

EU LEONARDO MOBILITY PROJECT ‘SOCIAL PEDAGOGY – LEARNING IN PRACTICE’

PARTICIPANT REPORT BY CLARE JACKMAN FROM CARE VISIONS

PREPARATION

I first heard about the mobility around a year ago and was intrigued. I had been introduced to Social Pedagogy in my previous job at the ‘Sycamore Project’, when Gabriel Eichsteller and Sylvia Holthoff, the two directors of ThemPra, did some initial training with us in 2008. It appeared to fit with my own values and methods and I was keen to find out more, so when the opportunity arose to take part in the mobility I knew I had to go. Around September/October 2011, we were invited to apply for the mobility and with the support of my manager I decided to apply. I felt so privileged to discover my application had been successful and knew this was going to be the experience of a lifetime.



On November 21st and 22nd, we all met for the first time as a group. There were six people from my organization of Care Visions and six from Lancashire council. We also met Gabriel and Charlotte who would be our mentors and organizers of the trip. During these two days we did many team building exercises to get us to open up and think in a pedagogical way.

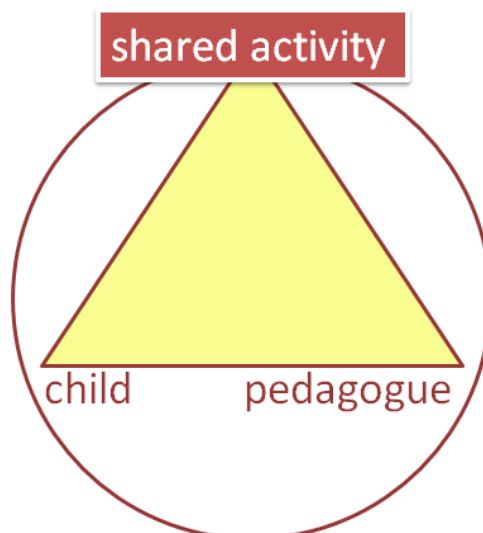
We were informed about where we would be living whilst on the mobility and what the placements would consist of and where they would take place. We were given the opportunity to choose which two placements we would prefer to take part in, and who we would be ‘buddied’ with on these placements;

each person would be paired with someone from the other organization. We were given some time with our 'buddies' to get to know each other and discuss what we hoped to get out of the mobility. With our 'buddies' we were filmed speaking about our hopes and aims for the mobility, which were possibly going to be shown to our hosting placements.

We also learned some of the theories behind social pedagogy such as;
'The Learning Zone Model' (Senninger; 2000)



The Common Third;



'The Three P's'; Personal, Professional and private, which we should be aware of when in practice, and 'Haltung' which is;

"Fundamental to social pedagogy, because it demonstrates the importance of the professional being authentic. In our 'Haltung' the professional and the personal are intrinsically interwoven (cf. [3Ps](#)), as 'Haltung' is not something we can adopt just for a particular situation. It explains why social pedagogy is not a method, not about what is done but how it is done, how 'head, heart and hands' are connected through a social pedagogical 'Haltung'. In social pedagogic terms, the 'Haltung' of the professional should be based on an emotional connectedness to other people and a profound respect for their human dignity." (From Thempra website).

We also did a quiz about Danish history and culture, which made me realize I really knew very little about this subject.

Following this participation, I realized I had a lot to learn and research. I began trying to learn Danish, which I found extremely difficult, I read a lot of articles relating to Social Pedagogy and my particular interests, chosen placements and role within fostering. Some of the articles and reports I read were;

'Pedagogy – a holistic, personal approach to work with children and young people, across services'
(Thomas Coram Research Unit, Briefing Paper – update 2009)

"Go Outdoors! – Guidance and good practice on encouraging outdoor activities in residential child care"
(Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care, 2010)

"Good enough caring – Therapeutic child care and social pedagogy"
(Mark Smith)

"Introducing Social Pedagogy into Scottish residential child care: An evaluation of the sycamore Services social pedagogy training programme"
(Ian Milligan, SIRCC, 2009)

"Non-violent resistance and violence against siblings"
(Haime Omer, Irit Scorr-Sapir and Uri Weinblatt, 2008)

"Foster Care: a role for social pedagogy?"
(Pat Petrie, 2007)

I also read about various theorists and key thinkers of social pedagogy.

