

QUALITY RECOMMENDATION FOR CHILD WELFARE

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Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare

Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2014:6

ISBN 978-952-00-3493-1 (PDF)

ISSN-L 1236-2050

ISSN 1797-9854 (online)

URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3493-1

<http://um.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-3493-1>

www.stm.fi/en/publications

Publisher: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Layout: Finnish University Print - Juvenes Print, Tampere 2014

SUMMARY

QUALITY RECOMMENDATION FOR CHILD WELFARE

■ The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities issue a quality recommendation for child welfare for the first time. The recommendation is issued principally in support of the implementation, evaluation, development and management of child welfare services in municipalities. The quality recommendation is also addressed to children, young people, parents and persons close to them as well as other child welfare actors.

The child is in the centre of the recommendation. The recommendation deals with all the five ethical principles integrated into the objectives of the quality recommendation:

- human dignity and fundamental rights of the clients,
- the child's best interests,
- interaction,
- the quality of the work of professionals, and
- accountable decisions and operational culture.

There are altogether 27 recommendations, divided into four content areas:

- Inclusion in child welfare matters and making use of expertise obtained through experience in the development of services;
- A child-oriented joint service system and cooperation between different actors;
- Competent professionals, division of duties and support for work;
- Multidimensional evaluation.

Each sub-area of the recommendation describes the characteristics of the quality of child welfare, provides examples and supplementary information, and the relevant recommendations are placed in the end of the component. The last chapter of the recommendation deals with monitoring of the implementation of the recommendation.

Keywords:

Children, child welfare, families, quality, quality recommendation

TIIVISTELMÄ

LASTENSUOJELUN LAATUSUOSITUS

■ Suositus on suunnattu ensisijaisesti lastensuojelupalvelujen toteuttamisen, arvioinnin, kehittämisen ja johtamisen tueksi kuntiin. Laatusuositus on tarkoitettu myös lapsille, nuorille, vanhemmille ja heidän läheisilleen sekä muille lastensuojelun toimijoille.

Lapsi on suosituksen keskiössä. Suositukseen on kuvattu kaikki laatusuosituksen tavoitteet läpäisevää viisi eettistä periaatetta:

- asiakkaiden ihmisarvo ja perusoikeudet,
- lapsen etu,
- vuorovaikutus,
- ammattihenkilöstön työn laatu sekä
- vastuulliset päätökset ja toimintakulttuuri.

Suosituksia on laadittu 27 ja ne jakautuvat neljään sisällölliseen alueeseen:

- Osallisuus lastensuojeluasiassa ja kokemusasiantuntijuuden hyödyntäminen palveluita kehitettäessä
- Lapsilähtöinen yhteinen palvelujärjestelmä ja eri toimijoiden välinen yhteistyö
- Osaavat ammattilaiset, tehtävänjako ja työn tuki
- Moniulotteinen arviointi

Kullakin suosituksen osa-alueella on kuvattu sitä, mistä lastensuojelun laatu muodostuu, annettu esimerkkejä ja täydentäviä tietoja sekä osion loppuun kuvattu itse suositukset. Suosituksen viimeinen luku koskee suosituksen toteutumisen seuranta.

Asiasanat:

Laatu, laatusuositus, lapset, lastensuojelu, perheet

SAMMANDRAG

KVALITETSREKOMMENDATION FÖR BARNSKYDDET

■ Social- och hälsovårdsministeriet och Finlands Kommunförbund ger för första gången en kvalitetsrekommendation om barnskyddet. Rekommendationen riktar sig i första hand till kommunerna som stöd för genomförande, bedömning, utvecklande av tjänsterna inom barnskyddet och ledarskapet. Kvalitetsrekommendationen är också avsedd för barn, unga, föräldrar och deras närstående samt andra aktörer inom barnskyddet.

I centrum av rekommendationen är barnet. Samtliga fem etiska principer som går som en röd tråd genom målen i kvalitetsrekommendationen har beskrivits i rekommendationen:

- klienternas människovärde och grundläggande rättigheter,
- barnets bästa,
- växelverkan,
- kvaliteten i yrkesutbildade personers arbete samt
- ansvarsfulla beslut och verksamhetskulturen.

Antalet rekommendationer som utarbetats är 27, och de är indelade i fyra innehållsmässiga områden:

- Delaktighet i barnskyddsärendet och utnyttjande av erfarenhets-
expertis i utvecklandet av tjänster
- Barnorienterat gemensamt servicesystem och samarbete mellan
olika aktörer
- Kunniga yrkesutbildade personer, uppgiftsfördelning och stöd för
arbetet
- Mångsidig utvärdering

Inom varje delområde i rekommendationen beskrivs vad kvalitet inom barnskyddet består av, ges exempel och kompletterande uppgifter, och i slutet av delen finns själva rekommendationerna. Det sista kapitlet i rekommendationen gäller uppföljningen av hur rekommendationen genomförs.

Nyckelord:

Barn, barnskydd, familjer, kvalitet, kvalitetsrekommendation

FOREWORD

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health together with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities have issued the first Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare. The Quality Recommendation highlights the need for ethical action in child welfare and the participation and inclusion of children, young people and their parents. The child is the primary client and at the centre of all child welfare activities. Not just the child but all parties to a child welfare case must be able to feel and trust that they will be heard in their own right, and that they can give their inputs to the case being discussed.

Recommendations concerning the service system, personnel and competence, and assessments are also a key part of the document. The objective of child welfare work is that the child or young person receives assistance and that their distress is noticed, regardless of where they live and what services they use. The management plays an important role in enabling the organisation to engage in high-quality child welfare work. It must also be ensured that the service and organisation structures support expert cooperation in the children's and young people's cases. As a priority, assistance must be provided in the natural growth environment of the child or young person and within services targeted at all children and young people. Child welfare services are needed to complement other services when providing them is in the best interests of the child and the other services alone are not adequate.

The Quality Recommendation contains concrete examples, many of which are good practices or models generated as a result of development efforts. The recommendation also contains tools that can be used to assess the quality of child welfare at the local level. National quality pages will be created for child welfare, which can be used to share information about the future development of good practices and to assess the implementation of the Quality Recommendation. The municipalities are challenged to report on services for children they have found good on the quality pages and to post descriptions of their good practices on the Innovillage service (www.innokyla.fi). The quality pages can thus be utilised both locally and nationally for interactive and comparable development of services.

The preparation of the recommendation progressed through a number of phases. The work carried out in the preceding phases and changes

in society were incorporated in the further preparation. The recommendation received its finishing touches in autumn 2013 through feedback received as the document was circulated for comments and the inputs on the Ota kanta website open to all citizens. In the preparation phase, the working group also liaised with a number of experts.

We would like to thank all those who gave their input in the various preparation phases of the Quality Recommendation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare is primarily intended to support the implementation, evaluation and development of child welfare services in municipalities. Under section 11(1) of the Child Welfare Act, on which child welfare work is based, the municipalities must ensure that child welfare is arranged in such a way that the content and extent of such services accord with the need prevailing within the municipality. As responsibility for organising child welfare has been assigned to the municipalities, in particular those responsible for this work in municipalities should pay attention to the quality of child welfare work and use this recommendation to support its management. The Quality Recommendation is also intended for children, young people, parents and persons close to the family. Other child welfare actors may also draw on the recommendation for planning and evaluating their activities.

In addition to the Quality Recommendation, ensuring a good standard of child welfare and conducting self-assessments are also supported by the national supervisory programmes jointly drawn up by the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health and the Regional State Administrative Agencies (Municipal child welfare services, 24-hour care and education in child welfare) and the Handbook of Child Welfare maintained by the National Institute for Health and Welfare. The Handbook of Child Welfare is an open online service that provides up-to-date information on such topics as the Child Welfare Act and its application. The Handbook also contains information about special issues associated with child welfare.

The Quality Recommendation was drawn up by the following persons appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services to a subdivision of the working group on Functional Child Welfare on 27 March 2013:

- Ministerial Adviser Marjo Lavikainen/Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Chair)
- Senior Expert Aila Puustinen-Korhonen /Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities,
- Programme Director Hanna Heinonen /Central Union for Child Welfare,
- Senior Research Social Worker Laura Yliruka /Heikki Waris Institute, the Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in Helsinki Metropolitan Area
- Development Manager Mikko Oranen /National Institute for Health and Welfare,

- President Aila Paloniemi /Finnish Federation of Foster Care Associations
- Senior Expert Laura Lindeberg /Talentia,
- Senior Officer Annika Juurikko /Ministry of Social Affairs and Health,
- Inspector Kristiina Ruuskanen /Valvira (expert secretary),
- Director Päivi Voutilainen /Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (expert).

