

# *Transition from School to Work*

*A Holistic Approach to Young  
People at Risk*

*Happy Smiling People*

Holistic Approaches for Young People



**Thematic Report of the Conference**  
**15<sup>th</sup> November 2006 - 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

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Austria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Wales



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## A Holistic Approach to Young People at Risk

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15<sup>th</sup> November 2006 - 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006

Prague, Czech Republic



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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

In the transnational project Happy Smiling People (HSP) – Holistic Approaches for Young People, development partnerships from four European countries cooperate to develop and exchange new ways of dealing with pupils with special needs in order to prevent them from becoming marginalized.

The following development partnerships cooperate on this project:

- **IBEA** (Austria)
- **Find Your Direction** (The Czech Republic)
- **In Sight** (The Netherlands)
- **Equal Shares For All** (Wales)

The transnational partnership Happy Smiling People is co-funded by the European Union under the budget line of ESF–Equal.

This is a third report focusing on the international partnership HSP, which was organized by the Czech development partnership between November 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Prague. The preceding conferences were prepared in the Netherlands (November 2005) and in Austria (May 2006). This international cooperation is coming to close and the last conference will be held in Wales in March 2007. Outcomes and findings from both preceding conferences were used for running the conference in Prague.



## Chapter 2 – Report on Conference

### *Introduction in Context – Programme of the Conference*

*Marie Janoušková (The Czech Development Partnership)*

Our development partnership organized an international conference of our project partners from the Netherlands, Austria, and Great Britain between November 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006 in Prague 3. The title of the conference was „**Transition from school to work**“. After the conferences in the Netherlands (November 2005) and Austria (May 2006), we had the opportunity to invite our foreign partners to the Czech Republic.

Based on experiences from the previous conferences, we deemed necessary to get the foreign partners familiar with the educational system in the Czech Republic, which is in many aspects different from educational systems in the countries of our foreign partners. The overall overview of the educational system was provided through the means of a presentations and discussions with specialists from the Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling Centre in Prague 2. The guests had the opportunity to compare the educational systems in the respective countries and could compare all consequences that result from these systems.



Several excursions were arranged for the foreign guests. The main goal was to provide them with the widest possible overview about what types of care for problematic adolescents are at disposal here, in the Czech Republic, as well as which services are missing in this area. Therefore, the theoretical presentations were complemented by direct visits of organizations, which intensively work with the problematic adolescents.



Firstly, we visited Grammar school in Prague, Londýnská Street, which differs from other grammar schools by having their own teaching curricula and presence of integrated classes. At this moment, the school is checking its school educational plan “Free grammar school”. One specific

feature of this plan is, for example, absence of marks, which is rather rare in the Czech educational system.



Further, we have visited the Centre for Behavioural Care in Modřany, which provides preventive upbringing and therapeutic services to clients usually between the ages of 13 and 18 years, who have some problems in relationship and communication with parents, teachers or are labelled as “problematic” within its wider social milieu. During this several weeks long stay, there should be at least slight improvement.

For illustration of the work with adolescents, we have visited the Proxima Social Civic Organization, which runs a drop-in centre for the adolescents and coordinates various programs of primary prevention or runs a “job club”.

We were very pleased by the interest of the partners regarding details associated with carrying out of the project of our development partnership called „Najdi svůj směr“ / „Find Your Direction“. Together, we have visited partner children’s home in Jablonné v Podještědí, where our guests had the opportunity not only to get a tour of the children’s home, but also had a chance to meet our experts and their everyday work with the children. Together, we have evaluated and discussed a lot about the significance of the project in the broader context of institutional care in the Czech Republic and its sustainability.

The conference was highly inspirational for possible cooperation on prepared projects. The exchange of information and results from just finished projects run by the Community Initiative Equal “Happy Smiling People” was another benefit. The guests were the most taken aback by the high number of children, who are growing up in institutional care in the Czech Republic. Further, they were surprised that the employees of non–profit organizations and school institutions are primarily young people. This is not a common phenomenon in other countries. Conclusions of all discussions stated that in the Czech Republic, there is a lack for individual, long term and systemic approach towards disadvantaged groups.



## ***Educational System in the Czech Republic***

*Jarmila Klégrová, Pavla Picková (Educational and Psychological Counselling Centre for Prague, Districts 1, 2 and 4)*

There are two main types of educational institutions in the Czech Republic: **schools** providing education and **school facilities** providing school related services.

The precondition allowing a school or a school facility to carry out its activities is to be registered in the School Register at the Ministry of Education. The primary language of instruction is Czech. Language instruction in the case of ethnic minorities follows these regulations:

- A kindergarten class using the language of the respective minority can be established for a minimum of 8 children
- A primary school class for the minimum of 12 children
- A secondary school in which the language of the respective minority is used can be set up provided there are at least 15 students in each class
- Bilingual education is not in principle precluded



### **Schools**

- Nursery schools and pre-schools – non compulsory, age range from 3 to 6 or 7 years, the postponement of school attendance is possible
- Primary schools – compulsory school attendance of 9 years
- Secondary schools
  - *Grammar schools* – 4, 6 or 8-year attendance, depending on the children's age of starting the school, concluded by a school leaving certificate (GCSE equivalent)
  - *Secondary vocational school* – 4-year attendance, concluded by a school leaving certificate, mainly focusing on special area of education (technical, economical, educational etc.)
  - *Secondary training school*
    - 3 year attendance, offering a certificate of apprenticeship
    - 2 year attendance, concluded by a school leaving examination
  - *College of Higher Education* – 3-year attendance, after obtaining GCSE examination, offering a certificate of higher education and the title Certificated Specialist
- Higher education governed by a special law
- Universities – 5-year attendance, 3-year bachelors level, 2-year masters level
- Pupils with special educational needs



Pupils with special educational needs are granted a right to education where its content, forms and methods will be in accordance with their educational needs and abilities. There are several forms of education of these pupils.

*Individual integration* – the pupil attends an ordinary class provided conditions necessary for meeting the child's needs are ensured, the school may also introduce an assistant teacher for indicated cases.

*Group integration* – education for handicapped children is provided in a class which is part of an ordinary school (mostly for children with specific learning difficulties, like dyslexia, etc.); in either case, the education follows an individual programme of study.

*Education in special schools* – established specifically for severely handicapped children, mostly with sensory, physical and mental handicap.

### School facilities

- School facilities for continuing education – adult education
- School counselling facilities
  - *Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres* – will be discussed later
  - *Special Educational Centres* – will be discussed later
- School facilities providing non-vocational and further education for children and youth – school clubs, hobby centres, afternoon classes etc.
- Boarding school facilities and school canteens
- Facilities of institutional care, protective education and preventive–educational care
  - *Diagnostic child care institute* – for children from 5 to 15 years
  - *Diagnostic institutes for youth* – age range 15 to 18, for youth on the edge of social pathology, it still possesses the features of prevention, not punishment
  - *Educational care centres under diagnostic institutes* – resident and non–resident section, providing guidance with an element of therapeutic assistance
  - *Children's homes*

The main reasons of placement of a child into these facilities are:

- Neglected family care
- Mistreatment of the child
- Child abuse
- Major behavioural disorders

The placement of a child is preceded by a judicial decision called preliminary measure or proposal of social care provision.



## **System of Educational and Psychological Counselling in the Czech Republic**

*Jarmila Klégrová, Pavla Picková, (Educational and Psychological Counselling Centre for Prague Districts 1,2 and 4)*

Educational counselling has a quite long tradition in the Czech Republic. Its origins go back to the 1950s and the 1960s. Currently, there are two main parts of this system:

### **Counselling within schools**

School counsellor – provides basic information and a career guidance, keeps the pupils' files, cooperates with educational psychologist; it is usually a teacher with reduced teaching duties who has to have a postgraduate course at the university level.

Methodologist of social pathology prevention – this position has been created recently in order to respond to a growing drug abuse problem; special course is required for this position.

School counselling centre – a quite new approach to solving school problems, now established in 53 schools in the Czech Republic – only in Prague; it is a team approach including cooperation of the school counsellor, school psychologist, methodologist of prevention and special educational teacher; its future existence depends on the amount of funding.

### **School counselling facilities**

Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres have the longest tradition in the system, both authors of this article work in one of these Centres established in Prague. Their services in the current system are



irreplaceable – their findings provide the base for further work with children at schools (e.g. integration of children with learning disorders, specialist support for teachers dealing with these children, helping with seeking the help for children with lower social adaptability). Age of the clients of these Centres ranges from 3 to 18 – 20 years. Children are referred there by the teachers or parents can contact the Centre themselves. Written consent of the parents is needed before the child is accepted for care. There are 70 state – run Centres in the Czech Republic (the service there is free of charge), 2 private Centres (the service is paid) and 1 church – run Centre (free of charge). Staff of the Centres usually consists mainly of educational psychologists, special teachers, social workers, sometimes part time speech therapists, psychiatrists, neurologists, etc.



Standard activities of the Centres include:

- Diagnostic work – psychological assessment (e.g. school maturity, learning problems, behavioural problems, career guidance, personality issues)
- Educational and psychological intervention and help for parents
- Visits to schools
- Cooperation with school counsellors

Additional activities:

- Seminars for teachers
- Methodological guidance of special education teachers
- Programs for children with behavioural problems
- Peer programs
- Improvements of relations in class
- Internships of university and colleges of higher education students

Special education centres – established in 1992, providing long term help especially for children with mental, physical or sensory handicap, usually connected to a special school

Institute of Educational and Psychological Counselling – founded by the Ministry of Education in 1994 as a methodological centre, coordinator of the counselling system, provider of further education of the specialists in the field, source of information

### **Some existing problems**

- High demands on staff – insufficient number of psychologists and other staff members sometimes make it difficult to provide the necessary long-term support for the clients
- Limited possibilities of systematic supervision of staff by specialists
- Insufficient funding prevents regular updating of test sets and introducing new ones
- Unsystematic postgraduate education and further preparation of counselling staff

### **Findings from the long term experience**

- It is useful to focus on early intervention – the younger the client, the easier it is to deal with the problem before it becomes too severe
- Educational and psychological counselling centres are perceived by parents and teachers as well as a needed service and respected as such
- The proportion of work with parents as a factor crucial for the child's development has increased



## **Young People Leaving the Institutional Care**

*Hana Pazlarová, Oldřich Matoušek (Department of Social Work, Charles University Prague)*

### **Children living outside their families in the Czech Republic**

The Czech Republic belongs to the states with a considerably high number of children living in the institutional facilities. We have had approximately 20 000 children living outside the family environment per approximately 10 million of inhabitants for several years. A half of them approximately consist of clients of the social care institutions which are the boarding type facilities for a permanent residence of persons with special health needs (mentally or physically handicapped). There are about 10 000 persons in the institutions for children in the age of 0 to 18 years.