I learned that the term social pedagogy is derived from Ancient Greece, Pais meaning child and Agein meaning to bring up or lead. Many wealthy families in these times had pedagogues, who were sometimes slaves, to be responsible for bringing up the sons to ensure they became upstanding citizens. The term 'social pedagogy' is used in recognition that is not just one persons responsibility to bring up a child but society as a whole, bringing together education, upbringing and the relationship between the individual and society. Social pedagogy draws together theories from related disciplines such as sociology, psychology, education, philosophy, medical sciences and social work. In European countries the 'pedagogue' is a widely recognized professional, most pedagogues train for three to four years at degree level. They work in a wide variety of social care, health and educational settings.

Many foster carers, around one third, in Europe are trained pedagogues and are considered 'professional foster carers', taking on the more challenging cases and are paid more.

The 'Green Paper', on looked after children – 'Care Matters: Transforming the lives of children and young people in care (2006), proposed a national qualifications framework for foster carers and residential child care workers, that would 'incorporate the principles of social pedagogy', and indicated a need to extend this work to develop ways of establishing pedagogic education within the existing qualifications framework.

In Scotland it is now possible to do a degree in social pedagogy through 'Camphil' in Aberdeen, and the social work degree in Robert Gordon's University, Aberdeen now offer social pedagogy as the fourth year of the social work degree.

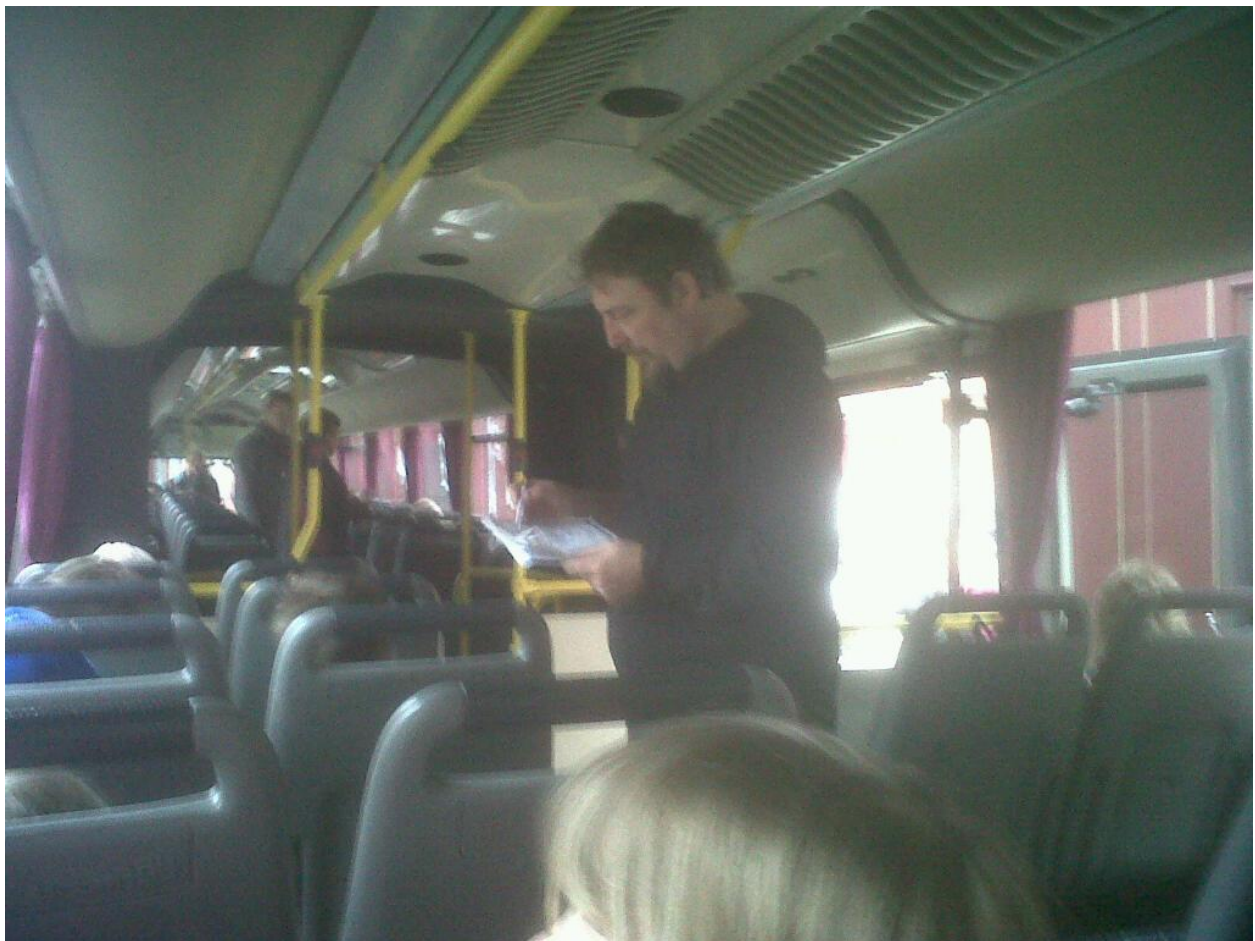
The build up and anticipation leading up to the mobility was intense, and at times almost unbearable. The following from Danny Henderson is part of an email he sent around to the whole of Care visions just before we left and sums up nicely the reason for the mobility and our aims and objectives.

