

# A Description of Inclusive Strategies Applied in Informal Pre-school Settings in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Sweden, UK and Poland

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## Erasmus+ Project: Good Start for All (GSA)

2017-1-CZ01-KA201-035409, February 2019



Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

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High-quality early childhood education and care services positively contribute to children's participation in education and academic achievement. A large body of evidence shows that children who participated in high-quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) were better prepared for school and tended to have higher math, reading and memorization skills than children who did not. More importantly, longitudinal studies demonstrate that early socialization in formal ECEC settings promotes prosocial behavior (Sylva et al., 2004; Harrison et al., 2009; Sammons et al., 2007). Studies show that ECEC graduates are more task-oriented and independent. They have higher, cooperation and conformity skills, positive learning dispositions, and less anxiety and antisocial behavior. According to reports published by the European Commission, children from socially disadvantaged environments are less likely to participate in ECEC. Therefore, it is crucial to reach out to these groups at an early stage. For this reason, the project Good Start for All focuses on fostering cooperation between informal education settings and pre-schools that aim to support the inclusion of children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different environments. The goal of the project is to come up with innovative methods distinct to the needs of each partner country and based on the best practices that have worked in other partner countries. The goal is to use these methods to work with families from socioeconomically disadvantaged or culturally different environments, such as migrant and Roma families, in order to prepare children to enter the formal education system.

The following Descriptions introduce methods used in informal pre-school settings of each partner country. Each Description is devoted to an informal pre-school institution that represents a good example of working with children, parents, and their cooperation with formal pre-school institutions. The first chapters present a general description of the informal pre-school institution. They describe the specification of the locality, details about the goals and target groups of the institution, and details regarding age, family background and the number of children attending the institution. The second chapters elaborate on the methods used to work with children and parents in informal pre-school institutions. The emphasis is placed on detailed accounts of methods that aim to prepare children from socially disadvantaged and culturally different environments for formal education. However, not all partners managed to obtain this data in their country. The methods used in work with parents from socially disadvantaged environments focus on communication strategies that help support and motivate parents to engage in the educational process of their children. Finally, the third chapters address the cooperation with formal pre-school institutions. The important points described include the reasons for establishing partnership, the target groups included, how cooperation is established, and its visible outcomes.

The first Czech Republic Description discusses the Pre-school club Klubíček. This club offers child care services for children ages 3 to 6. The club supports children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different areas to enable them to smoothly enter the formal education system. The social workers at Klubíček work with children according to the Good Start Methodology. Klubíček collaborates with the local Pre-school Sluníčko to facilitate the process of adapting to formal pre-school institutions, as well as to prevent misunderstandings between teachers and parents.

The Second Description elaborates on the cooperation between the Slovakian village Spišský Hrhov with the ECEC Play Hub, Primary School, Nursery School, and the Wide Open School (NGO). The reason for this cooperation is mainly due to issues with the integration of the Roma minority. ECEC Play Hub provides a safe education and care space where relationships can develop between Roman and non-Roma young children and their families. Children are offered care services, and parents are offered parental support and training.

The Swedish Description focuses on Drömverkstan (the Dream Workshop), an organization that offers every child an opportunity to be creative. Individuals can either visit the Workshop on their own or with their school. Most children that attend the Dream Workshop are from minority cultures with socio-economic difficulties. One of the main goals of the Dream Workshop is to keep children and young people off the streets by giving them a safe place to gather and hang out.

The fourth Description focuses on Horsforth Children's Centre located in Horsforth of north Leeds in Great Britain. This suburb has areas of concentrated 'deprivation' and social housing. The Children's Centre offers early support and advice for families with young children that live in these conditions. The center provides many different activities such as the Parent and Tots groups, the Breastfeeding Café, Family Learning classes for parents, and a Young Parent's group and English classes for Speakers of Other Languages.

The fifth and final description elaborates on the "Polish Toddlers Club" in Poland. This club is a private kindergarten that caters to Polish youth, children with disabilities, and children of migrant families primarily from Ukraine. Due to the variety of children and their needs, a unique team of specialists was assembled to provide these children with the utmost professional care.

# Pre-school club Klubicek

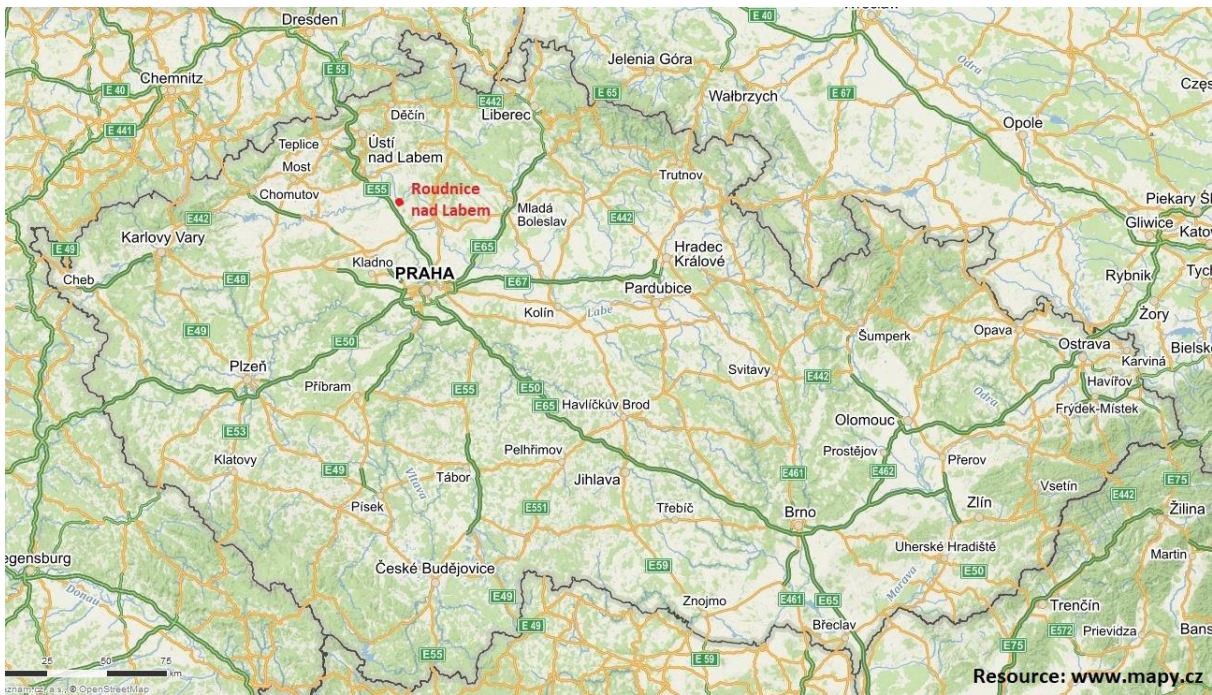
## Czech Republic

The Czech Republic case study focuses on the cooperation between Klubicek, a pre-school club managed by the Czech Caritas, and the local kindergarten in Roudnice nad Labem. Since 2016, the non-governmental educational organization Schola Empirica has worked with the Czech Caritas on a national project to increase the inclusion of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds into mainstream education. The positive outcomes of this initiative are readily evident and will be summarized in the description below.

## 1. General description of the informal pre-school institution

### Specification of the locality

The pre-school club Klubicek is located in Roudnice nad Labem. Roudnice nad Labem has approximately 13,000 inhabitants, and is a part of the Ústecký Region in the northern part of the Czech Republic. The Ústecký Region has a population of more than 820,000. It is estimated that there are about 60,000 Roma people living here, of which 22,000 live in socially excluded areas. These Roma are both geographically segregated from the town centre and socially excluded in areas within the centre because they live in high-rise housing estates. (Government of the Czech Republic 2011).



The unemployment rate in Roudnice nad Labem is about 10%. In several localities, many people are at risk of social and spatial exclusion. In addition, there are high rates of indebtedness and drug use. There are two localities in the city identified as the most problematic: the first one is on T. G. Masaryk street and the second is on Sladkovského street. The first locality includes three blocks of flats. The Caritas in Roudnice nad Labem have been active in this locality since 1997. They have opened a shelter, a youth club, and a pre-school club for small children. In the spring of 2009, the municipality sold the three blocks of flats to a private owner. Currently, there are preparations being made for reconstruction, and the new owner is in the process of searching for housing substitutes for almost 300 of the flats' inhabitants. The second locality is situated on the outskirts of the city and borders the railway line and the Elbe river. In this area, the civic association Naděje (Hope) operates a shelter for men, provides social counseling, job counseling, and educational activities. Annually, the locality organizes an event dedicated to cleaning the town and its surrounding areas. Due to the relative remoteness of the locality from the town, children and youth dropouts sometimes hide out here. Most of the inhabitants in this area are long-term unemployed (Agency for Social Inclusion 2018).

## The pre-school club Klubíček: The main goals and target groups

As previously mentioned, the Czech Caritas in Roudnice nad Labem launched Klubíček in 1997. The initial goal of this pre-school club was to make it easier for children to enter formal pre-school institutions, with a primary focus on children from socially excluded areas. The aim of the Klubíček was to provide these children with equal opportunities to enter the educational system and prosper.



Source: Czech Caritas Roudnice nad Labem, <http://www.charitaroudnice.cz/>

*“Earlier, when children didn’t have many choices and opportunities, they went mostly to the special schools, which is what Klubíček tries to prevent. Thanks to Schola Empirica’s project, we started to include these children in the kindergartens. The children adapted more easily and the transition was easier for them because it wasn’t too fast.”* (From the interview with social workers Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

Klubíček offers a Social Activation Service (SAS) that provides children and parents a place to stay for a few hours. SAS is one of seven services provided by the Caritas Roudnice nad Labem. Other services include shelter for mothers with children, a day care center for children and youth, care services, psychological counselling, access to a charity wardrobe, and permeable housing. The Caritas Roudnice nad Labem is funded by large and small grants programs in the Ustecký Region, the municipality of Roudnice nad Labem, the European Social Fund, the State Budget of the Czech Republic, the Labour Office in Litoměřice, and the Tereza Maxová Foundation.

In a day, the maximum number of children that have visited Klubíček is eight. This capacity changes throughout the year. One of the reasons this occurs is because some families migrate a lot. Due to factors such as this, the number of children that attend the club fluctuates throughout the year. According to Klubíček’s own statistics, the average number of children who attend Klubíček reaches about 15 per year.

Initially, only children ages 3 to 7 years attended Klubíček. This is because in September of 2017, it became mandatory for children to start compulsory primary school education at age 6 or 7. Following the passage of this law, the age of children attending Klubíček declined from 3 to 5 years. The condition for entering Klubíček is that children must be able to use the toilet. *“Now, we have a girl who is two and half years old and she doesn’t have diapers during the day so she can be here.”* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

Klubíček is opened from Monday to Thursday from 8:30 to 11:30. Some children come every day, and some parents would appreciate if the club was opened until later. Initially, it was possible for children to stay longer, but then the Caritas changed the rules. The idea behind this change was that Klubíček solely provides social services and is not substitute for kindergarten. The services of Social Activation Service are focused not only on children but also on parents. The parents participate in activities organized specifically for them, such as baking and cooking classes, once a week.