The results of research<sup>(1)</sup> prepared in 2004 provide an interesting opportunity for international comparison. The research was focused on monitoring of children up to three years in the institutional facilities across 32 countries of the entire Europe. While in the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom, there are 16, 3 and 1 child in an institutional facility per 10 000 children, respectively, there are 60 (!) children in the Czech Republic. Even though this particular research monitored the situation of children in the age up to 3 years, the results would probably be very similar for older children. Therefore, it is necessary to address the situation for those children in the Czech Republic.

### **Analysis of the existing situation at the labour market from the viewpoint of children in the children's homes**

Young people leaving the children's homes belong to the group of population that is at the highest risk of unemployment and other risks associated with this fact (fluctuation, homelessness, criminality, abuse of drugs, prostitution, etc.) Their starting position is substantially worse in their entry to the labour market than that of their peers.

What are the reasons for this situation? Children brought up in the children's homes unfortunately take an increased health burden into their life. As their medical examinations say, about a half of those children have their neurological findings within the usual limits in their early age.<sup>(2)</sup> An increased need of professional care is often associated with that.

Not only this inborn disadvantage is uncompensated (as it is usual in biological families), but these dispositions are further aggravated due to effect of life in the institutional environment. All children living in the children's homes for a long time are burdened by consequences of mental deprivation to which they are exposed later in their lives.

In the majority of cases, those negative effects of the institutional education are not caused by a bad care of the educational employees in those facilities, but they come from the very nature of collective education.



A partial development in several effects of mental deprivation can be prevented by selection of suitable forms and methods or the handicap can be compensated, but it can be never eliminated completely.

These children enter the educational process in a disadvantaged position against an overwhelming majority of their class peers. For example, they have a limited vocabulary, a weaker verbalisation capacity, less developed abstract concept, limited scope of positive life experience. A number of them have problems with fine motor activities, but other problems also appear.

During their school attendance, these problems often escalate rather than recede. Children miss natural motivation and adequate approach to finding a solution for particular school problems. Depending on the personality structure, they can select between their resignation on a school success and demanding attention by undesired behaviour. Thus the behavioural problems are added to the school failure.

A minimum of children from the children's homes completes the elementary school results good enough that would enable them to successfully complete a secondary-school education. Most of them continue their education at the secondary vocational schools.

Children growing up in the children's homes will achieve just the low level of education (secondary vocational schools) in their overwhelming majority and some of them even do not complete them. A small percentage (1 to 4%)<sup>(3)</sup> pass the secondary school-leaving examination and the university students represent an absolute exception, consisting of several individuals per year within the whole Czech Republic.

Children from the children's homes attend vocational training centres within the reach of their original children's home often due to practical reasons. It means that their interests or qualities are not always taken into account.

Hobbies and interests that a human being nurtures in the childhood and adolescent age quite often play a key role for selection of future occupation. Even in this area, the children from institutional facilities are handicapped. Children's homes provide a various selection of children's activities outside the school. However, it is a pity that they cannot meet the needs of each individual child. On the contrary, they are forced to go with the specific possibilities and conditions of the given facility (space, personnel, finance, technical equipment, etc.). Several children's homes enable the children to participate in activities outside the institution itself, which is good. However, it is still difficult for some homes to accommodate the needs of all children, for example with respect to the transport accessibility, financial demands of several hobbies, etc.

During the selection process of future occupations, these children miss model patterns which they could observe from their relatives. They lack natural motivation and perseverance in reaching the targets, such as, for example, completion of the started studies, perseverance in employment despite some troubles, etc. A missing supportive social network is one of serious risk factors.



Life experience of the children brought up outside their families is limited. They have an incomplete and inaccurate idea of “the outside life”. This restricted horizon also limits their aspirations and life plans or makes them non–realistic.

As soon as the children reach adulthood and complete preparation for their occupation, they are thrown into the life handicapped and unprepared in several aspects. They come to the real world from a sufficient material welfare which is unknown to them (equipment of the majority of children’s home is at a quite good level today). Children’s homes usually help their clients to find the first job and accommodation. Unpreparedness of those young people often leads to their failure and a vicious circle of fluctuation, unemployment and dependency on the rescue social networks starts to spin. In the worse cases, they trespass the law and such situations get them started in their “criminal career.”

In a model case, a young person brought up in the children’s home is leaving its gates with a vocational training certificate and the first employment assured and a temporary accommodation as well. Within the state social support, he could receive a single financial benefit of 10 000 CZK (313 Euro) at this time.

Due to the low level of education, the found employment is not paid very well. After starting the job, the consequences of psychical deprivation – deteriorated communication, weak motivation to work, etc. – may appear. Young people in such situation leave the first employment due to their insufficient idea of the real situation at the labour market and they think they will find a better one. Then, a series of short–term jobs follows (short–term work tasks, etc.).

Here, another risk plays an important role – a low legal consciousness. Young people do not know what are their rights and duties in the labour relationship and it is easy to “fool” them. They make just verbal agreements and the employer does not observe them. They miss a relative that would advise them in such practical situations quite naturally. Sometimes in such situation, social workers from the children’s home replace them if the adolescent in question turns to them. However it is not a systemic solution.

Problems with accommodation arrive hand in hand with the occupational problems. Accommodation that is arranged for them after their departure from the children’s home is only for a limited time (employer’s hostels, “half–way” houses, subletting). When the employment is lost and they are not able to pay for accommodation, they can lose it very quickly. In the better case, they find their places in asylum facilities, in the worse situation, they stay on the street. The possibility to acquire one’s own accommodation is absolutely impossible due to the situation on the housing market in the Czech Republic.

Almost a half of children who leave the children’s home move to their biological families <sup>(4)</sup>. Though the family accepts them, problems usually emerge soon and the possibility to stay disappears again. It is a pity that the biological family sometimes takes their money they have received at their departure and subsequently spends them.



Young people leaving the children's homes do not have practically any experience with administration of their own finances. They cannot manage their funds. It is proven that the amount they receive at their departure is quite quickly spent on consumer goods (mobile phone, designer clothes).

They have similar problems if they work. It is quite often difficult for them to divide their income so that they are able to pay all necessary expenditures and would not get indebted in a month (regardless of the actual salary level).

The time a young person enters the labour market for the first time and looks for a job is one of the key periods for his future life. Satisfaction in employment constitutes a pillar of harmonic life together with satisfaction in personal relationships and good health. It is a demanding period for each young man. It is even more demanding and complicated for young people who have spent their recent life in the institutional facilities and miss a social network and life experience; their starting position is a handicap in general. We may dare to say that their conditions are unequal in entry to the labour market.

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## **Services for Children and Families in the Czech Republic**

*Hana Pazlarová, Oldřich Matoušek (Department of Social Work, Charles University, Prague)*

In the last decade, there have been more than 2300 children sent to the institutional care in our country every year. Only a small proportion of that number are children who represent considerable risk to the society – in fact less than 100. All the other ones are children who lack proper family care.

Residential services – *children's homes, homes for disabled children and youth, correctional institutions* – host approximately 20 000 children. The “side effects” of residential care have been well known for at least a half of the century: deprivation of the very basic psychological needs of a child to have a close attachment figure and deprivation of other needs caused by an artificial environment which prevents the development of the necessary life skills. One boy, who came to the institutional care shortly after his birth and left the children's home when he was 19, it is estimated that about 180 professionals participated in his education.

Non-residential services run by the state are the *child protection units* of local administration offices. Social workers who are responsible for the proper reaction of the state to the family situation of a child and his behaviour have a caseload exceeding 350 cases per year. These social workers still have very a paternalistic attitude towards the clients. Their decisions are biased based on the “middle class mentality”; stressing hygiene, order, good material conditions of a household as main values. Social



workers are not trained how to evaluate family situation of the child. They are not supervised. Their power is not yet adequately controlled by the courts. Almost in every case the court accepts the suggestion of the social worker. The priority of social workers and of the courts is to save the child, not to reinforce the family. The Strasbourg Court has recently decided that the Czech Republic seriously damaged one family from South Bohemia which, after losing its apartment, had lived in the workshop where the father of the family worked. Five children were placed in three different homes far away from their parents.

Other state services are *marriage and family counselling centres* and *pedagogical counselling centres* which offer short term care to children and families.



Non-governmental sector of social services is generally very state dependent and still underdeveloped. There are some new initiatives which try to compensate “side effects” of existing services for children and families at risk. Our project Find Your Direction can serve as an example. We have added a new worker to the staff of 17 children homes. This person is responsible for educating children with special needs and also prepares adolescents for independent life.) Other NGOs are building new services – copied and modified version of models that work abroad.

The development of new services is blocked by widely spread expectation that the “real change” must come from the top, most probably as a change of the law or passing a new law. We have inherited the top-down approach from the previous authoritative political regime. We are starting to plan social services now. It is labelled as a “community planning”. Plans are unfortunately not based in solid data collected from the target groups. They are created based on discussions among service providers, representatives of the state and sometimes also representatives of the clients. (But children and families at risk have no lobby).

Services which we lack the most are as follows:

- New types of homes – refuges for single parents with children, dormitories for families, small homes for short stay of children
- Short-time care for children at risk in the families of trained foster parents
- Programs for perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse
- Therapeutic programs for abused and neglected children
- Complex programs for multi-problem families
- Programs supporting parental skills
- Programs for Gypsy minority supporting education of parents and motivating families to promote children education
- Mediation programs for parents who undergo divorce
- Programs preventing school drop-outs

**Basic Facts about Project Find Your Direction**

*Hana Pazlarová, Oldřich Matoušek, Tomáš Chmelař (Department of Social Work, Charles University, Prague)*

The fact that there is no systemic solution for situation of young people leaving the institutional facilities in the Czech Republic was in the cornerstone of the idea to join the Equal programme and to create the “Find Your Direction” programme. Positive approaches and motivation of children to study and work from the very young age are strengthened by a long-term and systemic work directly in the children’s homes by means of various methods and forms. There is a targeted approach to all age groups from their entry into the educational process until they leave the children’s home. The diverse age structure of children requires application of various methods in different life periods – preparation for a successful school entry for small children, smoothing out the learning problems in a younger school age, support of hobby activities for older children and preparation of adolescents to depart the children’s home including occupational advising activities. Therefore, the project intends to strengthen the probability of success in one of three key periods of human life – asserting oneself at the work.

