



Vlaanderen
is kansrijk opgroeien



Community-focused networks for children and families



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with Kind en Gezin (Child and Family)

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Framework for community-focused networks in a nutshell

Introduction

This reference framework was developed based on practical experience by 10 pioneer community-focused networks, in collaboration with Kind en Gezin (Child and Family). In addition to the initiators, local partners of the network were also involved, including community work, community development, child care, community liaison officer, etc.

A community-focused network for children and families creates - within a community together with partners and families - a rich environment for all children and families and brings together and integrates essential functions that are important for children and families.

The participation of children and families is central. The focus is initially on families and children from the ages of 0 to 12, but this can be broadened depending on the local situation.

Creating a rich environment for children

Each community in Flanders is different - scale, character, residents, affluence, number of provisions, etc. With community we mean an area (community, neighbourhood, village centre, district etc.) which residents can experience as 'close to home', a living environment with which they have a connection. The term 'community' encapsulates people's commit-

ment and can be recognised by everyone. A specific community makes it possible for professionals to base their work more firmly on the people most closely concerned. It offers possibilities for increasing opportunities for all children and families in the community.

A shared reference framework that is developed bottom-up, can therefore support working together at community level. It can stimulate and strengthen the dynamics at community level and support the translation of a local integrated family policy to community level. A strong link and alignment with the Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres) can also help make this possible.

1

[what?]

Background

Creating a rich environment

A child needs to feel at home in its environment and has to be able to help shaping that environment. A rich and positive environment offers **diverse experiences** and contributes to **equal opportunities for all children from the start**.

The first thing we take as an important predictor for the development of the (young) child is often the quality of its home environment and the mutually stimulating interactions with its family. There can be little doubt about its importance.

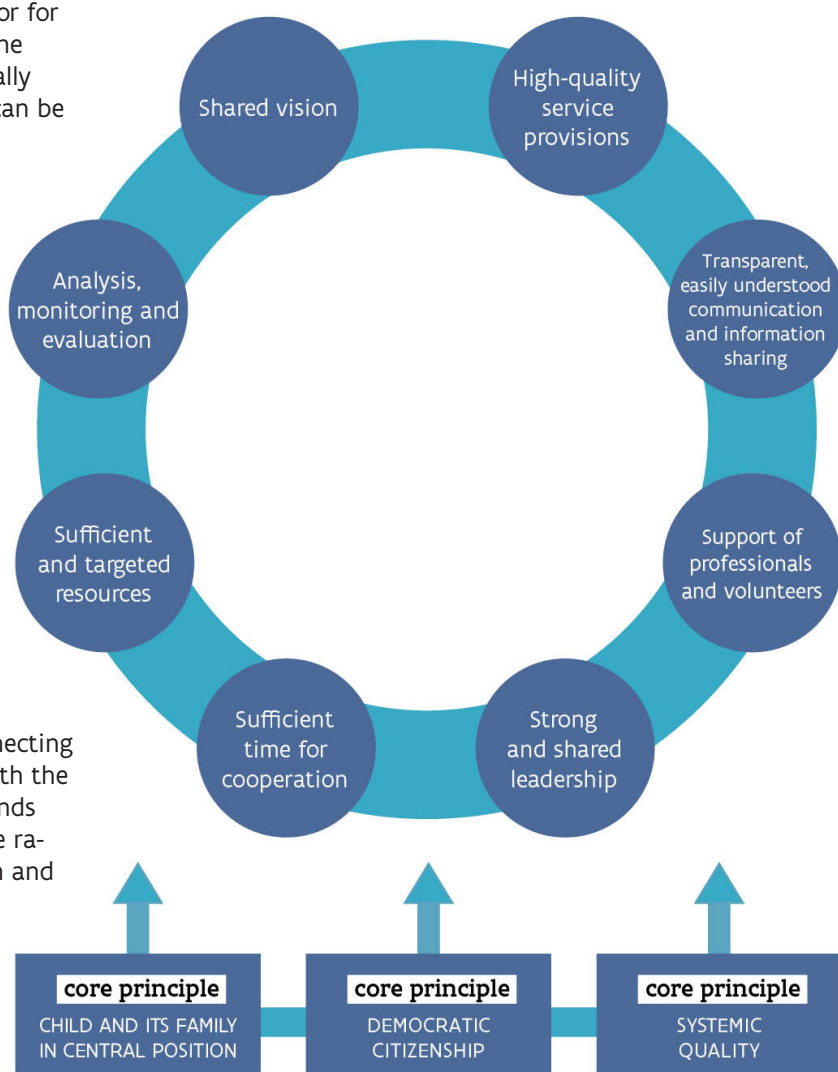
But the home environment and the child are also strongly influenced by the wider environment. What takes place outside the front door and around the house also determines the future, the well-being and the health of young children.

