



WWP//EUROPEAN NETWORK

WWP EN Online Study Visit 2020 10-11 November

“Keeping children safe in
perpetrator work – A virtual tour”

Report



Funded by
the European Union

OAK
FOUNDATION

Introduction

This year's study visit took place in a different format than our usual study visit. In response to the pandemic, WWP EN decided that the event would take place online. This meant that rather than a visit to one host organisation, participants could learn about good practice from four organisations (and even get a small glimpse into their facilities!). The online format also allowed more WWP EN members to participate.

As part of WWP EN's focus on child-centred perpetrator work this year, the study visit was themed **"Keeping children safe in perpetrator work – A virtual tour"**.

Why is a focus on keeping children safe so important for perpetrator programmes? Although most of the network's members do not work with children directly, children are affected by the work with their abusive fathers. And while many perpetrator programmes rightly focus on cooperation with women support services and keeping the partner safe, keeping the child safe is not always integrated into the work in a structural way.

In 2020, WWP EN has therefore started putting a greater focus on child protection within the work with perpetrators and on supporting our members in developing more child-centred practice. Building upon the WWP EN Child Protection Policy developed last year, WWP EN has been offering a free training for its members focusing on child-safety in perpetrator work as well as a mentoring programme (Support4Safety) to support members on their path towards more child-centred interventions.

Within this framework, the study visit offered members an additional opportunity to increase their awareness and understanding of this topic. They learned about four different good practice models that have built a focus on child-safety into their work, and discussed the models in relation to their own experiences as practitioners.

The participants of the WWP EN Study Visit this year were:

- Sarah Griffin (The Change Project, UK)
- Grega Mesic (DNK, Slovenia)
- David Morran (Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection, University of Stirling, Scotland)
- Silvia Guenzi (CIPM, Italy)
- Isotta Rossoni (CIPM, Italy)
- Juha Holma (The Psychotherapy Training and Research Centre, University of Jyväskylä, Finland)
- Bridget Symonds (Respect, UK)
- Senka Damjanovic (Dom Duga Zagreb, Croatia)

- Lauren Agius (Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta)
- Colette Farrugia Bennett (Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Malta)
- Tika Gorgadze (Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, Georgia)
- Ria Oksman (Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, Finland)
- Keete Janter (NGO VAITER, Estonia)

Presenters:

- Pascale Franck (Family Justice Centre Antwerp, Belgium)
- John Doyle (Men's Development Network, Ireland)
- Dermot Brady (Caring Dads, UK)
- Ingunn Rangul Askeland (Alternative to Violence (ATV), Norway)

WWP EN staff:

- Mirko Dehring
- Antonia Montanus



Presentations

The presentations were given by:

- Pascale Franck from the Family Justice Centre Antwerp in Belgium
- John Doyle from the Men's Development Network in Ireland
- Dermot Brady from Caring Dads programme in the UK
- Ingunn Rangul Askeland from Alternative to Violence (ATV) in Norway.

To better illustrate how the models work in practice, the presenters prepared examples of typical cases they are confronted with. These were then discussed in the small and large group discussions following each presentation.

Family Justice Centre Antwerp (Belgium)

In her presentation, Pascale Franck gave a small virtual tour around the Family Justice Centre's (FJC) new facilities to give participants an impression of the way the FJC is organised. It offers a range of services around domestic violence under one roof with a particular focus on providing support to women and children, and working along a family approach. The FJC has a strong focus on child-friendly services and providing adequate support to children, e.g. through a representative from a Child Advocacy Centre (CAC) that is part of their integrated, multi-disciplinary team. A video interview with a child psychologist from the CAC described the way in which the collaboration works. The FJC works with