The working group, which was able to base its Quality Recommendation on the steady foundation of its predecessor's efforts, sees the issues brought up in the recommendation as keys to child welfare work with a high impact in our current time and circumstances that each municipality can introduce. The working group was instructed to ensure that its quality recommendations form a consistent whole together with the recommended measures put forward by the working group on Functional Child Welfare. Some illustrative examples have been added to the recommendations, and additional information has been provided.

During its term that extended from 27 March till 14 June 2013, the working group on the quality recommendation met seven times. In addition to the original working group, experts of various areas were consulted during the preparation of the Quality Recommendation. These experts included Alpo Heikkinen/Talentia, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, and numerous other experts at the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The working group's proposal for the Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare was circulated for comments in 20 June –15 October 2013.

The Quality Recommendation was updated on the basis of the comments received before its publication. The proposed Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare elicited 163 written statements and 144 comments on the Ota Kantaa website, where all those interested in the issue were free to comment on the proposal. Visitors to the website could also indicate how important they considered the guiding principles of child welfare work listed in the recommendation and submit their own suggestions. The principles presented in the recommendation received broad-based support on the website (see separate compilation of the comments).

I GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CHILD WELFARE WORK

Ethical principles are cross-cutting in all objectives of child welfare work and the Quality Recommendation. Checking that the solutions are ethically sustainable is also necessary when developing child welfare. Each professional and work organisation engaged in child welfare work should examine the ethical principles and assess their significance in their own duties and organisation. Commitment to key principles guiding child welfare work supports searching for the right services and finding them at the right time.

The basic principles of child welfare work are enshrined in the Child Welfare Act (section 4).

In child welfare, action must be taken with as much sensitivity as possible, and assistance in open care must be given precedence, unless the interests of the child demand otherwise. If substitute care is needed in view of the interests of the child, this must be arranged without delay. When providing substitute care, the aim of reuniting the family must be taken into account in a manner that accords with the child's interests. Under the Act, child welfare must:

1. promote the favourable development and wellbeing of the child
2. provide support in child upbringing and care for parents, custodians and other persons responsible for child care and upbringing
3. be aimed at preventing child and family problems, and
4. intervene sufficiently early if problems are found.

The Union of Professional Social Workers Talentia / Committee on Professional Ethics has published Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals (Helsinki 2013). The guidelines also provide an appropriate framework of professional ethics for child welfare work (http://www.talentia.fi/files/558/Etiikkaopas_2013.pdf).

This Quality Recommendation contains an extensive introduction to the principles guiding child welfare work, which are based on the ethical principles of social welfare and health care sector set out by the National Advisory Board on Social Welfare and Health Care (ETENE) (Ethical grounds for the social and health care field, 2011). The ethical principles arising from the spe-

cial features of child welfare work are described under each one of the five general principles. They complement the principles enshrined in the Child Welfare Act. When developing and evaluating child welfare work, the actors can also utilise the Advisory Board's publication on the ethics of childhood and youth in the social welfare and health care sector (ETENE publications 41, 2013), which discusses the ethics of childhood and youth from the particular perspective of the inclusion and consultation of children and young people.

I. HUMAN DIGNITY AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF CLIENTS

The dignified treatment and protection of privacy of the client are paramount in child welfare. In daily child welfare work, this is reflected in such principles as equal, non-discriminating and respectful treatment of clients. The rights of the child and the obligations of the State Parties' authorities prescribed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must be taken into consideration in the activities at all levels. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Finland has ratified, must also be respected. Key sections of the Convention in terms of child welfare are Article 7 on children with disabilities and Article 23 on respect for home and the family.

Convention on the Rights of the Child¹

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights convention applicable to children aged under 18. By ratifying the Convention, Finland has given its commitment to amending its legislation and changing its operating methods to comply with the Convention. The Convention is thus obliging to the central and local governments, the child's parents and other adults alike.

Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and implementation of children's rights are supervised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. State Parties report to the Committee on progress made with implementing children's rights every five years. The Convention comprises 54 articles in total. Under the Convention, the parents or other legal guardians of the child are responsible for the child's upbringing and care, and they must act in the child's best interest. The state must assist them in this task.

¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Implementation Handbook of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (<http://www.unicef.fi/lapsen-oikeuksien-kasikirja>)

General principles of the Convention include that:

1. All children are equal
2. A child has a right to a decent life
3. Adults must find out about children's views and opinions and let children have an influence over their everyday life
4. When decisions concerning children are made, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration.

The role of the Ombudsman for Children in promoting children's rights

The Ombudsman for Children is an independent state official whose activities are based on the Act on the Ombudsman for Children (1221/2004). A key task of the Ombudsman for Children is to promote the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ombudsman's duties include monitoring how the welfare and rights of children and young people are implemented, lobbying decision-makers from the perspective of children, liaising with children and young people and communicating the information received from them to decision-makers, and communicating information that concerns children to those who work with children, the authorities and the population at large.

Further information: www.lapsiasia.fi. The website contains a number of publications and brochures, such as:

Tiedätkö lasten ihmisoikeuksista? (Are you aware of children's human rights?) A brochure. Publications of the Ombudsman for Children 2013:10: <http://www.lapsiasia.fi/julkaisut/julkaisu/-/view/1866199>

Toteutuvatko sinun oikeutesi? Tietoa ihmisoikeuksista lapsille ja nuorille (Are your rights implemented? Information about human rights for children and young people), publications of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2013:7: http://www.lapsiasia.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=6987043&name=DLFE-26515.pdf

Toteutuuko lapsen oikeus pysyviin kasvuolosuhteisiin? - Puheen-
vuoro lastensuojelun vaikuttavuudesta (Is children's right to a permanent growth environment implemented? - A discussion of the impact of child welfare.) Publications of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children 2010:3: <http://www.lapsiasia.fi/julkaisut/julkaisu/-/view/1565156>

II. A CHILD'S BEST INTERESTS

When assessing the need for child welfare and in the provision of child welfare, it is first and foremost the interests of the child that must be taken into account (Child Welfare Act, section 4). When assessing the interests of the child, consideration must be given to the extent to which the alternative measures and solutions safeguard the following for the child:

1. balanced development and wellbeing, and close and continuing human relationships
2. the opportunity to be given understanding and affection, as well as supervision and care that accord with the child's age and level of development;
3. an education consistent with the child's abilities and wishes;
4. a safe environment in which to grow up, and physical and emotional freedom;
5. a sense of responsibility in becoming independent and growing up;
6. the opportunity to become involved in matters affecting the child and to influence them; and
7. the need to take account of the child's linguistic, cultural and religious background.

In addition to the criteria given in the Child Welfare Act, the implementation of the child's interests can be examined from the perspectives of fairness, openness, reliability, and safety and security.

Fairness

The requirements of good governance, including finding out about different options, providing justifications and respectful treatment of the client are highlighted in each phase of client work. In child welfare, fairness can only be realised by justifying the solutions and decisions concerning the child by the child's interests. When the child's interests are expressed in concrete terms, the justifications behind a decision are easier to comprehend, also by the children themselves.

In the Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare, fairness refers to implementing all rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as fully as possible. In terms of fairness, the right to non-discrimination plays a key role, as it safeguards the equality of all children regardless of the starting points of their lives. Children must be guaranteed the protection that they need and, in addition to funding for child welfare from public resources, above all the right to participate in making any decisions that concern him or her.

Openness and reliability

The Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses respecting the parents' or guardians' responsibility for bringing up the child. A prerequisite for this, also in child welfare, is transparent and reliable knowledge of a child's developmental level at various ages and the forms of support and services through which the child and the family can receive the support they need.

Solutions that accommodate the preferences of the child and the parent/guardian cannot always be made in child welfare cases. For this reason, the operating practices of child welfare, including the decisions made, must always be predictable and justified. Open and reliable activities can only be implemented by systematically following the principle of the smallest possible intervention.

Safety

In child welfare, safety must be taken into consideration in the child's circumstances, human relationships and interaction alike. Most importantly, whether or not the child feels safe should be a consideration in every situation, and their feelings of safety should be promoted. Safety must also be examined from the perspective of the child's family and the employee.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses taking aspects related to safety into account, especially in case of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Particular attention in child welfare must thus be paid to ensuring the safety of children living in child welfare institutions and outside the home by the adults responsible for their care and protection. Children must have a right to express their opinions, practice a religion and enjoy their own culture without the fear of stigmatisation or discrimination. Children's views must be taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity when matters relevant to them are being heard.

III. INTERACTION

Good interaction includes caring about the client. In good client encounters, appreciation, humanity and empathy are highlighted. Both the client and the employee can influence the success of the interaction. Professionals of child welfare must have particular strengths and skills related to interaction and constructive handling of conflicts with the clients - both children and adults.