We assume a **shared upbringing responsibility** between family and society.

Society bears the responsibility to achieve the conditions so that young children can grow and develop to their full potential and so that parents and others responsible for the upbringing can fulfil their commitment towards young children.

A rich environment is focused on **broadening the experiential world** of children and on connecting with a diversity of children and families and with the community where children grow up. This demands **connecting** elements and social cohesion in the rapidly diversifying living environment of children and families.

Rich and varied development opportunities for each child means taking care of good basic provisions for children and their families. It also means that this cannot only be achieved in protected 'reservations for children' or 'youth islands'. Both the quality of the physical space, the social living environment and the basic provisions for young children and their family determine to a considerable degree how rich or poor the development opportunities of children are.





A rights-based approach

The 'International Convention on the Rights of the Child' and the 'Fundamental rights of every citizen' in Belgium, as stated in the Belgian Constitution, form the general basis for the expansion of a rich environment for children. In that context, articles 22, 22bis and 23 are particularly important:

- Everybody is entitled to respect for his privacy and family life.
- Every child is entitled to respect for his moral, physical, mental and sexual integrity.
- Every child is entitled to express his/her opinion.
- Every child is entitled to measures and services that promote his/her development.
- The interest of the child is the first consideration in every decision that affects the child.
- Everybody is entitled to lead

a decent existence (including the right to work, right to social security, right to proper accommodation, right to protection of a healthy living environment, right to cultural and social fulfilment).

The fact that these rights are anchored in our constitution, offers **an important framework within which we can assess our practices**. Of course, this does not mean that all rights can be realised in practice for all children and families.

Basic provisions play an **important role in the realisation of rights of children and families**. Basic provisions are provisions and services which everybody can use pursuant to a rights-based approach. They are in line with the various needs and requirements of children and parents and are accessible, available, affordable, understandable and usable for all families.

In comparison with other European countries, Flanders has a **number of particularly strong points** regarding the basic provi-

sions for young children and their families:

- The preventive family support reaches almost all families in the period shortly after birth and has a particularly high performance rate in the area of vaccinations. The preventive family support is generally not associated with problems or specific target groups and this makes it particularly easy to access.
- There is a tendency towards more integrated provisions (Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres), community schools, community-based child care, etc.) that are set up based on an inter-sector cooperation between culture, youth, sport, child care and education, etc. These provisions can offer a more flexible and more comprehensive answer to various questions from parents. Of course, this does not mean that all parents will find their way to the provisions and actually discover what they need.

- With child care for almost 50% of those between the ages of 0 and 3 and nursery schools for nearly 100% of pre-schoolers, Flanders easily reaches the 'Barcelona norms', but in many places this does not cover the demand.
- Furthermore, nursery school is almost free of charge and child care is, to a large degree, affordable thanks to income-related parental contributions, although there remains a problem for the very lowest incomes.
- There is an extensive cultural mix whereby attention for the youngest children and their families is becoming stronger.
- There is a wide range of recreational and exercising possibilities, including those in youth work, in sport (multimove, school sports, etc.) and in the cultural sector.
- In an increasing number of municipalities, the UITpas makes participation in cultural and recreational activities more financially accessible for children and families.

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**By working together, all sorts of services and provisions can become more accessible for families.**

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Community-focused networks

To strengthen our resolve to achieve the actual implementation of the rights of children and families, we would like to highlight here the **community-focused networks**.

A community-focused network for children and families creates, within a community, together with partners and families, a **rich environment** for all children and families and brings together and integrates essential functions that are important for children and families. Each partner contributes to this, based on

their own expertise. The focus is initially on families and children from the ages of 0 to 12, but this can be broadened depending on the local situation.

We define a community as an area (neighbourhood, village centre, district, etc.) which residents can experience as 'close to home', in which they feel at home; in other words, a (living) environment with which they have a connection, with which they are familiar and which they recognise. The term 'community' encapsulates people's commitment and can be recognised by everyone. A specific community, a clearly defined, demarcated area, makes it possible for professionals to base their work more firmly on and better reflect the living work of the people most closely concerned. It offers possibilities for increasing opportunities for all children and families in the community.

Our objective is that provisions and services start collaborating in a community-focused network in such a way that this **network also functions as a basic provision** for children and families. We do not consider a basic provision here as a physical location, but do consider it as something 'accessible to all'. It is exactly by working together that all sorts of services and provisions become more accessible for all families.

Community-focused networks want to contribute to offering an answer to the question of which scale is appropriate for developing basic provisions that match as closely as possible the needs and requirements of families and children, to being there for all families and children and being able to address the tasks and challenges facing those basic provisions.

Shared reference framework

There is already close collaboration in networks for children and families at community level in many places in Flanders and Brussels. At the moment, this often takes place under the auspices of the Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres) or from

other local networks (poverty reduction network, community school, etc.).

