

Mobile crisis work

– help at home for older people in difficult life situations

People over 60 are less likely than other age groups to take advantage of support services, especially when faced with challenging life changes or losses.

How could organisational crisis support better meet the needs of the over-60s?

This mobile crisis work pilot (2014–2015) was part of the Mirakle project and implemented in co-operation with crisis centre Osviitta and Tampere City Mission's Likioma project.

Its strategy is based on documenting new work methods, crises faced by older people, and crisis support in homes.

In-home services between private and public sectors

More and more older people live at home in their old age.

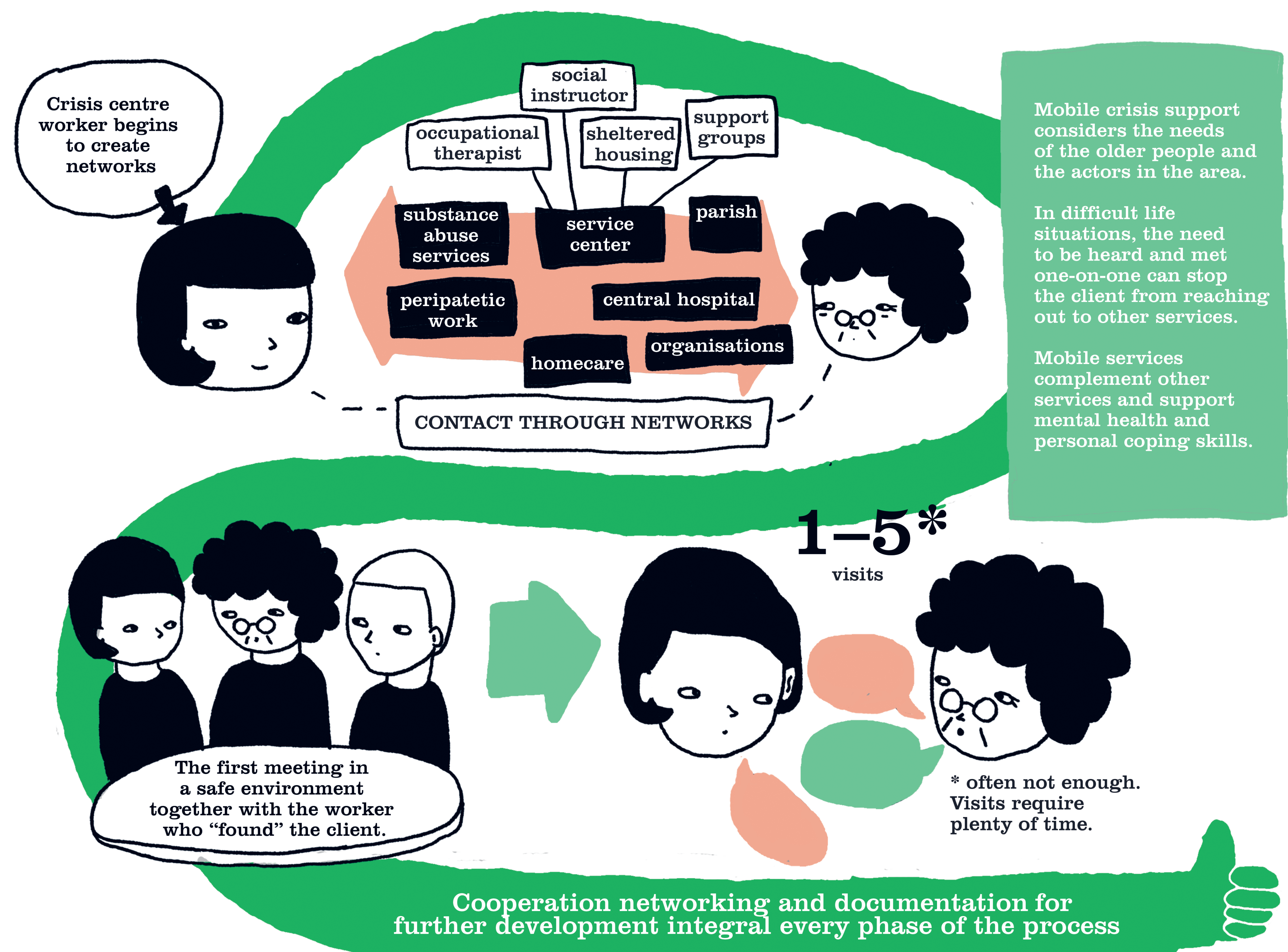
A high-quality life and a good old age require supporting the health, wellbeing, and independence of older people, and providing the safety measures needed.

When facing major life changes, it is important for older people to receive help in a familiar environment.

The feeling of safety is important also for the crisis worker.

Mobile crisis support acknowledges both the meaning of one's home as a personal, intimate place and the effect of difficult life situations on the client.

Feeling like one is not seen or heard deepens crises. With in-home services, it is essential to be truly present, listen to the client, and respect their right to self-determination.



Mobile crisis support considers the needs of the older people and the actors in the area.

In difficult life situations, the need to be heard and met one-on-one can stop the client from reaching out to other services.

Mobile services complement other services and support mental health and personal coping skills.

Right help at the right place

The help offered by the pilot was exactly what older clients wanted and needed:

- feeling seen and heard
- opening up and talking about difficult life situations
- finding one's own coping mechanisms and resources
- supporting and strengthening a solution focused way of thinking.

As life situations became clearer, mood, competences, and control over one's life improved.

Crisis support lowered the threshold for seeking other services and participating in group activities.

Fundamentals of life and debilitating new situations

Crises are caused by everyday things:

- relationships – past and present
- loneliness
- making ends meet
- abuse
- substance abuse

Some changes and losses are so common that neither clients nor outsiders recognise the need for help:

- retirement
- serious illnesses
- changes in one's ability to function
- memory problems
- approaching death

Changing perception of time

In old age, there is more time lived and less time to look forward to, but also more free time to fill. Everyday life slows down, which also affects crisis support needs.

- receiving help is slower
- phone calls require time – even when scheduling visits
- 10 visits would increase the feeling of security
- visits every 2–3 weeks – weekly visits are often too frequent

Remember: time invested in crisis support lessens the workload of other actors.

In order for the client to feel truly heard, the help must feel unrushed.

Training and support for implementation

The model includes training material on older clients and the special characteristics of crisis support.

The pilot's cooperation with peripatetic services was effortless and benefitted both parties.

Network-based activities adjust locally. The model is therefore flexible and responsive to needs and resources.

Possible applications:

- crisis centres as consultants
- a nation-wide network of trainers
- instant help online
- on-call model