

Wohnheim Lindenfeld – Switzerland

Introduction

Wohnheim Lindenfeld (WL) is located in Emmen, in the canton of Lucerne, Switzerland. Founded in 1974, the facility was originally established to provide accommodation and support for individuals leaving prison who lacked stable housing. Today, it is managed by a private non-profit foundation, the *Wohnheim Lindenfeld Stiftung*, which operates under formal contracts with both federal and cantonal authorities. The facility functions under the supervision of the Department of Justice and Security of the Canton of Lucerne, within the Office of Custody and Probation Services, with governance overseen by a Board of Trustees.

Due to its dual mission—combining social and health services with justice-related measures—Wohnheim Lindenfeld is subject to multiple regulatory frameworks. These include hygiene and safety regulations typically applied to healthcare facilities, such as regular inspections of its professional kitchen and food services. The facility is inspected at least every 12 months. A replacement building was opened in 2024. The old building was demolished. The costs amounted to around 18.3 million CHF, of which 1.9 million CHF was co-financed by the Swiss federal government. The building's design now allows flexible adaptation to evolving resident needs.

Scale

Wohnheim Lindenfeld offers accommodation for forty-six residents. Of these, fourteen places are reserved for individuals placed under justice measures, while the remaining capacity serves residents within the social and health sector, mainly men with psychological or psychiatric difficulties who require assisted living. Currently, several rooms remain vacant due to recent changes in electronic monitoring (EM) policies, which have reduced the number of justice-related placements.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group

Wohnheim Lindenfeld accommodates only men. Mixed-gender housing would complicate management given the complex needs of its residents, including individuals convicted of sexual offences or with co-occurring psychiatric conditions. The facility is divided into two main sections:

Social and Health Section: Provides assisted living for men with significant psychological or psychosocial difficulties. While no medical or nursing staff are on site, the team supports residents in achieving greater autonomy. Residents may stay for decades or use the facility as a transitional step toward independent living.

Justice Section: Hosts individuals under various judicial regimes, including semi-detention, external work programmes (AEX), external living and working programmes (WAEX), electronic monitoring (EM), and in a few individual cases custodial measures under Article 59 of the Swiss Penal Code. Recently, the facility also began admitting residents under custodial therapeutic measures, such as individuals convicted of sexual offences, in collaboration with a forensic psychiatrist. In practice, this means that different residents follow different rules regarding departures, return times, and the strictness of certain measures, depending on the legal framework and their individual sentence conditions.

Forms of security

Security at Wohnheim Lindenfeld is primarily based on relational and procedural principles, with minimal static measures. Staff members, trained in social pedagogy and social work, focus on trust-based relationships rather than strict control. Residents receive a personal key and are generally free to enter and leave the facility, as there are no fences or physical barriers around the property.

Procedurally, security cameras are installed in communal areas, but they are not continuously monitored; footage is reviewed only when necessary, for example to confirm entry or exit times or to investigate incidents. Residents must inform staff of absences and expected return times, and individual restrictions may be applied as needed. Individuals in semi-detention follow stricter rules: they do not mix freely with other residents, eat at separate tables in the dining hall, and are restricted to certain areas outside the building, although exceptions may be made during holidays or special events.

The staff team consists of twenty-eight employees, equivalent to 16.4 full-time positions, including management, kitchen, and cleaning personnel. There are no dedicated security guards. One staff member remains on-site overnight to respond to emergencies.

Activities

Wohnheim Lindenfeld applies to systematic risk assessment (ROS) to guide individual reintegration planning (see rosnet.ch). All medical, psychiatric, and therapeutic appointments take place externally, promoting engagement with community-based services. Residents under justice measures are required to work at least fifty percent of the time, often outside the facility. They eat their main meals externally on workdays and join communal meals on weekends or rest days. Residents from the Social and Health section are also expected to participate in meaningful daily activities, such as supported employment in the secondary labour market.

The facility maintains a clean and orderly environment: staff handle the cleaning of rooms and linens. Wohnheim Lindenfeld has a small bus used occasionally for group activities such as football matches, excursions, or museum visits. Residents are encouraged to take initiative in leisure activities, with staff providing support as needed. Visits from family and friends are allowed in designated areas, and visits involving children require supervision due to the diverse and sometimes sensitive resident population.

Residents staying at Wohnheim Lindenfeld for justice-related reasons are generally required to contribute to the cost of their accommodation. Daily rates vary depending on the programme, reflecting the dual-purpose structure and extensive support services provided. The daily rate for AEX and WAEX residents is 235 CHF, of which 50 CHF is paid by the resident and 185 CHF by the referring authority. For semi-detention, residents contribute between 20 and 40 CHF per day, while the authority covers 210 CHF.

Community Integration

Location and architecture

Wohnheim Lindenfeld is located in Emmen, near Lucerne, with convenient train and bus connections. The facility is situated near a highway and a small military airport, which occasionally cause noise disturbances mitigated by modern soundproofing. Nearby shops and a shopping centre, within 500 metres, provide easy access to daily necessities.

The new building combines modern design with sustainability and flexibility. It spans five floors: the ground level includes a reception, dining area, kitchen, meeting rooms, and communal lounges; the basement houses laundry, fitness, and leisure rooms. Each residential floor contains sixteen private rooms equipped with a bed, wardrobe, refrigerator, bathroom, and soundproof windows. Some rooms have balconies, and internal doors can be adjusted to create smaller living units when needed. The outdoor area features an open terrace with seating and a newly planted lime tree in the front garden, symbolising renewal after the original tree had to be removed during renovations.

Interaction with the community

Although Wohnheim Lindenfeld is located near a highway and a small military airport, which limits its visibility to neighbours, residents actively interact with the wider community through daily life. They make use of nearby shops, services, public transport, and other amenities, supporting their social inclusion and independence. While the facility does not have formal partnerships or structured collaborations with local organisations, residents' engagement in work, appointments, and recreational activities outside the facility fosters informal contact with the community and reinforces reintegration.

Wohnheim Lindenfeld

Founded: 1974

Capacity: 46

Autonomy level: High level of autonomy

Nearest city: Emmen (Switzerland)

Nature of interaction: Visited by RESCALED (25-04-25)

Publicity / Read more

- About Wohnheim Lindenfeld at the official website of the facility: Wohnheim Lindenfeld . *Wohnheim Lindenfeld – Emmen (Kanton Luzern)*. Retrieved March 6th, 2025, from <https://www.wohnheim-lindenfeld.ch/>
- About Wohnheim Lindenfeld at the national platform KONKORDATE (coordination network for correctional facilities in Switzerland): KONKORDATE. *Wohnheim Lindenfeld – Luzern*. Retrieved March 6th, 2025, from <https://www.korkordate.ch/>