The recommendation came from the conference 'The Future is Young' to develop a reference framework for community-focused networks, based on the practice of existing networks. Such a shared reference framework can provide **support** to collaboration at community level on a **rich environment for all children and their families** in which **participation** of children and parents forms one of the core elements. This can also contribute to **enhancing the dynamic within the Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres)** in Flanders and the necessary attention therein for an integrated network that reaches the level of the community.

This reference framework for community-focused networks will **stimulate** and **strengthen** the dynamic at community level and support its translation of a local integrated family policy to community level.

Ambitious targets

The targets of a community-focused network for children and families are ambitious and often reach farther than the current resources and clout of local organisations and associations allow. In addition to the efforts of organisations and partners in the community to ensure a close collaboration on the targets, to set up collective activities and to enable the network to function at a high quality level, this also demands resources at network level.

2 Sustainable collaboration in community-focused networks for children and families *(why?)*

Definition and task of the community-focused network

A community-focused network for children and families:

- Creates within a community together with partners and families a rich environment for all children and families.
- Brings together and integrates in a coherent whole all sorts of essential functions that are important for children and families:
 - » meeting and strengthening social cohesion
 - » child care and nursery and primary education
 - » play and leisure time activities, cultural, sports and artistic development for children and their families
- Acts as basic provision that plays a meaningful role for all children and families using a rights-based approach:
 - » (preventive) family support and (preventive) healthcare
 - » place for children and families in the public space
 - » support for exercising fundamental rights (education, work, housing, health, assistance, culture, etc.) reception and social services
 - » defending the interests of children and families and providing a signalling function to other organisations and administration levels
- makes the connection between material and

immaterial needs of families

- » creates an environment that is focused on broadening the living environment of children and parents and connecting with the community
- » profiles itself as meeting place
- » is a place where every family with children can go with any question or need
- » matches the various needs and requirements of all children and family in a community

In a community-focused network, various actors collectively ensure, **each from their own expertise** (e.g. culture, sport, [preventive] healthcare, family support, social services, child care, nursery school, community work, etc.), that all important functions for children and families have been included. The analysis of which organisations shall assume which functions can be made locally.

These community-focused networks thus bring together all sorts of functions that are important for children and families. Services, which are not specifically focused on children or concentrate exclusively on adults, can also have important repercussions for children. This is true, for example (but not exclusively) for services that are involved in healthcare, social services, employment and housing.

Central to a community-focused network is a commitment to the **active involvement of children and families**, dealing positively with disputes and having fun. Such a network profiles itself, first and foremost, as a place to which every family with children can turn for all sorts of questions and needs, as a place where you can leave your children in the hands of professionals, but also as a place where you can spend time with your child, as a meeting place, as a place for fun, relaxation and development. A potential commitment of such a network can be that nobody ever says to a parent: 'This is not for us; you have to go elsewhere'.

Proportional universalism

Such a community-focused network works according to the principles of proportional universalism. It is a basic principle whereby a service is expanded for everybody, that varies in scale and intensity. This reduces inequalities in health and well-being, which are a consequence of social inequality. A proportional universal service provision is based on a human and children's rights perspective and takes the diversity in society

and the variety of needs as its starting point. Everybody is welcome there, and at the same time there is specific attention for questions and wishes of specific groups, without determining in advance which needs which groups have or may have.

A community-focused network of provisions and services must also contribute to achieving the rights anchored in the constitution. What is essential in such a network is a strong **link** between **immaterial needs and material needs** from the perspective of unconditional rights of children and their families. In Flanders, more than 11% of children grow up in poverty of opportunity and for families, material and immaterial needs are inextricably linked. This necessitates the strong link and involvement of services that have social services specially focused on human dignity as their objective, such as the Public social welfare centre (OCMW) and, by extension, the 'Integrated broad-based reception'. They are partners for tackling the fight against under-protection.

Local context and dynamic

Such a network can, of course, build further on the dynamic of the Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres), local child poverty networks, community school, Child-friendly municipality, etc. A community-focused network can go some way farther and match the needs, expectations and possibilities in the community in a close-knit and immediate manner.

The local context and dynamic plays a very important role in the specific design of such a community-focused network. Initiatives and actors in the community find each other and can work together on a rich and varied environment for children and their families.

Each community in Flanders is different - scale, character, residents, affluence, number of provisions, etc. The differences between communities and the development of those communities must be taken into account.

In some communities there is a large association life, there is already a citizen initiative, etc. Dissimilar communities ask for a different approach, a customised approach.

The initiative for such a community-focused network can be taken by a variety of actors: a community school, family support services, leisure time initiative, child care, community association, local government, etc. It is important to see where the energy and dynamic can be found in the community or where there are pacemakers who can instil enthusiasm in the residents and organisations in the community and support this.