**Project contents**

During the project term, i.e. 24 months, a professional – a pedagogue is working in the selected children’s home and he/she focuses mainly on education and support of professional preparation of younger children and placement in the labour market of the children who are leaving the children’s home.

**Children in the “Find Your Direction” project**

Seventeen children’s homes were selected for this project, out of 85 that were interested in the project. In these 17 children’s homes, there are 831 children in total (situation as of February 2005). The children’s homes enrolled into the programme differ in number of children (14 to 82 children), their age structure and educational problems (0 to 40% of children with learning problems). From the geographical point of view, the children’s homes are located mainly in smaller municipalities with poorer transport accessibility and in regions with a high unemployment level. Therefore, these homes are in need with respect to the project targets. Due to the pedagogue capacity, it was not possible to include all children from the particular children’s homes in the project. Selection of children was made on the basis of criteria stipulated in advance and after agreement with the management of the children’s home.

**School-aged children**

Children brought up in children’s homes are handicapped in their educational perspectives since the very entry into the school process. Effects of psychical deprivation are apparent to a various degree from their very young age. Several of them directly influence their success at school.

**Children with learning disorders**

According to the investigation made in the initial phase of the project, in several children's homes, there are even 30 to 40% of children with some learning problems. In such situation, it is not within the reach of the preceptors to pay a sufficient attention to those children.

Children with learning problems represent a clearly defined group. Even in a standard population, the children with learning problems have worse school results and thus a poorer study and working position later. Though the awareness of this issue is bigger nowadays, we still can find non-diagnosed learning problems. Then, these children seem to be less intelligent, less handy, etc., in spite of the fact their general intelligence may not be reduced at all.

An early diagnosis, good co-operation with the school, individual approach to the pupil and co-operation with a specialised pedagogue – all these factors are important in addressing all learning problems. There are other factors, which have already been mentioned and are associated with the learning problem itself (psychical deprivation, collective upbringing, etc.). Pedagogue individually works with those children by implementation of standard and special teaching methods within this programme. Thus he/she should contribute to compensation of detrimental effects of learning problems and fulfil the individual approach principle.

**Children with problems in particular subjects**

An overwhelming majority of children's homes questioned within the initial project phase (81 of 85 homes) stated that their children had problems with mathematics and the Czech language. Some also indicate problems in other subjects (physics, English, etc.). Preceptors are not able to pay a sufficient attention to the school preparation of each child. They can supervise fundamental duties, but an individual approach is almost unachievable in practice. The particular form of these tutorial classes is defined after agreement with the children's home management according to the situation in the particular children's home. We would like to supplement an individual approach partially, at least, that the children receive in usual families.

**Adolescents from 15 to 18 years**

Children of older school age and adolescents create a group that comes the closest to the entry into the labour force. At the same time they spend the longest time in the institutional facility including all its negative factors. Adolescence is a complicate period in general and is more complicated for these children. From this point of view, it is the most endangered group to which a high attention is paid within the programme.





We proceeded from these facts and needs in planning activities for this target group. We focus on the following areas:

- Systemic introduction to the life behind the walls of children's homes (occasional visits of events and places otherwise not known, however usual for their peers from families);
- Introduction to the educational and labour opportunities in a broader neighbourhood (in cooperation with the schools and companies of the region);
- Training of practical life situations (visit of labour authority, bank, municipal authority, etc.)
- Regular club meeting with a pedagogue focused on development of social skills, getting to know oneself, etc.
- Help with creating personal financial budget or administration of one's own finances
- Advices regarding job selection
- Individual advisory services, etc.

The scale of offered activities may be wider or modified depending on the interests of the particular group of children and local conditions. It is important to gain confidence and to open relationship between the pedagogue and the children.

### **Continuous evaluation of the project results**

Due to a big age range of children and different partial targets, it was necessary to create two different models of evaluation. The first one is focused on the school aged children; the other one monitors results of adolescents.

For the school children, three basic information sources are used. The first one consists of school marks and evaluation of child's behaviour at school. The other two include information from the teacher and the main child's preceptor. From the point of view of methodology, a certain objectivity of gained information is thereby assured. The teacher provides information about the child's results at school, his behaviour, activity and approaches to learning. The preceptor focuses on the level of cooperation with the child, his position in the educated group collective, method for spending his free time and other indices. The case is always be to catch up the trends in development of monitored indices. Teachers and preceptors use the scaling technique. This data is monitored every three months. At the end of the project, we will have the data available from 6 to 7 evaluations and they should provide sufficient information to prove the programme efficiency.

Evaluation of the adolescents compares two basic groups. One consists of adolescents who left the children's home in summer of 2006, i.e. the group that participated in the project for one year. Here, the following topics are monitored by questionnaires – working position and prospects, accommodation, supporting social network, health condition, occurrence of risk factors, etc.



In order to be able to prove a possible positive influence of the project, a control group of adolescents was monitored the same way during the first year of the project period. Children in the control group left the children's home in summer 2005 and, therefore, they were not influenced by the project in any manner. These investigations will be also performed in a three-month interval.

### **Summary**

The "Find Your Direction" project is the first one of this type, scope and intensity in the Czech Republic that focuses on supporting education of children in the children's homes and their position on the labour market. This is a pilot verification of efficiency for a similar approach that could become an example of "good practice" for the future and an impulse for systemic changes in this area, if it proves to be successful.

### **Project Evaluation - Sources of Data**

*Tomáš Chmelař (The Czech Development Partnership)*

We continuously assess the course of the project. This evaluation is carried out from several different points of view. The main part of evaluation consists of collection of data about clients included in the project. Further, we follow evaluation of the project by the employees of the children's home (CH), who are involved in the project. As part of the project evaluation by the employees of the CH, we follow characteristics such as, for example, satisfaction with financial arrangement of the project, satisfaction with the work of the experts included in the project, etc.

Lastly, we process evaluations of the school experts so we can set up necessary workshops for them and thus we will increase qualification of the experts for work with the target group. These evaluations include, for instance, experts' expectations, satisfaction with prepared educational blocks and workshops, etc.

### **Data regarding clients participating in the project**

We collect data about the number of clients included in the project in regular intervals. We monitor the numbers of clients based on several different criteria. Among these criteria belong:

- Gender
- Age
- Categorization in the target group of the project
- Type of school attended
- Specific learning and behavioural disorders
- Length of client's stay in the children's home
- Family situation of the client



We collect data about the clients, who are in school age and are included in the project, every three months. These data cover three main monitored areas. These areas include data about school results, evaluation of the client by the teacher and evaluation of the client by the educationalists / CH employee.

Among the monitored characteristics belong:

- Mark in behaviour
- Mark in mother tongue
- Mark in maths
- Average mark in all subjects
- Quality of cooperation with the teacher
- Position in the school class peer group
- Manner of client's preparation for school
- Client's interests and way of spending free time
- Quality of cooperation of the client with the expert working as part of the project
- Position of the client in the CH peer group

During the course of the project, there were overall seven sets of data collected. The data is collected through questionnaires and, with the exception of the school results, are assessed on a four-point scale. The partial data evaluation, which was carried out in summer 2006, indicated that there had been an improvement in school results of clients included in the project. Due to a short time period, during which the program was carried out at that moment, it is not possible to consider this result as conclusive.

By the adolescent clients, we also assess some other characteristics, such as socio-economic status of the client, length and type of possible employment, possible continuing studies, type of family life in which the client lives after leaving the CH, type of accommodation, relationships with close people, risky behaviours (drug abuse, promiscuity, gambling, suicide attempts, etc.) and health conditions. Through this assessment, these data were collected about clients, who left the CHs in the summer of 2006 and were part of the project only for one year. In order to have the possibility to compare whether the clients, who participated in the project, were positively influenced by it or not, we created a control group consisting of clients who left the CHs in the summer of 2005 and thus were not part of the project at all.

### **Evaluation of the project by employees of the children's homes**

As part of the project, we have repeatedly asked the directors and other employees of the CHs how do they perceive the course of the project, its virtues and vices and benefits for the targeted group of the entire project.



In June 2007, total of 30 CHs employees participating in the project took part in the evaluation. They were mainly directors (14), lead educators (7), associate directors (6) and social workers (3). Employees of the CH assessed several aspects of the project. These aspects were evaluated on a five-point scale.

Table 1 summarizes the satisfaction of the CH employees with some aspects of work of the expert in the CH.

Table 1 – Evaluation of the project by the employees of the children’s home

	Average
Overall satisfaction with the project	1,8
Satisfaction of cooperation between the expert and the employees of the children’s home	1,8
Satisfaction with the direct work of the expert with the clients	1,5

Further, employees of the CH tried to assess, which target groups of clients for the project would be, in their opinion, affected by the work of the expert the most and the least. The following list includes opinions of the CH employees about which target groups of the project were affected by the work of the expert-advisor **the most**:

1. Tutoring
2. Clients with specific learning disorders
3. First graders
4. Pre-schoolers
5. Adolescents

The CH employees also had the opportunity to express themselves through open-ended questions regarding the benefits and negative aspects of the project onto the clients and the CH employees as well.

The most frequent comments of the CH employees regarding the **benefits** of the project **for the clients** (listed in order of frequency):

1. individual approach of the expert towards the client
2. significant help of the expert with preparation of the client for classes
3. improvement of clients’ school results
4. improvement in approach of the clients towards school duties and overall preparations for school
5. application of new or alternate way of working with the clients (in comparison with the educationalists / CH employees)
6. the expert became a close person for the clients, a confidant



Other benefits for the clients, which were mentioned by the CH employees, were following: help with foreign language studies, help with speech therapy, help with work on PC, diversification and increase in numbers of free time activities or improvement in communication between the school and the CH.

The most frequent statements of the CH employees regarding the **benefits** of the project **for the CH employees** (listed in order of frequency):

1. thanks to the experts' work, employees of the CH have more time for other clients
2. expert is a valuable helper with preparation of children for school, fulfilling school duties
3. expert is another professional on the team
4. expert uses new or alternative ways of working with clients
5. expert helps the employees of the CH with preparation of children for their life outside the children's home
6. expert brings new observations and motivation for further professional development of the CH employees

CH employees also had the possibility to express their opinions regarding possible negative effects onto the clients and themselves as well. The frequency of statements about negatives of the project was, however; significantly lower than frequency of statements regarding the benefits of the project.