European Family Justice Center Alliance



Child focus in FJC

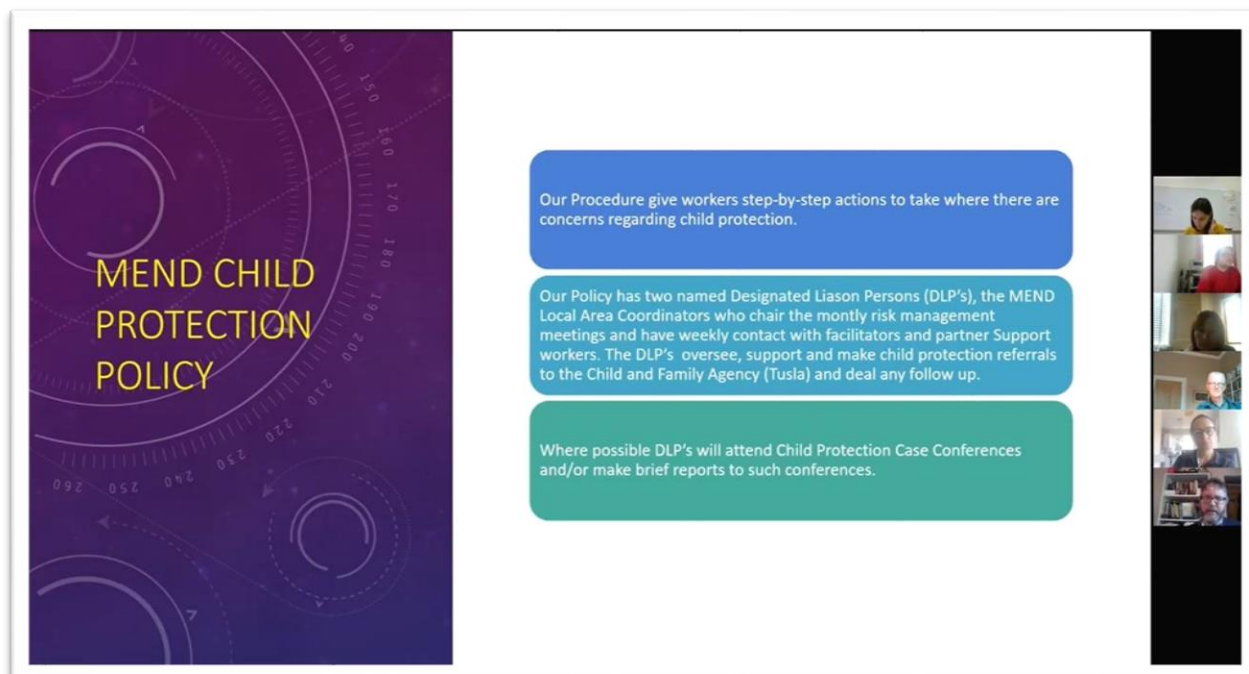
- Child Advocacy Center: part of the team integrated in the FJC
- Youth care: involved in the high risk cases
- Child focus group working on focus on children through all the activities
- Action Plans involving each individual child
- Child psychologist CAC weekly on the floor as advisor
- Center for mental health: working together with Time Out (perpetrator program) and Child team: advice, counseling and case management
- Covid-19: outreach to vulnerable children
- Budget to sponsor counseling for children
- Parent group cfr interview
- Children's participation: 2021
- Part of SafeShelter project: REC-program 2021-2022
- Project Hope: Circus Hope
- ...

www.efjca.eu

perpetrators through the Time Out programme, who coordinate their work with victim and child support professionals in case conferences. There is a strong focus on working with parents on the impact of domestic violence on their children. The Centre has established a child focus group whose role it is to consider the effects of each step taken as part of an intervention on the child. For the near future, the FJC is planning for direct child participation in order to better address and integrate the wishes of children, to better determine their needs and adapt offers accordingly.

MEND / Men's Development Network (Ireland)

John Doyle introduced the perpetrator programme MEND offered by the Men's Development Network, before explaining how they integrate a focus on child safety and wellbeing in their work. MEND has a child protection policy that sets out which steps employees should follow if child abuse is suspected in one of their cases. These procedures are integrated into monthly risk management meetings and the weekly contact between perpetrator programme facilitators and partner support workers where child safety is part of the agenda. Two Designated Liaison Persons with special training in child protection oversee and support the work and decide on child protection referrals, if needed. This involves careful planning when initiating a referral process and the way this is communicated to the perpetrator and the mother. John also pointed out some of the challenges, such as responding to the two different perspectives from parents in the process of deciding what is best for the child.



MEND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- Our Procedure give workers step-by-step actions to take where there are concerns regarding child protection.
- Our Policy has two named Designated Liason Persons (DLP's), the MEND Local Area Coordinators who chair the montly risk management meetings and have weekly contact with facilitators and partner Support workers. The DLP's oversee, support and make child protection referrals to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and deal any follow up.
- Where possible DLP's will attend Child Protection Case Conferences and/or make brief reports to such conferences.

Caring Dads programme (UK)

The presentation on the Caring Dads programme by Dermot Brady highlighted some of the gaps in perpetrator programmes on the one hand, and parenting programmes on the other, when it comes to dealing effectively with abusive fathers. Hence two key aspects of the Caring Dads programme are holding the perpetrator accountable for his abuse and working with him on his relationship with his child and responsibility as a father. This includes child-centred fathering, helping the man to understand and respond to the needs of the child, and thereby increasing the child's emotional safety and wellbeing. The father's abuse of the mother is part of all aspects of the programme, as the safety and wellbeing of the mother is seen as intricately linked to that of the child. The abuse often includes the undermining of the relationship between the mother and the child – an aspect that is also addressed by a strong focus on co-parenting.