A network active within a community or on a sufficiently small scale offers the possibility of being very close to families and children and to work for and with them. It increases the involvement of children and families. The network that commits to an integrated community approach keeps a



finger on the pulse in the community and has strong links with other

networks that work locally or city-wide. A strong link and alignment with the Huizen van het Kind (Family Centres) can also help make this possible. If a difference is to be made for children and families, it is essential to be able to switch between community, local and supralocal levels.

Directive role and strong leadership

The local government already takes the directive role in numerous networks that have a strong link with the targets of a community-focused network of provisions and services for children and families (such as child poverty, youth, sport and exercise, social policy, child care, Integrated broad-based reception, Child-friendly municipalities, etc.). The local government consequently has many strings to its bow to allow it to assume the directive role for the community-focused networks. The local government can opt to outsource the directive role to a partner within the partnership. The imple-

mentation of the network's shared targets is a shared responsibility of all partners.

If such a partnership is to succeed, a strong leadership is necessary: a leadership that aims at collective targets whereby children and their families have a central position, that motivates and at the same time pays attention to the process, so that every voice can be heard and that a shared ownership emerges within the network. In such a network, the democratic collaboration between practitioners and provisions must be a priority and certain actors should not dominate.

How best to shape a community-focused network for children and families depends on the context, the degree of urbanisation, demographic characteristics, historical developments, and so on. So no single model of such a network is pushed to the fore. In one place it will be desirable and possible to shape that collaboration through physical integration, in another the preference could be for a decentralised approach.

It is also important to continue to pay attention to the attribution of meaning of the users and the non-users. It must therefore remain possible for a family to prefer a service provision other than the one in the community.

The provisions and services that work for children and families are currently directed by and/or funded from various policy bodies, each with their own criteria and targets. A shared reference framework for community-focused networks that is developed bottom-up can provide support to local collaboration working towards a rich environment for all children and their families.

Being able to switch between community, local and supralocal levels is essential.

Inspiration for other networks

Following the recommendation from the Conference 'The Future is Young', we developed a reference framework for networks for children and families at community level. The tasks and principles of this reference framework could possibly inspire other partnerships and local/supralocal networks. Bringing together and integrating the essential functions that are important for children and families described here must hold the central position. Expounding this reference framework can also help develop consensus for creating a connection between a wide scope of life areas and well-being and placing children and families in the central position.

3

Reference framework for community-focused networks for children and families

The reference framework for community-focused networks is made up of 3 components:

1. Core principles
2. Building blocks
3. Specific practices at network level

For this structure, we took our inspiration from the INTESYS project (Towards Integrated Early Childhood Education and Care Systems – Building the Foundations) <http://www.europe-kbf.eu/en/projects/early-childhood/intesys>.



3 clusters

core principle

CHILD AND ITS FAMILY
IN CENTRAL POSITION

core principle

DEMOCRATIC
CITIZENSHIP

core principle

SYSTEMIC
QUALITY

1. Core principles

The foundation of a community-focused network for children and families consists of a number of shared core principles. Here we continued the work of the working groups Young & At home everywhere and Young & Involved.

<http://www.kindengezin.be/detoekomstisjong/over-de-conferentie/conferentie/> (in dutch)

The pioneers identified 3 clusters:

1. The child and its family in central position
2. Democratic citizenship
3. Systemic quality

Each cluster has a number of core principles that strongly intertwine.

Each partner within a network can, of course, have a specific focus (e.g. strong focus on children in the operation of a nursery school/child care) but all partners endorse all core principles and take ownership of their implementation.

core principle

CHILD AND ITS FAMILY
IN CENTRAL POSITION

Key experiences for children

The network creates opportunities for gaining experience in all essential fields (identity development, communication and expression, exploring the world, body and exercise). The central idea is that children must have the opportunity of gaining key experiences in each of these areas and implementing them themselves. The network offers possibilities for children to develop their current and future potential. Each network partner always pays attention to the physical and emotional care of children.

Holistic view on children and families

The network is based on a holistic approach of children and parents. It focuses simultaneously on the physical, social-emotional and intellectual aspects of the life of children and parents. Learning and living is done with your head, heart and hands.

The child and its family are central in the network

The aim of the network is to raise the opportunities for children and parents. This is shaped in the development, implementation and assessment of what is on offer. Their needs and expectations are central and the integrated mix on offer addresses these needs. Parents and children contribute ideas and join in the implementation.



core principle

DEMOCRATIC
CITIZENSHIP

Respect for diversity

The network uses the intrinsic strength of diversity (learning with, from and through each other). Openness, care and the genuine desire to respect the other as they are form the basis of the basic attitude of commitment within the network.

Respecting diversity means that the network actively looks for obstacles and ineligibility or 'selection' mechanisms, for ways in which these can be eliminated and develops the actions necessary for this.