Source: Czech Caritas Roudnice nad Labem, <http://www.charitaroudnice.cz/>

There are many ways how the children and their parents may be approached. Contact can be established personally, as most of the clients in Klubíček are women living in the shelter. Another way is to spread information about the Caritas' services is by word of mouth. Furthermore, it is possible to get information from social networks, e.g. Facebook. The Caritas also organizes an Open Day where all its activities and services are presented. Their services are also promoted at various PR events at schools and state institutions. For these reasons, the Caritas hand out many different leaflets. There is also great cooperation between the Caritas and the Department of Social and Legal Protection of Children because the social workers inform the Caritas about families that need help.

## Composition of families

The children and parents attending Klubíček are mostly inhabitants of the shelter in Roudnice and its surroundings, including Roma families. The families are mostly from socially deprived or disadvantaged areas. The majority of them are unemployed, single parents, with big debts, who live in poverty and are currently undergoing several executions. Sometimes there are cases of domestic violence and drug addiction.

In 2015, there were 89 socially excluded areas in the Ústecký Region. The number of inhabitants in these areas is about 36,000 to 38,500. This region has the highest number of socially excluded inhabitants in the Czech Republic (GAC 2015). The existence of these socially excluded areas is partially the result of the gradual concentration of poor Roma families in places with a low standards of living. Social exclusion in the Czech Republic is mainly an ethnic problem. However, this problem does not only concern the Roma. Based on a Government issued Report on the state of the Roma minority in the Czech Republic, (Government of the Czech Republic 2018) there were 63 500 of Roma people in the Ústecký Region in 2017. According to estimates, 60 % of them were socially excluded.

The houses and flats in the socially excluded localities are often wet and full of mold. People live in overcrowded, poorly ventilated and inadequately heated flats, which negatively affects their health. Health issues are also caused by long-term stress caused by other social factors, such as unemployment. The residents suffer from pulmonary and skin diseases, diabetes and allergies. They also have unhealthy eating habits. They eat flour foods, poor quality meat, small quantities of vegetables, and fruits and dairy products. In addition, Roma families eat at irregular times.

As previously mentioned, drug addiction is quite frequent in these socially excluded areas. The contact centres that provide services to drug addicts estimate that approximately 80 % of their clients are Roma (Government of the Czech Republic 2011).

The deteriorating health situation and high illness rate of the Roma population are some of the factors that contribute to children lagging in school, and the incompetence of adult employees, which is often a reason for employers to terminate one's employment even during the probationary period. Subsequently, the social prejudice against Roma reduces their motivation to seek employment. (Government of the Czech Republic 2011)

## The main reasons for entering Klubicek

The main reasons why parents use the services of Klubicek are that they want their children to bond with other children, to learn basic social and cognitive skills (colour recognition, counting, self-reliance etc.), and prepare to enter kindergarten. In most cases, parents are afraid of placing their children directly into kindergarten due to their lack of experience with children from different ethnic or social groups. Parents are afraid that their children will not be accepted. The aim of Klubicek is, therefore, to enable children to make the transition to kindergarten as soon as possible. The social workers from Klubicek provide parents with information about kindergarten and help them with enrollment. When they succeed and manage to place a child into kindergarten, the family's cooperation with the Social Activation Service of Caritas ends. The Caritas is no longer able to ensure that the child regularly attends kindergarten.

## 2. Inclusive methods used in Klubicek

### The methods used in work with children

The children attending Klubicek come from different socio-cultural backgrounds and more likely face more problems than other children. Their mental development is delayed and there is evidence that this is due to insufficiently stimulating home environment. These children have almost always have issues with communication. Their speech development is backward in comparison to other children, and some of them do not speak at all. In Klubicek, pedagogic personnel work on the development of communication skills and social and emotional competences using the Good Start methodology.

For social workers in Klubicek, the first step is to establish a relationship with parents, which ensures the continuous successful integration of children into formal pre-school institutions. The next important step is to establish a relationship with the child and work on building trust between the child and teacher. At the beginning of the child's stay, parents are allowed to stay with their child. However, the pedagogical personnel have found that in many cases this strategy did not work, and that sometimes it is better when the mother is not present. This is because the child's behaviour in a group of children differs when the parent is present.

Special attention is given to children when they first attend Klubicek. The social worker actively listens to the children and talks to them in order to make them feel comfortable. The children are often afraid of the new environment, so the pedagogic personnel play with them to build trust and make them less scared. One strategy that has proven helpful, is to talk to the child about their personal life. When a child's initial uncertainty diminishes, that is when it is the time to start building a positive relationship with other children.

For some children, the structure and regularity of staying in one institution is very important because it makes them feel safe. Therefore, it is common for both kindergartens and informal pre-school institutions to introduce a clear structure of daily activities. The structure of Klubicek is explained by Jana, a social worker at the club.

*"Accompanied by their parents, children come to Klubicek at 8:30 in the morning. There they meet other children. The day starts with the main program of the pre-school club, i.e. the establishing relationships and communication. The child greets the personnel and says goodbye to their parent. Then, the children have their own space for a free time game. Afterwards, we have a circle time when the children greet each other, and they are trained to address everybody by name. Sometimes we use a ball during circle time and play a game where the child has to say another child's name and throw the ball to that child. Then, the teacher asks questions about the children's activities at home, and the children learn to listen actively to each other answers. In addition, children learn to understand emotions and read facial expressions of others. This is why we use with picture cards and we ask the children how the character on that picture may feel and also how they themselves sometimes feel.*

*After circle time, we teach good hygiene. In the beginning, this is a big problem for some of the children. Children go into hysterics in some cases. They are not used to using the toilet. Normally, it takes about 14 days for them to learn to use the toilet independently. The hygiene habits we are learning in Klubicek include washing hands before and after a meal.*

*When the children finish washing their hands, we eat a prepared meal. At this time the teacher emphasizes to the children that they should walk slowly. When the children have a snack together, they practice the rules which say to e.g. at the table we sit silently or that walk slowly so as not to hurt ourselves. After the meal, the children brush their teeth. There are children who have never seen a toothbrush before they came to Klubicek. The children brush their teeth with enthusiasm, they love it. In comparison with other children in the kindergarten who are resistant, these children in Klubicek are keen on doing it. Moreover, they are used to cleaning up everything after their snack. They also wash the dishes, and*

*sweep the floor. That's the difference from the kindergartens where children are not allowed to do these tasks on their own. In Klubicko, we teach children to be self-reliant.*

*Then we continue practicing communication skills. We work with picture books. Children love these books. They bring them to me and describe the pictures. They are learning to tell a story and to describe what is happening in the picture. Some children even manage to make up their own stories.*

*In addition, we develop physical skills through physical activities, numeric skills, and artistic abilities – for this reason, we have a lot of crayons, pencils, colours, glue etc. With these activities, the children are taught to differentiate the colours. They also develop creativity and imagination. When the parents come, they join their children in this activity.” (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)*

In Klubicek, the social workers work according to the Good Start methodology. However, it is difficult to be consistent because the pedagogic staff in Klubicek is frequently changing. For example, a teacher that joined Klubicek in May of 2018 was not trained on the Good Start methodology until August. Since that time, she is trying to use the methods from the methodology. The methods of the Good Start methodology, focus on setting rules, having a positive attitude towards children, praising and rewarding children, and being consistent in teaching children to concentrate and finish tasks. The last focus is very important because mothers of the children in Klubicek are rarely consistent. In addition, when a child misbehaves, the teaching personnel calmly explains what the child should do and how he/she should behave. The teacher explains that if the child doesn't follow the instructions, it is difficult to reach goals and work together. The advantage of working with a small group of children is that the teachers can give each child enough attention. They encourage the children to work together when playing games. Their negative behaviour is ignored because they are sometimes moody and do not behave properly, but this is only because they have not been shown how to behave properly. However, when a problem occurs, the teacher tries to show the children the steps to find the right solution to the situation.

## A Detailed description of the methods used in Klubicek

### PRAISING CHILDREN

Praising is one method that teachers can use in all activities with children. It offers children support to grow up a mentally healthy person. In order for praise to be effective, it has to be specific to a particular activity. In positively assessing a child's activities, adults demonstrate to children that they are confident in them. This builds the child's self-confidence, helps them create new relationships, and stimulates their desire to discover and explore new things. In addition, teachers support the ability of children to assess and praise themselves.

When praise is not specific, and is instead expressed with general phrases such as “good job”, it can lead to the child's misconception of their extraordinariness. It can also increase the risk of the child not being able to deal with failure.

Constructive praise teaches the child to appreciate specific details. When a child does not succeed, he/she should be able to cope with failure and find another means to support his/her self-confidence. The way in which adults support, assess, and encourage children teaches them how to deal with obstacles, failures, and disappointments. This type of support teaches children to be independent and responsible. (Havrdová & Vyhnánková 2015: 45)

#### The principles of encouragement could be following:

→ Praising should be specific and linked to the child's activity.

*“You are doing a super job of drawing that cat.”*

*“You are being a good friend by helping find Anna's coat.”*

*“I like the way you remembered to walk quietly to your desk.”*

*“Thanks for being so patient and waiting while I was finishing my work.”*

*“Keep at it, you are working really hard and getting it!”*

→ Show enthusiasm. Smile at the child, use an enthusiastic tone of voice and positive facial expressions. Give the child your full attention.

→ In addition to the result, it is important to praise the process.

*“I know that it is complicated for you, but you are making progress.”*

*“You really know how to tidy up, you put all the lids on the felt pens!”*

- Search for reasons to praise the children who do not fulfil tasks correctly. Praise the specifics such as their effort and progress.
- Praise should not be combined with critique because it may be confusing, especially for young children.
- Use four times more praise than critique.

In a group of children:

- Respect the differences among children. Do not create a competitive atmosphere.
- Pay attention to all children. Teach them to be patient because you are not able to take care of all of them at once.
- Train children to self-praise.
- Involve other children in praise.

*"Lenka, look how Jana sits quietly."*

(Havrdová & Vyhnanáková 2015: 46-47; Webster-Stratton 2010: 80-90)

The social workers from Klubíček have a positive experience with praise according to the Good Start methodology: *"We can acknowledge that the Good Start methodology works because we can see the results after two and half years. We praise the children for their efforts and in front of their parents because it supports the self-confidence of both the child and parents"* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

## GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

An example of a good practice example includes one child who managed to get into kindergarten thanks to the support of social workers from the Caritas. They worked not only with the child in Klubíček, but they also supported the family through other services provided by Social Activation Service. For example, the mother barely knew how to cook (*"she did not even know how to cut the onion"*), but with the Caritas help she was able to attend cooking classes. She has two children, an older boy and younger girl. The girl receives most of the mother's attention, which is one of the reasons why the boy's development is delayed.

