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Putting children at
the heart of Europe

Deinstitutionalisation practices & further development of social care policy in Europe - 15 June 2015

Workshop III: Successful mechanisms for developing community-based social services

Alternative care for children & young people – ways for achieving better outcomes

Better outcomes for children ?



The more we provide young people with opportunities to experience and accumulate the positive effects of protective factors, the more likely they are to achieve and sustain health and well-being during childhood and in adulthood

*Source: Prof Antony Morgan, 2010
Programme Leader MSc Public Health with Social Action,
Glasgow Caledonian University
Research Fellow, University of St Andrews*



An assets-based approach to children's outcomes

40 Developmental Assets for Young People's Health and Development (Scales, 2001)

External supports

- **Support** (family relationships, caring school and neighbourhood)
- **Empowerment** (community values youth, young people seen as resources)
- **Constructive use of time** (participation in clubs and associations)

Internal strengths

- **Commitment to learning** (achievement motivation)
- **Positive values** (caring and responsible to others)
- **Social competencies** (cultural competence, peaceful conflict resolution)
- **Positive identity** (self esteem)

Children in alternative care

UN Guidelines on Alternative Care : 1st Principle = NECESSITY

Is everything being done that could be done to prevent children entering the care system?

Family benefits and welfare support
Early childhood education and care
Family and parenting support
Family group conferencing **Pre and post natal maternity care**
Housing **Inclusive education**
Respite care for families with children with disabilities
Family mediation systemic therapy
Reconciliation measures
Debt relief and support



EC Recommendation on Investing in Children

EC Recommendation 'Investing in Children – Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage'

Adopted in February 2013, promotes child-centred, quality and comprehensive policies to tackle child poverty and promote child well-being.

It calls for a children's rights approach and integrated strategies based on **three pillars**:

- access to adequate resources,
- access to affordable quality services,
- and children's right to participate.



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Current trends in ending institutional care



BOSNIA & HERZOGOVINA,
BULGARIA, ESTONIA, GREECE,
HUNGARY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA,
ROMANIA, SERBIA, UKRAINE

Report back from 10 national coordinators

- In several countries the numbers of children in institutions appear to be decreasing & institutions are being closed
- However, rates of family separation & the number of children entering public care is not falling
- Roma children & children with disabilities are still over-represented
- Despite bans on institutionalization of children under 3, it is still general practice in several countries



Children in alternative care - suitability

Provision of Quality & Appropriate Alternative Care

- Kinship care
- Foster care
- Residential care organized around the rights & needs of the child

“the natural way in which family members talk & listen to each other, & particularly parents listen to their children, cannot easily be replicated in more formal living institutions” UNCRC Implementation Handbook

Fundamentally important role of the carer in *“developing positive, safe and nurturing relationships with children”* (UN Guidelines)



Children in alternative care – after care

- Early planning & preparation involving children directly
- Life-skills & vocational training to support young people's autonomy
- Access to legal, social & health services & appropriate financial support during & after transition
- On-going contact & access to support from former carers



Is everything being done that could be done in my country to prevent children entering public care?

What is the right balance between universal or population-wide services & benefits and more targeted interventions for the most vulnerable?



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