

# Exodus Leiden - The Netherlands

## Introduction

Exodus Leiden is located in the city centre of Leiden, a city and municipality in the northwestern part of the province of South Holland in The Netherlands. Exodus Leiden is part of an NGO, named 'Exodus Netherlands'. Their mission is to have a safe society where people can build a meaningful life with new opportunities. This organisation offers support for people in detention, people that were in detention and their network. They offer various housing possibilities, including eleven exodus houses spread over the Netherlands, of which Exodus Leiden is one of them.



Exodus Leiden was established in 2003. The approach in these Exodus houses is based on five pillars: housing, work, relationships, purpose, and finances. During their program, individuals are referred to as "participants." Within Exodus Netherlands, these Exodus houses are also known as "mother houses." A mother house is a 24/7 protected residential facility and is the first phase in a two-phase program. Participants initially stay at Exodus Leiden (the first phase) and can then transition to a step-down house (the second phase). From the step-down house, they move on to an independent living situation. In the step-down house, there is a focus on assessing what each person needs to live independently and practising those skills.

## Scale

Exodus Leiden has a capacity of fourteen people, all of whom live together in one house. In a step-down house, participants live in a family home with three or four people.

### RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

## Differentiation

### *Target group:*

Both men and women are welcome at Exodus Leiden. However, since men are more frequently involved with the justice system, there are almost no women residing in the house in Leiden, although women are as welcome as men. Selection is not based on an individual's conviction. There are a few contraindications: a person is not eligible if they have severe psychological problems, are currently dealing with addiction, or do not have any support needs. Additionally, it is required that individuals are motivated, open to guidance, and have some insight into their own behaviour.

Exodus Leiden offers programs for people who are serving their sentences, those who have already served their sentences, or individuals who have come into contact with the justice system. Those eligible for a place include people with a conditional sentence (VV), conditional release (VI), or those undergoing a suspension of their sentence. Due to a new law, Article 43.3 Pbw, the manager can also decide to admit other individuals to Exodus Leiden, provided that the resident meets certain criteria.

### *Forms of security:*

Exodus Leiden emphasises relational security, with staff providing support and guidance to participants. This creates a strong bond between staff and participants, reinforced by mutual respect and trust. Exodus Leiden operates with an open-door policy, allowing participants to approach staff with questions or for conversations at any time.

Despite this focus on relational security, other security measures are also implemented at Exodus Leiden. Procedural security is important and is reflected in several house rules designed to ensure security and aid participants in their reintegration. For instance, all residents must be in the house by 11:00 PM. Additionally, participants are required to spend part of their time in a meaningful activity, with a mandatory 26 hours per week dedicated to activities such as work, volunteering, or school. Alcohol and drugs are prohibited, and these substances must not be present in the facility. To enforce this, urine tests and room inspections are conducted. All these rules are communicated clearly and simply to participants.

In addition to these procedural measures, static security measures are also present at Exodus Leiden. As a 24/7 protected residential facility, there is always staff on site. Each resident has keys to the facility, the



common areas, and their own room. Recently, cameras have been installed in the common areas. Before Exodus became a national organisation, each region had its own rules and security measures, and cameras were not present at Exodus Leiden. Staff are not allowed to view camera footage without a specific reason and must obtain permission to do so.

### *Activities:*



The activities of participants are tailored to their individual needs and goals. The staff use the "Jouw Kracht" (Your Strength) methodology, which involves creating an inventory of strengths that maps out the participants' past, present, and future. Based on this, action plans are developed to work towards the participants' goals. These plans leverage the strengths, skills, and resources that participants have had in the past or have developed over time to achieve their objectives. Exodus Leiden focuses on five key pillars: housing, work, relationships, purpose, and finances. Staff are intensively involved in guiding participants, with the level of support varying based on individual needs, allowing for either more freedom or more guidance during their program.

The program at Exodus Leiden also includes mandatory activities related to the participants' reintegration. For example, participants are required to assist with household chores and engage in at least 26 hours per week of meaningful activities, such as (volunteer) work or education. A communal meal is organised every Wednesday, where participants can join, and a volunteer helps with cooking. Although this communal meal is mandatory only during the first eight weeks, participants continue to join even after it is no longer required. Additionally, there is a mandatory residents' meeting once a month and a monthly theme night focused on reintegration.

### **Community-integration**

#### *Location and architecture:*

Exodus Leiden is located in the province of Southern Netherlands. Leiden is known as a student city with the city centre full of student housing and university buildings. The city has about 130 000 inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> The



<sup>1</sup>AlleCijfers.nl. (2024). *Statistieken gemeente Leiden*. <https://allecijfers.nl/gemeente/leiden/>

house is located within a residential area in a normal and livable neighbourhood near a river. It is part of the community.

All participants have individual bedrooms, which they can furnish as they wish to create a homely feel. Both large and small rooms are available. When a larger room becomes available, participants can express their interest in moving to a different room. Other areas in the building are communal. Showers and toilets are shared on each floor. There is also a shared living room, laundry room, and garden. Exodus Leiden features a large kitchen where each resident has their own cupboard for storing personal items. At the back of the building, there is a chapel used for group activities.

### *Interaction with the community:*

Interaction with the community is a natural aspect of life at Exodus Leiden. Participants utilise all the facilities and services available in the community. Additionally, the chapel at the back of Exodus Leiden can be rented by people from the community. This space is used by local residents for activities such as yoga classes.

Recently, on the initiative of the participants of Exodus Leiden, they also took part in the "Singelloop" in Leiden, contributing to the local community by supporting a charitable cause. Participants raised €1,200 to donate to the King Willem-Alexander Children's Hospital.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Exodus Leiden**

Founded: 2003

Capacity: 14

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Leiden  
(The Netherlands)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by RJN and  
RESHAPE (17/04/2024)

### **Publicity/ read more**

- About Stichting Exodus Nederland at the official website of Exodus:

Exodus hulp na detentie. (n.d.). *Exodus*. Retrieved June 14th, 2023, from <https://www.exodus.nl/>

- Document about the houses of Exodus and how they work (in dutch):

Informatieboekje voor (ex-) gedetineerden. (2023). *Exodus*. Retrieved June 21th, 2023, from <https://files.enflow.nl/6ffbb417-1260-4c26-83de-726071701f4b/ae735d93-b6b0-4e31-8967-22cfb77b9e0a/promotiemateriaal/exodus-nederland-infoboekje-def.pdf>

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<sup>2</sup>Doneeractie. (2024). *Exodus rent voor kinderen in het Leidse Ziekenhuis*. <https://www.doneeractie.nl/exodus-rent-voor-kinderen-in-het-leidse-ziekenhuis/-90212>