examples

- Tailoring support to daily needs
- Encouraging self-reliance
- Collaborating with informal support
- Identifying signs of too much or too little pressure

Questions

- 1 Does the client receive sufficient support with daily tasks?
- 2 Are there tasks the client wants or is able to continue doing independently?
- 3 Are signs of too much or too little pressure noticed?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Structure and daily routine



Examples

- Clear daily structure
- Varied range of activities
- Sports and recreation areas
- Opportunities for client participation

Questions

- 1 Are there times when you feel bored or lonely?
- 2 Do you give any input on the activities offered at the daycare center?
- 3 What do you think of the daily schedule offered at the daycare center? For example, meal times, bedtimes, activities, etc.



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Structure and daily routine



Examples

- Clear daily structure
- Varied range of activities
- Sports and recreation areas

Questions

- 1 How do you ensure a clear daily structure in 24-hour care?
- 2 Does your organization provide sufficient opportunities (both internal and external) for clients to engage in activities?
- 3 Are sports and exercise options included in the funding agreements?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Safety/ expertise about security



Examples

- Safety within the shelter
- Access to lockers
- Dealing with aggression

Questions

- 1 What do you need to feel safe at the shelter?
- 2 Do you always have access to a locker?
- 3 Do you know what to do if an unsafe situation occurs at the shelter? In case of a fire, for example, or if you feel unsafe.



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Safety/ expertise about security



Examples

- Safe working environment
- Clear safety protocol
- Training options
- Dealing with aggression

Questions

- 1 How does your organization ensure a safe working environment in the shelters?
- 2 Does your organization offer training for staff that focuses on de-escalating techniques?
- 3 Does your organization have a safety protocol?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Housing agreements vs. controlling practices



Examples

- Clarity and communication about rules
- Flexibility to adapt or deviate from the rules
- Balance between safety and freedom
- Perception of rules: helpful or restrictive?
- Opportunities for input or consultation

Questions

- 1 How do you experience the rules in the shelter?
- 2 Can you have a say in the rules that apply?
- 3 Do you feel free within the boundaries that exist?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Housing agreements vs. controlling practices



Examples

- Clarity and communication about rules
- Applying tailored/person-centered care within agreements
- Involving clients in rules
- Balance between safety and freedom

Questions

- 1 Are clients involved in making or adjusting rules?
- 2 Do these rules serve safety or mainly the organization's structure?
- 3 How do we create room for tailored/person-centered care within the house policy?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Employee attitude/ human image



Examples

- A respectful and empathetic approach
- Listening, patience, and clarity
- Attention to human dignity
- Consistent and reliable caregivers

Questions

- 1 How do you experience your interaction with the staff?
- 2 Do you feel you are treated with respect?
- 3 What do you value in how people interact with you?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Employee attitude/ human image



Examples

- A respectful and open approach
- Empathy and patience in communication
- Clear and honest communication
- Self-reflection and peer feedback
- Culture and people-oriented work

Questions

- 1 Am I treating this client the way they want to be treated?
- 2 What does my basic attitude convey to the client?
- 3 How do we keep each other focused on people-centered work?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Customized care/ diversity



Examples

- Cultural and ethnic background
- Gender and sexual diversity
- Social diversity
- Physical diversity

Questions

- 1 How are different norms and values addressed in the shelter?
- 2 Do you feel safe in the shelter to be who you are/who you want to be?
- 3 Is sufficient consideration given to your background?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Customized care/ diversity



Examples

- Cultural and ethnic background
- Gender and sexual diversity
- Social diversity
- Physical diversity

Questions

- 1 What role does a client's diversity play in our support?
- 2 How do we address psychiatric disorders, intellectual disabilities, and addiction problems?
- 3 Do we consider a client's background when making decisions?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Expert by experience



Examples

- Easy-access drop-in hours
- Use of experts by experience
- Training programs for experts by experience

Questions

- 1 How can an expert by experience support you in shelters?
- 2 Have you ever considered volunteering as an expert by experience?
- 3 Do your support workers ever ask you questions about what it's like to be homeless?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Expert by experience



Examples

- Easy-access drop-in hours
- Use of experts by experience
- Training programs for experts by experience

Questions

- 1 How does your organization ensure that clients are sufficiently informed about the progress of the programs they are undergoing?
- 2 Does your organization make sufficient use of experiential expertise?
- 3 Does your organization have a defined vision for experiential expertise?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Personal agency



Examples

- Making your own choices in daily life and care
- Opportunity to express preferences
- Understanding and respect for your own pace and style
- Support in making decisions

Questions

- 1 To what extent can you decide for yourself what happens during the day?
- 2 What would you like to have more say in?
- 3 What helps you make your own decisions, even when you need help?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Personal agency



Examples

- Supporting and encouraging independent choices
- Respecting personal preferences
- Adapting to one's own pace and style
- Avoid unnecessary taking over of tasks

Questions

- 1 Do I support personal agency, or do I unconsciously take over?
- 2 How well do I know what this person values in daily life?
- 3 How can I contribute to strengthening their self-confidence and autonomy?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Daytime activities/participation



Examples

- (Voluntary) work
- Creative or sports activities
- Training/education
- Group activities

Questions

- 1 Are opportunities for volunteering offered to you?
- 2 Do employees consider which courses or training might suit you?
- 3 Do employees discuss what kind of work you would like to do now, or in the future?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Daytime activities/participation



Examples

- Assessing client needs
- Encouraging
- Finding a match

Questions

- 1 What kind of participation is available for the client, internally and externally?
- 2 Does the organization offer sufficient participation for the client?
- 3 How are clients motivated?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Perspective



Examples

- Easy-access drop-in hours
- Network support
- Active information about treatment progression options
- Active network with network partners and clients

Questions

- 1 Do you ever talk to a counselor about the next step in your life?
- 2 Have you been informed about the options available to you after leaving the shelter?
- 3 Do you receive support from your counselor in contacting your family, friends, or acquaintances?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Perspective



Examples

- Easy-access drop-in hours
- Network support
- Active information about treatment progression options
- Active network with network partners and clients

Questions

- 1 How does your organization manage collaboration with and support for clients' network?
- 2 Are employees aware of the social map?
- 3 How do you ensure annual updates of all networks and meetings in which your organization is involved?



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Additional topic...



Examples

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

Questions

1 ...

2 ...

3 ...



Can you think of another question related to this theme?



Additional topic...



Examples

- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...

Questions

1 ...

2 ...

3 ...



Can you think of another question related to this theme?