IV. QUALITY OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL'S WORK

Professionals working in services for children and young people must be aware of both their own responsibility for the child's upbringing in their work organisation and their duty to support parenting. The employees must also understand their responsibility for the work they do in a wider sense to the child, young person, family, their own organisation and society alike. Managers and supervisors must be conscious of their responsibility for enabling work of a high standard and supporting the employee.

V. RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS AND OPERATING CULTURE

Child and family centredness

Those working with children and families must have clearly defined responsibilities to ensure that client work does not remain at the level of individual measures and the responsibility of individual employees. Responsible decision-making has a considerable impact on the quality of child welfare work. Decision-making, development efforts and service provision must stem from the needs of children, young people and families. The impacts of the decisions made must also be described and assessed from the perspective of children, young people and families. Informing children, young people and families in a manner that they can comprehend and collecting their experiences and feedback to support development are also part of the work.

Principle of proportionality

The actions taken by an authority must be in correct proportion to the aims and objectives of assisting the client. The principle is that official actions are taken at the lowest level that achieves the required impact (the principle of smallest adequate intervention). In particular, this principle is stressed in case of involuntary interventions where the family's protection of privacy is violated in order to implement adequate child welfare measures.

An evaluation framework in table format is attached in Appendix 1 that can be used as a tool for discussing ethical principles applicable to individual employees/units. When developing services and operating methods, the tool can also be used to check that ethical principles have been accounted for when making changes. An evaluation tool that supports quality assessments will also be included in the Handbook of Child Welfare maintained

by the National Institute for Health and Welfare. This tool can be used to evaluate the quality of work with a child, the quality of the organisation's work, and the actions of the municipality that support good quality.

Online wellbeing report

The wellbeing report is a vital part of the strategic planning, implementation and evaluation of operation and financial management in a municipality. The online wellbeing report is a tool designed for municipalities to support management by wellbeing information and decision-making as part of the municipalities' yearly calendar of activities. It can be found at www.hyvinvointikertomus.fi. The tool is suited for preparing a report that covers a local council term and for annual reporting. Its use is based on cross-administrative and cross-functional planning, implementation and evaluation. The tool can be used to produce comparative information in an individual municipality about the status of the residents' wellbeing and services by population group and the municipality's vitality, finances and structures. In addition, the municipality can add other information to it. The tool also includes a preliminary impact assessment method that supports decision-making. The method can be used in municipalities to conduct preliminary impact assessments of forthcoming decisions and to compare different proposals, which will support the making of the best possible decision. The wellbeing reports adopted by the municipalities and the preliminary impact assessments can be accessed on the tool's website.

The primary users of the online wellbeing report and preliminary impact assessments will be Finnish municipalities and joint municipal authorities. In addition, the online wellbeing report can be used by other public actors and private service providers. Over 75% (nearly 260) of the municipalities have user IDs for the online tool, and it has at least 124 municipalities as its active users. The development of the online wellbeing report has been supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's National Development Programme for Social Welfare and Health Care, the Kaste programme. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities will take over the provision of this service in 2014.

Further information about the online wellbeing report:
<http://www.hyvinvointikertomus.fi>

2 KEYS TO EFFECTIVE CHILD WELFARE WORK

I. PARTICIPATION IN A CHILD WELFARE CASE

Enhancing the inclusion of children, young people and parents is one of the keys to developing effective child welfare services. To ensure their inclusion, all parties to a child welfare case must be able to feel and trust that they will be heard in their own right, and that they can give their inputs to the case being discussed. Adequate information flows and timely cooperation, in particular with health care, early childhood education and care, the school and the family, are vital.

Chapter 4 of the Child Welfare Act (417/2007) discusses a child's involvement. Under section 20 of the Act, in the provision of child welfare, the child's wishes and views must be ascertained and they must be taken into account in a way that is appropriate for the child's age and level of development. Section 24 of the Child Welfare Act, on the other hand, imposes on social workers responsible for a child's affairs the duty to oversee compliance with the interests of the child and to provide assistance for children or young people in exercising their right to be heard. In addition, they must, where necessary, direct the child or young person to seek legal aid or ensure that an application is made for a child's guardian in situations referred to in section 22. An amendment to section 29 of the Child Welfare Act that entered into force on 1 January 2014 clarified the duty of a social worker or other child welfare employee working with the child or their family to see the child in person.

It is essential for the child/young person that information is provided in a form that they can understand and that their views are heard and taken into consideration whenever this is in their best interest. The child/young person must have a possibility of influencing the work carried out with them: the time, the place and the manner in which the affairs of their life are discussed. It is essential for the child, young person and parents to know whom they can contact in a matter that concerns them; who is their own social worker responsible for their case and how to contact this person. It is equally essential that the employee in charge of the case has enough time to encounter their clients and that this employee is not constantly replaced.

A child welfare employee must have basic skills in working as indicated by the age and developmental level of the child/young person and to interact with the child/young person/family. The management, on the other hand, must have access to management structures and practices that support child-centred work.

In substitute care services, it is important to take into consideration the foster parents' views of the child's need for support. The Family Carer Act defines the concept of family care and, among others, justifies the need to also carefully discuss with the substitute family the type of support the substitute family itself needs. It is also vital to take the client's participation into account in the supervision of substitute care.

By involving children and parents in developing the services, the employees and the management responsible for the services can obtain a better understanding of the reality of child welfare work from the clients' perspective. The basic assumption of the Quality Recommendation is that municipalities should draw up a plan for enhancing the participation of children, young people and their parents and improving child welfare services. This plan should include concrete measures by which the participation of children, young people and parents can be promoted and experience-based knowledge can be utilised as part of both everyday child welfare work and more comprehensive development of child welfare. Ways of implementing the participation of children, young people and families in service development include expert groups, hearings and training courses. As an example, the City of Vantaa has prepared a plan titled Vantaa for children and young people - action plan for participation (http://www.vantaa.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/vantaa/embeds/vantaawwwstructure/93506_Lasten_ja_nuorten_vantaa_toimintaohjelma_netti.pdf), which explains the various possibilities of inclusion and influence and describes key measures aiming to increase opportunities for participation during the programming period.

A tool and a guide for assessing the impacts on children of municipal decisions has also been created by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (<http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201205085157>). For instance, this tool can be used when considering the changes affecting children and young people that result from municipal mergers, budgeting of services or various strategies. The tool contains separate sections for different branches of administration and important questions related to children and young people, and it can be used to compare alternative solutions.

As an example, the City of Helsinki relies on joint research groups to develop its child welfare activities: Young developers, Young developers in the East and Young people of Maunula.

LEVEL 1:

As a community care support measure, children and young people who are clients of child welfare have the possibility of taking part in a group of experts by experience in their own area engaged in developing child welfare that meets regularly together with child welfare professionals. The group collects and discusses experience-based knowledge by means of functional methods to support the development of child welfare.

LEVEL 2:

Experts by experience bring the information produced in their local group to seminars and events aiming to develop child welfare and/or other services in their area. They can also bring information about more extensive development sessions back to their groups and work on it further.

LEVEL 3:

Experts by experience together with professionals meet regularly (e.g. twice a year) the top child welfare management in the municipality at an event focusing on sharing information and joint development.

LEVEL 4:

If necessary, the experts by experience and professionals join their forces in taking the information produced by them to other experts, supervisory authorities and political decision-makers both in municipalities and at the national level.

Further information about the expert experience activities in Helsinki: <https://www.innokyla.fi/web/verstas386879> (Helsinki)

Inclusion is both an attitude and a feeling – the example of young experts by experience in Pesäpuu Association

The underlying structure of the work done with experts by experience is open cooperation where the clients, children, young people and parents alike, are involved in service development as equal partners. The client contributes to the work the perspectives of experience-based knowledge, skills in managing and an ability to cope in the environments that the participants scrutinise together. The experts by experience often also reflect their feelings on the issue to be discussed, which can thus be examined at a deeper level of meaning. As a result of this interaction, experience-based knowledge and theoretical information are combined.

Pesäpuu Association has involved young people who are in substitute care in the development efforts. It was felt that they could not be excluded from the welfare discussions. This gave rise to the team of Survivors, the aim of which is, together with professionals, to consider what aspects of child welfare should be reinforced, what should be prevented and in what issues young people need help and support.

It is helpful for professionals to listen to the young people telling their stories in their own words. This helps them to understand the meanings and needs behind the words. Issues may have a different meaning for the experts by experience and the professionals, and in this case, the discussion promotes a shared understanding.

The Survivors of Pesäpuu Association have classified their own expert-by-experience activities as taking place at three levels:

1) Individual level in a group

The child/young person enjoys experiences of participation and peer support in a group, an example of which are Forums for young people. At best, the activities are empowering and help the young people in understanding and sharing their life's events, situation, feelings and thoughts. Even a single encounter or discussion may carry them through a number of tough spots. The ideas the young people come up with can be taken further, but this is not the basic idea of peer groups or Forums for young people.

