

# Supported housing transition

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# Supported housing transition 2023-2024



- Qualitative, narrative research that utilizes visualization
- Illustrates the phases and support needs in the transition process
- Pilot + extended study
- Data consists of audio recorded interviews from 12 professionals in Uusimaa region, Finland
  - Professionals work in NGO's that provide support services and housing
- Research funded by Y-Foundation

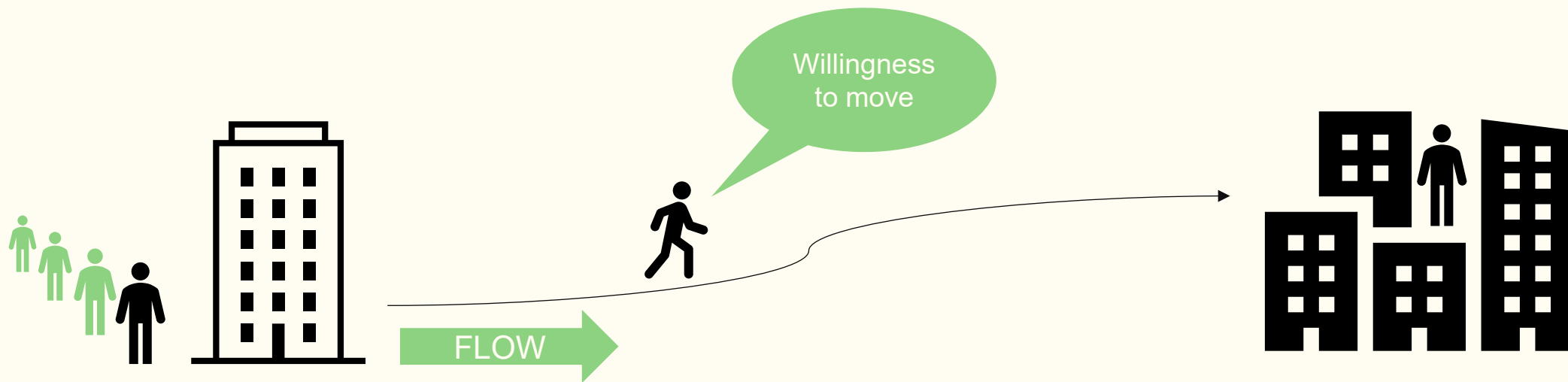
## The transition process:

Moving from HF supported housing unit to a scattered site housing / rental house with less intensive support



# Research questions

1. *How did the moved tenants and the pilot's support workers experience the supported transition?*
2. *How is the transition and its challenges experienced by professionals?*



# Finnish Housing First

Designed for anyone facing homelessness or the risk of homelessness

1

## Different Permanent Housing Options

Scattered housing and supported housing units. Options for specific needs and circumstances.

2

## Tailored Support Services

Personalized support services are integral. Aims to address diverse challenges that people may face.

3

## Affordable Housing

400 000 state-subsidized rental-apartments. Tenant selection is based on the need for housing.

4

## Prevention of Homelessness

Proactive measures: detecting the risk of homelessness & recognizing the significance of early intervention and support.

5

## Low-Threshold Work Activities

Acknowledge the diverse skills and capacities of individuals & provide opportunities for engagement that align with their abilities and aspirations.

6

## Normality

Normal rental agreements. Main-stream universal social and health services.