Where Does Caring Dads Fit?		
Parenting Program	Caring Dads	BIP
Focus on <i>parents'</i> stress, challenges	Focus on child safety, run in partnership with child-focused services	Focus in women's safety
Attention mostly on parent-child relationship	Fathers' relationships with moms viewed as central to father-child relationships	Focus mostly on adult intimate relationships
Expect parents to arrive looking for answers and with some openness to change	Expect fathers to be reluctant participants who see little reason to change	Expect men to be reluctant participants
Focus on strategies to manage child behavior	Focus on managing risk and on strategies to re-evaluate and change own behavior	Focus on managing risk and on re-evaluating and changing own behavior
Reflection on child development, child needs, and parenting aspirations	Pushes men to become more "child-centered"	Focus on the impact of IPV on children
Confidentiality of each parent is considered, no contact with a parent who is not involved	Mother contact expected in any case where men are co-parenting with children's mothers	Partner contact a core part of the work


Alternative to Violence (ATV, Norway)

Ingunn Rangul Askeland gave a small virtual tour around the ATV office in Oslo. At ATV, child-centred thinking is informing treatment from beginning to end, with specific procedures in place that ensure coordination with the child protection service at client's intake, assessment, and during treatment. A child focus informs the work with the client, where the relationship with the child, the impact of the abuse, and safe and healthy parenting are all addressed. Next to trauma treatment, the work with the partner focuses on supporting her to re-establish safety for her and the child. ATV also has direct contact with client's children,

in which it is made sure that the child's right to information is being met. They are also given the opportunity to tell their own story and develop a safety plan.

Best practice

- Get to know the relevant laws and regulations - because they help you to maneuver
- Discuss the implications, meaning and practical use of the laws in relation to specific clinical cases.
- Develop procedures to ensure that the child's perspective, safety and wellbeing, are included in all the steps of treatment, from first contact, throughout assessment, and treatment.
- Develop models to ensure children's rights to information are being met.
- Always include work on fathering/mothering in treatment of partner violence when there are children in the family.





ALTERNATIV
TIL VOLD



All presentations can be accessed by our members through the internal area of our website. For access details, please email Antonia (Antonia.montanus@work-with-perpetrators.eu).

Discussions and conclusions

The presentations and the following discussions showed that child-centred practice can take different forms, with certain aspects of child protection being given a different emphasis. It can involve establishing internal organisational procedures on how to act when there are concerns regarding child safety in one of the cases; establishing fixed formats in which child protection professionals, perpetrator programme facilitators and victim support workers come together regularly; or integrating the effects of domestic abuse on children and positive fathering into the direct work with perpetrators.

These measures should not exclude one another, but should all be considered in efforts to integrate child safety and wellbeing into perpetrator work in a structural way. The presentations provided helpful input on these different aspects of child protection.

In the course of the small and large group discussions, it became clear that child-centred interventions were very much understood as working appropriately with the father but also the mother, based on the strong link between safety and wellbeing of the mother and that

of the child. This was also discussed in the context of the different ways in which domestic violence impacts the child and how this can be addressed with the father.

Sessions on child-centred parenting or fathering, and supporting an understanding and appropriate response to the needs of the child formed part of all models presented. Participants noted the strong motivating potential of fatherhood, but also the challenges of working with fathers who have experienced abuse as children themselves, recognizing their experiences without letting this diminish their acceptance of responsibility for their actions.

Long waiting periods for child protection services to take up a case, or receiving information regarding the further development of child's situation due to underfinanced services with a high case load often remain a challenge. Linked to this was a discussion on the sometimes problematic categorization into low- and high-risk cases, with the limited resources understandably being assigned to high-risk cases. However, risk is often difficult to assess and can change overtime, which means that children can be unsafe although their case is on the bottom of the waiting list.

Highlighted in the discussions was also the importance of having a designated person with a clear focus on the wellbeing of the child who oversees the work when multiple agencies are involved. Moreover, the process of initiating a child protection referral and communication around this towards the perpetrator needs to be carefully prepared in order to avoid that he disengages with the programme. The importance of preparatory work in relation to steps taken to protect the child appeared various times throughout the discussions – preparing/adapting safety plans, or arranging what needs to be in place before starting to involve the child directly (if this is part of the organisation's work). This may also entail giving the child the opportunity to tell its own story and have a voice in the process of addressing the father's violence.

Participants of this first online study visit said they particularly appreciated the opportunity for exchanging experiences and perceptions in this small group format and learning from four distinct services within two days. It was noted that the space given to small and large group discussion personalised the event and made everyone feel involved. Opportunities like these to discuss and share thoughts about practice were much being missed since the COVID outbreak.

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the "Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020" of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.