2) Community level

The thoughts, experiences and ideas of children/young people are collected in a structured, ethical and respectful way. At the individual level, the young people's expertise is utilised in local area networks and the development of local level services.

3) Societal level

At the societal level, the young people's expertise is utilised in national child welfare advocacy work.

A precondition for involving children and young people in this manner is that the participating adults are responsible and have certain capabilities and skills. The development work performed with experts by experience must be ethically sustainable. Through open cooperation, child welfare services and services for young families can be made more transparent and effective.

More information about implementing participation, possibilities and observations: We believe in you – So should you handbook (in Finnish, Swedish and English) & a handbook for adults: <http://www.lskl.fi/usus>

SALTO Youth Resource Center: We Are All Europeans <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/cultural-diversity/publications/wearealleuropeans/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Child welfare work should facilitate continuous and trusting interaction between the employee and the child/young person as a child welfare client and other interested parties. (E,M²)
- The management supports the employees' ability to engage in child-centred and human relations based work by assuming responsibility for resourcing, the emphasis of the work and enhancement of skills. The management also ensures that the confidential relationship between a client and an employee is not unnecessarily severed, for example as a result of an organisation restructuring. (M)
- The members of the client's social network and their possibilities of providing social support are determined individually, guided by the needs and preferences of the child/young person and the family. (E)
- The child welfare employee, the family and other authorities relevant to the child's case jointly discuss the possibilities other authorities might have of supporting
 - the realisation of the child's best interest and

² The recommendation refers to the party at whom the recommendation is targeted in brackets E = Employee, M = Management

- assisting the parents in fulfilling their responsibility for the child's upbringing. (E)
- The social worker engaged in child welfare ensures that substitute parents are involved in the child's situation in all phases of substitute care. (E)
- The management ensures that children, young people and families can participate in developing the services. When a plan is prepared in a municipality to enhance the inclusion of children, young people and their parents and to improve child welfare services, this issue also becomes more visible for the clients. (M)

II. A SHARED SERVICE SYSTEM

The objective of child welfare work is that the child/young person receives assistance and that their distress is noticed, regardless of where they live and what services they use. In addition to the child/young person, the parents and the employee must also be able to trust the service system and the working methods used in it.

Cooperation between various authorities and a multiprofessional approach are needed to ensure that a child/young person as a child welfare client receives the right kind of assistance at the right time. It is the duty of the managers of various sectors and political decision-makers to ensure that the structures of the services and organisations support cooperation between experts in children's and young people's cases (including working time allocation, decision-making). Primarily, assistance should be provided in the natural growth environment of the child/young person and through services targeted at all children/young people. From the perspective of children, young people and parents, situations must be eliminated where the municipality or the hospital district requires a person to be child welfare client in order to provide a service, even if the help needed could be provided as a more extensive service that supports families (including child or youth psychiatric services, or, pursuant to the Social Welfare Act, low-threshold home-help services or family work).

As an example, the municipality of Nurmijärvi was awarded a prize in spring 2014 for the multi-sectoral and multi-professional cooperation in the early-phase work of its child welfare services. Nurmijärvi has actively developed social work, child welfare work and child welfare services as part of the municipi-

pality's service culture. Its personnel have received extensive training in early-phase open cooperation and dialogue. The operating model has been successful in creating a new culture of doing things together in preventive, early support and child welfare activities. For a diagram describing the model, see Appendix 2. (http://lskl.fi/tiedottaa/tiedotusvalineille/tiedotteet/nurmijarven_varhaisvaiheen_lastensuojelupalvelut_palkittiin_vuoden_parihaina.3273.news.)

The municipalities should actively disseminate information about child welfare and family services in their area, as information about the services creates an atmosphere of security and trust even when there is (as yet) no need for the services. Local contact details help clients to find the services quickly. Information also supports timely targeting of the services. The service package in each area is different, as some of the service providers are local and the manner in which the services are organised varies. For this reason, information about the service system can not be provided at the national level only. In the descriptions of local services, the Handbook of Child Welfare and the information about services for children, young people and families provided on the Kasvun kumppanit website can be used. The Kasvun kumppanit service is maintained by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (http://www.thl.fi/fi_FI/web/kasvunkumppanit-fi). It is essential that clients are also informed about Social Ombudsmen and the possibilities of obtaining independent advice in their cases.

Child welfare employees should also not feel that they are left alone to cope with a client case. Child welfare employees are responsible for the child welfare client process with an individual or a family, and they draw on the competence of other professionals when this is necessary for finding and providing a service that is in the best interest of a child or a young person in after-care. The support that is offered should be based on the individual need of a child, young person and a family.

Multiprofessional team of experts

A multiprofessional team of experts is a team set up by a municipality, or two or more municipalities together, of social and health care representatives, child growth and development experts and other experts needed in child welfare work. The purpose of the team is to ensure that social workers responsible for a child's affairs have at their disposal expertise in child growth, development and health care, and legal and other expertise necessary in child welfare work. (Child Welfare Act, section 14.)

The team of experts must have adequate resources so that it can be utilised in all stages of the child welfare process from preventive child welfare to after-care. It must be possible to flexibly reinforce the team when a child welfare case has special features, including the disability or serious or long-term illness of the child or the parent, or a factor related to the family's cultural background. As parents commonly have substance abuse and mental health problems, the expert group must have expertise in these fields.

A recommendation guiding the activities of a multiprofessional expert team: <http://www.sosiaaliporntti.fi/Page/a145351a-345d-457e-ace0-7c48bfb8a4e2.aspx>

Even when a child/young person and their family are clients of child welfare, each actor taking part in the cooperation is responsible for ensuring, through services of their branch, that the child/young person/parents receive the assistance they need. The employees in services intended for adults (including social work with adults and substance abuse and mental health services) should contact child welfare to investigate and take into account the need for support experienced by their clients' children. In social work with adults, it is important to support the inclusion in working life and rehabilitation of parents, as the wellbeing of the parents is in the best interest of the child.

Client plans are tools for agreeing with the family on the work to be carried out. However, drawing up client plans with several parties simultaneously (for example child welfare, social work with adults, substance abuse services) takes up a lot of resources, both from the work organisations and the client. It may also result in formulation of conflicting goals. For this reason, as a basic assumption client plans should be drawn up jointly by the authorities.

Examples of the municipalities' views of the service system³

Expressed in a child welfare survey of municipalities conducted by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in 2012:

- 68% of the municipalities that responded felt that the service system pushes clients into the child welfare services. Being a client of child welfare could be a requirement for obtaining other services.

³ <http://www.kunnat.net/fi/asiantuntijapalvelut/soster/sosiaalipalvelut/lapset/lastensuojelu/lastensuojelun-kuntakysely/Sivut/default.aspx>
<http://www.kunnat.net/fi/tietopankit/uutisia/2013/Sivut/kotipalvelun-k%C3%A4ynneista-alle-prosentti-lapsiperheisiin.aspx>

- Only 12% of the respondents felt that the need for support of a child cared for by a client of substance abuse and mental health services for adults is investigated extensively.

- Similarly, 99% agreed that it is necessary to expand and enhance measures that support children and families in stressful life situations without contacting child welfare when the situation does not involve child welfare issues.

A survey of home- services and support services conducted by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities indicates that less than 1% of home service visits were made to families with young children in 2011.

Such material as the online guide put together by the National Institute for Health and Welfare in 2013–2015 and the modular online training course based on its contents contribute to dispelling the uncertainty about exchange of information and secrecy between child welfare professionals and parties subject to notification duty. The management must ensure that the authorities work together to a sufficient degree, also locally. Child welfare may inform the authority having made a child welfare notification of having received the notification and give the name and contact details of the office or employee dealing with the matter. Providing the contact details facilitates cooperation between the authorities in situations where it becomes necessary to return to the matter at a later date. When the professional having made the child welfare notification and other authorities later take part in investigating the child's case and offering support as necessary, the cooperation has a solid foundation. Coordinating cooperation between the authorities with a stake in a child welfare case is the duty of the social worker in charge of a child's case. In this role, the social worker in charge of the child's case must make sure that the authorities are aware of the purpose and goals of the cooperation in the individual situation of each child.

When developing the service system, attention should be paid to the fact that a prerequisite for promoting a child's welfare is recognising his or her worries and difficulties, and seeking strengths and resources in a manner that does not overlook the child. A child-centred work approach ensures that the different employees, the parents and the child work together and that the work focuses on issues that support the child's welfare. Dividing the child welfare client process into a number of elements is not always a good idea for the client. Fragmentation also makes the work of parties involved in the cooperation more difficult. Client feedback must be collected and utilised systematically, communicating the clients' experiences of how the service system works to the decision-makers and improving the effectiveness of the activities.