"Research suggests that young people looked after in countries where social pedagogy is widely practiced enjoy better outcomes than their UK counterparts (60% of care leavers in Denmark go on to higher education in comparison to only 6% in the UK) and the aim of the Leonardo Mobility project is to establish an understanding as to what contributes to the difference in outcomes. We'll explore the integration of services, care planning, risk management, reflective processes, the management of services, inter agency working amongst other things and speak directly to staff members and young people about their experiences of working in and using social care services. The practice of social pedagogy places an emphasis on a nurturing approach whereby authentic relationships are a medium for safety, growth and change. There is a great deal of interest in this nationally and this Leonardo de Vinci project is the first of its kind bringing together practitioners and managers to experience, observe, reflect and evaluate, in real time, with highly trained social pedagogues in a supportive cultural context. The prospects for learning are both rich and wonderful and we're all eager to share the benefit of our experience with our colleagues when we return."

(Danny Henderson – Care visions – 2/3/2012)

MOBILITY

My first placement was at Stockholmsgave, which is a forest kindergarten for children ages two and half to six years old. There is a base, which is the meeting point that parents take their children to and collect them from at the end of the day. The base is in an area in Copenhagen called Norrebro, which is a vibrant multi-cultural area with a high percentage of Muslim people. There are also many creative people such as artists, musicians and actors. The area has had problems recently with gun crime and there are some racial tensions apparent. The base is a fairly small building with cloakrooms, play areas and offices. There are brightly coloured murals on the walls and it is a very child friendly environment. Parents can drop their children off from 7.30am and collect them up until 5pm.



A large bus collects the staff and children from the base at around 8.15 every morning to transport them to the forest Kindergarten, which is about a 20 minute journey. We arrived at around 8am most

mornings and the place would be busy with parents bringing in their children. I was struck by how openly affectionate and fun the parents were with their children, they would see them onto the bus, then wait outside the bus often making funny faces at their children or doing silly dances to amuse them. The pedagogues would take a register as each child came into the base and then count them all once on the bus. They would also check each child to ensure their seat belts were on properly and would make a point of wearing seatbelts themselves to show a good example. Once everybody was on board the bus would take off and all the parents would run after the bus waving and blowing kisses to their children until it reached the end of the road. This was a wonderful sight and added to the already happy environment of listening to children happily singing and chatting to their friends. The children were so well behaved on the bus and not once did I hear a pedagogue have to ask them to behave. On arrival at the kindergarten I was surprised that it was just off a busy main road and did not really seem like a forest as I had anticipated.



The building is a fairly large, 1950's two storey building. It houses three separate kindergartens which are based in different areas of Copenhagen and are all bussed in the same as at Stockholmsgave. The three kindergartens, although in the same building and sharing the same grounds do not often join up but children can mix outside if they wish and then come together for celebrations such as Christmas.

