



TRANSFORMING LIVES, TRANSFORMING CLUBHOUSES: The Power Of Accreditation!

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Gunilla Byström

Hello, my name is Gunilla Byström I am director of Fountain House Stockholm and a member of the Swedish coalition. I will be talking a little bit about the history of Swedish Clubhouses.

For those of you who are unsure where Sweden is! Sweden is one of the Nordic countries with Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland being our closest neighbours. (All of these are countries with Clubhouses.) Sweden has a population of 10 million with Stockholm the capital city having a population of 1,5 million. We are not just famous for Ikea, Abba and Swedish House mafia. We are also famous for being the first country outside of the USA to have established a Clubhouse. Fountain House Stockholm opened 35 years ago and has always been situated at the same address.

As an accredited Clubhouse we think it is important to follow the Standards and keep them current. We are proud to say that we are Accredited, and we are proud of all the work we have done as part of the self-study. The self-study process was a great opportunity for me as a new director and the whole community to focus on our community and to celebrate and be happy about those parts of our Clubhouse community that work well -- and as a community, to discuss those things that needed to be improved upon. We are also proud that we got excellent feedback from the Faculty team and the Accreditation report.

There are 12 Swedish Clubhouses -- but only three are accredited. Why is that? I want to talk a little about our history, and where we are today. For several years, most of the Swedish Clubhouses had slowly but surely begun to distance themselves from Clubhouse International, and begun to question why they should be members; and they questioned the meaning and importance of being accredited. I am happy to say, though, this is a trend that has changed during this past year.

In my opinion there were two main reasons that the Swedish Clubhouse had begun to distance themselves from Clubhouse International.

1. Lack of basic training in the Clubhouse model. To understand the main foundation of the Clubhouse community you need training. To sustain and develop the fantastic work we do requires training. For many Clubhouses in Sweden, as for many other places I imagine, the limited budget is a constant concern. Sometimes it is easier just to put training on the back burner and to focus on more immediate expenditures. This is unfortunate. A Clubhouse that does not have trained staff and members can often create an atmosphere and environment that is quite different from the culture of a real Standards-based Clubhouse. The foundation of the Clubhouse working community must be integrated throughout the Clubhouse community, with the Standards being the core. Without this, it is easy for new directions that don't belong in a Clubhouse take up too much space. When these kinds of new patterns and routines are established, they are almost impossible to change; and in these cases Accreditation can feel like a threat. Because of this Clubhouses stick to what they have been doing. It is true that Accreditation is a process to help Clubhouses become stronger Standards-based Clubhouses – but if what they are doing is quite different from a Standards-based Clubhouse, it is understandable that Accreditation would feel like a bad fit.

2. There is a feeling that Accreditation is unattainable for individual Clubhouses/countries with specific challenges. Each Clubhouse exists in a context with its own political and social system. We have Clubhouses in 33 countries. 33 different countries with different legislations, different social welfare systems and different interpretations on how rehabilitation from a mental illness should look. It is of enormous importance to take this into consideration in the Accreditation process. It is extremely important that every Clubhouse describes the current situation in their specific country in the self-study document, so that the Faculty team and Clubhouse International are up to date on the rules and regulations of the system in the relevant countries.

We had an excellent example of this in Sweden.

Transitional Employment is an example of how the Swedish social welfare system clashes with the Standards. Of course we agree that it is very important to create job opportunities for our members, jobs without demands of previous work experience for members with very significant vocational challenges; as well as independent and supported work. But that is another workshop! However, several Clubhouses in Sweden had felt that it was pointless to apply for Accreditation assuming that they wouldn't be Accredited because the concept of Transitional Employment isn't compatible with the Swedish social welfare system and regulations.

Because of this, last year the Swedish Clubhouse directors invited Clubhouse International to Sweden to discuss the situation of the Swedish Clubhouses and our difficulties on being able to live up to the demands and Standards where Transitional Employment is concerned. The meeting ended with a positive feeling that Accreditation is now more accessible than ever before. It became clear to our Swedish Clubhouses that Clubhouse International is eager to listen and learn from Clubhouses in different parts of the world, to find ways to make Accreditation accessible to everyone. Training, the feeling of belonging to an international community, networking and learning from each other, and engaging in the self-study and Accreditation process -- we know this is a winning concept. In June this year six teams from five Swedish Clubhouses went to training at Fountain House, New York; and today, five Swedish Clubhouses and the chairperson of the Swedish coalition are participating at this international seminar! Later this year, two more Swedish Clubhouses will be accredited.