The most frequent comments of the CH employees regarding the **negatives** of the project **for the clients** (listed in order of frequency):

1. employees of the children's homes did not mention any negatives
2. limited duration of the project
3. at the beginning of the project it was difficult to harmonise planned upbringing activities with the schedule of the expert
4. the expert could not spend more time with the clients
5. impossibility to include more clients in the project

The most frequent statements of the CH employees regarding the **negatives** of the project **for the CH employees** (listed in order of frequency):

1. employees of the children's homes did not mention any negatives
2. at the beginning of the project it was difficult to harmonise planned upbringing activities with the schedule of the expert
3. limited duration of the project
4. at the beginning a more difficult communication and cooperation between the expert and the employees of the children's home

**Conclusion**

Positive trends, which are indicated by currently evaluated data, are not confirmed yet. We currently evaluate the remaining data, which we have been collecting during the project. Evaluation of these data should answer our question whether, if any, impact had the work of the experts onto the clients Employees of the children's homes evaluate the course of the project, as well as the impact of the expert onto the clients very positively and the only negative which they mention is short-term duration of the project.

***Rights of the Children in the Czech Republic – Current Situation and Challenges***

*Hana Pazlarová (Department of Social Work, Charles University Prague)*

As a signatory of the Children's' Rights Convention (further on only the Convention), the Czech Republic agreed to fulfilling its basic principles, implementation of the Convention into the judicial system of the Czech Republic and to a continuous monitoring, how is the Convention implemented. The Convention as a whole is based on four pillars, which was created by the UN Committee for Children's Rights, body responsible for monitoring of the Convention around the world:

1. **Interest of the child is primary** – not in the sense of giving inadequate preferences to one group of citizens over another, but as an appeal and a warning sign of the fact, that children form an important group in the society, and at the same time, belong among the most endangered.
2. **Right not only to survival, but also to development** – compared with previous documents focusing on the children's rights (for example the Declaration of Children's Rights, 1959), the Convention puts emphasis not only on children's health and their all-round development, but also on fulfilment of their mental and psychological needs.
3. **Listen to the children – take their opinions seriously** – a completely revolutionary request for a bigger involvement of children into the life of the entire society. Children are viewed as full status citizens, whose opinions should be taken into consideration.
4. **The rights are valid without any form of discrimination**

How are the principles carried out in the Czech Republic? Where do we have significant areas for improvement from the point of view of the Convention? Till this moment, the Czech Republic has put together two reports about compliance with the children's rights. Based on these reports, the Committee for the Children's Rights has evaluated and stated its recommendations. The main findings of the Committee are as follows:



### Strengths

- The Committee highly values the level of child health care in the Czech Republic. We belong among countries with the lowest infant mortality rate and the highest rate of child vaccination in the world. We have a very good system of preventive care.
- Education of majority of population is at a relatively good level. We have a low level of illiteracy or early school drop-out numbers. More than 80% of young people complete some form of secondary education. In comparison with western European countries, we have a lower number of university-level educated citizens.

### Room for improvement

- The Czech Republic lacks a complex policy regarding children. Responsibilities are scattered, in some places they overlap, in other there are “blind spots”. In some cases, life situation of one child can be dealt with by up to 5 different ministries. This set up creates many other problematic areas in the entire system.
- On the international level, we are highly criticized for a too high number of children in the institutional care. Due to insufficiently developed system of services for families experiencing some difficulties, taking the child away from the family and putting it into institutional care is usually the only option the social services workers have. The state does not take the necessary measures to lower the number of children separated from parents and to shorten the time of the children’s stay in the institutional care. There are many documented consequences of a long-term institutional care and consequent problems of this large group of children leaving the institutional care with integration into the society.
- There are no measures, which would prevent discrimination of children of Gypsy ethnicity in their approach towards education. Almost three quarters of Gypsy children attend special needs schools, which is more than ten times more compared with the rest of the population. Attending special needs schools limits further possibilities of their further education in the current set up of the Czech educational system. This further deepens the discrimination for entering the work force.

Above identified statements belong among those, which the Committee included in its comprehensive report and which are closely associated with the situation of described groups of young people and their entrance into the labour force. Gypsy children and children leaving the institutional care belong among citizens with the lowest achieved educational level, the highest level of unemployment and thus being at the highest risk of having problems with being incorporated into the society. Thorough implementation of the Convention could be a good guide in the process of solving problems of these groups at risk.



## Chapter 3 – Visits

### **Grammar School Londýnská**

*Jiří Trunda (Grammar school Londýnská)*

Grammar school Prague 2, Londýnská Street 34 is a school with nine successive school grades. At the junior school level, there are usually three classes in each grade and on the comprehensive school level, there are usually two classes in each grade.

The school is located in a building which was built at the end of the nineteenth century. To a certain extent, this limits the variety of activities, which it is possible to run for the pupils within its premises. For example, the gym was built properly for its time, but today it does not fulfil the requirements needed for physical and sport development of pupils.

Another limiting factor is a high number of pupils at the school, which is getting close to the set maximum capacity of pupils. Therefore, the after school department does not have its own premises, but they are placed in regular classrooms. So with the exception of physics and Information Technology Lab, there have been no special labs created. All classrooms are home classrooms, with the exception of the IT Lab.

One of the great advantages of our school is a great public transport accessibility. This accessibility, along with a good reputation, which the school has gained over the years, results in a high demand for the school. Only one fifth of all pupils comes from its set district. The rest comes from different Prague districts, some commute even from outside of Prague. This fact yields another advantage – parents of our pupils have usually picked our school. This means that these parents think about the upbringing and education of their children. Since they have chosen our school, this means that they also agree with the educational principles, which we try to carry out. Therefore, there is a great potential in cooperation between the school and the families.

Our school belongs among the first grammar schools in the Czech Republic which were testing the making and application of its own school educational curricula / programs. Within the borders, which are set by the Czech Ministry of Education, we have created a “Free school” Program. During the process of making the program (year 2002), we tried to support the development of positive experiences from our own work in previous years along with consideration of all positives and negatives, which we have mentioned above. We put our school program through the process of self–evaluation on a regular basis. We have incorporated the information gained through this process into our school program. Therefore, we can state that the “Free school” Program is a living entity which evolves continually. At the same time, some values of the program are permanent and form a base for organizational and methodological solutions. The main direction of our school remains the same, though.



Systematic self-evaluation allows us to look for more effective ways of working, more effective partial solutions when looking for solutions while carrying out our priorities.

These priorities are called the pillars of the school educational program. We consider the school educational program either in paper or electronic form primarily as the process which occurs at our school – activities and relationships of teachers, pupils and their legal guardians.

### First pillar – Integration of pupils

Out of the current total number of 550 pupils, one tenth is educated based on individual educational plans. In majority of the cases, these pupils have specific learning disorders. However, also exceptionally gifted pupils, pupils with a health handicap and combined handicaps are also educated using these individual plans. The plans are created by the teachers of individual subjects in cooperation with special education teachers (there are two working at our school) and based on evaluations of psychological advisory centre and their recommendations. The plan sets specific expected outcomes which the pupil should master in the given school year, didactics and methodological principles, which help the pupil with the organisational set up in order to assure the best possible course of education of each pupil. All pupils are fully integrated into regular classrooms.



### Second pillar – Education in context

We try to show the subject matter of individual educational subjects in context. We carry out this approach primarily applying these approaches:

1. project work – finding solution to complex tasks in smaller and bigger groups, the pupils interconnect their skills gained in individual subjects and learn how to cooperate in general. This is a significant added value for future life of the pupils
2. inter-subject relations – the context of the subjects is planned in such a way so their context is interconnected. For instance, the topic “Water” can be covered in all subjects at the same time and, by doing so, we create a synergic effect and education of higher quality.



3. integrated subjects – we have integrated those learning areas, which are traditionally covered separately into new subjects – Math + Physics = Math–physical fundamentals, History + Geography (socio–economic sphere) = World of nature, Arts + Music = Aesthetics. Educational subjects undertaken in such a wide range should allow the pupils to acquire the newly covered topics and to create arguments for one’s own life attitudes. This way, it is also possible to have a more individualized contact with the pupils. A subject, which is covered in a broader manner, does not require a specific talent.

### **Third pillar – Verbal evaluation**

All our pupils are evaluated verbally during the course of the entire school attendance. Verbal evaluation expresses to what extent the pupils fulfil the expected outcomes set by the school educational program or individual educational plan. This way, all pupils can experience the feeling of success. Exceptionally gifted students know that their effort will show in the evaluation and the handicapped pupils know that they can reach a very good evaluation as well. This is true also for pupils from the central part of the Gauss Curve. We never compare the pupils among each other when evaluating.

We want to create a system where separate segments of our activities will fit into each other and where they are building upon each other. We try to be open. We welcome impetus from our pupils. The school parliament is a self–governing body where representatives from all classes meet. The parliament hands over suggestions to the teachers as well as to the school leadership. They relate to all aspects of school life including the content of the lessons. The parliament, for instance, organizes entire school projects on a regular basis. Observations and suggestions related to the school culture are important as well. We are also interested in parents’ opinions. They are also represented in the school board. Parents have founded the Londýnská Civic Organization, which cooperates with the school, supports some activities and is a partner for the school leadership – meetings of the civic organization with the school are more effective than meetings and negotiations with individual parents.

As we have already mentioned, the result of our work is not finalized. We are trying to prove our educational strategies, which we use, distribution of the subject content and all aspects of our work, where we continually look for improvement.

**Civic Organization Proxima Sociale***Martina Zimmermanová (Proxima Sociale)*

The Civic Organization Proxima Sociale (further on only the Organization) is a non-governmental non-profit organization, which mission is to improve the quality of life of the citizens and to enhance their opportunities and capabilities in dealing with difficult social situations. The organization carries out its services in two community centres – Community Centre Step in Prague 12 and Community Centre South Pole in Prague 11. In both centres, they offer complex social services not only for children and adolescents, but also for other groups of citizens, which got into difficult life or personal situations.

All programs are carried out on a high professional level and most services are accredited. As part of the program methodologies, even in direct work with the clients, the **standards of quality of social services** are implemented. The Organization is active in processes of regional cooperation in the area of social services and creating open civic society.