*"When the boy was three years old he didn't talk, didn't react, had diapers, had difficulty walking, he was even refusing contact with his mother, he didn't want to talk to her, sometimes he also refused contact with us and he didn't want to take our hands. Gradually, he adapted to the group. He was in Klubíček one and half years when he started to articulate syllables, he liked to look through the books which he commented with his syllables. Then he started feeling safe in Klubíček's environment and was more relaxed, but then, problems started when he would leave the club to go back home. The reason was that in his home, conditions were very poor – it was wet, there was water all over the ground, the family lived in an old house. When we arrived there for the first time, there were beetles in the beds and it was very dirty. So the mother started to learn how to clean because she was not taught in her own home when she was a child. She didn't realize that the children should get something to drink or eat. The children slept in insufficient conditions and we couldn't understand how it was possible that the mother didn't see it. When the children came to Klubíček, their clothes were always wet. Now, the boy and his sister are already in kindergarten. But it is still evident that he doesn't want to go back home. But the mother is trying hard. She got pregnant for the first time at 17 years old. In Klubíček, the boy learned to go to the toilet and express himself with simple sentences. He is now in kindergarten. He has some physical troubles but he is in an ordinary class with other children."* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

## Methods used in working with parents

Social Activation Service Caritas (SAS) includes working with both children and parents. Their parental skills are supported both in the home and at the pre-school club Klubíček. The SAS offers the following activities:

- The support of parental competences (adjustment to the daily program, instruction on good hygienic habits, modification of the eating regimen, assistance with health care provisions, and support in spending time with their child)
- Support in preparation for school (possibly tutoring children in the home environment in which the parents are actively involved) and communication with school personnel.

→ Support of social skills and habits of children, support in preparing children to enter primary school and after-school activities (Klubíček, individual work in the field).

Parents are especially interested in the eating habits of children and ask how to include healthier foods into their child's diet. Another common question is when to start complementary feeding. The other issue is how to divide one's attention when there is more than one child in family, how to manage stressful situations, and what to do when children do not listen. They seek help in structuring the child's day and maintaining a schedule for the whole family. In addition, parents seek advice on how they can help their children fulfil the school curriculum.

Each client has an individual support plan that outlines the particular ways in which the client plans to cooperate with SAS. The social worker helps parents set goals that reflect their needs that must be addressed. The social worker regularly meets with parents and gives them feedback. He visits the households once a week. When the family needs more support, and the social worker is capable of doing so, it is possible to visit the family more often. In addition, parents and children take part in activities at Klubíček that are focused on actively spending time together – learning games, songs and rhymes etc. The parents are obliged to participate in several activities each month and also fulfil their individual plan.

The activities for parents include:

- cooking: Organized every other Tuesday, parents are obligated to participate in it at least once. *„They learn to prepare adequate and healthy meals, and then we eat it together so they learn how to dine together with their children. There is a limited capacity for this activity, a maximum of four mothers.”* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)
- joint parent-child activity: It happens Every Wednesday, parents are invited to join their children in playing games. Parent should attend at least twice a month.
- consultation with a social worker: It takes place every Friday and the parents should participate at least once a month.

The social worker Jana described the SAS activities and their impact on parents as follows: *„We have organized joint activities, creative workshops for parents together with children. What is interesting is that the mothers enjoy it even more than the children. Besides cooking, we baked Christmas cookies with families and it was really successful because the mothers wouldn't manage it alone at home. Then, we organized lectures in a shelter which were focused on family topics, financial literacy, promoting work habits, sewing etc. The project on financial literacy is interconnected with the sewing workshop. The mothers sew something and then we sell the products at different events so they can either get some money for it or receive some food aid. We have been arranging this workshop for already three years.”* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)



Source: Czech Caritas Roudnice nad Labem, <http://www.charitaroudnice.cz/>

In addition, social workers prepare informal meetings for parents which are organized as trips. These meetings primarily focus on supporting parental competences and spending time with their children. It has been noted that parents do not know how to spend free time with their children, so these trips were presented as one of many options. The experience

from these trips was summarized by Jana: „*We made three trips, the first one was to the zoo on request of one mother who really enjoyed the visit. Then we took parents and children to the protected natural area, and the third one was to the lake not so far from Roudnice. In Roudnice, we also cooperated with Castellan (governor of a castle). He allowed us to use the garden in the summer. There were sheep as well as an inflatable pool, therefore, the children really enjoyed it. We planted peas there but the children didn't want to eat them. In general, they don't eat vegetables because they are not taught to eat them.*” (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

The main obstacles in working with parents from socially disadvantaged or culturally different backgrounds were defined as follows: working with these clients puts social workers under a lot of time pressure. It is long-term, time-consuming job. It is first very important to gain the confidence of family members, which takes a long time, and only afterwards is it possible to start making improvements. The other obstacle is that clients migrate a lot and often move away before it is possible to make any major progress. It is necessary to search for better ways to motivate parents.



Source: Czech Caritas Roudnice nad Labem, <http://www.charitaroudnice.cz/>

### 3. Cooperation with a formal pre-school institution

#### The reason for establishing partnership

Caritas Roudnice nad Labem has cooperated with Kindergarten Slunicko since 2016. This cooperation was facilitated by Schola Empirica's project on inclusive methods of work with children and parents. The main reason for establishing this partnership was to overcome barriers between the formal pre-school institution and families from socially disadvantaged and culturally different environments. Their cooperation helps to reduce the fears and prejudices of both teachers and parents.

The partnership aims to remove the communication barrier between teachers and parents. The social worker Jana described the problems that have occurred during this cooperation: „*In the beginning, the mothers had problems with the teachers'. The communication between parent and teacher is quick in the kindergarten, which was complicated for these mothers because various issues occurred e.g. 'the teacher looked badly at me', 'why did the teacher ask me about my social benefits in front of the other parents?'. Thanks to the patient director everything was solved in the end. However, without the close cooperation between Caritas and Kindergarten Slunicko it would not be possible.*” (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

#### The strategy of cooperation

The strategy of cooperation was introduced by the project managed by Schola Empirica. However, Kindergarten Slunicko and Caritas offered their input, and searched for the most effective ways to help children adapt to formal education. Therefore, the three institutions collaborated to create the strategy. It involves following measures:

- The cooperation between the school assistant and social worker involves supporting the relationships between teachers, parents and children. It is a long adaptation process in which the families have to gain confidence in the partners and realize that there is no danger in being a part of the kindergarten's community. Meetings between the school assistant, the director of kindergarten and the social worker take place once a week. During these meetings, the information about the families and possible solutions for complicated family situations are discussed. After two years, communication between the school assistant and the social worker becomes more informal.
- The parents are supported in various ways. This involves motivational meetings between the director of the kindergarten and the parents, adaptation meetings that take place one month before the child's entry into the kindergarten, and then during the first two months of their enrollment. The meetings help diminish the distrust of mothers, help families address the teachers, and provide the possibility for mothers to participate in the kindergarten daily program.
- The teachers are also supported in dealing with difficulties when trying to establish initial contact with new families. The biggest problem is communicating with some of the families. This may include the complaints of parents, different educational principles, and a priori distrust of parents towards kindergarten. Among the mentioned issues, others could be a specified parent's disrespect for the rules and requirements of the kindergarten and the teacher's impatience to work individually with families.
- The adaptation process of children is enriched by the inclusive aspects of the Good Start methodology. In addition, there is a school assistant who helps the child build trust, become self-reliant, and learn habits of good behaviour. There is also another aspect of the adaptation process in which the children become gradually accustomed to the environment of the kindergarten during the two-month adaptation period from April to May that is monitored by a school assistant and a social worker provided by the project.

The cooperation between Kindergarten Slunicko and the Caritas Roudnice and the activities they organized made it possible to support children from socially disadvantaged or culturally different areas. Firstly, children from Klubíček are invited to participate in theatre performances, Children's day celebrations, and other events which are organized by Kindergarten Slunicko. Secondly, once a week, children may attend the educational pre-primary preparation. Thirdly, young children are accompanied into the kindergarten by a social worker. Fourthly, the social worker participates in the kindergarten program once a week. She is in the classroom with the children from supported families and observes the behaviour of the child within a group. It also gives her an opportunity to work more closely with teachers and assistants. When she communicates with parents, she can discuss the child's developmental goals.

The last point is particularly important because it is common for a child to behave differently in the home environment than in the kindergarten. In the kindergarten, the teacher only knows how the child behaves in the classroom, whereas the parents and social worker only know how the child behaves in the home environment. The partnership between Kindergarten Slunicko and Caritas provides the opportunity for the social worker to get acquainted with the child's behaviour in both environments and therefore, can help both parents and teachers support their child in many different ways.

At the same time, social workers who work in informal pre-school centers and organizations for children and their parents draw inspiration from the programs of the kindergarten, activities, pedagogical methods, and approaches. This greatly benefits and supports their professional development.

## The visible outcomes of this cooperation

During the spring months, the social workers start to work more intensively with parents of children who are of age to enter compulsory kindergarten. First, they identify these families and acquaint the parents and children with the kindergarten environment. Due to their efforts, four children from socially disadvantaged and culturally different environment entered Kindergarten Slunicko in 2017 and seven children joined the pre-school in 2018.

There are usually barriers between these families and the kindergarten staff, but thanks to the cooperation between the Caritas and Kindergarten Slunicko, parents have an opportunity to learn to trust the formal education system. Parents are motivated to learn more about the system when they accompany their children to the school.

*„From our perspective, our goal has been achieved, there are visible results in the development of the children if they stay in Klubíček longer. [...] Schola Empirica's project has helped a lot and it is great model that should be followed by informal institutions in the Czech Republic.”* (Interview Jana, Marie, and Helena, 7. 11. 2018)

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# ECEC Play Hub Spišský Hrhov

## Slovakia

It is necessary to point out that there is a unique partnership between ECEC Play Hub, Primary School and Nursery School, the municipality of Spišský Hrhov, and, Wide Open School (NGO) on the issue of Roma integration. This collaboration has been recognized by several important national and international institutions such as the World Bank, the European Commission, the political bodies of several countries, ambassadors and worldwide media and press outlets.

Primary and Nursery school professionals have full time duties which include organizing programmes, trainings, content, and the curriculum of ECEC Play Hub. The Play Hub is located in the very centre of the village, in a newly reconstructed building owned by the municipality. It includes offices, several play rooms, bathrooms and a conference area.

## 1. General description of the informal pre-school institution

### Specification of the locality



The ECEC Play Hub is located in the village of Spišský Hrhov. The village lies in the basin of the River Hornád in the vicinity of the district town of Levoča. It has 1,700 residents, nearly 400 of whom are Roma. For the past ten years, it has experienced an unprecedented amount of development and population growth. While the Roma population has not significantly increased, the number of majority residents has grown by nearly 30%. The construction of individual residences has begun to take place on 600 building properties, is beginning to take place, or will be in the near future. These efforts make it possible to assume additional population growth by at least 100%. We can broadly label Spišský Hrhov as the most dynamically developing village in the Spiš region over the past 10 years. It has devoted itself to long-term improvement of the living conditions of the local Roma community and treats them as an equal group of citizens. The Roma community in Spišský Hrhov is equipped with technical infrastructure of equal measure to other parts of the village, and all services of social infrastructure are available to it without exception.