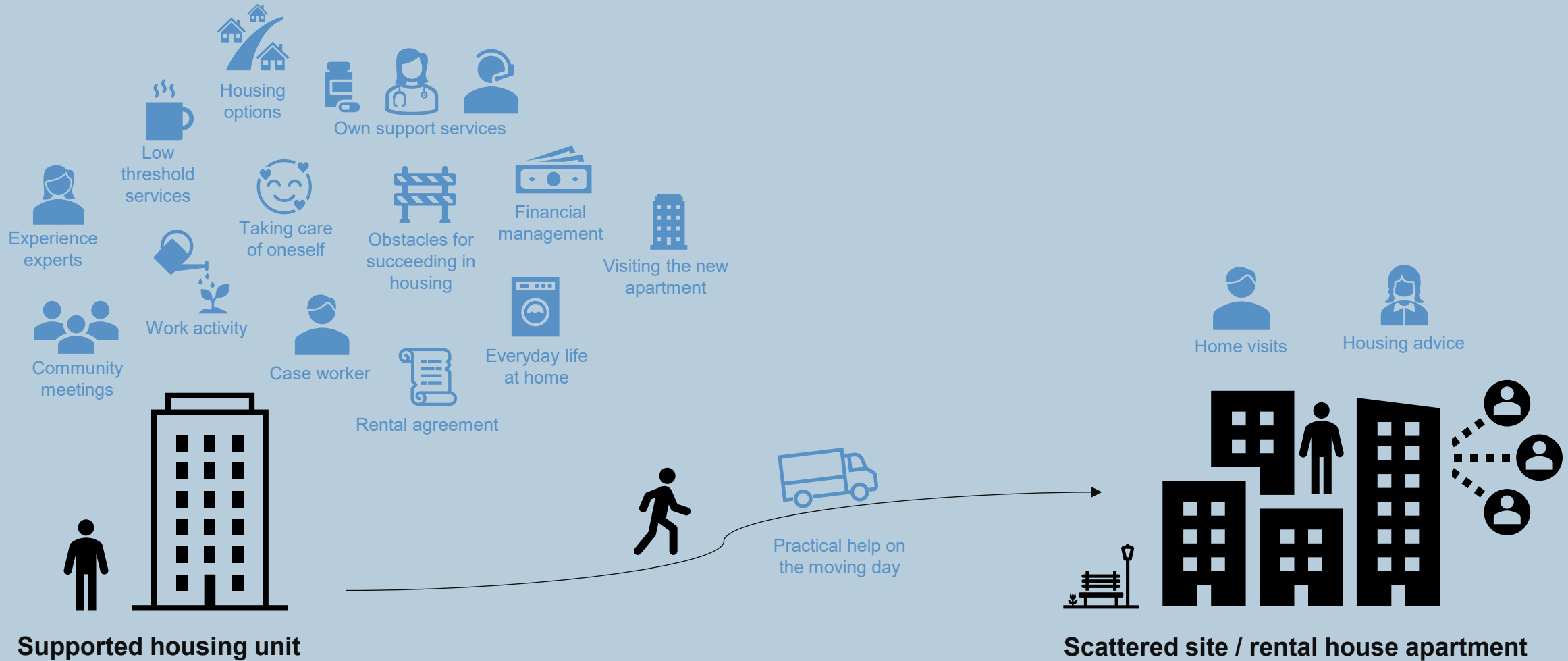
*Model of the transition  
and its main aspects*

*8 key insights and  
discussion points from  
the data analysis*

# Preliminary findings

*A “change circle”  
diagram*

# The support given in the transition



# The main aspects in the transition



Own support services



Significant others



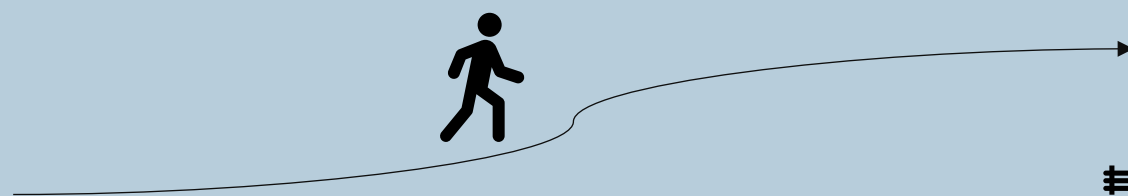
Work / meaningful activity



Finance



Supported housing unit



Scattered site / rental house apartment

# The change may initiate new processes

- A new **home-making** process + changes to the **sense of belongingness**
- **Every day routines** may feel different in the new place
- **Relationship-building** with neighbours, communities and places nearby
- **Detaching** from previous communities
- Changes in the **feeling of security** and testing one's **coping skills**
- **Getting familiar** with new services and support workers