The Organization is a member of the Czech Streetwork Association, Association of Civil Advisory Centres and the European Foundation for Street Children Worldwide. On the international level, it cooperates with the Jugendclub Burgwedel Hamburg, with which it has been running joint programs in recent years. Employees of the Organization participate at various seminars, trainings and short term work stays abroad. Occasionally, they work with foreign organizations.

**The main goal** of the Organization is to provide specific types of social services, primarily of communal and broadly accessible nature based on the needs of the target groups in its vicinity, primarily non-organized children and adolescents, adolescent committers of crimes, mothers with children, unemployed and citizens needing social and judicial consultations. Other goals are: to increase quality of offered social services, participate at communal planning, create other programs based on the demands coming from the local community and to develop the phenomenon of volunteer work in the area of social services.

**Important years in history**

The fundamental idea to run social services focusing on community was created in 1994. In 1995, several programs and projects were carried out. These programs focused on helping children and adolescents, whose life is accompanied by many difficulties and problems. In the first project of the Broadly Accessible Centre The Step, which had been supported by the Phare EU funds for three years, participated in the process of bringing new methods of social and social-pedagogical work into practice. New projects of the broadly accessible centre were created, as well as the social fieldwork in Prague 12 – Modřany and a social flat designated for adolescent boys. In 1999, this project was labelled as a model project of the European Council for work with children and adolescents.



Since 1998, the Organization changed its funding system to a multi-source funding of its activities. In 1999, there was an expansion of the offered services to Prague 11, where the Broadly Accessible Centre – The South Pole was created. In the following years, new programs were created, for instance social flat for mothers with children (initially for adolescent boys), civil advisory centre, job club, probationary and re-socializing programs for adolescent convicts and preventive programs for grammar schools.

In 2005, the Organization has started to run project of social integration in Prague 12, which is co-financed by the European Social Fund of the EU, the Czech national budget and budget of the Capital City of Prague. The main goal of this project is to allow socially excluded individuals to gain sufficient skills and abilities needed for integration back into the society and into the labour force. The Organization entered the year 2006 with a new system of joint management.



The Proxima Sociale runs the following services as part of its activities:

### **Broadly accessible programs for children and adolescents**

The main goal of broadly accessible programs is to minimize possible risks associated with lifestyle of young people, to allow them to get better oriented in their social environment and to offer support and help with finding solution to difficult life situations, which they encounter. These programs are run in the locations of Prague 11 and Prague 12 as part of the broadly accessible facility for children and adolescents and in the form of fieldwork programs.

### **Broadly accessible facility for children and adolescents (also called “The Broadly Accessible Club”)**

The Civic Organization Proxima Sociale runs two broadly accessible centres for children and adolescents – Club The STEP in Prague 12 and THE SOUTH POLE in Prague 11. It is an open space with minimal entrance rules (“no to drugs, no to alcohol, no to violence”), which is designated to young people between 13 and 19 years of age living in the given locations and being in a difficult life situation. The clients can use the offered services, or just to spend the time and have a chat. The club reacts to the needs of the clients and supports their initiatives.



The basic offer of our clubs includes primarily counselling in situations, in which the young people don't know what to do, information service, offering support and advices when managing everyday situations, backing during the difficult time of growing up, etc. The offer of the clubs is supplemented by diverse programs, such as sport tournaments, film clubs, art workshops, concerts, happenings, evening programs connected with staying overnight, programs for girls, weekend trips outside of Prague, renting musical practice rooms for starting bands and running of so called home groups. Both clubs went through an evaluation of the offered services in the year 2007 with excellent results.

### **Fieldwork programs**

This is a form of social work, where social worker working in the field looks for and contacts children and adolescents in their natural environment, offers them consultations, arranges professional help, support in solving difficult life situations or problems associated with their age and lifestyle. Our target group are children and adolescents between 13 and 18 years of age who spend their free time primarily in the streets. The goal of the service is to initiate positive change in the lives of young people, which leads to limiting the risks and supports clients to finding active and independent solutions to life difficulties and to motivate them to spend their free time actively, rather than being in the streets.

The field social workers are either directly in the streets of the city or in the neighbourhood of a "mobile home", which is their base for working with these clients. There are three locations in Prague 12 and one location in Prague 11. Field social workers and field programs of the organization have received an honourable mention for their activities as part of the annual award given by the Czech Streetwork Association three times already.

### **Programs for adults**

These programs are designed for adult clients with the focus on risk groups from the point of view of their needs and specific points at issue. The Civic Advisory Centre, social living for mothers with children and the Job Club belongs among these programs.

### **The Civic Advisory Centre**

The Civic Advisory Centre is a social service, which is conceptually based in minimal standards of the Association of Civic Advisory Centres. The main goal of this service is to eliminate situations during which the citizens suffer because of not knowing their rights and duties, not knowing the services which are offered or lacking the skills needed for expressing their problems.

This service is free of charge to all citizens regardless of age and gender and is run primarily by the local community, which can solve the issues from the area of social, work and civic-legal relationships, living, family and relationship problems, civic rights, consumer rights, etc.



Citizens are offered assistance when finding solutions to difficult life situations and they are helped to become more competent and confident in finding solutions to their problems.

### Social flat – asylum living

Social flat offers help to women, mothers with children and to adolescent girls, who are finding themselves in a difficult life situation connected with the loss or failure of safe living space and they are not capable to



solve this situation by themselves. The base of the service is an arrangement of an asylum form of living in a three-room apartment in a regular housing arrangement for the period of 6 months.

The clients are offered social help and intervention in finding solution to basic problems, such as employment or living arrangements,

consultation geared towards overcoming difficult life situation, to broaden social skills and assistance in administrative matters.

### Job Club

This service reacts to the needs of unemployed citizens primarily of the local community with the goal to offer them complex advisory services, support in looking for employment and solving employment–legal problems. Special attention is given to groups at risk, such as long–term unemployed individuals, unemployed just before starting their retirement, mothers after the maternity leave, etc. The service is offered free of charge in both community centres and has the following forms:

- individual consultations during which the clients can solve various problems, which are associated with looking for employment (ex. clarification of personal possibilities in the labour market, writing resumes, motivational letters), they are offered employment–legal services as well as the possibility to work long–term on a specific problem/topic.
- short term instructional course „What to do in the labour market“, which is focused on the entire process of looking for a job starting with the selection of the employment, creation of resume, motivational letter, presentation of one’s own skills, practicing dealing with future employer, etc. The course is repeated three times per year in 10–week cycles. The course is supplemented by a course called “Basic computer skills”, which is run on a weekly basis over the span of seven meetings.



- service Job club c@fé offers a free-of-charge access to the Internet with the aim to look for job. An assistant is available to those using the Internet and can provide them with elementary work and legal consultations and help them with the work on the computer. Creation of this service was initiated by the needs of our clients.

### **Preventive programs**

These programs are long-term interactive programs in the area of primary prevention of socially-pathological phenomena for children at the comprehensive school level. The main goal of the programs is to support healthy lifestyle, increase the information level and create positive attitudes towards risky behaviour, including dependencies on various addictive substances, with the focus on development of personality and healthy self-consciousness.

The programs are formed by structured blocks, in which the main goal is to work with the target group through the means of directed discussions, explanation, self-discovering, arts, movement and relaxation techniques. These programs systematically work with groups of children from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades.

The block topics are specific for individual classes and focus primarily on communication, healthy self-presentation, conflict solving, avoiding bullying, interpersonal skills, life values, sexuality, alcoholism, dependency on addictive substances, gambling, racism, etc. The base for working with these pupils is to create a safe environment for supporting the openness when discussing the issues, offering information and support in enhancing skills leading to responsible behaviour.

### **Probationary program**

This program is tailored to young offenders, who are attending them as part of the alternative punishments, of so called commensurate limitations. The main goal of the service is re-socialization of the adolescents, development of non-criminal behavioural patterns and acceptance of life norms and rules, strengthening responsibility for oneself and others. The program is run through group two-hour meetings once a week, which are followed by a weekend-long off-site program and individual work with the client.



## **Centre for Behavioural Care Modřany**

*Jeanette ŠvÍková, Ivo Kalvinský (Residential Department of the Centre for Behavioural Care)*

### **Characteristics of the Centre**

The Residential Dept. of the Centre for Behavioural Care (CBC) Modřany provides preventive behavioural and therapeutic services for clients between 6 and 18 years of age, who have problems with relationship and communication with parents, teachers or with their wider social group. The stay is voluntary and is



carried out based on a signed agreement between the Institute, the client and his or her legal representative. The program is 7 weeks long. During the stay, the child does not stop going to school or work and maintains important positive contacts with his or her social group. Employees of the department are in regular contact with the teachers, curators or with psychiatrists and other

professional workplaces, which participate in the process of finding solution to the child's and family's situation.

During the stay, a regular contact with the school is arranged, and if needed, we stay in touch with other professional entities, which actively participate in the process of finding a solution for the situation of the child and his/her family.

Before the end of the stay, the client, along with its warrantor, puts together a plan of further activities and tasks for a period of at least two months. During this time, the client is in contact with his or her warrantor as needed.

After the end of the stay, it is possible to set up a follow-up outpatient cooperation of the child, his/her family with the employees of the centre, or if needed, with a therapeutical group of a follow-up care.

The main focus of the residential department is preventive upbringing care and activities with therapeutical elements with the aim of correction of unwanted and undesired behaviour of children and adolescents, particularly in their family environment and in the context of a wider social group, including the school.



The stay is based on a community style of work. There are **maximum 8 children** in each **co-educated group**. Program of the stay is focused on the personality of the child, his or her social skills and helps children to learn how to get oriented primarily in their family relationships and life situations.

From the point of view of social models, work in the Residential Department occurs at four elementary levels:

1. level of **communal and therapeutic** effect – as a model of a wider social environment
2. **group and peer** level – as a model close to the family environment
3. **individual** level – the possibility of making a real closer contact between the child and an adult
4. level and context of **primary biological family** – work with interested family members and the client as with a whole unit

Before signing the agreement at the beginning of the stay, each child writes his/her own goal or wish, how the stay should benefit them. Parents and the CBC professionals help the child with formulation of the agreement, which should be as specific as possible and is usually rooted in troubles or difficulties in relationships, which are currently important to them. The main task for the parents is to think about which change they would like to see after the stay and how they can (want) to support this change to happen. Further, they set how they want to use the time the child is away.