*„We should have had this long before, it is so simple, rare and unique in its context! A real place to bring all kids together. Your Play Hub is a good example to other municipalities that struggle with prejudices against Roma.“*

**Dr. Vladimír Ledecký, mayor of Spišský Hrhov**

New York Times:

*SPISSKY HRHOV, Slovakia — In a part of eastern Slovakia where other villages are withering, Spišský Hrhov shows signs of surprising prosperity. The houses are solid and well-tended. There is running water and electricity. A former distillery has been turned into an art space, its facade decorated with a colourful mosaic. But there is something even more striking about this place. About 350 of the 1,800 residents are Roma, a group commonly shunted aside, impoverished, undereducated and widely disparaged across Europe. "Twenty years ago, this village nearly disappeared," said Vladimír Ledecký, 51, who has been mayor for 18 of those years. "We were down to 700 residents, half of them Roma," he explained. "The problem for Slovak villages is that when the population becomes half Roma, the other half tends to move out."*

*The situation for Roma has improved vastly in the village, said Petronela Kacová, 27, who lives in one of the Roma neighborhood's newest apartment blocks with her husband and two young children. Until she got this new home, the family had to share one room in her mother-in-law's house. Now, she said, relations are cordial between Roma and non-Roma residents, unlike in other nearby villages.*

*"The children know each other in school, so they play together," she said. "And we sometimes sit together, Slovaks and Roma, when we are at the pub together."*

## Wide Open School, n.o.

Wide Open School is a non-profit organisation composed of a team of experts whose vision is for all families, especially families with young children, to live in heterogeneous, tolerant communities, to have access to education and social services, and to have access to reliable and competent public administrations in addressing their needs. They care about the needs of families from heterogeneous communities, especially those with young children. They contribute to the development of a stimulating environment with an emphasis on education, employment, housing and health. Wide Open School eliminates intolerance and facilitates dialogue among stakeholders.

## Primary School and Nursery School Spišský Hrhov

**(The ECEC Play Hub is situated in the school building and most of its teachers volunteer at Hub.)**

The primary school with a nursery school in Spišský Hrhov is a fully organised state countryside school with Slovak as its teaching language. The school has 9 grades and, in accordance with the international standards for classification of education (ISCED), offers primary education for approximately 320 pupils and pre-primary education for 80 pupils every school year. The school provides primary and secondary levels (from 6 to 16 years old) and optional activities, like sports, gardening, cooking, access to computers, and language classes. The educational process is facilitated by 20 fully qualified teachers and professional employees, and some of them speak Romani. The average number of children per class is 20. Two special classes are available for children with specific needs and who require special attention (100% of children in these classes are Roma).

Of the total number of pupils, 51% are of Roma origin, which results in the incorporation of elements of inclusion and multicultural enrichment to the school's educational programme. This also results in the school's cooperation with non-profit and non-governmental organisations. Many schools in the region consider the presence of a large number of Roma pupils to be a negative. In this way, **The School in Spišský Hrhov has become a positive example of problem-free co-existence, cooperation with the removal of minority tensions and barriers.**

Description:

The school teaching foreign languages, computer literacy, and reading literacy. The school also focuses on strengthening social and environmental awareness, respect for regional and folklore traditions, and a variety of other activities that are not commonly accessible at schools of the same type in this region. Emphasis is placed on thoroughly preparing pupils for secondary school education. The effect of this preparation is evident from excellent student scores on the Monitor 9 that have improved across the district in recent years. Every ninth class has a number of Roma pupils who are not only completing their primary education with successful scores on the Monitor 9 exam, but who are also continuing on to grammar or vocational school. On average, 90% of these children finish the secondary school. However, 10% of Roma girls leave before finishing the 9th grade (during the 6th or 7th grade, they become pregnant, leave the school, and obtain social benefits).

Ten Roma pupils who left the school came back at a later date were provided a second chance to finish their studies. They **received free textbooks from the school**.

**A non-exhaustive list of projects developed at the school are indicated below:**

- “Not-a-test” is an initiative started by the school director to increase student visits to the school library.
- Foreign qualified teachers and lecturers from the USA and Great Britain help Roma pupils practice conversational and correspondence skills. They simulate scenarios to practice necessary skills for abroad work or travel. The lecturers also provided education to the pupils’ parents.
- The programme of the Regional development partnership called the Roma Educational Development Fund (RED Fund) tutors intellectually gifted Roma students. This programme is financed by American donor and philanthropist Jarret Schecter from New York, who is known for activities in the process of supporting education of marginalised pupils.
- “Let’s Give the Weak a Chance”: thanks to a grant offered by the Orange Foundation in the amount of EUR 3,000, a selected group of 50 Roma children took part in activities focused on increasing English language literacy in the during the summer holidays.
- Pupils from the school won first place in the Slovak-wide Medicinal Plant Olympics.
- Through the school activity “Tourist Guide Services”, and with the help of a lecturer from Sandwell College, University of Birmingham (United Kingdom), pupils participated in an intensive language and professional preparation programme for tour guide services in the region.
- The organisation People in Need Slovakia supports the organisation of afternoon activities in the segregated community of Roškovce.
- Together with volunteers from the same organisation, the school organises “green days” to promote environmental protection and equality of people of all different ethnic backgrounds.
- The school was involved with a project called “An Equal Chance” that aimed to support the social integration of Roma pupils, reduce the number of Roma segregated classes, create a model of an integrated (inclusive) school environment, improve quality education, and train pedagogical workers on intercultural diversity.
- Currently, with the project “The World of Bread – Bread of the World” the school carries out non-traditional teaching strategies to develop the pupil’s relationships to nature, crafts, and traditions.
- In cooperation with a methodological-pedagogical centre, a day-long educational system for pupils from marginalised Roma communities was launched.

## **ECEC Play Hub Spišský Hrhov: The main goals and target groups**

Play Hub is a safe education and care space where relationships are built between Roma and non-Roma young children and their families. This new toy library is equipped with brand new furniture, lots of books, and modern toys and games. The activities have become popular among both Roma and non-Roma community of the village. Volunteers and teachers offer children more than just a place to play – children come together to draw, play sports, read, and to attend different workshops. Parents also benefit from available parental support and training.

The Play Hub was founded in 2015 with the support of the EU co-funding and municipal budget.

**MAIN GOALS:**

- Support practitioners and other stakeholders in the development of skills and competences, and to organise inclusive non-formal community-based ECEC activities, involving young children of all backgrounds, their families and older adults;
- Ease children’s transition experience to formal education;
- Support parents’ competences and support parenting in the first years of a child’s life;
- Challenge discrimination against very young and older adults, as well as against children and families from ethnic minorities and migrant backgrounds, and those living in difficult circumstances.



#### TARGET GROUPS:

- Roma children and non-Roma children
- Parents
- Grandparents,
- Pre-school teachers and Primary School teachers
- Local authorities
- Volunteers
- Health service authorities.

*"I have never felt so welcome and respected before." said Anna Dirdova, Roma mother of six, after visiting the newly opened Play Hub in Spišský Hrhov, Slovakia. "The new place just visited with my kids is something that we should have had much sooner" – she continued. "My boys are happy to play with other kids from the village and nobody treats them any differently. They even have the chance to use books and toys that I could not afford. What a perfect place!" – Ms Dirdova concluded. (Anna Dirdova, mother, 45)*

In 2018, over 65 children ages 3-6, and 65 parents, visited Play Hub on a regular basis. Play Hub employs two full-time community workers who communicate with parents in person, through email and SMS notifications. To advertise the organisation, posters and banners have been displayed in several locations throughout the village. Also, Primary School and Nursery School staff share information and news updates via pupils and their relatives.

*"On Friday evening, my mom took me to the Play Hub at our great school. I was amazed to see the colours of the room. All different colours you can imagine. It had many shelves. It was huge and spacious. We decided to go to the kids' section which was in the back of the room. I was happy to see all the different toys. The entire floor was full of brand new toys. Me and my mom chose some board games and had a wonderful time together. We don't play at home because we don't have such modern and new toys. My father had left us when I was a baby, so my mom takes care of me on her own. Before we left, Tatiana, a volunteer girl, told my mom we could take some toys with us home. I simply couldn't believe that. We took a Lego set home and spent a long time constructing it until I fell asleep!" (Zuzana, 8 y.o)*

## THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

In Spišský Hrhov, 80% of Roma parents are employed. Most Roma families (90%) live in brick houses with running water and electricity, and 10% live in brand new flats. Only 5% of families have more than 3 children. All Roma families speak the Roma language and 95% of them also speak Slovak. There is a very low crime rate of less than 2%, which only consists of small thefts.

*„I have never experienced the atmosphere where so many different kids play together just as in our Play Hub. It is a unique place for us Roma mothers.“ (Monika, 36 years old, mom of 4 children)*



The big issue is that very few children attend pre-school. Therefore, the main reason for attending the Play Hub is to improve local Roma welfare, and to motivate young parents to enroll their children in pre-school to increase their chances of receiving a good education. The average age of children that use the organisation's services is between 3–12 years, but some services are offered to children over 15 years of age. 70% of kids attend the Play Hub on daily basis, Monday through Friday. The average duration of one's stay is about 2 hours.

*“ECEC Play Hub in Spišský Hrhov represents a world of opportunities to the kids of Roma communities. The management and volunteers are aware of their important role in the lives of kids from less lucky environments and find themselves tutors of their parents as well.*

*Thanks to a new Play Hub volunteers are able to stimulate kids' development at a very early, pre-school age. We can see their success today. Fifteen years ago such a scenario had been just a wish. I am so glad to see schools, the municipality, and organisations such as Wide Open School who consider the future of these kids to be important.” (Vladimíra Ledecká, Office of the President of the Slovak republic)*

## 2. Inclusive methods used in ECEC Play Hub Spišský Hrhov

### Methods used in work with children

#### WATCHING AND READING FAIRY TALES

→ the age of children involved: 3–6

→ the number of children annually involved: 55

- how/if parents are involved: they take care of kids and watch together with kids
- problems addressed: lack of use of Slovak, kids listen to stories in Slovak because they will be using it in pre-school and on.
- frequency and length of activities: once a week
- the number of children involved in the activities: 15
- steps of the activity: meet at the scheduled time, introduce the activity, have someone volunteer to record it, watch the video, discuss it, participate in ongoing activities to improve parent involvement. Participate in activities to improve children's communication skills, vocabulary, and use of imagination with activities connected to the main idea of the fairy tale story.
- tools and materials needed: projector, video disc, speakers, comfortable sofas, chairs, tables, and refreshments
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: children and parents increase their vocabulary and knowledge

### **FUN DRAWING LESSONS**

- the age of children involved: 2–6
- the number of children annually involved: 50
- how/if parents are involved: parents assist children, follow leader's instructions, help children learn the colours, teach drawing techniques
- problems addressed: coping with instructions, learning colours and shapes, general preparatory activities for pre-school age children
- frequency and length of activities: every week, 40 mins per session
- the number of children involved in the activity: 10
- steps of the activity: hand out papers and pencils, give instructions, start warm-up activity, set a challenge, set goals, exhibit the children's work, hold a competition, all children awarded
- tools and materials needed: A clear explanation of the task, paper, colouring books, pencils
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: build new skills, build trust, have fun, increase vocabulary and motion skills.