8 key insights about the transition process and support provided

# #1 The most critical phase in the process is right after the move when several new processes start simultaneously

- A change itself is a risk, specifically when several changes happen at the same time, and more specifically among people that are in a vulnerable position
- A change is a risk even though the person feels ready to move and is willing to move, since not everything can be predicted and the situation may be completely new
- If the focus of the support is on the practical side (such as cleanliness and benefits), the positive effects are also mostly practical

*...it happened for both of them, in fact, that when they found out that they were going to get the new apartment, then they had a kind of setback. Then they started to use a lot of drugs or didn't take care of things.*

*Those people are extremely sensitive to the fact that in a way there's a kind of break in that support. That suddenly you have no one around, then you have to go to new places of service. Or there's someone new you should be dealing with.*

## Criteria to a recommendation to support the move from the housing unit

- Willingness to move
- Paying rent and bills in time
- Everyday skills, such as cleaning the apartment
- Ability to apply for benefits and visit offices and clinics independently
- Not causing disturbances
- Substance use in control

## #2 The criteria to a recommendation for the move are focusing on "not being evicted" instead of "feeling secure in the new home"

- The professionals are aware of the hindrances to move, such as fear of loneliness and fear of becoming homeless again, but when discussing the criteria, the focus is on "preventing eviction"
- The criteria seems to relate to typical reasons that may lead to evictions, even though the psychosocial aspects that affect these reasons were discussed in the interviews via other questions
- Building a trusting relationship was seen as the most essential in the transition – tenant's courage to share their challenges and needs that may feel embarrassing

*Well, the fact that the everyday skills are in order, that the apartment is clean and does not cause disturbances. Then the fact that there is no rent debt and the fact that the tenant himself pays the rent independently. And then the fact that he can apply for the necessary benefits*

*...they are afraid that homelessness recurs (...) they are so afraid that they will have to go through the same process again (...) I think that's one of the biggest reasons why they don't want to move from here at all.*

*Building a relationship of trust is, of course, the be-all and end-all*

# #3 Detachment from the unit causes changes in social roles and social environment > may cause feeling of insecurity and loneliness

- The unit's community may provide safety and become a hindrance to move due to the pain of detachment
- Some tenants keep visiting the previous community to do peer to peer work or to meet friends.
- Support workers acknowledge these risks and try to help the moving tenant to attend new communities
- Own network including access to significant people and places is essential
- *Which meaningful roles can we offer for people who move further from the supported housing unit?*

*At some point, many people may experience a feeling of emptiness and loneliness (...) At first you get the feeling that it's wonderful that I now have my own home.*

*...because some people are really attached to this community and it's very important to them. It's really hard for them to break away, they have very close friends here and sort of everything they need is here in the house. But then there is also the other side, that some people have the desire to leave it.*

*When a customer's living space is formed somewhere, it's kind of a big thing to hold on to*

## #4 Emotional support during the process is important > non-dealt emotions may lead to relapse or objection

- Response to a suggestion to consider moving ahead can show for instance so that the tenant invents problems that were not there before
- Mental health issues or substance use may increase after the move due to e.g. loneliness and uncertainty
- The need for emotional support is recognized and also given, but there are no counterparts for these in the criteria list; such as evaluation on the capacity to deal with emotions, support oneself and ask for help
- The practices differ in what the home visits include

*It's an odd thing when you start to think about it when you make, for example, a service plan, so yes, then they start to come up with the support needs (...) Then they arrange all kinds of debts, especially rents (...) or start drinking heavily*

*And she said that it was a really tough start. The beginning of the move, that it was quite shocking, that my moods were swinging and that I would never be able to do anything because I was so alone after the community.*

*...things related to dealing with emotions, so that we remember to really sit down calmly and discuss openly*

*... the idea of home visits is just to see what condition the house is in and so on.*

# #5 Work and meaningful activities may help to manage the transition

- The week structure in the supported housing unit is left behind when moving
- Any activity that is outside the supported housing unit and provides structure and meaning helps to connect with the world outside home – and carry over the transition
- Some units let the moving tenants participate in the work activities or peer-to-peer work in the unit after the move. One participant called this as “an exit rite”.