### Before the child starts the residential stay

At least 3 walk-in contacts with the client precede signing of the contract with the client and his legal guardians. The main goal of the meetings is a proof of indication necessary for the stay based on given criteria: basic will of the client to cooperate and initial formulation of specific goals, which he wants to achieve during the stay, his overall health condition, the ability and willingness of the client to accept and to go through the residential program, the level of willingness and abilities of the legal guardians of the client to cooperate and follow the agreements, arrangement of the morning program for the client (school attendance, possible temporary job or any other suitable and controlled activity). Additional material may contain possible conclusions of other specialized offices. Outpatient cooperation of the client and his family can be long-term in specific instances.

Other necessary matters to be arranged before the beginning of the stay:

- Payment of subsidy for the preventive upbringing care (subsidy for food – 65 CZK / approx. 2 EUR per day and 500 CZK / approx. 17 EUR per the whole stay for some programs – trips, admission fees for cultural events, etc.)
- Agreement about the amount and ways of providing the pocket money
- Doctor's certificate about health capability of the client for the stay in a collective institution
- Informing the school about the stay – arranged by the legal guardians.

**During the stay**

The warrantor and the therapist (ethoped or psychologist of the department) are the key persons of the stay along with the communal and group processes both for the client and legal guardian. The warrantor (eventually in cooperation with the therapist) is in a personal contact with the client at least five times during the stay.

The legal guardians participate at minimally three group meetings of the parents and children. In the indicated cases, a separate group of motivated parents under the auspices of a special pedagogue or psychologist can be created. It can meet during the stay, but also after its end. The program of these groups focuses on certain topics based on the wishes and needs of the given group. The legal guardians, possibly other individuals agreed upon by the community can participate in the community meetings (e.g. relatives, partners of the clients, teachers, guests – other specialists or colleagues from other institutions who had worked with the client).

**The conclusion of the stay**

The final stage of the stay is used primarily for planning and “practicing”, trying of specific steps, which will follow after the return of the client home. One of the possible prevention of relapse of conflicts is a special behavioural practice of new appropriate behavioural patterns, which will not create negative emotions in the environs.

**After the end of the stay**

After the end of the stay, an outpatient contact of the client and his family with the employees of the CBC follows. The main goal is to check and to support the client at the same time in fulfilling the dismissal contract.

Motivated clients can be offered participation in a socio–therapeutic group of the follow–up care. The CBC offers an open group for parents. Participation in the group is voluntary, contractually binding for specific time periods. This service, which is currently viewed as above the standard, is based on the current program of the establisher, can be paid outside the work contract of the given employee.

**Children's Home Jablonné v Podještědí***Vlastimil Faltýnek, Petra Okrouhliková (Children's home Jablonné v Podještědí)***Basic facts about the institution**

Capacity of the institution: 64 beds

**Organization of activities**

The premises of the children's home allow for the incorporation of elements of parental upbringing into our work. One of such elements is creation of budgets for individual family groups, which manage their resources, primarily clothing, money for trips, fund of repairs, buying material for family groups.

The initial plan for each school year consists of Yearly educational plan of the children's home, which is prepared by the director of the institution. Weekly plans are prepared similarly and there are already specific events and activities mentioned. The pedagogues try to prepare this weekly plan along with the children.



The children's home is divided into six co-educated family groups. The composition of the group in these family groups is diverse. The children's age span is between 3 to 19 years.

All children come to our children's home from a Diagnostic Institute. The social worker is a drug coordinator as well. This social worker leads talks on diverse topics (drug dependency, problems with maturing, sexuality, principles of good manners, etc.). Specialists are invited to lead "seminars" for children.

**Facts about the staff members of the institution**

The children's home employs total of 32 staff members, out of that 19 pedagogical staff (including the director) and 13 non-pedagogical employees. We do not have external staff members, sometimes there are students on their praxis (internship) during the holidays. We contract out holiday workers for arranging summer camps and recreational stays.



Following professions take care of the operation of the entire institution:

- 12 day time pedagogues
- 6 night time pedagogues
- 4 cooks
- 2 cleaning women (one full time, one part time)
- 1 seamstress
- 1 laundress
- 2 social workers
- 1 accountant
- 1 head of catering / economist
- 1 caretaker/ heating caretaker
- 1 caretaker/ heating caretaker / gardener
- 1 director

Further education of pedagogical staff occurs through various forms of courses, seminars and series of talks with seminars.

### **Facts about the children**

There were 64 children with us this school year. Out of this number, the following numbers attend:

Elementary school:	25 children
Special needs school:	17 children
Kindergarten:	8 children
Assisted class:	4 children
Training school, professional school and high school:	6 children

During the 2004/2005 school year, there were totally 19 children accepted into our children's home.

### **Behavioural problems**

- solving common behavioural and educational problems at training schools
- one group escape (2 children) – solved using the Internal Code of the children's home
- five individual escapes, solved using the Internal Code of the children's home
- for repeated behavioural and educational problems, 3 children were transferred to special school
- smoking of majority of students of training schools and of part of older school-aged children – a continuous problem

**Concept of the educational and upbringing process**

The main partial goals are primarily independence of the children in their private lives, the ability to actively take part in social life, the ability of self-regulating and self-discipline, creating proper work habits, positive outlook on life, emotional stability and also successfully completed education.

**Advisory services**

Children with various handicaps, who require special care, are placed into our institution. These children attend special needs school and assisted classes. Some children placed in special needs school are monitored by the Special Pedagogical Centre in Liberec. In two cases, we must take the children to Jedlička Institute and Special School for Hearing Impaired in Liberec due to their handicap. Part of the children regularly attend the outpatient care of children and teenager psychiatry, where they decide, whether the child will go to the Children Psychiatry Treatment Institute. Our institution closely cooperates with:

- workers of the Department of Social Legal Protection of Children
- the authorized state attorney from the State Prosecution Office
- police of the Czech Republic
- courts of the Czech Republic
- town offices and the municipal council
- other children's homes in the region and in the entire Czech Republic

One of the points of the yearly plan valid for the 2004/2005 school year was to lead direct preventive activities in the sphere of social and pathological phenomena at least once a month. We have led the following events:

- Talk about drug dependency – social worker (nurse)
- Talk with an employee of the K-Centre
- Bike and trekking trip
- Skiing trip
- Summer camps
- Table tennis tournament
- Football and volleyball matches
- Theatre performances
- Music performances
- Various interest groups

We have tried to involve our children in more interest activities, which are organized outside the children's home – as part of school, city or sport club programs.

***The Project Find Your Direction from the Point of View of an Expert****Tereza Kratochvilová (Children's home Sedloňov)*

The main goal of the project is to improve the initial position of children from the children's homes when entering the labour market. The project has many partial goals, for instance preparation of pre-schoolers for their entering of the school system, improvement of the successfulness in school education, levelling off the difficulties of the children with specific learning disorders, preparation of children for an independent living after leaving the children's home, etc.

A weekly work schedule is created in each children's home and it accommodates the needs of the children's homes and the children. The number of clients in individual groups (pre-schoolers, first graders, tutoring, children with specific learning disorders) depends on their specific needs. In some children's homes, for instance, are no pre-schoolers, so the pre-schoolers group is not created, etc.

In the group of pre-schoolers, the expert focuses on the development of skills and abilities needed for successful outcome of the school system. They focus on speech development and thinking, listening and visual perception, graphomotrics.

Individual care is the most important for a group of children with specific learning disorders, which needs to be re-educated every day, if possible.

The tutoring group belongs among the largest groups in the children's homes. Experts practice the school subject while using the most diverse forms of learning and tries to improve the attitude of the children towards education, increasing their motivation. This should lead to improved results at school and consequently to improve their chances for finding their place in the labour market.

In the group of adolescents, the clients are prepared for entering the real world and to be self-sufficient. First, they discuss key issues theoretically – for instance education and the significance of school, where to look for jobs, how to find accommodation, how to manage money, how to initiate valuable relationships, etc. After that, the activities focus on practical situations, where they transfer and develop skills, which help them to withstand in life. Interactive activities and practicing of model situations are the most important ones. They strengthen the skills of children to solve matters connected with, for instance, getting proper education, housing, getting oriented in state institutions, etc. Excursions “into the terrain”, i.e. visits of these institution, are not less important.



We have selected the following dreams and wishes of adolescents from our survey:

- *“I would like to continue in my studies. I hope I will have work, which will suit me.”*
- *“I want to have my base, my work and a good group around me.”*
- *“I want to have a beautiful job and a flat, to fulfil my dreams...”*
- *“To find my own flat, good boyfriend and to live according to my wants...”*
- *“I would like to get my school leaving certificate, to start a business, to have my own flat and to be content in my life.”*

Experts try to be involved in as many children’s homes activities as possible, for instance to attend summer camps with the children along with sport and cultural events, to attend the parent’s meetings at school and to work with the psychological advisory centres.

Work in the “Find your direction” project brings a visible effect in the area of improving school results, which is positively assessed by the teachers at schools the clients attend, but also by the educators at the children’s homes, as well as by the clients themselves. It is very important for the children that they have someone by their side, whom they can go to with school problems and who can give them individual attention, because the educator has very limited possibilities to do so in the home’s educational group. In my point of view, the individual care is the biggest contribution of this project. It is a pity that this project is limited in time to only two years. The children got already used to the regular lessons with their expert and after his or her leaving, the children’s school results will probably worsen again.



## Chapter 4 – Comments from the Development Partnerships

### ***Comments from the Dutch Development Partnership***

*René van Hooren (The Dutch Development Partnership)*

#### **Introduction**

We appreciated the opportunity to visit such a variety of institutions in the Czech Republic that aim at improving the school careers of children and youngsters. They try to support them for life after school and prevent them from dropping out. Some aspects were familiar and some are different from the Dutch situation. We would like to comment the following issues that we encountered in the transnational meeting: Support in and outside schools; motivation as a central issue for support; residential or not; monitoring the results; social change.

#### **Support in and outside schools**

There is a tendency in the Czech Republic as well as in The Netherlands to provide services for pupils with special (educational) needs within the ordinary school. In The Netherlands, there is a policy of the national government called ‘Going to school together’. However there are limits: there are pupils with special needs because of deviant behaviour, physical and/or mental handicaps that cannot attend mainstream schools for whom there are special primary schools and special schools for (vocational) education. The number of pupils in these special schools is rising.