### **ROMA CULTURE DAY AS A COMMUNAL GATHERING**

- the age of children involved: 2–6
- the number of children annually involved: 30–40
- how/if parents are involved: prepare programme and costumes together, present Roma culture, food, traditions, and customs to Slovak citizens of the village
- problems addressed: avoid prejudices
- frequency and length of activities: twice a year
- the number of children involved in activity: 40
- steps of the activity: plan with volunteers and Play Hub leaders, develop the programme, hold trainings and rehearsals, prepare advertisements such as posters, invitations, hold the event, evaluate the process
- tools and materials needed: computers, printers, costumes, food, gadgets
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: better relationships between different culture groups, an increase in knowledge of different cultures, intergenerational learning, inclusiveness, activity that attracts the wider community

## COMMUNITY TRIP IN NATURE WITH A BARBECUE

- the age of children involved: 2–7
- the number of children annually involved: 45
- how/if parents are involved: assisting volunteers and community workers, helping prepare meals, childminding, preparing activities in the nature
- problems addressed: People getting to know each other to get rid of prejudices
- frequency and length of activities: three times during summer, 4 hours per event
- the number of children involved in the activity: 34
- steps of the activity: meet, planning, discussing, include children in decision making and planning, shopping for supplies, start activity
- tools and materials needed: sports equipment, food, medicine kit
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: mutual communication, no prejudices, Roma and non Roma kids play and spend time together

## PLAYING WITH TOYS AND PARENTS – INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

- the age of children involved: 2–6
- the number of children annually involved: 65
- how/if parents are involved: play with kids
- problems addressed: lack of toys at home, meeting new kids, lack of bonding time with peers, following instructions, learning responsibility
- frequency and length of activities: 2 hours per session
- the number of children involved in the activity: 15
- single steps of the activity: planning, choosing toys, setting rules, having fun while planning,
- tools and materials needed: toys and games
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: improved vocabulary, no prejudices, meeting new friends

## VISITING THE FORMAL PRE-SCHOOL (A CRUCIAL ACTIVITY IN MANY WAYS)

- the age of children involved: 3–6
- the number of children annually involved: most of them, if possible
- how/if parents are involved: they accompany children (a very important aspect)
- problems addressed: getting used to the nursery school environment, pointing out its importance, necessity and safety features, meeting other parents, helping children overcome fear of attending school, gradually diminishing the unwritten Roma rule of keeping children at home and without a pre-school education
- frequency and length of activities: once a month, at least one hour per session
- the number of children involved in activity: only 10
- steps of the activity: communicating with nursery school staff, setting targets and goals, preparing activity plans, and meeting and playing with children at Nursery school
- tools and materials needed: none
- visible positive/negative outcomes of activities: parents come to consider pre-school formal education as important and safe

## Methods used in work with parents

- Weekday afternoon and weekend trainings and meetings focused on responsible relationships, motherhood, marriage, breastfeeding, safe sex, family economy, saving money, meal preparation, household maintenance, gardening, and most importantly, pre-school education.
- A school psychologist meets with parents of pre-school children to promote the benefits of attending day care at school. In particular, the psychologist shares data on how spending more time in school day care can improve academic results.
- How to develop mental faculties through games series.
- Personal services offered every two weeks to help sort out difficult situations based on trust and privacy, as well as opportunities to meet with a psychologist, finance advisor, health care, nurses, school advisor and others.
- Unemployment office consultancy.
- Information on NGO involvement with their projects and solutions.
- Common activities with children – drawing, dancing, singing, outdoor and indoor sports, trips and festivals.
- Activities focused on inclusion with the majority population – common activities include mothers' meetings, clubs, cooking sessions, competitions, and tutorials.
- Workshops, trainings, crafts, and any other useful skill building activities.

## 3. Cooperation with formal pre-school settings

Play Hub closely cooperates with the Nursery School in Spišský Hrhov as both institutions aim to get as many Roma children as possible to enroll in pre-school formal education.

- Good practice examples
- Helping each other to enroll more kids
- Support community planning and improving educational needs

### THE AIM OF THE PARTNERSHIP:

- To create an inclusive environment
- To integrate Roma kids into mainstream education
- To avoid prejudices

### TARGET GROUPS INVOLVED:

- Roma and non Roma children, parents, teachers, local authorities, and educational advisors

### THE STRATEGY OF COOPERATION:

- Hold common meetings
- Create a community action plan
- Conduct research and surveys
- Collaborate of management between the municipal board, Primary School Headmaster, and the NGO

## THE VISIBLE OUTCOMES OF THIS COOPERATION:

→ More Roma children in mainstream and pre-school education

### Good practice examples:

#### “The World of Bread – Bread of the World”.

The goal of this initiative is to carry out non-traditional teaching strategies to develop the pupil's relationship to nature, crafts, and traditions, which leads to the development of entrepreneurship competencies. The theme is bread – its production, traditions, an explanation of the different types of bread in the world, sales and advertising. A part of the project is devoted exclusively to the Roma tradition of baking unleavened bread called *marikle*.

Most pupils, and Roma pupils in particular, know of the times of distress in which this unleavened bread was one of the few foods available. This initiative is an effort by the developers of the project – the teachers – to provide children who come from socially stronger environments with the opportunity to learn about this aspect of Roma life. The pupils deal with subjects in six blocks of interactive forums and experiential activities. With the help of experts, pupils carry out activities in the form of and reading case studies and preparing a business plan, presenting it, production, sales management, and more specific to the project, building an oven, baking, and the like. They will try to “sell” their own handmade bread and baked goods with ingredients from their own herb garden. In the final phase of the project, both Roma and non-Roma residents of the village attend meetings organised in order to present the project results. A total of 120 Roma pupils and 30 Roma parents are involved.



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## 1. General description of the informal pre-school institution

The vision of *Drömverkstan* – The Dream Workshop – is to provide children with opportunities to be creative in their spare time, but also offer schools a chance to come to the Dream Workshop and create. Here, the teaching can be concretised in a creative, accessible and pleasurable way.

This is how The Dream Workshop describes itself:

*At Drömverkstan, if you are interested in art, you have the opportunity to create your own artwork and use different artistic techniques and materials - or maybe you love painting, drawing, pottery, carving wood or casting in plaster. It is also a good place to get out of the house and meet new friends your own age, who share the same interests as you. You also have the chance to present your own solo exhibition at our gallery.*

*At Drömverkstan, we try to keep the noise level down, as well as maintain a clean and tidy environment.*

*We have four studios filled with materials for various purposes.*

*In the woodshop, for example, you can carve butter knives, build small toys, or design a wooden bowl. You have access to various tools and machines. The machines may only be used by the staff. However, if you are over 18, and familiar with using these types of machines, you can use them on your own. Otherwise the staff will help you.*

*In the sewing studio there is fabric material so that, for example, you can sew a bag, a pillow, embroider a piece of fine cloth, or knit a scarf. We have some sewing machines that you can use when being here. If assistance is needed, the staff is ready to help.*

*In the large studio, you have access to all sorts of materials you may need for all of your art creations.*

## Specification of the locality

The Dream Workshop is located in the centre of Söderhamn and readily accessible. Children living outside the city can easily reach the city center by bus.

### Dream workshop in Söderhamn



The Dream workshop consists of four studios: a carpentry studio, sewing workshop, a ceramics studio, and a larger studio for exhibitions.

### The Heart of The Dream workshop





Media workshop







### Dream Workshop: The main goals and target groups

At Dream Workshop, teaching is concretised in a creative, easy-to-understand and appreciated manner. The reason for this is because the workshop is based on the background of educators and the need for an aesthetic place, open to all ages. The children produce and create artwork that is then displayed in an exhibition, and afterwards the children get to bring their creations home. It is meant to be a place for children to gather off of the city streets where they might get into trouble.

The Dream Workshop started as a temporary project, but has become a permanent centre for the past 11 years, supported financially by the Söderhamn municipality. It was meant to replace the community youth centres that closed down in order to decrease the number of youth disturbances in town and several schools. The target groups of the workshop are children and adolescents, and the goal is to promote and develop creative expression and support employment. There are over 400 children and adolescents who attend the workshops. There are also additional spare time activities that attract more participants.

The children also come from school with their group/class. More information is available on the municipality's website and social media.

### The Composition of families

The children that participate come from different social, economic and cultural groups. Most children are from minority cultures with socio-economic difficulties. Söderhamn has received a large number of refugees from many different countries and cultures. Few children come from stronger financial backgrounds, possibly due to the fact that they have access to other activities in their spare time. The age of attendees varies from the pre-school to upper secondary school age.

One of the main purposes of the Dream Workshop is to provide children and young people an open space so that they can spend their free time in a safe environment rather than on the streets.

During the day, there are activities for children ages 4 and up. In the evening, children primarily ages 10 and up participate. It is also possible for adults to attend during that time as well. The length of each activity varies. It depends on what projects the pre-school/school is in the process of working on, and would like to continue working on in the

Dream Workshop. Throughout the day, there are scheduled activities for pre-school teachers. In the evening, children can choose how long they want to participate in the activities. The workshops are related to the curriculum of the pre-schools and schools. Workshop leaders work towards the same goals as the schools and aim to further support the children's development. However, these activities are supplementary and do not replace pre-school/school.

## 2. Inclusive methods used in The Dream Workshop

### Methods used in work with children and parents

Group sizes range from 4 to 30 participants that come from pre-schools, primary schools, and schools for the intellectually challenged (Special needs comprehensive school).

Special needs comprehensive schools are intended to provide pupils who have intellectual disabilities with an education that is personalized to their individual needs. This form of education is necessary in order to impart knowledge and values, contribute to one's personal development and a sense of community, and to provide a good foundation for active participation in society.

There are not many parents involved. The staff mostly meets parents when they pick their children up from school. Parents are indirectly involved with the pre-school and school, as there are no specific educational opportunities for parents. Parental participation is voluntary. For example, some parents contribute materials for workshops such as fabrics, buttons, etc. The Dream Workshop aims to increase parent involvement and participation.

The methods used by educators during the workshops are based on the children's interests: The educators demonstrate the types of projects and activities that attendees can participate in, and then children are free to choose the workshops they want to work in. Children of different ages are involved in the workshops at the same time. If the children get too loud or rowdy, the instructors have a dialogue about being quieter. The educators always start with basic exercises due to the fact that they see the difficulty that some children have using scissors, paper and pens. The length of each activity varies. The most popular activities are free creation and working with different materials, which are based on a particular topic or one's personal experiences. Other activities include attending exhibits in the city, going to the beach, or camping. The Dream Workshop collaborates with the Young Art organization in the Province of Hälsingland. The purpose of this collaboration is to instruct children on how they can develop their interests and creative abilities. The Dream Workshop also collaborates with *Bilda*, an adult educational association. With this partnership, they educate adults and parents on a variety of topics and issues. For example, they provide services for parents with alcohol problems. They also hold joint parent and child groups where they discuss numerous subjects.

A particular feature of the Dream Workshop is their emphasis on using natural, reusable materials such as stones, tree cones and wooden pieces. This is meant to teach children and youth about sustainable development.

The Dream Workshop has been praised by the media, as well as by other Swedish municipalities and countries that have visited it. The Dream Workshop is involved in a variety of EU projects. This is how people in the municipality know about the activities of the Dream Workshop. Every child and parent can apply to the Dream Workshop and initiate the process of enrolling in pre-school.

## 3. Cooperation with formal pre-school institutions

The goal of the Dream Workshop is to collaborate with pre-schools and schools. Today, the institution is mostly visited by primary schools. The goal is for these children to develop in subjects that are based on their interests and the primary school curriculum. Pre-schools are not as familiar with the activities offered by the workshop, which aim to promote creative expression and reduce conflicts between students. It is important that the educators have a good relationship with the children. The positive relationships between children and between children and adults promotes productive conversation about how the children feel, which in turn prevents potential conflicts.

