

"Villa Voortman" A meeting place for people with dual diagnosis problems within community care

How and why?

Under 'Article 107' that deals with 'community-based health care' and 'assertive community treatment' we started a day centre in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in Ghent (Belgium) for this

Villa Voortman

A welcoming space for individuals with dual diagnosis challenges in community care.

Our Mission and Approach

Villa Voortman is a day center in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Ghent, Belgium, created under 'Article 107'—a framework for community-based health care and assertive community treatment. Our center follows the principles of social psychiatry, offering a low-threshold, open-door environment where individuals facing both psychiatric and addiction challenges can find support. When necessary, we also engage mobile teams to provide additional assistance.

We aim to be an anchor for those who experience constant exclusion and instability. Our space fosters self-worth, confidence, and engagement, encouraging visitors to rediscover their value and take an active role in their own lives. As we like to put it: **"Minimal structure, maximal responsibility."**

At the heart of our philosophy is **hospitality**, understood as an ethical principle that allows the "outsider" to be seen and accepted in their uniqueness. Villa Voortman serves as a refuge—a place where marginalized voices can be heard, and personal stories can unfold through dialogue, reflection, and connection.

Our work is rooted in concepts such as **active citizenship, empowerment, harm reduction, case management, and network-building**—all aimed at preventing further marginalization and fostering social participation. We draw inspiration from thinkers like **Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Winnicott, and Maxwell Jones** to shape our approach.

Visitor-Staff Meetings

Every week, visitors and staff come together for a central meeting, which serves as a key decision-making platform. This gathering is a space for open, democratic discussion, where we collaboratively plan activities and shape the daily life of the centre. Input and feedback from visitors are essential in guiding our work.

Individuality and Choice

Each visitor at Villa Voortman has the freedom to find their own place within the centre. Some choose to participate in group activities, while others prefer quiet observation. It is a space to connect with friends, have conversations with staff, or meet with other healthcare professionals. Our commitment to an open and inclusive atmosphere is also reflected in our preference for working with volunteers, many of whom have artistic backgrounds.

Social Inclusion and Structure

Visitors decide how much time they wish to spend at the centre each day or week. While we do not follow a rigid schedule, certain activities—such as music sessions, creative workshops, and dance—occur at set times each week. Shared lunch preparation and weekly visitor-staff meetings are also integral to our routine, reinforcing our sense of community and participation.

At Villa Voortman, we strive to create a safe yet open environment where individuals can reconnect with society on their own terms.