Go Sweden!! So all of the Clubhouses here at this Seminar should just do it too! Remember, together we are strong!

The Accreditation of Fountain House Stockholm 2014

The background- an Introduction

Anders Rudström

Gunilla became the new Director of Fountain House Stockholm in 2012 and we applied to be accredited in 2013 and received a date for Accreditation in 2014. When we began to go through notes and material from earlier Accreditations of Fountain House Stockholm, we discovered that the majority of members and staff that had been involved, of different reasons, were no longer active at the house. Staff had gone into retirement, members went from active to passive, or had simply moved on to other types of rehabilitation, work or education.

In the beginning of 2014 we received the CPQ and self-study materials. The time for the actual Accreditation visit was set for the end of November. We began to discuss different suitable ways to be able to begin the process. We absorbed information from other Clubhouses in Sweden that had recently been accredited. During discussions in our units and weekly house meetings we decided that as many people as possible would have the opportunity to participate in some way in the process. A group of trained (Three week training at Fountain House New York) members and staff were given the mission of preparing points to discuss based on the material given from Clubhouse Internationals self-study material. The language barrier can be an issue. Translating the self-study into Swedish was the first step in making the material available to everyone. Twice a week Fountain House Stockholm has a forum called Fountain Forum. It is open for everyone and old and new members discuss the standards and test them in different contexts and situations that can

occur in our Clubhouse. We decided that we would use one of these meetings each week to discuss the Accreditation process. To make the discussion welcoming and open for everyone, each session was carefully prepared and translated. During these meetings notes were made, then written and translated back into English. At the end everything was then summarized and included in the self-study. A summary of how far we had come was presented at the house meeting once a month. From March until June the Accreditation process was an important part of the daily work in our Clubhouse. In the Autumn the process intensified, especially the work of translation, to get the material ready for the Accreditation visit.

The Accreditation Process part II- The Visit

For four days at the end of November we had two representatives from Clubhouse International visiting us, a team made up of a member from Norway and a staff from Ireland. I believe the collaboration of staff and member is of strong value, which is so obvious to a Clubhouse, and also clearly seen in the Accreditation team. It provides trust and confidence within the Clubhouse they are visiting. They were well received and varied their time in the units interviewing members, staff and board members. At the end of the week they presented their initial report in an extra house meeting. In December we received the final decision that Fountain House Stockholm is, amongst other things:

"Fountain House Stockholm is a vibrant Clubhouse community, committed to providing the best possible opportunities for its members."

"The Clubhouse has created an excellent foundation for future growth, based upon strong collegial and respectful Clubhouse relationships."

"The Clubhouse is committed to sending staff and members for Clubhouse international training and to various Clubhouse trainings and seminars around the world."

"The Clubhouse has a newly appointed director, who has a strong vision for the future of the Clubhouse and a great deal of enthusiasm in the daily operation of the Clubhouse."

Why we recommend that all Clubhouses go through an Accreditation:

- It strengthens the members and staff within the house to continue to work according to the Clubhouse Model.
- It creates work and engagement for the members in the units. Accreditation gives opportunities for the trained members and staff in the Clubhouse to use their knowledge and inspire their peers to gain more.
- The feeling of belonging to an international organization, that works within the same model, with the same goals, makes Fountain House Stockholm members and staff feel proud of their work.
- Apply for Accreditation on a regular basis. If there isn't a long gap between each term of Accreditation, the process stays real and current, reducing the risk of knowledge and abilities sinking into oblivion!

Last of all, Accreditation should not be about hiding the weaknesses in your Clubhouse to soften the accreditors coming to visit. Instead, Clubhouses should use it as an opportunity to be enlightened on the strengths in your Clubhouse and also the chance to improve the parts of the Clubhouse that need improving.