*... that when you have a regular rhythm that you have the work activity or work trial. You don't stay lying on the bottom of the couch, which increases the risk of mental health and substance abuse challenges. So you have a goal. Why do you get up in the morning? Why does the alarm clock ring? It's very important.*

*...and of course the experience that cannot be measured is what it is like when I get to do something and I'm good at something, when you can have a background of not having been anywhere for a long time.*

# #6 Finance is the most rigid piece in the puzzle

- Finance is the most rigid piece in the puzzle. There is not much flexibility.
- From the point of view of eradicating homelessness, the analysis points towards questions: *Do we really have long-sightedness and flexibility in the payment arrangements and financial help / management in our housing system? Are we aware of the cost for a person who becomes homeless again – measured both in human life and economy?*

*it was a really cold game, that when the rent is owed, there will be no new contract.*

*when I myself worked as an individual social worker on the homelessness side, so yes, it is the ... thing that was banged to everyone that you take care of the rent first, that even if you have other bills left unpaid, you take care of the rent.*

*You get the worst fires put out and the money flowing, so to speak, so that you get the rents taken care of and get money to live on. It is the obligatory first but then after that so then can start these other areas of life to go through.*



# #7 The pressure to "flow" has increased, but the goals and practices of flow are not well defined

- Pressure to flow and the discussion about flow (=free space from the supported housing units) has increased lately. We have hundreds of people cuing for the units.
- Some tenants are not able to "move on". Some tenants are not willing to move.
- Positive flow, negative flow, stabilizing living
- For the flow to flow, there needs to be also places to flow to and those who flow, need to be able to settle
- *How much and in which way future is discussed and envisioned with the tenants?*

*The history of people's lives was such that it was actually clear from the beginning that a large proportion of those people are going to live long-term or until the end of their lives in those housing units*

*People are somehow stuck in this housing unit. They like to be there.*

*The [city] says or sort of pushes that forward, but the [city] won't provide them with housing, so where on earth do they put them?*

*In my opinion, there is now a bit of a danger that when there is financial pressure, they want to save costs and direct customers to cheaper support.*

# #8 Encountering and personalised support

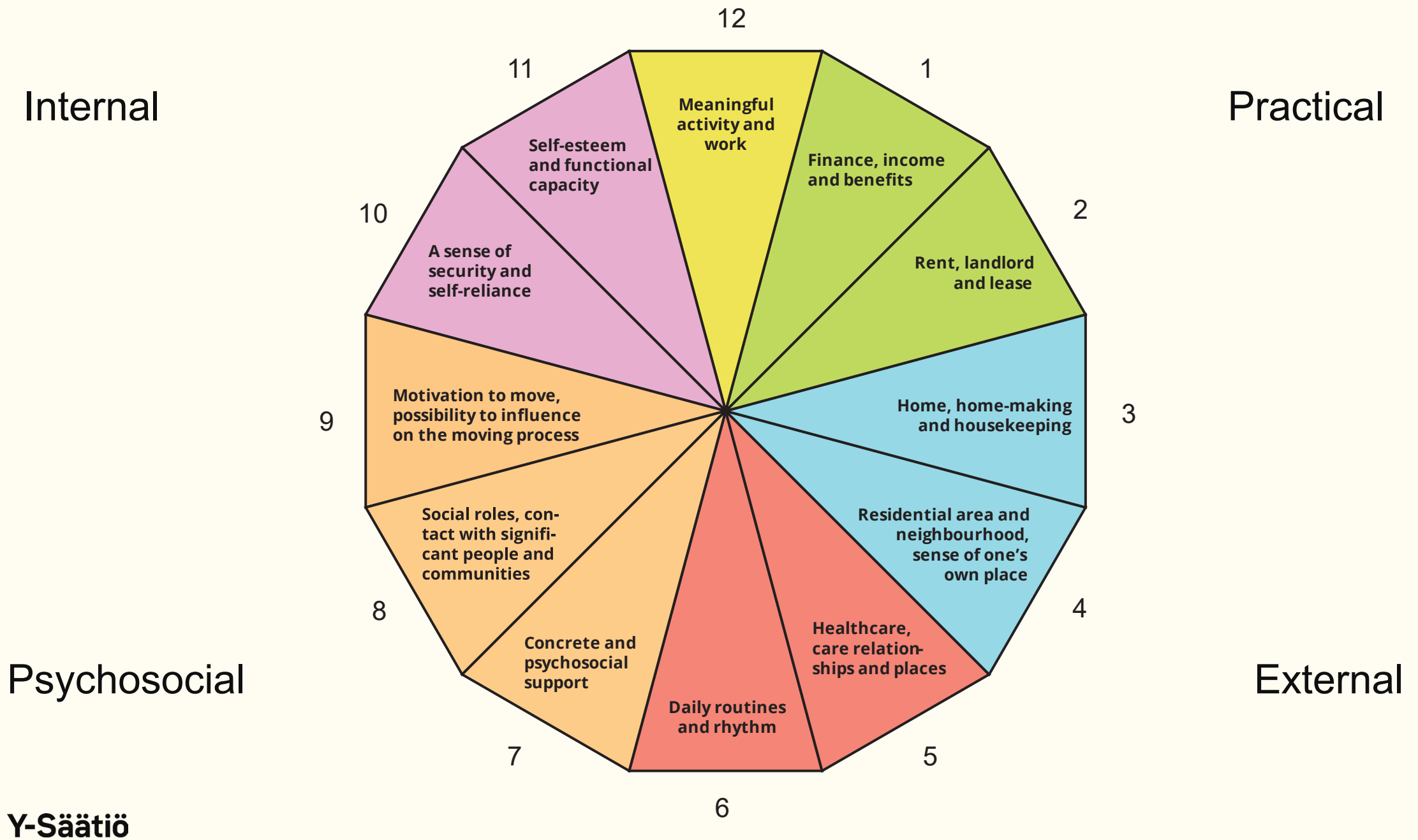
## ”So that we know the person and the person knows us (and what we do)”