Example: Kehrä II

The ABC model of multi-actor encounters means working together with the family, child welfare and other partners, and commitment to the principles and models of child-centred work. In this model, working practices that support and create client participation and elicit information from the various participants are used. The aim is to enhance the child's experience of basic safety and to reinforce client participation in the cooperation process. The model of multi-actor encounters can be used in child welfare work or in preventive child welfare work (e.g. school counsellors).

In multi-actor cooperation, the experience-based knowledge of the child and the parents is examined and considered a valuable input when integrating social welfare services in the everyday life of the child and the family. In multi-actor encounters, rather than transferring the clients from primary services to child welfare services, child welfare joins in as a partner for the family and the primary service.

Further information:

<http://www.socca.fi/index.phtml?s=864>

<https://www.innokyla.fi/web/malli176141>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The child welfare office lets the authority having made a notification know that the notification has been received and provides the name and contact details of the office or employee in charge of the case. (E, M⁴)
- The professional having made the child welfare notification takes part in investigating the child's case and offering support as necessary. Other authorities are involved in the initial investigation to the extent that this is necessary and useful. (E)
- The social worker in charge of the child's case coordinates cooperation between the authorities relevant to the child welfare case and ensures that the authorities are aware of the purpose and goals of the cooperation in the individual situations of children and their families. (E)

⁴ The recommendation indicates the party at whom the recommendation is targeted in brackets: E = Employee, M = Management

- When a child and a guardian are informed of the fact that child welfare work is about to begin, they are also explained what child welfare work means in practice, and they can be given an information package about child welfare as a printed client's guide and pointed towards the municipality's website for information about the services. The client must also be informed about the services of the Social Ombudsman and the legal remedies available for the client. (E, M)
- At the first meeting - and if necessary, also later - the principles of child welfare work are discussed with the clients (including the possibility of open documentation). (E)
- The support offered to the client and its intensity are tailored to the client's needs. (E, M)
- The work practices must be versatile. Home visits - if necessary, unannounced visits - are an aspect of child welfare work. They are an important part of investigating the circumstances in the child's home. (E, M)
- The multiprofessional team of experts supports child welfare work in its various processes and is a resource that is genuinely at the social worker's disposal. In the team of experts, 1) the child welfare social worker acts as the presenter in the team, 2) the expert team does not take over the authority to make decisions belonging to the social worker in charge of the child's case, 3) the team members analyse how the organisations behind them could support the child, and 4) the role and tasks of the expert team are clearly defined (for example, local specifications of the team's composition and the roles of various professionals). (M)
- Systematic client feedback on the services is collected. (M)

III. COMPETENT PROFESSIONALS

Child welfare work requires particular competence of the employees. The work organisation and the management must have a long-term commitment to developing the competence needed in child welfare. To support the employees in this demanding work, they need:

- strong basic, specialisation and continuing education and training
- competence in various aspects of the work
- work guidance
- possibilities of developing child welfare, and
- a team of experts they can rely on.

In general, the employee resources of child welfare are inadequate compared to client numbers. According to a labour force survey carried out by Local Government Employers in 2012, the municipalities experienced a labour shortage of 11% regarding social workers in child welfare. The labour shortage of social instructors working in child welfare was 2.5% and the shortage of practical nurses 7.8%.

According to a child welfare survey addressed to municipalities by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in 2012, one out of four municipalities that responded had access to an adequate labour input of competent social workers. One out of three municipalities had access to an adequate labour input of social instructors, and 12% of the municipalities that responded had adequate legal expertise available for social work. According to municipal sector pay statistics compiled by Statistics Finland, the number of senior social workers, social workers and social instructors whose salaries were paid by a municipality increased by a total of 1,744 persons in 2004–2012. In 2012, the total number of employees with the aforementioned job titles paid by the municipalities was 5,924.

There are great variations in the way in which child welfare work is organised in different areas. The working group on Functional Child Welfare proposed that the impacts of various organisation methods, work practices and quality requirements of child welfare on the workloads of child welfare services be piloted in certain municipalities. This will provide a foundation for assessing the preconditions and grounds for determining appropriate staffing levels at the national level. The proposal is associated with the changing service structures of social welfare and health care. The objectives of service system development include turning the services into a whole where children, young people and families would, as far as possible, be supported in the normal growth and development environments of the children and young people, including early childhood education and care and the school.

The personnel resources of child welfare must enable interaction and participation. Municipalities must pay attention to a suitable personnel structure and ensuring that the employees have enough time to encounter their clients and to document the client's case. At the national level, a review of the social welfare sector task structure may result in policies that support a personnel structure reform (an update of the task structure recommendations from 2008).

Task structure⁵

In a child welfare survey addressed to municipalities by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities in 2012, the municipalities highlighted division of duties in social instruction and social work as a means of developing the quality and impact of child welfare work and reducing the workload of social work. In as many as 84% of the municipalities that responded it was felt that an effective division of duties and adequate volume of social instruction and family work can essentially reduce the workload of social work. It was felt that the professional skills of social instructors were particularly well suited for finding out about the child's views in various stages of the child welfare process, case management and partnering a social worker in investigating the need for child welfare measures. In some municipalities, the division of duties had been completed, in some it was under way and in others it had not yet been started.

Each work organisation must clarify locally the number of personnel and time input available for a client's case that is optimal for its child welfare work, taking into consideration regional factors and those related to the content and the clients' service needs. The work can be divided into direct and indirect tasks. Time use can be examined by reserving an average of 6 hours/month/child for direct process management tasks, including investigating the need for child welfare measures, drawing up client plans, urgent placements, preparations for taking a child into care, documentation, decision-making, plans, statements, client work with groups and work with partners, and, in the active work phase, at least 2 hours/month should be reserved by the employee to whom the client has been assigned for personal encounters with the client. However, the time needed for a client case may vary considerably, depending on how demanding and challenging an individual case is.

From time to time, both the management and the work organisation should pause and assess the actual distribution of working time of child welfare employees. The following questions may support these assessments:

- Is the working time allocated to the specific issues that play a key role in child welfare work?
- Would the number of cases and the level of challenge handled by the work organisation or an individual employee require reorganisation of work or additional resources?

⁵ <http://www.kunnat.net/fi/asiantuntijapalvelut/soster/sosiaalipalvelut/lapset/lastensuojelu/lastensuojelun-kuntakysely/Sivut/default.aspx>

- Is enough time left over for indirect tasks, including meetings, stakeholder cooperation, information, training, work guidance, supervisory work and service monitoring?

In addition to child welfare targeting individual children and families, resources should be allocated to tasks that have links with child welfare and that require specific competence, including the work of the child welfare officer, arbitration in guardianship disputes and the organisation of supervised access. The service structure reform will enlarge the population base of child welfare work. An adequate population base is significant for the organisation of child welfare, as it supports access to not only social work expertise but also legal, psychological, psychiatric and pedagogic competence by the work organisation focusing on child welfare. In case of special groups, including children or parents with disabilities, it must be possible to contact, and receive assistance from, experts on disability.

Universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational institutions turn out competent professionals of child welfare work. In recent years, the universities and universities of applied sciences specialising in social work have created cooperation structures with work organisations. Centres of Expertise on Social Welfare have also joined higher education institutions in promoting the development of basic and special competence needed in child welfare.

Practical teaching/teacher networks⁶

Changes in society and in the operating environment mean that social work and the social worker's competence needs must be updated. Competent experts of social work can only be educated by keeping in touch with the practical work; interaction between practice, theory and research is already needed in the student phase. The universities providing education in social work have in recent years developed their practical level teaching (studies related to professional practices and work placements). In Helsinki and Turku, teaching and research centre or clinic activities are established structures.

All higher education institution units that focus on social work aim to create education and research centres to serve as permanent cooperation structures bridging academic aspects and practical work

⁶ Sosiaalityön käytännönopetus liikkeessä. Noora Tuohino, Anneli Pohjola & Mari Suonio (ed.), SOSNET julkaisu 5. Tampere 2012.

that could have a versatile role as hubs of teaching, information production, and practical experiments and development activities. A course in practice research, for example, serves as a kind of window to the various working cultures of social work. Some work organisations have already perceived the possibilities offered by the influx of students as researchers in the work organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Each employee has a possibility of taking part in developing his or her work. (E, M)
- The employees' expertise is brought to bear on clarifying the contents and job descriptions of child welfare work. (E, M⁷)
- Division of duties between the employees is developed further, e.g. between practical nurses, social instructors and social workers. (E, M)
- The management ensures that in addition to expertise in social work, the work organisation has access to legal, psychological, psychiatric and pedagogical competence. (M)
- When developing the work, the negative effects on clients caused by replacement of employees are minimised. For example, this can be achieved by ensuring that there is one employee who stays with the client throughout all the various stages of the child welfare process. (M)
- Instead of individual training courses, long-term instruction and guidance are stressed in the continuing training of employees and work development. (M)
- Work guidance is provided for those engaged in client work. (M)
- Child welfare employees are given the opportunity to become child welfare work mentors and mentor their colleagues in their own or in another work organisation (E, M).