For pupils with social–psychological and/or behavioural problems that have no learning (or cognitive) problems, there are special centres that can be compared with the Diagnostic Institute and Centre for Behavioural Care (CBC) in Prague. But the debate is always about what can and should be done within the school and what can and should be done outside the school? In The Netherlands both is being done. There are so–called ‘time–out’ centres for pupils that show severe deviant behaviour that can not be tolerated in the school. After few weeks, they may return to their school. In the public debate, there is now a tendency to place youngsters who are (likely) unmotivated and are not willing to except any intervention for school and/or labour market in what in first instance were called ‘preparation camps’ with a kind of military–based regime based on the concept of ‘boot camps’ in the United States. Now 10 pilot programmes have started, financed by the Dutch government, some of them are semi–residential and some are not residential at all. The original idea of ‘preparation camps’ with a military-type of regime is not followed in most (but not all) pilot programmes.

#### **Motivation as a central issue for support**

We would like to promote an approach in which stimulating motivation of pupils with behavioural problems is central. Motivation is not a personality trait, nor something genetic, and certainly not a *yes* or *no* condition.



A motivated pupil agrees with the teacher, accepts the problem as presented, expresses a desire or need to help, appears to be distressed about his or her condition and follows the teacher's advice. A non-motivated pupil disagrees with the teacher, refuses to accept having a problem, expresses no desire or need for help, does not appear distressed about his or her condition, and does not follow the teacher's advice.

Motivation is a process in which a person is willing to see the costs and benefits of the problem behaviour and his willingness to accept plans to change. For teachers this means that communicating with unmotivated pupils will be successful if this is not done in a high-handed way, if the pupil is accepted as a person (the behaviour is not accepted) and if objective facts are pinpointed (for example: if you do this, you don't get friends). If there is anger with the pupil it is of no use to overrule it but one should accept this and try to find ways of asking questions on a level of meta-communication: what are we doing, what am I doing and what are you doing? However there is more to this than only to be trained in using verbal tricks: a teacher should be genuine. There are also non-specific factors of communication that are important, such as showing respect, sharing experience, showing real care (non-possessive warmth), being honest, giving objective info and not judging. This does not mean a teacher has to be equal and may or should not set rules!

The probability for change is present, if the pupil accepts a plan or advice. Prochaska and DiClemente conducted important research on behavioural change. Originally, this research was done in the area of addicted persons, but their theory also applies for other situations dealing with changing unaccepted behaviour. In this theory, relapse is a normal stage of behavioural change and is not seen as a contra-indication for motivation and (in many cases) a reason for excluding people from guidance and support.

This calls for strengthening the role of teachers in supporting pupils, not only in gaining knowledge and skills, but also in motivation. The latter is crucial for developing knowledge and skills. Supporting schools by training teachers in, for instance, motivation of youngsters and organizing pupil-support teams in mainstream schools (with teachers, social workers, psychologists, etc.) is another way, in addition to the extramural support like the time-out centres dealing with youngsters with psycho-social and/or behaviour difficulties. For pupils with cognitive and/or learning difficulties, extra support within the mainstream school is possible (for instance remedial teaching), but when needed, they can attend special schools.

### **Residential or not**

The Diagnostic Institute and Centre for Behavioural Care (CBC) in Prague delivers a residential program for youngsters. Interesting was the residential aspect which was discussed by the Dutch delegates. Some qualified this as positive: youngsters can literally live from a distance with their social network for a few weeks and get the opportunity to settle things. Some delegates are more in favour of a semi-residential approach: youngsters should not lose contact with their families.

**Monitoring the results**

The main aim of the Development Partnership 'Find Your Direction' is to improve the starting-points for children from the children's homes upon entering the job market. The interim-results of the research regarding the effects of 'Find Your Direction' were presented during our transnational meeting in the Czech Republic. In contradiction to many presentations of other projects which in most cases are not about the real results or effects, but are more about promotion (PR) of the project. We consider the involvement of the university and the research being done regarding the effects of Find Your Direction as positive.

Results of the evaluation show that all changes are still very small to be conclusive and that the searched period is too short to maintain that the changes are caused by the project influence. Therefore, in the monitor no information is available about the effect considering the main goal (improving the starting points for these children entering the labour market). One aspect, however, might be considered as an alternative strategy: to improve the educational programmes by focusing more on the practically driven education and making better connections between education and the world of work, for instance by focusing also on employee skills. This could be the subject of a new European project!

**Social change**

Last, but not least, we would like to comment one of the problems mentioned by Docent Matoušek. He identified the top-down approach (social change must come from a new law) as one of the main problems encountered. We would like to emphasize that social change is, or should be, a result of a complex of interactions between the national, regional and local levels, and on all levels between governmental and non-governmental organizations. This may be sanctioned by a new law. However, this is not necessary in a democratic society – things must of course be done within the limits of law. We would like to support the idea of an empowered private or non-governmental sector which is in most cases more important for social change and changing laws than the national government.

**Comments from the Welsh Development Partnership**

*Roger Edwards, Andrea Dare, Kate Wolstenholme (The Welsh Development Partnership)*

**Introduction**

It was clear from the very beginning of our visit to Prague that our partners were carrying out some very important work and were trying to address the many needs of children in the Czech Republic.

It was very interesting to visit the Czech partner's EQUAL Development Partnership and also to learn about the Tereza Maxova Foundation ([www.nadacetm.cz](http://www.nadacetm.cz)).



This is an organisation that works with abandoned children and one of the first statistics that we heard was that there are 20 000 children in care in the Czech Republic, the highest in Europe. Of the children in care, 30% attend special schools. One of the most difficult problems the children face is finding their place in the labour market and in everyday life.

The Tereza Maxova Foundation does a variety of work including the provision of grants to projects and activities that deals with issues around abandoned children and raising the profile of their needs. A brochure and website are available that provide information for potential families to adopt children ([www.adopce.com](http://www.adopce.com)). The Foundation appears to have been very successful in raising sponsorship from private companies for the many activities that it carries out.

Another initiative of the Foundation is to produce a magazine called "Little Castle" which is targeted at children who have no one to talk to, about subjects that are important to them. The magazine concentrates on prevention and education in the areas of health, development, motivation and education of abandoned children. This is financed by sponsorship from the Czech Casinos and also through various fundraising events.

Another exciting initiative was the launch of a virtual children's home in 1999 that was designed to help abandoned children in children's homes around the Czech Republic ([www.sance.cz](http://www.sance.cz)). The aim is to facilitate intellectual and physical development of individual children aged 6 to 18 years of age. Once again, the Foundation has been able to obtain support from private organisations.

There are numerous projects that the Foundation supports, covering culture, social and sports events, leisure activities, including interaction with animals (that will engender a sense of responsibility), cycling, art and making links with the older generation. In 2004 the Foundation obtained their first large EU grant to support the education of disadvantaged children. A new project called Find Your Direction or Find Your Own Way was funded from the EQUAL Programme. For the length of the project, children in the homes will be provided with the care and assistance of special educators and psychologists. The focus of this project will be not just helping children with their studies but also finding the right pathway for their future personal and professional life. The short term objective is to improve the success of the children with their education in school and to prepare them for when they leave their home and become independent. The long term objective is to ensure that children in care have a good start in life especially when it comes to their ability to work. It was through the funding for the EQUAL project that the partnership with Happy Smiling People could take place.

Two of the successes of the project so far with the children are, that they have been better prepared for school and there is a strong improvement of their language skills, although it is too early to say yet whether this can be due only to the project.

**The Conference Programme**

On the first day of the conference we received an introduction to the Czech educational system. It was interesting to see that the Primary School children receive 9 years of compulsory school education which is followed by three to four years of secondary education. In the UK it is usually six years in primary school and five years in secondary school (at present there is a proposal to raise the school leaving age to 18).

It was interesting to see that the Czech Republic has school counselling facilities – educational and psychological counselling centres plus special educational centres. In Wales, there are educational psychologists connected with the schools. The psychologists are responsible for a group of schools, children are identified by the teachers and are referred to the psychologist for assessment for appropriate support. Generally, the children referred have behavioural or psychological difficulties. Special educational needs coordinators are responsible for children with learning disabilities.

The language of instruction used in the Czech Republic is Czech, however the language of an ethnic minority can be used if there is a sufficient number of minority students in the class, for example in a secondary school there must be 15. (In Wales there are schools that teach using Welsh).

In terms of children with special educational needs, they are granted a right to education that meets their educational needs and they are entitled to any available means to achieve this.

The system of integration is similar to Wales in a way that there are the possibilities for children with special needs to attend an ordinary class or to be part of a special class. They also have special schools that are available for children with disabilities.

Teachers in these special schools can specialise in a specific field relative to the child's disability for example, hearing, visual, physical or behavioural disorders. In Wales, teachers gain their General Certificate of Teaching and then go on to train in specialist fields, specialising in teaching for the deaf, visually impaired, autism, etc. Speech and language therapists are attached to schools to provide specialist teaching where necessary; also specialist schools are available catering for children within the autistic spectrum, and schools for the deaf and visually impaired. Some children with special needs attend main stream schools where appropriate and are given the additional support they need.

Placement in a special educational school requires a judicial decision and the reason is usually down to neglect, mistreatment, abuse or misbehaviour of the child.

Everyone in the Czech Republic has the right to continue their education at a higher level school, e.g. three years of secondary training school. Anyone who has not completed their nine year compulsory education can finish this off through attending courses at a later stage.



The first visit of the day, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006 took us to a school in Londýnská, Prague. This school works with children aged 6 – 15 years of age and several ex-pupils have subsequently led distinguished careers, e.g. Václav Klaus, the current president of the Czech Republic. It is a school that is part of a pilot programme called the “Free School” and undertakes a special programme of education that is more holistic in approach. One of their objectives is to help children to understand the world within its broader context, using information from as wide range of resources as possible (using the Internet, books, personal experience, etc).

Interesting aspects of the school are that they encourage children to evaluate themselves and that there is a system of verbal reports rather than a marking scheme. (This is in marked contrast to our own system in the UK where children have to undergo a continuous series of tests and examinations throughout their schooling.) Partnership and team work is the crucial element in this school, not only between the pupils but also with the teachers and parents, where the parent is seen as playing a crucial role in the educational process of the child. Rules are the same for teachers as they are for the children. The school also teaches subjects that are not available in some other schools. Foreign languages are taught from the first class and children also have access to and use of computers from the very beginning of their schooling.