Tackling social inequality

The network offers support in the actual implementation of the fundamental rights of all children and families. The network is for everybody in an unconditional way (continue to give opportunities). Under proportional universalism, the assistance and support varies in scale and intensity in accordance with the tackling of social inequality and needs. With respect to opportunities for all children, particular attention is given to transitions between differing contexts (e.g. from home to nursery school).

Citizenship

The network starts from a positive framework and contributes to implementing the rights of children and their families. Within this framework, work can be done on the connection between people and their environment and on an ecological awareness. These elements form the basis for democratic citizenship, sense of community and solidarity.

Agency and participation

Children and their parents are active designers of what could be called an educational, social and cultural community. This means that the network focuses strongly on active participation by children and their family in the broadest sense: both in basic provisions and in the wider living environment.



core principle

SYSTEMIC
QUALITY

Qualitative relationships

Achieving qualitative relationships between people, teams, provisions, between professionals and children, parents, families are crucial for the quality and functioning of the network. These relationships are based on trust, mutual respect, shared responsibility, collective agreements and commitment.

Continuous process and feedback for the purpose of an integrated, coherent story

Each actor in the network, whether individual or organisation, holds trumps that can be played for the purpose of an integrated, coherent story. To make this integrated story possible, all partners will be required to make efforts in a continuous process of mutual feedback, monitoring together and adjusting according to the needs that are present in that community.

Systemic approach

The network is aware of the fact that all elements of the network are intertwined and influence each other. The various elements can be distinguished but not separated. Change in one element has an impact on the whole.

Continuity and sustainability

The network strives for continuity and sustainability. It wants to be a fixed value in the community on which children and families can continue to rely, even from one generation to the next. Children grow up and become parents and/or volunteers who commit to the community. The network also provides opportunities within the activities of the network to children and parents for discovering and developing their talents and competences.

2. Building blocks

There are many possible routes to achieving a community-focused networks for children and families. The INTESYS project and the experience of the pioneers show that a number of elements always recur. We list them here as building blocks of a community-focused network.

The first 7 building blocks have been adopted from the INTESYS project; we have added an eighth building block: monitoring and assessment.

We thus arrive at 8 building blocks with which a community-focused network must work in order to implement the task it has towards children and families:

1. **Shared vision**
2. **Quality service provision from a community-focused network that operates as basic provision**
3. **Transparent, easily understood communication and information sharing**
4. **Support of professionals and volunteers**
5. **Strong and shared leadership**
6. **Sufficient time for cooperation procedure**
7. **Sufficient and targeted deployment of resources**
8. **Analysis, monitoring and assessment**

For the description of the building blocks, we started with the INTESYS descriptions and tried to translate those to our own Flemish or Brussels context.

The challenge for a community-focused network is precisely in the translation of the core principles in each of the building blocks.

The network as basic provision gives pride of place to children and their families and each time critically views the accessibility, availability, affordability, usability and comprehensibility of what is on offer for various children and families in the community. The network uses the principles of proportional universalism when developing what it offers.

1

SHARED VISION

A vision shared by the various actors within a network is the fundamental motive in implementing quality service provision for children and families. It is the shared vision, fed from the input of children and families that can achieve real change for children and families despite the differences between the actors (sector-specific view, culture, history, etc.).

2

QUALITY SERVICE PROVISION FROM A COMMUNITY NETWORK THAT OPERATES AS BASIC PROVISION

The network as basic provision gives pride of place to children and their families and each time critically views the accessibility, availability, affordability, usability and comprehensibility of what is on offer for various children and families in the community. The network uses the principles of proportional universalism when developing what it offers.

3

TRANSPARENT, EASILY UNDERSTOOD COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

The network invests in transparent and easily understood communication to children and families about what is on offer and what that can mean for them. Collaborating and planning together within the network demands smooth, transparent communication and information sharing.

4

SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS

To complement the competences for specific tasks, the network stimulates the development of competences that are essential for a partner in a network (collaborating and consulting, learning in group, reflecting, peer supervision, group activities, etc.)



5

STRONG AND SHARED LEADERSHIP

The network is managed according to collective targets whereby children and their families take pride of place. Strong leadership motivates and connects, pays attention to the process so that every voice can have its say and stimulates in this way a shared ownership across the network.

7

SUFFICIENT AND TARGETED DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES

The targets of a community-focused network for children and families are ambitious and often reach farther than the current resources and clout of local organisations and associations allow. In addition to the efforts of the network partners to set up collective activities and to enable the network to function at a high quality level, this also demands resources at network level.

6

SUFFICIENT TIME FOR COOPERATION

The network invests time in the process of cooperation in order to allow trust to grow within the network and the commitment to make integrated collaboration possible. The network installs possibilities for achieving dialogue between the various stakeholders (partner organisations, practitioners, families, community representatives, etc.).