⁷ The recommendation indicates the party at whom the recommendation is targeted in brackets: E = Employee, M = Management

IV. MULTIDIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT

In child welfare work, assessments are relevant to clients, employees and work organisations. It is necessary to pay attention to both the elements of a high-quality assessment in client cases and, at the work organisation level, assess your own activities in order to improve quality: assessing the client process and impacts of the work is vital.

Assessments of child welfare work are goal-oriented and supportive. The fact that an assessment is being carried out in a child's case must not interrupt the support and health care services received by the child and the family, or prevent their commencement. Once proceedings are initiated in a child welfare case, under section 26 of the Child Welfare Act, the social worker or other child welfare worker must assess immediately the child's possible urgent need for child welfare. The social worker must decide no later than seven days after receipt of the notification or other message, whether, on this basis, to begin investigating the need for child welfare, or whether the case is clearly of a kind that does not require measures to be taken. Under section 27 of the Act, the investigation must be completed no more than three months after the initiation of proceedings in the child welfare case. The extent of the investigation will be as required by the client's circumstances. After the initial stage, the assessment of the situation of the child and the parents continues in the various stages of the child welfare process.

In assessments conducted while a child and a family are clients of child welfare, their situation and their preparedness to receive support must be examined in order to provide support in the right way. In the assessment, a shared view of the family's need for support and the objectives of the assessment should be reached. The options available should first be discussed with the client. It should be ensured that the subject of the assessment also knows what the consequences of the assessment can be.

The assessment of client cases is being developed nationally. This is one of the priorities of development pinpointed in the Functional Child Welfare implementation plan. Even now, development efforts are being supported by the National Development Programme for Social Welfare and Health Care, the KASTE programme.

A project to develop investigations of child welfare needs in Central Finland (LasSe)⁸

The LasSe project focuses on issues of multidisciplinary work, case management and encountering and hearing a child in investigations of child welfare needs. The project is being implemented in 1 April 2013 – 31 October 2015 as part of Children's Kaste, a sub-programme of the national KASTE project. Five regions take part in the project: Southern Ostrobothnia, Kanta-Häme, Ostrobothnia, Tampere region and Päijät-Häme, as well as three Centres of Excellence on Social Welfare: Pikassos, SONet BOTNIA and VERSO.

The aim is that at the conclusion of the project:

1) Encountering and hearing children in connection with a child welfare process have been enhanced, and the client family's participation in the process of investigating child welfare needs can be assessed.

2) The internal procedures of social work in investigating child welfare needs have been made more specific, and the way in which decisions on taking up a child and a family as child welfare clients and case management are made has been clarified.

3) The roles and operating methods of the professional (multiprofessional) cooperation network before an investigation of child welfare needs is launched, during the investigation and after the investigation has been concluded have been improved and clarified. Dialogue between social workers and other child welfare experts has been reinforced by the support structure created during the project.

The studies, reports and summaries produced during the LasSe project can be accessed in the LasSe material database at: <http://pikassos.fi/aineistot/viewcategory/56-lasse>

From time to time, child welfare should also evaluate its own operation more extensively than just assessing the working time use. Cooperation with experts by experience in service system development was discussed in Chapter I of the Recommendation: Participation in a child welfare case. As a starting point, child welfare working practices and the methodology used should be based on research-based information and impact assessments. Particular attention should be paid to documentation, the employees' docu-

⁸ <http://www.pikassos.fi/lasse>

mentation skills should be built up, and decisions should be made on the local procedures for recording client cases. If child welfare employees had at their disposal portable devices on which client records could be updated and plans made up with the client, for example during home visits and negotiations, the transparency, timeliness of documentation and client participation could be improved substantially.

The management and elected officials must ensure that the employees have the preconditions for performing high-quality work. The employees are responsible for their own competence and building up their professionalism. The employer, on the other hand, supports competence development by such means as continuing education and training. The general objectives of the work should be set together with the employees, ensuring that they are clear at all levels. Practices/assessment structures should also be put in place between the management and employees to facilitate dialogue between them. The assessments that must be carried out by the management (for example, assessing the impacts of decisions on children and the organisation's effectiveness) should be implemented without making extensive demands on client work. When the work organisation is assessing its operation from the quality perspective, the list of questions in Appendix 3 can be used. The list is based on the contents of this Quality Recommendation, and the questions have been grouped around themes to make it possible to divide the assessment into smaller sections.

An example of a self-assessment and peer assessment model⁹

The Mirror model is a reflective method of self and peer assessment developed by the employees engaged in social work with adults in Haaga service centre. The purpose of a reflective assessment is to recognize the objectives and ethical principles that direct one's work. The goal of self-assessment is a systematic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of one's own work and the challenges encountered in client work. The Mirror assessment model is particularly suitable for situations where a social worker would like to avail of a peer assessment of a client's situation made by his or her colleagues.

The model has been found helpful for the employee, as discussing key challenges of client work supports the work and promotes coping.

⁹ Yliruka, Laura (2006) Kuvastin. Reflektiivinen itse- ja vertaisarviointimenetelmä sosiaalityössä. Stakesin työpapereita 15/2006.

Team work has been found an effective way of solving problems. At peer assessment meetings, the participants can share information and experiences and produce shared insights. At best, a peer assessment works similarly to work guidance. From the client's perspective, the peer assessment is considered a good working method as it speeds up progress in case of problems and results in fair services.

Further information: <http://www.helsinki.fi/sosiaalityo/tietoa/sosweb/dokumentit/kuvastin.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessing a client's situation is an elemental part of the child welfare client process, which is subject to liability for acts in office. (M¹⁰)
- During the assessment, the child/young person and his or her parents are encountered and their preparedness to receive support is investigated in order to provide it in the right way. (E)
- The assessment investigates the overall situation of the child/young person, allowing the interested parties to understand why an assessment is being conducted, what is being assessed and how the assessment will be carried out. (E, M)
- From time to time, employees and work organisations pause to assess their own operation and to draw on research-based information. In the assessment, particular attention is paid to documentation. The employees' skills related to documentation are enhanced, and local procedures are decided on. (E, M)

¹⁰ The recommendation indicates the party at whom the recommendation is targeted in brackets: E = Employee, M = Management

3 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF QUALITY RECOMMENDATION IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the quality recommendations described above, it is recommended that the plan for arranging and developing child welfare services referred to in section 12 of the Child Welfare Act would describe child welfare quality criteria used by the municipality and qualitative targets for monitoring and developing child welfare. The online wellbeing report and evaluation of impacts on children also give the municipalities concrete tools for evaluating the implementation of child welfare quality.

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare, child welfare quality pages will be created in connection with the Handbook of Child Welfare. The municipalities are challenged to report on services for children they have found good on the quality pages and to post descriptions of their good practices on the Innovillage service (www.innokyla.fi). On the quality pages of the Handbook of Child Welfare, a link will be set up to Innovillage's online tool where visitors can discuss or comment on child welfare quality issues. The quality pages can thus be utilised both locally and nationally for interactive and comparable development of services.

In 2013–2015, the National Institute for Health and Welfare will implement an R&D project on child welfare commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (LaskeTut). One of the missions of the project is to develop a child welfare information base and register. At the moment, there are no inclusive monitoring indicators for the national monitoring of the Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare, and the indicators are currently being created.

Once a year, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health will convene a meeting to assess the status of child welfare and the implementation of the Quality Recommendation at the national level. The Quality Recommendations for Child Welfare must also be taken into consideration in more extensive evaluations of primary services, in connection with which the majority of child welfare cooperation takes place. Such as the information accumulated on the quality pages can be used in the evaluations. Representatives of experts by experience will also be invited to take part in the evaluation of the Quality Recommendation implementation. The evaluation report will be posted on the Quality Recommendation website where it can be accessed and commented on, with the aim of creating a continuum of quality discussion that will contribute to improving the services. The Recommendation will be reviewed as necessary.

KEY CONCEPTS

Social work with adults

Social work with adults refers to social work targeted at adults that focuses on the individual consequences of such problems as everyday life skills, poverty, subsistence problems, substance abuse and mental health problems, social exclusion and unemployment.

Client

Child welfare clients are children/young people and their parents/guardians whose need for services is being investigated and to whom child welfare services are offered.

Community care support measures

The purpose of support in open care is to promote and support the child's development and to support and enhance the upbringing skills and opportunities of the parents, custodians and persons responsible for the child's care and upbringing (section 34 of the Child Welfare Act).

Human dignity

Human dignity is the foundation of human rights. In the Quality Recommendation, human dignity means that each human being is valuable in his or her own right.