The manager of Stockholmsgave is a lady called Helle Kielstrup. She told us that they are really feeling the financial crisis. Stockholmsgave is classed as a 'Community Institution' and parents pay for their children to attend. There are six institutions which have recently been amalgamated with one budget due to financial reductions. There are six leaders, plus one manager overall. At Stockholmsgave they used to have three pedagogues to twenty two children, but this has now been reduced to two to twenty two. Most of the budget goes on staff, and the bus costs them one million DK, around £1,100 for one year. They have six pedagogues plus three uneducated staff. Helle told us that the average wage of a pedagogue is 26 – 30 thousand DK per month, (approximately £2888 -£3333/£34,000-£40,000pa) but they do pay higher taxes, around 40-50%. When enrolling children into the kindergarten, parents have to sign a consent form giving permission for the Kindergarten to photograph their children for any marketing material, drive them, bathe them, take them on trips including on public transport. This means that no risk assessments need to be carried out, giving pedagogues the freedom to take children on trips and allow them to play freely. When major trips are planned they put a poster up on the wall of the base and it is the parent's responsibility to check this, eliminating the need to send letters home. Children are allowed to explore their environment freely, climb trees as high as they want, enjoy campfires, and whittle sticks with knives without the fear and constraints of parents or authorities complaining or suing if a child is hurt in the process.

There are currently 66 parents who have their children enrolled in the kindergarten. They have a parent council of 7 and meet three or four times a year to discuss what they want, suggestions etc. Parents then take responsibility to put this information out to other parents.

Kindergarten staffs meet every three weeks between five and eight pm, when they discuss children, plans, reflect on certain situations and discuss what they should do. Pedagogues are given trust and autonomy in their work and allowed to get on with their job as they see beneficial to the children.

On arriving at the Kindergarten, children make their way from the bus into the building and are again counted to ensure all children are present. As we entered the building my senses were overpowered by the smell of freshly baked bread, this was a warm and welcoming experience. Stockholmsgave kindergarten is based on the ground floor and has a large modern kitchen, several children's toilet areas with changing tables for those who are still in nappies. There is a staff room, an office where Helle works. There is also a snooze room which has mattresses a comfy chair and twinkly lights on the ceiling.



There are three separate rooms where the children are allocated into groups called 'The Snails', 'The Dolphins' and 'The turtles'. Each room has a cloakroom off it where the children have their allocated pegs and benches where they leave their snow suits and boots. Each room also has a partition which can be closed over allowing some private time if needed or to divide the group up when required. There is a large comfortable sofa, tables and chairs and plenty of toys, dressing up costumes and art equipment in each room.



There is a definite structure to the day, however children are allowed and encouraged to play with who they want to, independently from adults, allowing them to be in their own imaginative worlds.

Once the children had changed out of their outdoor clothing, everyone would gather in a circle on the floor, including the pedagogues. Children would usually cuddle into the pedagogues and there was a relaxed, calm and contented atmosphere. Every day at this point they would talk about the days of the week, months of the year, what the weather was like. Children were encouraged to put their hands up before answering a question and to take turns. Each day a different child would be asked to go around the group and count how many children there were. They then often sang a song, and Andus would play the guitar. The children were then asked to the tables by colours they were wearing. The first day, Martin (pedagogue) put on some Scottish music and asked the children to paint what they heard and how it made them feel. One boy was asked to wait until there was space as there was not enough room for his paper. I was expecting him to complain or become upset but instead he sat patiently and happily without annoying anyone else until it was his turn. One boy was completely focussed on the music and I watched mesmerised as his brush strokes went in time to the music and he carefully applied different colours. The standard of painting was far more advanced than children of the same age in Britain. They kept their colours clean and separate and some painted flowers and rainbows whilst others did abstract but thoughtful paintings.



At lunchtime the children were encouraged to help themselves to food and pour their own drinks. The Kindergarten has a no sugar policy, and provides light but healthy food. All children have to try a little of each type of food provided but if they don't like it can leave it on their plates. Once they finished eating all children take their plates to the rubbish bin to scrape off any food left then stack them neatly on a trolley.



After lunch all children put their outdoor clothes on and play outside for two hours. At this point the pedagogues take their breaks two at a time. This usually left two pedagogues supervising all children.



The outside area is a large space with a variety of play apparatus, huts and trees to play with. Often a fire was lit and children were allowed to play freely while the pedagogues usually sat by the campfire. Children would sometimes come to speak to them or have a cuddle, but on the whole were happy being in their own worlds playing independently with who they wished. This encourages independent and imaginative play. If a child fell and cried they were encouraged to get back up and no fuss was made. If children became in conflict with each other (which rarely happened) the pedagogues would calmly advise them how to resolve this, and sometimes an older child would be asked to help with this. Without conflict being allowed to take place children can't learn how to resolve it. Without children being allowed to take risks they can't learn their own limitations, or advance and develop.



