

Familiens Hus

Family houses in Denmark – an early preventive intervention for young vulnerable mothers and their children

The National Board of Social Services (Socialstyrelsen)



- The National Board of Social Services is an independent subdivision of The Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration
- The Board aims to promote new development and initiatives in social services while also supporting and counseling local authorities in providing services to citizens, i.e. children, young people, socially marginalized groups, elderly and disabled.
- The National Board of Social Services must ensure that such initiatives are put into practice in Denmark's local authorities as intended by the Parliament and to counsel and assist local authorities.

Young mothers in Denmark



Young mothers under 22 years in comparison to their peers:

- have a weak attachment to the labour market
- rarely get an education
- often end up receiving long term social benefits
- lack of social network and family support
- have been in care when they were children
- rarely live with the fathers of their children

Children of young mothers in comparison to their peers more often:

- have health and developmental problems
- are overrepresented in the group of children placed in care during childhood
- receive a conviction for severe violence or other forms of crime
- often become young parents themselves

Challenges in the ordinary social services and interventions towards young mothers in the municipalities

- lack of systematic coordination of services and interventions that support the complex situation that many young mothers find themselves in
- lack of anchoring of responsibility for the interventions/social services in the municipalities
- social and health interventions for vulnerable young mothers are often based on the mother/child relationship, and do not include the mother's overall situation
- vulnerable young mothers are reluctant to contact the municipality/social services because of the dual role of the municipality as both consultative/advisory and with the responsibility to take decisions in relation to the child and thus ultimately to decide on enforcement measures in relation to child

The family houses



- Funding from the Danish parliament in 2010 (4 year period) to develop and try out an intervention that addresses the challenges that many young mothers face
- The family houses are inspired by the family centres in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Holland
- The family houses involve and bring together all relevant actors and resources across the public and civil sector, thereby creating an innovative and holistic approach to solve complex social problems
- The family houses are based on a partnership between a private humanitarian organization (Mødrehjælpen) and two municipalities (the Municipality of Esbjerg and the Municipality of Høje-Taastrup)

Core values of the family houses



- A holistic and intersectorial approach
- Separated from the decisions of the municipal authorities
- Non-stigmatizing effort
- Involvement of civil society
- Based on manuals and focus performance management

Target group



Primary target group

Young pregnant women/mothers under the age of 22 years

Vulnerable pregnant women/mothers under 26 years of age

Secondary target group

The children

The fathers

Objectives and expected results



Objectives of the project:

- to improve the education and employment of the target group, increase their parenting skills and strengthen their social network.

The expected results are:

- that the young mothers become clarified in terms of starting and ultimately completing an education and/or obtain regular employment and a permanent attachment to the labor market

Secondary the young mothers achieve the following results:

- Strengthen their parenting skills
- Strengthen their social network
- Strengthen their options of action

Services in the family houses



- Open counseling (midwife consultation, health nurse etc.)
- Specialized treatment interventions for vulnerable young mothers (45 weeks during pregnancy and maternity leave)
- Group sessions (antenatal education, mother's groups, "how to study and be a good parent at the same time" etc.)
- Individual counseling as needed (conflict management, couples therapy, financial/debt advice, juridical assistance, housing counseling etc.)
- voluntary activities (celebration of holidays, baby swimming, baby massage, cooking class , dining together etc.)

Evaluation of the family houses and the expected results



The Family Houses will be evaluated by the Rockwool Foundation.

The goal of the evaluation is to investigate whether the young mothers:

- achieve clarification in terms of starting and ultimately completing an education and/or obtain regular employment and a permanent attachment to the labor market
- strengthen their parenting skills
- strengthen their social network
- strengthened their options of action

Secondly, whether the efforts in the family houses affect the children's development so that they:

- achieve an age-appropriate development
- achieve general good health and well-being

The Family House in Høje-Taastrup