### Jullarna

Drömverkstan cooperates with one of the pre-schools on a project that deals with magic fairy tales. These fairy tales have characters called *Jullarna*. These characters are Icelandic individuals with magical powers whose task is to help

children in different ways. There are seven Jullas and each one, in addition to its unique personality, has its own special strength such as love, courage, friendship, passion, will, power and security. All of the Jullas loves sweets and are very



mischievous.

The Jullas can make themselves invisible and move through time and space. Children are the only ones who can see the Jullas, and they tend to be best at discovering the Jullas. If an adult comes into the vicinity, the Jullas make themselves invisible or turn into cuddly animals.

The children from the pre-school started this project after acquainting themselves with the tools and materials available at the Dream Workshop. Their task was to work in pairs and make houses for the different Jullas. This activity develops creativity and the ability to cooperate. The children learn to compromise and use their words by describing what they want and how they intend to complete the task. Some of the children planned what they wanted to make, while others were happy to improvise. Some tried carpentry and used techniques such as nailing, sawing and filing.



The Julle Vinatta has the strength of friendship and likes to cook and bake. With Vinatta, the children discuss friendship, meeting new friends, and how to take care of friends that are new to a group. The also learn how to help someone who is alone and has no friends. The purpose of this activity is to acquaint children with how others feel and ask them to come up with concrete tips on how to help someone who is alone or new to a group.

# Horsforth Children's Centre

## Great Britain



## 1. General description of the informal pre-school setting

This case study presents the Horsforth Children's Centre as an example of the informal pre-school institution. The Children's Centre can be considered the most relevant example of how the informal pre-school institution prepares children for formal education. However, it is necessary to take into account that all Children's Centres are currently under scrutiny and that as many as 1,000 have been shut down nationwide. The organisation, tasks and finances are, therefore, constantly changing and the information included in this report might be different within a few months. Also, some of the data is only available for all of the Centres in a certain region as a whole (in our case, for all the Centres in Leeds) and not for individual Centres.

### Specification of the locality

"Horsforth Children's Centre is located in Horsforth, next to the Broadgate school. Horsforth is a ward in Leeds of Yorkshire and The Humber, England and includes areas of Horsforth, Lane Ends, Dean Head, Scotland, Canada, Larkfield, Woodnook, High Henshaw, Crow Trees, Rawdon, Yeadon and Nether Yeadon. According to the 2011 census the population of Horsforth is 21,506 and is made up of approximately 52% females and 48% males. The average age of people in Horsforth is 41, and the median age is 40.

About 91.9% of people living in Horsforth were born in England. Other countries of birth include Scotland (1.6%), Wales (0.6%), Ireland (0.5%), Northern Ireland (0.5%), India (0.4%), South Africa (0.3%), United States (0.2%), China (0.2%), Hong Kong (0.2%) (Qpzm LocalStats UK).

The Horsforth Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre established in 2008 and situated in north Leeds. The Children's Centres have different organisational models: one centre units (traditional standalone centres), clusters (phase 2 centres), and a specific clustering: hub-and-spoke. The Children's Centres in Leeds work in clusters. The Centre is located in a single storey building and shares its site with Broadgate Primary School. The area is relatively affluent but there are areas of concentrated 'deprivation' and social housing. About 11% of children in the Horsforth area have been identified as living in poverty. The vast majority of families in the reach area are White British, but there is a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups and some families who speak English as a second language. The children in the reach area that are targeted by the Centre and have skills lower than typically expected for their age are placed in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The obesity rate for children of this age is lower than the national average, but higher than other parts of Leeds. The Centre is governed by the local authority and supported by an advisory board. The staff is employed by the Broadgate Primary School. This Centre meets the standards for a phase 2 centre because it provides health clinics, family support, and creche facilities.

Horsforth Children's Centre is one of the Sure Start Children's Centres. It was established in 2008 as the cornerstone of early support and advice for families with young children. Their services are targeted at families with the greatest need, and are available in all communities. The goal of the Sure Start Children's Centres is to be: "... the key mechanism for improving outcomes for young children and reducing inequality in outcomes between the most disadvantaged and the rest to help bring an end to poverty." (DfES 2006). The target group for the Children's Centres has shifted from the general population of poor neighbourhoods to individual families with the greatest need. This requires intense work with families and close inter-agency partnerships – both demand high a calibre and a well-trained staff.

Children's Centres have historically been funded through the Sure Start Grant (CCG) and the LCC (Leeds City Council) funding. In 2015-16, funding for the Children's Centres decreased. The Public Health, CCG's, and Schools Forum made significant investments to sustain the Children's Centres in the short term, which gave the centres more time to evaluate their impact and plan future services in response to the local evidence base. The budget in the 2015-16 year

was £6,353,240, and in 2016-17 it decreased to £6,151,000. The estimated breakdown of partner funding for Children's Centres in Leeds in 2016-17 is as follows:

Source	Amount	Notes
LCC (Children's Services)	2,252,300	
LCC (Public Health)	1,398,700	
Schools - DSG	900,000	Funding is included in the budget but there is significant risk this will not be available in the future
CCG	1,600,000	Funding is included in the budget but there is significant risk this will not be available in 16/17
Total	£6,151,000	

### Horsforth Children's Centre: The main goals and target groups

Currently, 96% of all families (25,304) in Leeds with children under 5 years of age are registered with Children's Centres (100% through Early Start). Of these families, 13,581 are considered to be target groups that are 'hard to reach'. A total of 7,443 families in target groups (70%) regularly engage with the Children's Centres. Family outreach workers deliver a number of services to non-working mothers and other targeted groups. These include HENRY (healthy eating and nutrition for the really young), Stay and Play for mums and toddlers, First aid courses, Parenting courses, adult education courses and breastfeeding support. A total of 8,096 people attended these courses in the last three months.



Family outreach workers also work intensively with 'targeted families'. These are families who have been referred by others, or refer themselves. Of the 4,495 families in Leeds, there are 6,543 children under 5 years of age who are currently being supported by our family outreach workers. A total of 334 children supported by the Children's Centres across Leeds were in need of care last year. About 23 children of those supported by Children's Centres were taken into their care. Last year, Children's Centres also provided a 'soft landing' for 33 children that were transition out of their care. (This data is based on Leeds as a whole.)

#### The parents and children are recruited in several ways:

Families are recruited through outreach work. This focuses not only on directly reaching out to potential clients, but also on reaching out to community members and organisations that can identify and refer families in need. It is first important to identify and work with key players in the community to develop an outreach plan. This can include specific strategies for engaging with and recognizing the desires, wants, and needs of the people in the programs. Due to the fact that the Centre is a part of Horsforth Children services, information is first shared with other organisations in the community. This means that the Centre must be in touch with other organisations or groups such as social service agencies, faith-based organisations, schools, medical facilities, community centres, and support groups. This cooperation helps to determine potential target groups and their specific needs. The Centre provides program marketing materials (e.g. brochures, fliers, posters) tailored to referral sources and their target groups. The Centre also engages with families and supports them in participating in activities that are designed to meet the local demand. In this way, they continue to meet the families' needs beyond the current offer.

## Composition of families

In general, the Centres are responsible for all children living in the area. However, neighbourhood data for the Centre reach areas suggests that local outreach personnel were promoting their services towards more deprived areas. The majority of users/potential users from all of the Centres (59%) come from 30% of the most deprived areas. About 8.6% of the Centres, which are located in 50% of the least disadvantaged areas, drew many of their users from similar areas. However, nearly a third of their users came from the most deprived areas as a response to targeting.

## The main reason for entering the Horsforth Children's Centre

The three most commonly used individual services are: midwife/health visitor services; Stay and Play sessions (used by 85%); and organised activities (used by 59%).

Centres in Leeds achieved a very high level of registration in their reach area among families with children ages 0–4 (an average of 770 children). The proportion of families using the Centre in a calendar year was rather lower but still a substantial proportion of the age group in the local area (an estimated 55% on average) made use of the Centre. There was no evidence that ethnic minority families were underrepresented compared to other local families with children under four. Infants under one were the most common age group (27% of all user families). The data suggests that most users were light users (62% of users who participated in 5 'user events' or fewer per year), Heavy users participated in 20+ 'user events' per year (about 13%). Thus, slightly more than one in ten users were receiving intense support from the Centre in their reach area.

## 2. Inclusive methods used in Horsforth Children's Centre

### Methods used in work with children

The general framework for the activities of the Children's Centres as defined by the Leeds City Council: Children's Centres support families with young children (starting from the mother's pregnancy to when the child or children reach 5 years of age) and provide parent training, information, support, advice, and access to child care. The Children's Centres' managers and Family Outreach workers provide the following services:

#### Centrally run / commissioned services

Service	Provided by	Core or additional
Parenting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incredible Years or others</li> <li>Webster Stratton</li> </ul>	Parenting Team	Additional – funded by South East CCG
Counselling for parents (contract for £173,001 per annum)	Northpoint Wellbeing	Core - Targeted
Citizens Advice Bureau (contract for £135,000 per annum) Children's Centre delivery is part of a larger service commissioned by Citizens and Communities	Leeds Advice Network	Core - Targeted

The Horsforth Children's Centre aims to provide better opportunities for children and parents, and a strong and safe community within Horsforth so that all children can have the best start in life. They work closely with Horsforth Children's Services to ensure a smooth and seamless service for all families and children/young people 0 to 19 years old.

The Children's Centre provides lots of different activities such as the Parent and Tots groups, Breastfeeding Café, Family Learning classes for parents, a Young Parent's group, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. They are paying in point for the Leeds City Credit Union and have links with the Job Centre. They are also a part of an Early Start Team that in collaboration with local Health Visitors, enables them to support parents by offering parenting advice, local childcare, and access to specialist services.

Generally, Centres use two types of programmes: the 'well-evidenced programme' (as identified by Allen in 2011) and several less-evidenced programmes. In each Centre, the well-evidenced programmes are supposed to reach out to slightly more than 20 families (with high need parents) per year, while the other 'named' programmes reach out to many more.

Of the Evidence-Based Practice programmes, three of them are widely used by Centres: Incredible Years [IY], Triple P, and Family Nurse Partnership [FNP]. Other programmes are not considered to be well-evidenced, but they are also widely used. These include Every Child a Talker, Baby Massage, Family Links Nurturing Programme, the Solihull Approach, Signing, and many more. Well-evidenced programmes are less commonly run than other 'named' programmes, with Centres running an average of five programmes per year, of which only one is considered well-evidenced. Well-evidenced programmes are less successful than other 'named programs' in reaching out to families. For example, IY reaches out on average to 22 families per year, whereas 'named' programmes, such as Baby Massage reaches out to 47 families, and Parents Early Education Partnership [PEEP] reaches out to 104 families.

Horsforth Children's Centre is running the Incredible Years programme: a training intervention series of programmes focused on strengthening parenting skills such as monitoring, positive discipline, confidence. These sessions also focus on fostering parents' involvement in their children's school experience in order to promote their academic, social and emotional competencies, as well as reduce behavioral problems. The parent programmes are grouped according to age: Babies & Toddlers (ages 0–3), BASIC Early Childhood (ages 3–6), BASIC School Age (ages 6–12), and ADVANCED (ages 6–12).