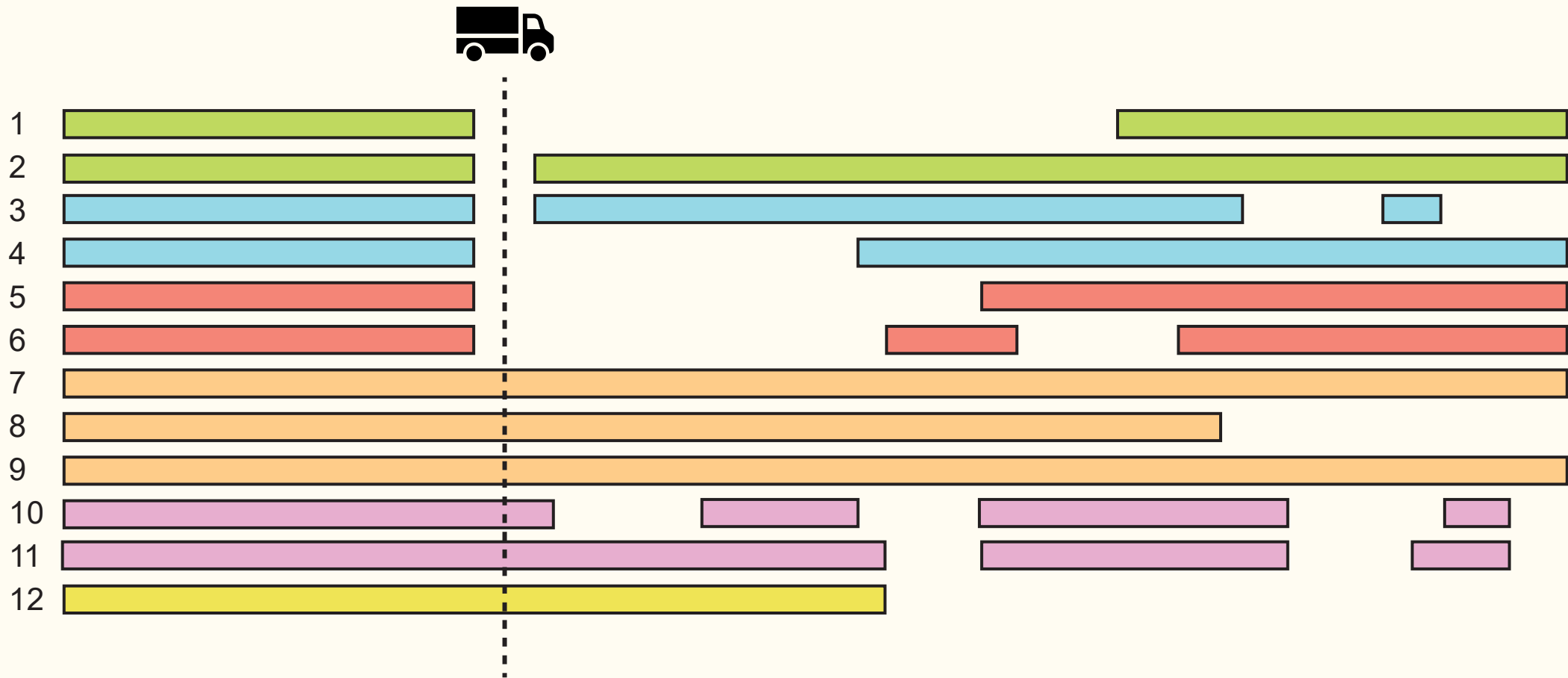
- An encounter approach was considered essential specifically by those interviewees who had been working closely with the moving clients
- Support during the transition needs collaboration and overlapping support where the information and knowledge about the tenant is transferred
- Flexible support, since the support needs may appear in different phases of the process in different individual's lives

