

Skejby Udslusningsfængsel - Denmark

Introduction

Skejby Udslusningsfængsel (from now on "Skejby halfway house") is a halfway house located in the suburbs of Århus. It is one of eight halfway houses in Denmark, operated by the Danish Prison and Probation Service (Kriminalforsorgen). Skejby halfway house was founded in 1973 as a social experiment where offenders are mixed with non-offenders to minimize their chances of reoffending.

Scale

Skejby halfway house has 27 beds of which almost 40 per cent are made available for individuals who have not committed any crimes, commonly referred to as "minus residents". This halfway house can be seen as a small-scale facility.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- ☒ Small-scale
- ☒ Differentiated
- ☒ Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

Skejby halfway house is mixed-gender, but the group is mostly made up of men. It is a facility for adults, although residents are allowed to bring their children. The target group consists of plus and minus residents. The aim is to have 40% minus residents. The plus residents have a conviction and can stay there for the last part of their sentence or sometimes immediately following their conviction.

There are some placement criteria for plus residents. They must be motivated to work on reintegration, agree to Skejby's house rules and want to participate in group activities. Based on their profile and a psychological report, the prison at which they are currently in detention can put them on a waiting list to transfer to Skejby. If there is room, the person will be invited to spend one night in Skejby and attend a group meeting. Based on this group meeting, the other residents have a say in whether or not this candidate is suited to stay at Skejby.

For the minus residents, it is especially important that their motivation is not sensational or to be an assistant to the staff. They are supposed to simply be themselves to provide a more 'normal life' context. Skejby halfway house does experience challenges sometimes with finding minus residents for the supposed capacity.

Forms of security:

Security in Skejby halfway house is based on relational security where good relationships, respect, clear communication, trust, and group activities (staff and residents eat together, watch TV together, have group conversations...) are all part of the working method. Skejby halfway house is known for its unique way of working which enables people who are involved with the justice system to live together with people who are not involved with the justice system (plus and minus residents live together). As a result, there is no "us" versus "them" - feeling, no staff versus incarcerated people. Minus residents rent a room and participate in this facility completely voluntarily.

Relational security is complemented by measures of static and procedural security. Static security is quite low but house rules and protocols are strict. Almost all residents leave the facility during the day to work or study, but they must follow their individual schedules and be in the right place at the right time. If they deviate from this schedule without prior permission from staff, they risk being sent back to a closed prison. Random drug tests and room searches are also part of the strict security policy at Skejby.

Activities:

Skejby halfway house has a strong focus on "taking on responsibilities", although residents also get assistance from staff and staff checks whether or not they go to their appointments. The residents have their own schedules in which they are required to participate in a mandatory daytime activity such as education or work. These generally take place outside the facility. They can also participate in voluntary work or sports in or outside the facility.

A person in detention said: "When you only join prisoners, then what do you talk about? Crime! It is the only subject prisoners share and the only subject prisoners talk about. But when you live together with non-offenders, then you discuss other items." (Minke, 2011, p.94).

Various programs are available to residents, including support for finding housing, managing debt, and resume building. During free time, there are workshops available on the facility's premises for creative activities. The general methodology used is ADL training, which is based on pedagogical and psychological specialist knowledge. This approach optimizes the process of reintegration and helps residents live a life without crime after detention. Skejby Halfway House provides a supportive environment where residents can develop the skills they need to succeed in society, while also being held accountable for their actions.

In the evenings, residents are expected to eat together and spend leisure time with one another, cooking in smaller groups on a rotating basis. This allows the residents to take on responsibilities and develop their culinary skills. Leave and visits are also arranged on an individual basis to support the development of social networks.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Skejby Halfway House is located on the outskirts of Århus. Århus is the second-largest city in Denmark and is located on the east coast of the Jutland peninsula. The population of Århus is approximately 361,544 (2023)¹, making it the fifth-largest municipality in Denmark. The city has a diverse population with a mix of ethnicities and nationalities and the city has a relatively young population compared to the rest of Denmark. The city is known for its vibrant cultural scene, and its university is one of the largest in Denmark, attracting many international students.

Skejby Halfway House is an integral part of the community. This location was chosen 60 years ago. At the time, it was located outside of the community. Afterwards, new buildings were constructed in the surroundings of the facility. For this reason, the facility didn't experience a NIMBY reaction. The facility is easily accessible by public transport, making it convenient for residents and visitors alike.

The architecture of Skejby Halfway House is functional and homely. Each resident has their own bedroom, while all the other rooms are shared. The homely architecture of the facility is apparent through the presence of various elements such as antiques, paintings, a television, sofa, kitchen table, and even a piano in the living room. This creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere, which is essential in helping residents to feel comfortable and supported during their stay.

Interaction with the community:

Skejby Halfway House is a low-security prison located on the outskirts of Aarhüs. There is no specific collaboration with the local community. Nonetheless, the presence of minus residents and plus residents having the opportunity to work, receive education or play sports outside the facility forms a relationship with the community.

Skejby halfway house

Founded: 1973

Capacity: 27

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Aarhüs
(Denmark)

Nature of interaction: Visited
by RESCALED and WayBack
(05/04/2022)

Publicity/ read more

¹Aarhüs (Municipality, Midtjylland, Denmark) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location. (z.d.). Retrieved 31 May, 2023 from https://www.citypopulation.de/en/denmark/admin/midtjylland/751__aarhus/

- About Skejby Halfway House at the official website of the Danish Prison and Probation Service:

Skejby Udslusningsfængsel - Kriminalforsorgen. (n.d.). *Kriminalforsorgen*. Retrieved April 3rd, 2023, from <https://www.kriminalforsorgen.dk/steder/skejby-udslusningsfaengsel/>

- Research article about the unique way of working in Skejby Halfway House:

Minke, L.K. (2011). 'The Effects of Mixing Offenders with Non-Offenders: Findings from a Danish Quasi-Experiment', *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 12(1), 80 — 99, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14043858.2011.561624>

- Bachelorthesis about Skejby Halfway House written by a dutch student who lived there for a few months:

De Haan, N, (2014), Meeting halfway: Experiences of convicts and non-convicts living together in a Danish halfway house (Bachelorthesis), Utrecht University, Utrecht, Retrieved June 1st, 2023 from <https://studenttheses.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12932/17907/Haan%2c%20N.%20de.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>