The Horsforth Children's Centre also runs Tiny Signers classes through the Every Child a Talker programme. These classes are composed of children ages 6 months to 4 years old. There are around 200 children that annually take part in the activities of one Centre, and their parents are normally present when they do so. The activities are available for all families due to the close cooperation between the Centre and Tiny Signers. Families from more challenging backgrounds do not have to pay for the sessions, the fee is usually paid for by the provider.

The issues addressed include parent-child bonding and communication issues such as delayed speech, or English as a second language. The classes are held once a week for 1 hour. This normally includes a 40 minutes session, a short break for mothers to talk to each other, followed by an additional 10 minute recap session.

The 'Sign support language instruction' is meant for both hearing and hard of hearing children. It is specifically designed to be used in classrooms that have a majority of students who do not speak English as their first language, but it also benefits children who do speak English as their first language. This is because sign supported language instruction supports and leads to a better understanding of spoken language. The method can also make it easier to communicate with hard of hearing and deaf children (cf. below), as well as with the children with different impairments (developmental or emotional disorders, learning disabilities, Down's Syndrome, Autism, Aphasia, cerebral palsy, difficulties with learning or producing spoken language, etc.).

There are usually 5 to 15 children involved in each activity. The activities last for about 10 weeks per group. The activities are pre-planned, but there are also drop in sessions available.

The activities are organised into several steps. The first step is to introduce everyone in the group with a circle time song and rhyme. Then, the theme of the activity and the signs for that theme are introduced. Then the group partakes in several activities to introduce the signs in context, followed by a short break and recap of what they just learned. For these activities, the lecturers use puppets, toys, flash cards, laminated picture, books, and a CDs. They also distribute charts to all of the participants with instructions on how to follow sign/spoken words. The children are closely monitored throughout the duration of the activities. This programme has had a positive effect on bonding between children as well as between children and parents. In addition, the children have grown better able to express themselves.

## Sign supported language instruction in nurseries and pre-schools: Example activity

### TOPIC: HOW DO WE FEEL?

Purpose: The first goal is help children understand different emotions and to use signs to express their emotions and emotional needs. The second goal is to communicate one's state of illness through signs.

1. Introductory song: I am glad you came today.
2. Introducing the topics: There is a bag filled with emojis. Each child picks one of the emoji characters out of the bag, the lecturers show the sign, and ask the children to discuss how the emoji character feels.

3. Story: Wiggly pig feels happy (from the Wiggly pig books series): The lecturers read aloud and sign the story, and ask the children to sign every time a new emotion is expressed in the story.
4. We can sign the song once we embrace and understand our emotions
5. The lecturers next demonstrate the signs for not feeling well. The group acts out the story of how a teddy bear or dolly does not feel well. One of the children acts as the doctor and another acts as the mummy.
6. The lecturers explain the signs related to feeling ill, such as temperature, medicine, doctor, nurse, and hospital.
7. The group signs the song: Mrs. Polly had a Dolly who was sick. Then they recap the signs.
8. The group finishes with a Bye, bye song, such as the bubble song.

#### Additional materials needed:

- Puppets/emojis, familiar characters, teddy bears, dolls
- Musical instruments
- Toys/pictures/photos
- Story books
- Simple vocabulary with signs charts
- Rhyme bag filled with objects/pictures to represent songs
- Echo microphones

The lyrics to "Miss Polly had a Dolly" are shown below. It is important that the lecturers teach the children to sing the song and to teach them the sign supported language that goes with it (Language in your hands teaching materials for childcare professionals ©2018). Please note that the key words are written in capital letters and are supported by graphics below.

## Miss Polly had a Dolly

Miss Polly had a DOLLY  
 who was SICK, SICK, SICK,  
 So she called for the DOCTOR  
 To be QUICK, QUICK, QUICK;  
 The DOCTOR came  
 with his BAG and his HAT,  
 And he knocked at the DOOR  
 with a rat-a-tat-tat.

He LOOKED at the DOLLY  
 And he shook his head,  
 And he SAID "Miss Polly,  
 Put her straight to BED."  
 He WROTE out a paper  
 For a PILL; PILL; PILL, ,  
 "I'll be back in the MORNING,  
 Yes it will, will, will!"




## Methods used in work with parents

The Children's Centres are equipped to make assessments of additional need per individual family. They can deliver services that are part of a package of care identified by social care. In these cases, the Children's Centre should be involved in planning to ensure that its services are being used to the family's full advantage. These may include a combination of home visits and participation in the Centre's play and learn sessions. The Centres coordinate with health visitors, midwives, and family support workers to make sure that partner agencies are involved in the development of such services. Targeted support should have a clear structure and defined outcomes that reflect the Children's Centres core values. There should be a holistic approach to working with the whole family. When deciding if a family needs targeted intervention from the Children's Centre, an assessment of additional needs is to be completed. The referrer and outreach worker should have clear roles and boundaries, and their work should be recorded and kept secure as mandated by the data protection act. This service, however, depends on the organisation and function of the Children's Centre in the particular locality.

When interviewed about these services, many parents stated that the Children's Centre makes it easier for them to establish new relationships with other parents.

*"Me and my 1 year old have been attending this group on Monday's and we think it is brilliant. My son really enjoys it and I've met a lot of new mums. It is fantastic." (Play and Stay session)*

*"If it were not for the Children's Centre, I would be lost and would not have the confidence to interact with other parents." (Play and Stay session)*

<b>What's on at Horsforth</b>		
	<b>AM</b>	<b>PM</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>Parenting Courses</b> 9.30am-11.30 am <b>Think Good Feel Good</b> - Starting 07/01/19 Based at the Horsforth site. Crèche available* <b>Tiny Signers</b> 10:30am – 11:30am Private provider -charges apply -please contact Rachel - 07742 296160	<b>Baby Massage (TTO)</b> 12:00pm – 13:00pm Private provider – charges apply – please contact Catherine 07825 299390 or book online at <a href="http://www.lovingbabymassage.co.uk">www.lovingbabymassage.co.uk</a> <b>Monthly sling Library</b> 12.00pm-14.30pm Following dates 14 <sup>th</sup> January, 11 <sup>th</sup> February, 11 <sup>th</sup> March
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Midwife Clinic and Baby Box Collection</b> 9:30am – 12:00pm Appointments only <b>Adult Counselling appointment only</b> 9.30am-1.45pm	<b>Parenting Courses-</b> 2.00pm-4.00pm <b>Pregnancy Birth and Beyond</b> – Starting- 08/01/19 Based at the Horsforth site. <b>Breastfeeding Support Group</b> <b>Drop-in session-</b> 1:00pm – 2:45pm
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Play and Learn</b> 9:30 am– 11:00am (TTO**) Drop-in session for 0-4's Everyone welcome! <b>Baby Massage</b> 10:30am– 11:30am (TTO)Private provider – charges apply, contact Catherine 07825 299390 or book online <a href="http://www.lovingbabymassage.co.uk">www.lovingbabymassage.co.uk</a>	<b>Adult Counselling appointment only</b> 9.30am-1.45pm
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Parenting Courses</b> <b>Understanding your baby</b> (dates to be confirmed) phone to book your place 0113 2591786 <b>Nurture</b> 9:30am – 11:30am 17/01/2019-28/03/19 Crèche available* <b>Pop Goes the Story</b> -9.45am-10.30am Call Rachel on 07762518906	
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Friday Fun Club</b> 9:30am – 11:00am (TTO**) Fun drop-in session for 0-4s Everyone Welcome! <b>City wide consultation sessions.</b> 9.00am-12.00pm-Appointments only	<b>Outreach in the local community</b>

\*Please note we charge £1.50 per child for each crèche session.

\*\* charged at £1 per family per session

TTO – Classes run during Term Time only

### 3. Cooperation with formal pre-school institutions and other organisations

The Horsforth Children's Centre works within the Horsforth Children's Services (HCS). The HCS brings Horsforth schools and relevant agencies (including pre-schools) together to work towards improving the quality of life for all 0–19 year olds and their families within the community. The aim of this cooperation is to ensure that all children and young people reach their full personal potential. In working together and drawing on each others knowledge, strengths and capabilities, the needs of children, young people, their families, as well as families in need of additional support, can more effectively be identified and addressed.

#### The reason for establishing partnership

The reasons for establishing this partnership are founded in law. Although parents and caretakers are primarily

responsible for the care of their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. These duties are outlined in the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004. Section 17 of the Children Act of 1989 states that local authorities have the duty to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found. Section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to investigate situations in which they have reason to believe that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm. The Chair and other board members who manage Horsforth Children's Services are key authority figures that have a professional and political responsibility to ensure the effective delivery of these functions. It is understood that these duties can only be acted on with the full cooperation of other partners, many of whom have their own individual duties and functions as stated under section 11 of the Children Act 2004. Under section 10 of the same Act, the local authorities must make arrangements to establish and promote cooperation with local organisations and agencies to improve the wellbeing of children. This cooperation should be prevalent and effective at all levels of an organisation, all the way from the initial strategic level to the final execution phase. It is understood that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

The service aims to ensure that all children up to the age of 19 reach their full personal potential. This is achieved with the following steps:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up with consistent safety provisions and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

## The strategy of cooperation

The activities are strategically coordinated by the Horsforth Children's Services Governing Board. This provides strategic directions to three additional committees.

### The HCS committees are the:

- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Family Support Committee
- Resources Committee

### Each committee has a separate role:

#### Learning and Teaching Committee

**Objective:** To be responsible for establishing an effective partnership that works to develop excellent learning and teaching experiences for all children and young people to maximize their personal potential, academic progress and achievement.

#### Family Support Committee

**Objective:** To be responsible for the coordination of a varied menu of services tailored to the identified needs of children, young people and families of the Horsforth Cluster, and to ensure the best practices in terms of safeguarding and providing equality of opportunity

#### Resources Committee

**Objective:** To be responsible for the effective and efficient use of resources and finances in order to have the maximum positive impact on children, young people and families in Horsforth.

The committees meet at least three times a year. Their activities and services are then further carried out by the particular agencies, pre-schools and schools.

For example: Horsforth Children's Centre is responsible for running an English course for parents. While parents are in class, local pre-schools employ childcare professionals to look after children. This is decided within the Family Support Committee. The boards also give recommendations on what additional services the Centre should offer.

The Horsforth Children Centre is currently under great pressure. The number of staff has reduced greatly, and the manager is the only full-time staff member.

## The cooperation between Tiny Signers and Children's Centre Horsforth

Tiny signers is one of the organisations in the so called informal childcare sector. It is closely connected with other informal providers as well as some formal providers of child care. Tiny signers and the Children's Centre collaborated in 2009, one year after the establishment of the centre, and their partnership is still ongoing. In working together, they meet the objectives of both of their organisations.

TS is a private informal provider of signing classes for children, parents, and child care professionals. The classes are held at Children's centres once a week, for 1 hour. They are opened to everyone, and indeed many people, primarily mothers with children, attend. Parents from 'mainstream families' are subjected to a small fee (5 pounds), whereas families in need attend free of charge. The Centres provides Tiny Signers free access to a classroom.