*...a more encounter-based way of working, which is of course expensive, but we need it. These people need to be met face to face and to be walked next to.*

*That we are able to be in dialogue with the housing unit and the resident (...) We know the person and they know us and we have prepared it for them, like their housing, environment, services for the whole system.*

*that the support is sufficient even after the change (...) that it is flexible, because there can be such ups and downs, like someone is doing well at first and then it doesn't work out.*





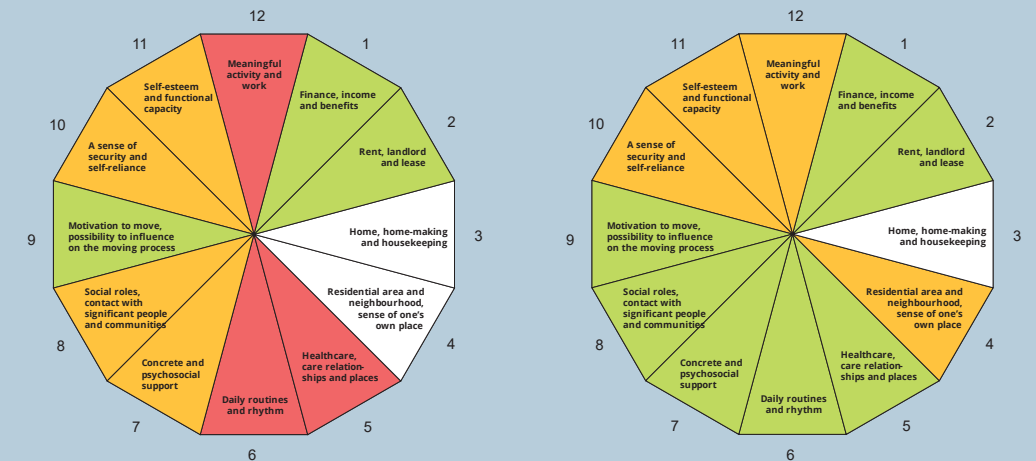
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# Conclusions - discussion

- A move is emotionally and physically demanding specifically for people in a vulnerable position. *Could the change be practiced beforehand?*
- In the transition, several things change – but they don't necessarily need to change at the same time. *Could it help to make the moving and support process more visible to the support workers and the tenants?*
- The "flow" requires examination on tenant, landlord and unit profiles and collaboration in defining goals and practices.
- The societal cost of successful transition vs. a failed one needs more attention > savings in cost and humanity

## Change circle diagram as a tool

Prediction of success of the sub-area



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