Management

Management refers to the local council, committees and top-level public servants.

Quality

Quality refers to the ability of services to respond to the clients' assessed service needs systematically, effectively, in compliance with regulations and cost-effectively. A high-quality service maintains or improves the client's functional capacity and increases health benefits.

Child

A child in the Quality Recommendation refers to a person aged under 18 years.

A child's best interests

The aim of complying with a child's best interests is implementing all rights contained in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensuring

the child's general wellbeing. A child's best interests are specified in concrete terms in section 4 of the Child Welfare Act, which is discussed in Chapter 2 of the Recommendation.

Child welfare

Under the Child Welfare Act, child-specific and family-specific child welfare consists of an investigation of the need for child welfare measures, a client plan and the provision of support in open care (non-residential care). Child-specific and family-specific child welfare also includes emergency placement of a child and taking a child into care, as well as substitute care and after-care related to these.

Child welfare institution

The Child Welfare Act (section 57) defines child welfare institutions as children's homes, correctional schools and other comparable child welfare institutions.

Investigation of the need for child welfare measures

An investigation of the need for child welfare measures contains an assessment of the circumstances in which the child is being brought up, and of the prospects for the custodians or other persons who are at that time responsible for the child's care and upbringing to see to this care and upbringing, and of the need for child welfare measures (section 27 of the Child Welfare Act). The extent of the investigation will be as required by the circumstances of the case in question.

Social network

Social network refers to all those people who are involved - or who could be involved - in supporting the child and his/her care and upbringing.

Young person

In the Quality Recommendation, a young person refers to a person aged 18–21 years (entitled to child welfare after-care services).

Services

In the Quality Recommendation, services refer to the services that child welfare can offer to a client.

Fundamental rights

The Constitution of Finland (791/1999) defines the fundamental rights whose implementation the state must safeguard for the citizens. Fundamental rights include:

- equality,
- the right to life, personal liberty and integrity,
- the principle of legality in criminal cases,
- the freedom of movement,
- the right to privacy,
- the freedom of religion and conscience,
- the freedom of expression and right of access to information,
- the freedom of assembly and association,
- electoral and participatory rights,
- protection of property,
- educational rights,
- the right to one's language and culture,
- the right to work and the freedom to engage in commercial activity,
- the right to social security,
- responsibility for the environment, and
- protection under law.

Family

In the Quality Recommendation, a family refers to a child, his/her parents and guardians, substitute parents, siblings and other persons living in the same household.

Family care

Under the Social Welfare Act (710/1982), family care means the provision of care, upbringing or other 24-hour attendance in the case of persons in a private home other than their own. The provision of family care is specified in the Family Carer Act (312/1992).

Confidentiality

Under the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999), official documents shall be in the public domain, unless specifically otherwise provided in an Act. The Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000) specifies that any information gathered by child welfare officers on a client of social welfare or other private individual must be kept secret. Secrecy includes the secrecy of documents, duty of non-disclosure and prohibition of exploitation.

Substitute care

Under the Child Welfare Act (section 49), substitute care means arranging the care and upbringing of a child that has been taken into care, placed urgently or placed on the basis of an interlocutory order referred to in section 83 of the Act away from the child's own home.

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APPENDIX I

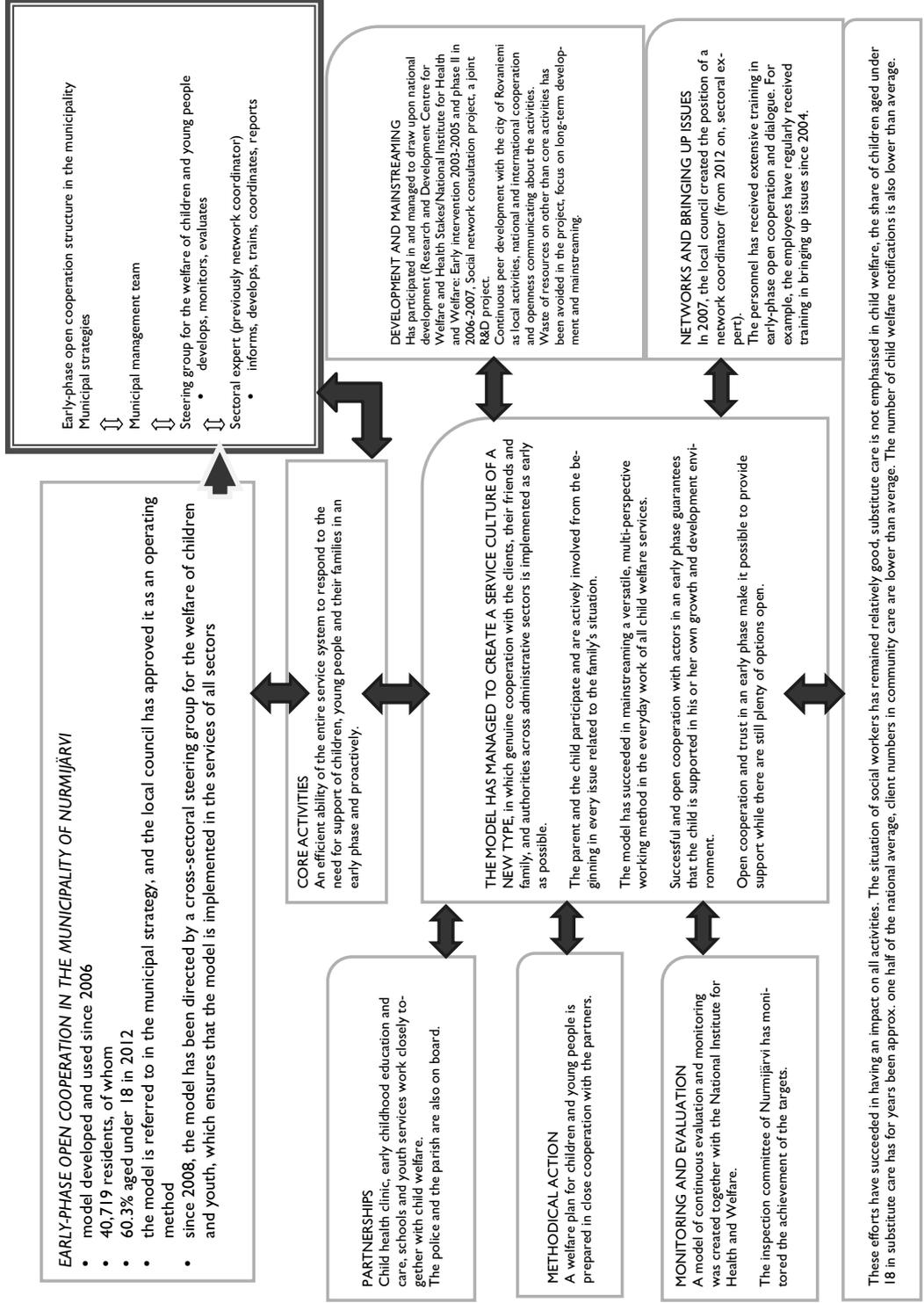
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

General ethical principle	To be considered in the implementation of child welfare	An example of how I could assess this in my work	My assessment of what the principle means in my work/ work organisation
The actors respect their clients' human dignity and fundamental rights	Dignified treatment and protection of privacy of the client are paramount in child welfare. In daily child welfare work, this is reflected in such principles as the equal, non-discriminating and respectful treatment of clients. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is complied with in the operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I do not answer the phone in the presence of a client - I take care with documents related to client cases to prevent outsiders from seeing them even by accident - I am familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child 	
The starting point of child welfare is the child's best interests	<p>FAIRNESS</p> <p>The requirements of good governance, including finding out about different options, giving justifications and respectful treatment of clients are highlighted in each phase of client work. In the Quality Recommendation for Child Welfare, fairness refers to implementing all rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as fully as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I justify decisions concerning the child and explain in concrete terms how they are in the best interest of the child. - I make sure that the right of children who are my clients to participate in making decisions that concern them is implemented. 	
	<p>OPENNESS AND RELIABILITY</p> <p>The Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses respect for the parents' responsibility for the child's upbringing. A prerequisite for this, also in child welfare, is transparent and reliable knowledge of the child's developmental level at each age, and the forms of support and services through which the child and the family can receive the support they need.</p> <p>Decisions that are consistent with the wishes of the child and the parent cannot always be made in child welfare. For this reason, the operating practices of child welfare as well as the decisions made must always be predictable and justified. Open and reliable activities can only be implemented by systematically following the principle of the smallest possible intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I take into account the age and developmental level of a child who is my client when I explain what child welfare is and what type of support can be provided. - I consider what practical methods could be used to support parenting in the family and whether support provided by other services than child welfare could be sufficient. - I tell the family about the options available in the matter and explain what can be done next. 	