8

ANALYSIS, MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The network takes a thorough and broad environmental analysis as its starting point and focuses on periodic monitoring and assessment of scope, quality and impact on service provision and projects. What is monitored and to what end is determined together with families and stakeholders. During the process of monitoring and evaluation use is made of qualitative and quantitative data and research.

3. Specific practices within a community-focused network

The pioneers visited each other and, partly with use of an observation framework, they shared information about practices within their network. Fed by this knowledge from practice and with the core principles and building blocks in the back of the mind, the pioneers then set to work with describing specific practices.

The pioneers made use of their own successful experiences within their network but also, which is just as interesting, learned from less successful experiences and current weaknesses/areas for growth.

This resulted in a list of specific practices which is already being used today and, according to the pioneers, actually contributes to the success of a community-focused network, supplemented with practices that the pioneers consider highly desirable but as yet do not have sufficient examples in today's practice.

The summing up of practices tries, without wanting to be complete, to give an answer to the question of what a network does so that it can, as basic provision, achieve a rich environment for children and families.

These specific practices at network level can prove inspiring and act as a guide for other networks. Further refinements and examples on how networks put this into practice in their own community or municipality can further enrich this framework.



1

SHARED VISION

A vision shared by the various actors within a network is the fundamental motive in implementing quality service provision for children and families. It is the shared vision, fed from the input of children and families that can achieve real change for children and families despite the differences between the actors (sector-specific view, culture, history, etc.).

OWNERSHIP

All network partners take ownership within the network.

When organisations become partners, this means that they endorse and support the targets and that they will deploy staff, resources and time for this (in proportion to the size and possibilities of the organisation). Each network partner shall continue to bear the targets of the network in mind. Each network partner announces both within its own organisation and outside it that it is a partner within a network and that the accomplishments are those of the network and not of one organiser.

SHARING INFORMATION

The network partners develop, within the legislative framework around data sharing, practices about the sharing of information that contribute to the targets for children and families.

STRENGTH-DRIVEN APPROACH

Within the community-focused network, client consultation is organised from a strength-driven approach to families. Organisations sit at the table with the families concerned based on the needs of families and/or at the indication of the partner organisations involved. The (new) needs and wishes are mapped, together with the steps that have already been taken. The network partners start from a strength-driven approach to see, together with families and the partners, which steps can still be taken and who can offer what support.

2

QUALITY SERVICE PROVISION FROM A COMMUNITY NETWORK THAT OPERATES AS BASIC PROVISION

The network as basic provision gives pride of place to children and their families and each time critically views the accessibility, availability, affordability, usability and comprehensibility of what is on offer for various children and families in the community. The network uses the principles of proportional universalism when developing what it offers.

TRANSITIONS

The network partners regularly enter into a dialogue with each other about the way in which they ensure that the transitions of children and families between various contexts and services within the network are handled in a high quality manner, based on input and experiences of families. This is, among other things, about continuity in the area of care, educational and professional continuity and commitment to the community.

WELL-CONSIDERED BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SUPPORT

The network partners and families regularly enter into dialogue with each other about what in their community is a good balance between individual support of families and collective approaches. At collective approaches (group activities, social restaurant, vegetable patch, cooking together, etc.) individual questions are attached and contacts between people in the community are stimulated. Based on these findings, competences among the network partners are strengthened and shared and new links are made in the existing mix and/or new activities are shaped.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The network partners systematically involve children and families and give children and parents a voice. The network partners focus on meeting and strengthening social networks between people so that all children and families can feel recognised as a fully-fledged part of society. In addition to the informal capture of signals from children and families, the network focuses on a range of work forms such as dialogue moments with people living in poverty, diversely composed client groups at network level, etc.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTISING DUTCH AND LANGUAGE POLICY

Children and families are not excluded because they do not know Dutch. Interpreters are used where necessary to ensure the support of families. The network partners actively focus on attachment, meeting and opportunities for practising Dutch.

ACCESS TO WHAT IS OFFERED BY NETWORK PARTNERS

Each network partner has an active role in ensuring access to what is on offer from the network partners. The network partners can, from one specific offer, give families the opportunity to learn what is on offer from the various network partners. The network partners ensure that there is a good referral of or assistance for the family if this is desired or required. The network partners are also sufficiently aware of the desire and need that families have for meeting opportunities with other children and families in the community without focusing on referral and orientation.

BASED ON MATERIAL SUPPORT, ACHIEVE ACCESS TO WHAT THE NETWORK PARTNERS ARE OFFERING

A network deals with material needs. This also creates space for meeting. Material support is specific and clear for families. This situation is used to build up a trust relationship and a warm referral to what the partners have on offer. This is always based on the needs and wishes of families.

