

# Wet eldercare facilities: stability as strength and drawback

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Wet eldercare facilities constitute a form of residential housing for people – usually above the age of 50 years – who age with long-term substance use problems. Housing is permanent and residents typically live there until they die. The consumption of alcohol is allowed and the focus is on acceptance and dignity, not on abstinence. Wet eldercare facilities have been described as the last and only solution for people who have been through the entire system of treatments and failed.

The aim of this paper is to investigate what problems and needs residents are considered to have - according to themselves and according to caseworkers, and how these views affect their stay at the facilities. Data consists of interviews with 42 residents, 21 staff and 11 case managers. The analysis shows that staff and case workers constructed clients as either “untreatable” or “unplaceable”, with the option to expand the target group and include clients with atypical problems. While it is clear that the facilities provide a safe haven for people who age with substance use and complex needs, admission also means that people become stuck in the identity as untreatable and stuck at the place itself. The accepting approach creates an extreme form of stability that constitute these facilities’ strength, but also their drawback. Residents cannot be evicted, but neither can they move. They are accepted for who they are, but also stuck in the identity as an untreatable substance user.