In the afternoon, we visited the SVP Centre for Behavioural Care. This was located in a residential area in Prague. It is funded by the Ministry of Education and it provides behavioural and therapeutic services for young people aged 13 – 18 years of age. The service is for those young people facing difficulties in their lives, for example relationship and communication problems. The adolescents stay for 7 – 8 weeks after signing a three way agreement between the institute, a legal representative and themselves. Attendance at their normal school is maintained throughout the stay and contact remains with family and friends.

The purpose of the stay is to try and find a solution to the child’s and family’s problems. The Centre operates at four levels, the communal level, group and peer level, individual level and with the primary biological family. During the course of the stay, intensive work is carried out with the parents and family of the young person with the aim of improving the situation and therefore enabling the individual to return to the family with at least some of the issues resolved or to an improved relationship. This centre is small and can take up to eight children at any one time. Children are free to move around freely. One important point is that the family must agree to work with the Centre, this is in recognition that it is not just the child that needs guidance. This can sometimes be the most difficult part as there may not be recognition that there is something wrong in the family. One of the first problems may be to overcome the attitude of the parents. It is interesting how the institute approaches their work. All the time, they try to find a proper pathway for the young person to follow. There is a structure to the day with a routine that starts with breakfast and going to school, etc. At the end of the day, there is a group session where the positive and negative points are discussed. There are therapy groups available using the medium of art and music. After this, the young people do their homework.



The young people participate in the domestic chores of the Centre, the cooking and cleaning etc. The first weekend the young person stays at the Centre, they are then able to go home for the second weekend. The centre has eight members of staff consisting of a specialist teacher, a social worker, a professional advocate, four assistants and an educational psychologist.

There is an eight hour shift system in place. The Centre operates on a two adult and eight children basis that emulates a large family unit. There is a maximum of two stays. Ninety per cent of young people attending the program are from Prague. A new rule is in place that now requires parents to contribute financially for their children to stay at the Centre (150 Euros for the 6 – 8 week stay). It is interesting to observe that there used to be a waiting list before this financial rule came into place. However, this is not true anymore.

The second day we went on a trip through some beautiful countryside on the way to Jablonné to the north of Bohemia, a very old town dating back at least to 1249. At Jablonné, we visited a children's home that caters for 64 children in a very magnificent building.

The home is divided into six co-educational family groups and each has its own budget to pay for clothes, trips, repair work and school items. There are 32 employees including the manager and a social worker. The age of the children is between 3 and 19. All the children who are resident in the children's home have been through a diagnostic institute and some of them have a disability.

The objectives of the institute are to enable the children to achieve ultimate independence in their lives, to be able to participate in a social life, be self-regulating and self-disciplined, to be prepared for work, have a positive outlook on life with emotional stability and to successfully complete their education.

At the institute we received a presentation from Docent Oldřich Matoušek, head of the Social Work Department, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague. The presentation was about the problems related to children and youngsters growing up in institutional care and children with special needs.

In 2005, 2336 children were placed from families into institutional care of which only 89 represented a risk to society and the remainder lacked proper family care. In the Czech Republic, 20 000 children are in care amounting to a European record. As a result many of the children suffer side effects (lack of confidence, inability to concentrate) and lack the necessary life skills.

Social workers dealing with the children cases have a huge case load (150 – 280 per year) and some children during the course of their time in the institutional care can be involved with up to 180 educators. Social workers are not highly regarded by the public and their relationship with the family can be viewed as paternalistic, as their priority is often to save the child rather than to reinforce the family.



Docent Matoušek explained the role of the non-governmental sector in the Czech Republic. NGOs were often state dependent and often compensate for existing services but they were able to introduce new services that have been copied from other countries that have a more established voluntary sector. He then went onto explaining the problems that are prevalent in the Czech Republic. There is a top down approach without necessarily basing services on identified need. The state is seen by the public as failing in its duty, probably due to too big expectations placed on it.

No research is being undertaken on the outcomes of the services and no systematic estimation of need has been carried out. There is a lack of comprehensive services covering the main needs of the target group and a lack of self help.

However the good news is that from 2007, there will be a new legislation that will cover deinstitutionalisation. In 2002, there was a reform of the state administration that means that social planning and social policy can be planned at a local level. The European Union's new programme of structural funds will provide additional funding for the Czech Republic and this should help financing some of the missing services.

Docent Oldřich Matoušek then listed the services that were missing: refuges for single parents, short term foster care, programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, services for multi-problem families, services for families experiencing poverty, services supporting parental skills, services supporting parental education and preparation of children for school, family therapy, mediation, marriage guidance, prevention of school drop out and failure.

Hana Pazlarová, an external expert from the "Find Your Direction" project, followed with her presentation regarding the project. The main aim of the project is to improve the starting point for children entering the job market. Ms. Pazlarová then gave a talk about the work of the study groups that took place with the institute Jablonné v Podještědí.

The aim of the study group was to encourage the children to study and to prepare them to become more successful in school. This included; how to learn effectively, how to search and work with information, how to express oneself clearly and develop methods to aid better comprehension. The group also covered life coaching including options for furthering their education and choice of career. The main aim of the social skills training group was to prepare the children for real life and for them to become fully independent.

The outcome of this project was positive. There was an improvement in the school work of the children which was also confirmed by the teachers. On the negative side is a fact that the project lasts only for two years and then after this, the project is at risk of ending due to lack of finances.



During the conference, we learnt about the system of educational and psychological counselling in the Czech Republic. It is compulsory to have a school counsellor and a methodologist available to the schools (The methodologist deals with drug problems – this can be the same person as the school counsellor.)

Educational and Psychological Counselling Centres are relatively new organisations in the Czech Republic employing a total of 420 psychologists, 118 special education teachers and 118 social workers. Anyone can call the centre for advice – parents, children, staff and teachers. They work mainly with the age group of 6 – 16, dealing with issues of learning and educational problems and providing career guidance and counselling. With the 15 – 20 years age group, they deal with learning problems as well in addition to personality issues and career guidance. The centres concentrate on diagnostic activities and offer methodological guidance.

They provide additional seminars for teachers, they organise meetings with students at secondary schools, offer programmes for children with behavioural disorders, programmes for difficult classes. They provide methods of assessment and suggest how to make improvements to relations with the class. They offer internships for university students and students from colleges of higher education.

Focus of the centres is on timely intervention, the younger the better and before the problem starts. Educational and psychological counselling centres are perceived by both parents and teachers as a needful service. Once again the involvement of the parents is seen as crucial to the success of the programme. The centres appear to be respected by the parents and teachers alike and the involvement of parents has now become integrated into the educational system. There are, however, limitations as to what can be achieved, as there are high demands on staff who are working within limited resources.

### **Conclusions**

The Tereza Maxová Foundation must be congratulated for the work it does and for the partnerships made with the many private sector organisations.

The concept of teachers, who are trained in specific fields of disability, is, as far as I know, a new concept and one that could be explored in the future.

The school in Londýnská is particularly interesting. It was refreshing to see that the school used a verbal reporting approach as opposed to our own target driven approach.

Also of interest was to see how the Czech Republic tackled the problems posed by young people in terms of behaviour and relationships. A balance seems to have been made between giving the young person a break from the family but still retaining the links with the school and social network. Having the family on the side at the beginning seems to be the key to starting to solve some of the issues the young people (and family) are facing.



Lessons could be learnt from the System of Educational and Psychological Counselling that is used in the Czech Republic and how they deal with children and young people who have behavioural and relationship problems. This is one example that could be applied in the UK that could reduce the number of pupils that are being excluded from school. In Wales, there were 465 permanent exclusions during the year 2004/05, 45 more than in 2003/04. (However this is 14% lower than in 1995/96 when there were 543 permanent exclusions. Ref: National Assembly for Wales, Statistics, exclusions from schools in Wales 2004/05.)

### **Future Co-operation**

There is a potential for future co-operation with some of the projects visited. The staff of Find Your Direction (our Equal Partner in the Czech Republic) maybe interested in visiting Wales again to see how we operate a short term respite care house for young people with learning disabilities. (This gives parents and carers a break and also a holiday for the young people themselves.) Other possibilities for future co-operation are for the Find Your Direction Project to see how we run the Student Volunteer Project, where student volunteers work with children who are falling behind in their work.

From the Welsh Perspective, it would be interesting to make links with the school in Londýnská and learn more about their pilot initiatives. It would also be interesting to learn more about the SVP Centre for Behavioural Care and the system of educational and psychological counselling.



## Chapter 5 – Conclusions

At the end, we would like to summarize the course of the international conference and the information gained here.

During three days of November, we visited several different types of organizations and school institutions to show our international partners the situation and status of work with adolescents at risk. This allowed us all to compare the different types of services for this target group. We visited grammar school, which is specific for its open approach to the pupils with special educational needs. This school belongs to the pioneers of this approach in the Czech Republic and is also one of the first ones that got involved in the pilot phase of undergoing reform of our educational system.

Further, we visited a non-profit organization running a community centre focusing primarily on adolescents at risk. To get an even better understanding of these issues of our target group, we visited the Centre for Behavioural Care, which is a specific transitional institution between walk-in services for adolescents at risk and institutional care and upbringing. During several weeks long stays, the Centre works with the adolescents and their families.

For a thorough presentation of our project and creation of an overall idea about our system of care about children and adolescents at risk, we visited one children's home. To offer our guests a theoretical insight into the problem, we prepared a presentation about the educational system in the Czech Republic and the offers of services of state pedagogical and psychological counselling centres.

Several discussion blocks were part of the conference as well. They explored each given point of the program. One of the findings, which were proven during the conference again, is that even though the target group of the Czech project is to some extent different, we can support each other in some areas on the international level. During the discussions, all partners from the individual countries agreed that it is necessary to go towards system solutions and decrease the number of one-time projects which are useful only during their realization process. Issues associated with institutional care and the current situation in the institutional care in the Czech Republic was greatly debated.

The international guests were greatly surprised by the fact that even though the general trend is trying to avoid the institutional care due to knowing its negative impacts on the children and adolescents, the much needed changes come very slowly and the changes are not always systemic in their nature. On the contrary, our guests positively commented, for instance, a relatively small number of children in the classrooms, good material equipment of the schools (school cafeterias, a big offer of after school programs directly at school) or a low number of children that do not finish their education.



It has been proven again that in all countries, it is necessary to pay more attention to the time period when young people are ending their schooling (or institutional care) and are entering the labour market. This is true even more for those who are somehow disadvantaged.