Lately, the Centres have also offered free classes and classrooms for Tiny Signers programmes taught by child care professionals from the Horsforth community. This is because the Children's Centres serve as a hub for child care professionals and they value the services of Tiny Signers.

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# Case-Study: “Toddler Club” Warsaw district pre-school institution

## Poland

### Introduction

The presented case-study describes the work of a pre-school institution in the Warsaw suburbs. The selected case-study presents methods and challenges of working with children from socially disadvantaged and culturally different environments. The name of the institution was coded due to the GDPR privacy rules, so for the purposes of this report it will be referred to as the “Toddler club”. The institution requested to not publish its data, but it provided information necessary for scientific and educational research. Interviews and observational research took place from September to October 2018. The report places special emphasis on the methods of work with the groups of disabled children and immigrants, as this input can be valuable for the project.

## 1. General description of informal pre-school setting

### Specification of the locality

The “Toddler club” is located in the suburban district of Warsaw. This locality is a relatively new neighbourhood inhabited by mostly young families with children. The pre-school was established due to high demand for this type of institution and the insufficient supply of services in the district. The need for these services became necessary in recent years as high levels of immigration from both inside and out of Poland drastically increased the suburban population. The main goal of the “Toddler club” is to provide care, catering and educational services for children ages 3–6 in the informal institution, so-called “klub malucha” (ang. toddler club). Special care is provided for socially disadvantaged, disabled children who receive special support from the informal pre-school institution. The holistic development of the child is at the forefront of importance for the founders of the institution who also focus on incorporating parents from socially disadvantaged and culturally different backgrounds into the process. The majority of immigrant communities in Warsaw city migrated from Ukraine after the 2014 shift in power and government, the Euromaidan, that resulted in large scale economic and social hardship for many people. Since then, it is estimated that between 2 to 4 million Ukrainians have settled in Warsaw, and the number of immigrants continues to grow exponentially in the suburban districts. Over a decade ago, one of founders was looking for a babysitter for her son. She could not find one, so she decided to start a toddler club. Soon after, she met an experienced mother and pedagogue who became the second founder of this informal pre-school institution.

Their passion for bringing up and teaching children has allowed them to create a unique institution that not only educates and cares for children, but also protects small children from various threats. The institution's unique team of specialists are trained to recognize various dysfunctions of children, unrecognizable by parents before the third year of their children's life. These specialists diagnose children, advise parents, and often successfully help them through a difficult situation or issue.

The “Toddler club” has both public and private funding. One of the main sources of funding parent fees, which cover the fixed and variable costs of running the institution. Another substantial source of funding is a subsidy provided by the authorities. The status of the pre-school changed when it entered the Register of Private Nursery and Children's Clubs run by the Capital City of Warsaw. This registration enables the pre-school institution to claim subsidies for each pupil attending the institution. There are higher subsidies for pupils with certain disabilities in order to cover additional educational and care support costs for the integration process. The Nursery also considers proposals made to receive grants to support the innovation and management of the institution.

### “Toddler club” – the main goals and the target groups

As of now, the “Toddler club” caters to about 80 children of all ages. However, there is pressure to take on more children

as higher birth rates and increasing immigration from Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine, rapidly add to the city's total population. In response, the founders have considered opening a second branch at some point in the future to increase supply and availability of their services. As the institution is not capable of meeting its demand, its marketing efforts are very limited. For this reason, paid campaigns are only moderately used.

The most valuable marketing method is word-of-mouth of satisfied parents of older pupils who recommend the institution to other families. The institution also has a website, a Facebook pages, and uses google ads and email marketing to share information about their service.

## The composition of the families

The composition of families is as follows:

- **Socio-Economic** – Currently, Warsaw is undergoing unprecedented economic growth and there are many economic opportunities. The GDP per capita in Warsaw is above the average GDP of the European Union. As newly developed suburbs are relatively expensive, most families are of the middle or upper middle-class. However, some children that attend the pre-school come from working class families. There is almost no unemployment in Warsaw, and the economic situation of families is relatively stable (some of them are very affluent). In case of larger families, they are subsidized by new government programme 500 + which, following the birth of the second child, gives the family a monthly payment of 500 PLN (about 125 EUR) until the child turns 18 years old. Some children have special educational needs that require the institution to offer additional assistance in classroom social integration. Special measures (including hired special need pedagogues) are available to enable the smooth process of this integration.
- **Cultural** – The majority of students (more than 80%) are of Polish descent. Some of the children's parents are native to Warsaw, while other parents came from other parts of the country in order to find work. The remaining 20% of pupils are children of immigrants (mostly from Eastern European countries and Ukraine). From time to time, there are pupils of other minority groups such as the Vietnamese, Chinese, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi. Sometimes there are children of other EU nationalities, but these families usually send their children to pre-schools with English as a language of instruction (International Schools or Pre-schools).

## Main reason for joining the “Toddler club”

The main reason for attending the institution is due to its high quality provision of care and educational services for children. Most parents do not have access to care-takers and rely on these highly demanded and needed services. The pre-school institution in this case-study is highly regarded by the community and, therefore, many parents choose to use it.

The average age of the attendees is about 4.5 years. The average parent drops their child or children off before work 5 days a week (Monday to Friday), and picks them up later. Operational hours are typically 6 AM to 6 PM.

# 2. Inclusive methods which are used in “Toddler club”

## Methods used in work with children

One of the most important issues faced by the “Toddler club” is the acknowledgement of the cross-cultural differences of pupils. The institution uses the **project method of integration**. Pupils are requested to work on projects in teams made up of students of different backgrounds in order to enable cross-cultural cooperation and social integration. Typically, there is a new project each week that relates to various spheres of child development. For example, projects can relate to animal biology and culture (i.e. teams of 4–5 children build a birdhouse, or use bricks to build typical houses of their region of origin). The methodology of project work focuses greatly on integration, and teaches pupils social and cooperation skills while working in teams. The pedagogues make sure that the teams are not randomly assigned. The criteria for forming the teams is as follows:

- There must be a diverse composition in terms of nationality, gender, but also special conditions such as disabilities.
- In choosing the weekly topic, there is a strong focus on including the perspective of minorities and taking into account the needs of groups which can be socially disadvantaged or culturally different. Teachers can either directly focus on

presenting diversity (for example, one group can be tasked with drawing a typical house in Poland, another presents a typical house in Ukraine, and the other group sketches a typical house in Bangladesh) or emphasize the exchange of ideas between students (for example, if a project concerns road safety, there can be a discussion on how zebra crossings or traffic lights differ in particular countries).

→ The pupils are assigned to different groups each week. In this way, pupils learn how to cooperate with different types of students which reduces the risk of marginalizing or excluding particular individuals.

The Projects are at the core of the methodology used by the “Toddler club”. These projects emphasize the club’s values and mission of pre-school care and education for all, regardless of age, cultural background or socio-economic status.

All children participate in the activities, which special provision and assistance provided for pupils with disabilities. Generally, parents are not involved with the projects, with the exception of the special Easter or Christmas project. These two projects usually include a theatre play prepared by the children. In these cases, parents are asked to help make the decorations and clothing. They are also an important part of the theatre audience. Special effort is devoted to including immigrant parents. They are typically less involved as they often have longer work hours, sometimes working two jobs or night shifts. In addition, they do not speak fluent Polish, and therefore might be scared or hesitant to participate in these activities. For this reason, the “Toddler club” focuses on involving these parents and encouraging them to participate. Usually, the director of the institution personally calls them to quell their doubts about participating.

### 3. Cooperation with formal pre-school institutions

The “Toddler club” does not cooperate with formal pre-school institutions on a constant basis. Occasionally, they hold joint meetings focused on the dissemination of good practices. The institution has started to cooperate with some formal pre-school settings in order to get a grant from the Erasmus Plus Programme – Strategic Partnerships.

The project method is a highly effective tool in easing the integration process of socially disadvantaged and culturally different children. This is especially the case for institutions such as the Toddler Club that are located in highly diverse areas. The high demand for its services, the diversity of its pupils, and the success of the project method make the Toddler Club an excellent model for other pre-school institutions that are considering using the project work methodology to better integrate children of diverse backgrounds in their communities.

This report summarizes the possible ways and methods of working with children from socially disadvantaged and culturally different backgrounds. Some of the case studies show how cooperation between formal and informal pre-school institutions are helpful in providing children and their parents the best possible care. In conclusion, we offer you a summary of the most interesting and beneficial information.

The informal pre-school institutions across all countries mentioned in this report focus on building positive teacher-child, parent-child, and child-child relationships. A large part of this process focuses on fostering the child's self-confidence.

The advantage of these institutions is that the teacher usually works with a smaller group of children than the teacher in a formal pre-school institution would. The teacher is able to work with the children more individually and pay attention to their specific needs.

In the Czech Klubicek, the teachers mentioned that one strategy proven to be helpful was to talk to the child about their personal life and thus encourage them to talk about his/her experience and feelings. The teachers and social workers aim to support the children's self-confidence by using specific and constructive praise.

The Slovak ECEC Play Hub hosts a nature trip and barbecue three times a year. These activities focus on improving relationships among children. These activities are planned and prepared by both the children and parents. During these community trips, Roma and non-Roma kids have the opportunity to play and spend time together as a means to get to know each other and get rid of prejudices. These interactions encourage communication between children and their families and diminish prejudices.

In the Swedish Dream Workshop, the children are encouraged to decide for themselves what they would like to create, and then the educator shows them how to do it.

In the British Horsforth Children's Centre, signing classes assist with parent-child bonding and increase the child's language and communication abilities. These courses are provided by the NGO Tiny Signers and take place once a week for one hour per session. It has been shown that children are better able to express themselves after these courses.

In the Polish "Toddler Club", the project method of integration is used to get children to cooperate in teams. The composition of the groups changes each week to give children the opportunity to work with people of different backgrounds. This minimizes the risk of marginalizing or excluding particular individuals.

Most of the parent activities involved regularly held joint meetings. In Klubicek, the ECEC Play Hub and the Horsforth Children's Center, parent meetings were specific to certain skills or topics such as cooking, motherhood, breastfeeding, family economy, and the importance of pre-school education. Each activity included a consultation with social worker or school psychologist.

Cooperation between formal and informal pre-school institutions was shown to be the most important in the Slovak and Czech case when it served as the essential way to integrate children from disadvantaged areas into mainstream education. These partnerships gave children the opportunity to better adapt in kindergarten. Social and community workers play a pivotal role in providing teachers important information about the children and their families, as well as provide parents and their children information about the purpose and benefits of this cooperation. They facilitate communication between these two parties. Moreover, the children from informal pre-school institutions take part in events organized by formal pre-school institutions, which helps to reduce prejudices and fears.

In the informal pre-school institutions of Sweden and Great Britain, cooperation between different agencies is organized differently. It is based on providing the programs and activities to the children and their parents. In the British case, signing courses are provided to children in informal pre-school by the informal educational institution. In the Swedish case, the informal pre-school offers its workshops not only formal pre-school institutions, but also to walk-ins.

The difference between the two types of cooperation are founded in the structure of each educational system. The informal pre-school institutions in Great Britain and Sweden play a small role in comparison with their counterparts in the Czech and Slovak Republics.