	<p>SAFETY</p> <p>In child welfare, safety must be taken into consideration in the child's circumstances, human relationships and interaction alike. Most importantly, whether or not the child feels safe should be a consideration in every situation, and their feelings of safety should be promoted. Safety must also be examined from the perspective of the child's family and the employee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I find out how safe the child feels and how their feeling of security could be promoted. I also remember to check that a child in substitute care feels safe. - I encourage children to express their views. 	
Child welfare is about interaction	<p>Good interaction includes caring about the client. In good client encounters, appreciation, humanity and empathy are highlighted. Both the client and the employee can influence the success of the interaction. Professionals of child welfare must have particular strengths and skills related to interaction and constructive handling of conflicts with the clients - both children and adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I ask for feedback on my interaction skills from other employees and clients - I strive to improve my interaction skills and capabilities of resolving challenging conflicts - If interaction with the client is difficult, I do not stop trying 	
Professional staff are responsible for the quality of their work	<p>Professionals working in services for children and young people must be aware of both their own responsibility for the child's upbringing in their work organisation and their duty to support parenting. The employees must also understand their responsibility for the work they do in a wider sense to the child, young person, family, their own organisation and society alike. The management (local council, committees, top-level public servants) must be aware of their responsibility for providing opportunities for high-quality work and supporting the employee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I take part in continuing training offered by the employer and also in other respects, I actively strive to upgrade my skills - I follow new studies being completed in my field and make an effort to draw on the results in my work - I let my supervisor know if I feel that I cannot work to an adequate quality standard and look for solutions to improve the situation 	

A prerequisite for good services is responsible decisions and a responsible operating culture	<p>CHILD AND FAMILY CENTREDNESS</p> <p>All decision-making, development efforts and service provision must be justified from the perspective of children, young people and families. The impacts of the decisions made must also be described and assessed from the perspective of children, young people and families. Informing children, young people and families in a manner that they can comprehend and collecting their experiences and feedback to support development are also aspects of the work.</p>	<p>- Justifications in decisions made in the case of an individual client are vital, and I thus pay particular attention to them.</p> <p>- I propose in my municipality that we could also introduce the tool for assessing impacts on children in decision-making and draw up an online wellbeing report, if one is not being produced already.</p>	
	<p>RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>Employees working with children and families must have clearly defined responsibilities to ensure that work with clients does not remain at the level of individual measures and the responsibility of an individual employee. Responsible decision-making has a considerable impact on the quality of child welfare work.</p>	<p>- I take part in discussions on the division of duties</p> <p>- I let decision-makers know if the quality of child welfare in my area is poor and give suggestions on how it could be improved</p>	
	<p>PRINCIPLE OF PROPORTIONALITY</p> <p>The actions taken by the authorities must be in correct proportion to the goals and objectives of assisting a client. The principle is that official actions are taken at the lowest level that achieves the required impact (the principle of smallest adequate intervention).</p>	<p>- When making decisions about actions needed in a child welfare case, I consider which measure would produce the requisite impact but interfere with the independence and privacy of the family as little as possible.</p>	

APPENDIX 2 DIAGRAM OF EARLY-PHASE OPEN COOPERATION IN NURMIJÄRVI



APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONS SUPPORTING AN ASSESSMENT OF HOW THE QUALITY RECOMMENDATION CONTENTS ARE IMPLEMENTED IN YOUR WORK ORGANISATION/WORK

Principles

- Which principles guide our work?
- Are the proposed ethical principles cross-cutting in our activities?
- How are they reflected in our everyday work?
(The Recommendation also contains a specific Appendix that supports the assessment)

Participation and inclusion

- How do we implement information exchange and cooperation with other services, in particular health care, early childhood education and care, and the school?
- Do we do enough?
- Do we discuss with the family and other authorities how the other authorities could support the implementation of the best interests of the child and support the parents in fulfilling their responsibility for bringing up the child?
- Has a plan been prepared in our municipality to enhance the participation of children and young people and to improve child welfare services that enables the inclusion of children, young people and parents in developing services as experts by experience?
- Does the plan contain concrete measures for promoting the participation of children, young people and parents and the utilisation of experience-based knowledge?
- Or how do we involve children and families in developing services?
- Do the children/young people know whom they can contact about their own case?
- How do we hear and take into account the child's views?
- How can children/young people influence the way in which we work with them: the time, the place and the manner in which we discuss the issues of their life?

- Do we provide children who are child welfare clients with information about child welfare work in a form that they can understand? How do we know that the information we provide has been understood?
- Are we using management structures and practices that support child-centred work?
- How is child-centredness visible in our work?
- How have we provided prerequisites for continuous and trusting interaction between the employee, a child that is a client of child welfare and other interested parties?
- Do we define the members of the social network and their possibilities of providing social support individually, in accordance with the needs and preferences of the child and the family?
- In substitute care services, do we also take into account the substitute parents' views of the child's need for support? How do we ask about it?
- How do we supervise substitute care? Do we also find out about the client's views and how do we take them into account?

Service system

- How have we made sure in our municipality that the service and organisation structures support expert cooperation in the cases of children and young people?
- Do situations occur in our area where being a child welfare client is a requirement for providing a service, even if assistance could be arranged in the form of a more extensive service that supports families?
- How are children and a potential need for child welfare measures taken into account in services for adults in our area?
- Are we drawing up/could we draw up joint client plans?
- Do the services in our area support families as a whole?
- In practice, how do we inform an authority that has made a child welfare notification about having received the notification and about the name and contact details of the office or employee in charge of the case?
- How do we invite the professional having made a child welfare notification and other authorities to take part in investigating the child's case and offering support?
- How do we specify when this is necessary and when not?
- By what means can the social worker in charge of the child's case ensure that the authorities participating in a child welfare case are aware of the purpose and objectives of the cooperation in individual situations concerning a child?

- How do we inform the child and the guardian about child welfare services at the beginning of the child welfare process?
- Do we give the clients an information package about child welfare as a printed guide?
- Does the municipality's website provide information about child welfare services?
- How else do we communicate about what the child welfare services in our area are?
- Does this information also include the services of the Social Ombudsman and the client's legal remedies?
- How do we discuss the principles of child welfare work with the clients?
- How do we use the possibilities of open documentation in client work?
- How do we offer support to the client? Do we automatically offer a service that is available, or a service that meets the client's needs?
- Do the services meet the client's needs, also as regards their intensity?
- What are our working methods like? Do they have room for improvement?
- Do we make home visits to find out about the circumstances in the child's home?
- How have we defined locally the work of the multiprofessional team of experts?
- What is the role and composition of the team in our municipality?
- Is it what we would like it to be?
- Does the team's work support our child welfare work in its various processes?
- To what extent is the team at the disposal of a social worker engaged in child welfare?
- Do child welfare social workers act as presenters in our team?
- How do we ensure that the team of experts does not take over the authority to make decisions that belongs to the social worker in charge of the child's case?
- How do the team members analyse the possibilities of the organisations behind them to provide support for the child?
- How do we collect client feedback on the services?
- Do we do it systematically?
- How do we use the feedback received and how do we communicate about it?

Professionals and skills

- How can we give each employee a possibility of taking part in developing their work?

- When are we next going to review the content and job descriptions of child welfare work?
- How will the employees' expertise be used in this review?
- Is our working time allocated to issues that play a key role for child welfare work? How have we established this?
- Do we also have enough time to encounter the clients and to document client cases?
- How do we develop further the division of duties between the employees, for example between practical nurses, social instructors and social workers?
- What required expertise do we not have in our work organisation?
- How should we develop our competence?
- Does our competence also cover promoting participation and adequate interaction skills?
- How can we fix the shortcomings?
- Is long-term guidance and instruction available? How could we organise it?
- Do we all get work guidance when we need it? How do we ensure this?
- Do we have the possibility of becoming mentors of child welfare work and mentoring our colleagues in our own or other work organisations?
- How do we minimise negative impacts on clients from employee turnover?

Assessment

- How do we make sure the support services that a child/family is already receiving are not interrupted during an assessment, or that the assessment does not become an obstacle for starting them?
- How do we make sure that the interested parties understand why the assessment is being carried out, what is being assessed and how the assessment is being implemented?
- Do we encounter the child/young person and the parents in the assessment stage and establish their preparedness to receive support?
- How do we face our liability for acts in office concerning an assessment conducted during a client process?
- How and when do we assess our own activities?
- Have we made adequate use of research-based information in our work? How could we make a better use of research-based information?
- What are our documentation practices like?
- Do we need to improve or update our documentation skills?
- How do we decide about local documentation procedures?

Quality pages

- What could we post on the quality pages/Innovillage from our area?
- Do we also communicate locally about the quality of our child welfare work and our efforts to develop it?