WELL-CONSIDERED BALANCE IN WHAT IS ON OFFER

Using a good community analysis in which the network partners and the families are involved, the network strives for a careful balance in what is offered and filling in the gaps for various needs/wishes of various age groups of children, life stages of families, family composition, etc. Proportional universalism is the guiding principle for the network.

INTEGRATING WHAT IS ON OFFER

Families have various needs, wishes, expectations, etc. You can address this better and reach more families if you work with a variety of partners. Network partners work on a well-considered integrated offer. For families, a more customised approach is used. They receive answers to various questions at places they already visit. Families and network partners can strengthen and inspire each other.

LINKS WITH OTHER LOCAL NETWORKS AND ASSOCIATIONS

The community-focused network searches for links with other local and/or supralocal network and networks, associations and initiatives active in the community. In relation to connecting essential functions for children and families described in the mission of the network, this can be about collaboration with networks active around culture, leisure time, poverty, health, public space, mobility, work, housing, etc.

ASSUMING SIGNAL FUNCTION

The network assumes its signal function to other organisations and administration levels.

For this, the network meticulously bundles the signals from the community and documents them. The network assesses at regular intervals the way of substantiating signals and impact.

3

TRANSPARENT, EASILY UNDERSTOOD COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

The network invests in transparent and easily understood communication to children and families about what is on offer and what that can mean for them. Collaborating and planning together within the network demands smooth, transparent communication and information sharing.

CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION WITHIN THE PARTNER NETWORK (PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS)

To achieve broad support, it is essential that each network partner commits to giving feedback on important information, decisions and changes within its own organisation. At the same time, each network partner must pass on information to the network (important information, decisions, changes). Tools such as intranet, sharepoints, etc. can play a supporting role in this.

COMMUNICATION TO ALL FAMILIES AND RESIDENTS/SOCIETY

Bringing what is on offer to families in an easily understood and transparent way, demands a range of efforts whereby the voice of various families is important. In this way, the network can address the broad diversity in which the families present themselves.

This can be paper, digital, personal via a string of channels and carriers, linguistically or non-linguistically, whereby the one does not exclude the other.

The network focuses on broad communication to all residents/society in order to create a wide consensus within society and to make the network and what it offers visible.

4

SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS

To complement the competences for specific tasks, the network stimulates the development of competences that are essential for a partner in a network (collaborating and consulting, learning in group, reflecting, peer supervision, group activities, etc.)

COLLECTIVE EDUCATION AND ALIGNING CONTENT

The network partners share knowledge and material directed at strengthening the competences of the partners. Special attention is paid here to education on the importance and the added value of participation by families and inspirational practices about this.

PEER SUPERVISION AND LEARNING NETWORKS WITH VARIOUS PARTNERS AND DISCIPLINES WITHIN THE NETWORK ENSURE TIME-TESTED KNOWLEDGE

Within the network, time and space is freed up for learning networks for practitioners from various organisations and/or network partners open up existing peer supervisions within their organisation for practitioners of network partners.

Possible themes:

- exchanges on how you, as a professional, approach your job.
- exploring what partners adopt and what they do not.
- exchanges about how to deal with situations and problems.

ACTIVELY ASPIRING TO REFLECTION OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE NETWORK

Everybody is offered the opportunity and actively encouraged to take up responsibility within the network. Volunteers are given the opportunity to follow a training and guidance is provided. In this way, the network partners also invest in the development of talents and competences and thus in the future of people from the community: parents, volunteers and young people, etc.

ACTIVELY FOCUS ON DEALING POSITIVELY WITH DIVERSITY

The network takes care of competence development for all partners around interculturalism, diversity, poverty of opportunity.

The network partners involve and/or appoint trained experts by experience.

Within the network, conditions are created to bridge the 'differences' in a network or in a staff team, e.g. making jargon transparent, common language, etc.



EXPAND AND MAINTAIN VOLUNTEER OPERATION AND MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY

The network develops a volunteer policy in dialogue with families and volunteers. Appreciation and recognition of volunteers is essential here.

A volunteer policy at network level offers many benefits: sharing of expertise, better framing and more room for talents and interests of volunteers.

5

STRONG AND SHARED LEADERSHIP

The network is managed according to collective targets whereby children and their families take pride of place. Strong leadership motivates and connects, pays attention to the process so that every voice can have its say and stimulates in this way a shared ownership across the network.

INITIATOR

The success of such a collaboration depends on strong leadership that strives for collective targets whereby children and their families take pride of place. It motivates while, at the same time, paying attention to the process, so that every voice has its turn and a shared ownership of the network emerges. In such a network, the democratic collaboration between practitioners and provisions must be a priority and certain actors should not dominate. The initiator inspires, connects, lubricates, etc. and rises above the interests of his own organisation. These are competent people who have sufficient time, space and support to fulfil such a role.

SHARED EXPECTATIONS AND SHARED COMMITMENT

The network partners share their mutual expectations and make their commitment explicit. This is repeated regularly. The exercise must be undertaken at the various levels (management, staff, involve field workers in consultation, network activities) of the organisation (various network partners) and at network level.



6

SUFFICIENT TIME FOR COOPERATION

The network invests time in the process of cooperation, allowing trust to grow within the network and the commitment to make integrated collaboration possible. The network installs possibilities for achieving dialogue between stakeholders (partner organisations, practitioners, families, community representatives, etc.).

CLEAR ROLE AND COMMITMENT OF THE PARTNERS IN THE NETWORK

The network lays out its shared expectations and commitment on paper. Each partner clearly states his own input and expectations. The commitment of a close network partner can differ from the commitment of other partners.

CLEARLY DEFINE, MONITOR AND ORGANISE PERIODIC CONSULTATION MOMENTS

The structure of the network is clearly defined within the network: who does what and who assumes the role of initiator in this. There is a clear planning in time and for each theme. There is a clear agenda with the appropriate people at the table, followed by good reporting and monitoring.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL NETWORK MOMENTS

Sufficient time is freed up within the network to allow regular network moments in order to keep the motivation of the network partners alive and to work on shared targets, e.g. a network moment for all staff, network day in which various networks meet and exchange ideas.

INFORMAL MEETING BETWEEN (POTENTIAL) NETWORK PARTNERS AND FAMILIES

The network invests in facilitating informal meetings whereby people get to know each other better and enter into personal connections. In addition to formal moments and meetings, time and space is freed up within the network for appreciation, collective activities and relaxation.

7

SUFFICIENT AND TARGETED DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES

The targets of a community-focused network for children and families are ambitious and often reach farther than the current resources and clout of local organisations and associations allow. In addition to the efforts of the network partners to set up collective activities and to enable the network to function at a high quality level, this also demands resources at network level.

COLLECTIVE SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS TO PROJECT CALLS

To ensure that the targets of the network are achieved, network partners develop project proposals together and the expertise is shared among the partners.

Organisations can submit applications to project calls separately but transparency towards network partners is important.

INITIATOR ROLE

The role of initiator is assumed by partners, based on the situation and customised. There is somebody or an organisation in the network who 'directs', coordinates or acts as a hub.

POOLING OF RESOURCES

All network partners contribute something and make something available to the network or to the integrated mix of provisions (e.g. multifunctional and shared use of premises).

Clear targets, agreements, trust and openness in the cooperation are important here.

8

ANALYSIS, MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The network takes a thorough and broad environmental analysis as its starting point and focuses on periodic monitoring and assessment of scope, quality and impact on service provision and projects. What is monitored and to what end is determined together with families and stakeholders. During the process of monitoring and evaluation use is made of qualitative and quantitative data and research.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

The network partners develop their integrated offer on the basis of analysis, academic insights and practical knowledge. They exploit the available expertise and knowledge of partners and families and take the time to enter into dialogue about this. In this way, they map the needs and requirements in the community and thus make substantiated choices.

ANALYSIS OF WHAT IS ON OFFER AND WHAT IS NEEDED

Within the network, there is a clear and up-to-date insight into what is done and not done by which partner and what is offered is synchronised within the network. Inquiries are made to families and local organisations about gaps in what is on offer. The environmental analysis is regularly updated and the network ensures that what is on offer is refreshed. The network partners accurately analyse which children and families they do not reach.

PERIODIC MONITORING

For the monitoring, quality and accessibility take pride of place; these always go hand in hand.

Within the network, the targets are defined in a clear way, according to smart. The network partners reflect in advance on what they want to measure, which criteria/indicators they are going to use, during which period, which actions they undertake and with what purpose they want to monitor. The network focuses on quality monitoring by external parties.

PARTICIPATION

The network partners make the commitment to pick up day to day signals, both formal and informal, and to document them. Not only from children and families that make use of what is on offer but also from volunteers, community residents, etc. In addition, the network searches for opportunities for collecting in-depth, qualitative information by, for example, focus groups, etc. The network partners make the commitment to convert the signals into improvement actions.

ASSESSING NETWORK STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

If the targets of the community-focused network are to be achieved, a dynamic structure is required. Various forms of organisation, (temporary) working groups and learning networks can be active depending on need. The network frees up time and space for assessing the network structure and operation, in relation to the shared targets of the network, efficiency and subsidiarity.

Sources

For this reference framework, we have built further on the work of others. In this section you will find links to publications, methodologies, and websites that have inspired us.

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Self-assessment, Go for impact in the fight against child poverty
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<https://www.expoo.be/samen-evalueren-voor-meer-impact-in-de-strijd-tegen-kinderarmoede-in-de-gezinsondersteuning-en-de>

Tool for mapping the quality of your community together with partners and families
The Place Standard (Schotland) How good is our place?
<https://placestandard.scot/>