One day the children were sitting around the fire whittling sticks. Martin guided them and ensured they were safe, and the children sat calmly and safely using sharp knives to do this. I asked Martin what the purpose of this was and he replied it's just a nice therapeutic thing to do. I tried it myself and became absorbed in trying to get a point on the end of my stick and could definitely see the value in this.

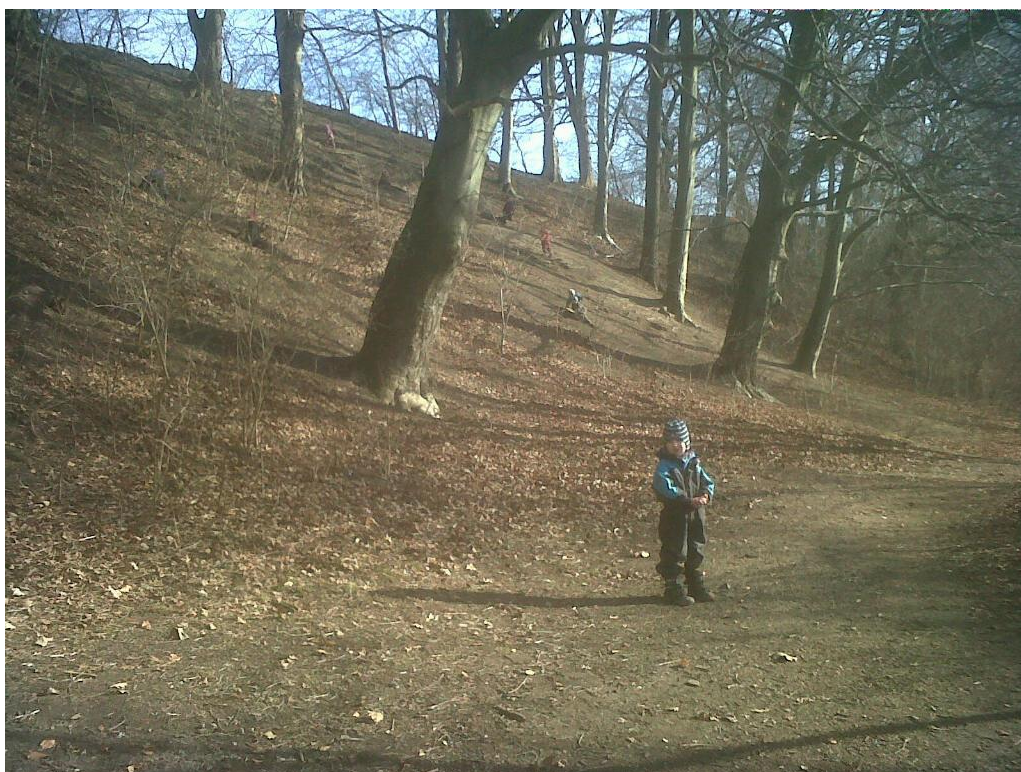


When it was time for the children to go inside they were given a snack of bread and fruit, then allowed free play time until it was time to get ready to take the bus back to the base. Sometimes a story would be read to them and they would all cuddle up on the sofa. The bus would arrive around 3.45 and all the children were counted back onto the bus. As it was such a long day, many children would fall asleep on the bus, this was allowed to happen and they were woken gently as the bus pulled into the base.



Parents who were waiting to collect their children hugged them on arrival and showed interest in what they had been doing. Some children waited at the base as their parents needed to collect them later after work. These children would play happily while waiting, although one or two became upset that their parents weren't there. A register was taken at the end of the day as the children left with their parents.

At the end of my first day Martin told me that we would be going on a trip the next morning. I asked where we were going and what we would be doing, he told me we were going to climb a hill to roll down it. I thought this was wonderful and looked forward to taking part. On the second morning we all got our snow suits and boots on, me included, and congregated outside. Martin had a flag on a stick that he had made with a snail on as this was the snails group. We set off and several children grappled to hold my hands. We walked from the kindergarten through woods and sang as we walked. There was a smallish hill which we climbed up and I was told that a burial chamber had been discovered underneath this which was thought to be that of a druid or wizard. The pedagogues encouraged the children to get excited about this and told stories and made faces and noises to create a spooky atmosphere. The children loved this and screamed excitedly. We then continued to walk until we came to a steep woodland bank.



Mete (female pedagogue) and I climbed up the bank with the children, while Martin and Andus prepared a camp fire. At one point the bank was very steep and muddy and I found myself flat on my front and began slipping down. A little girl of about five on seeing this held a stick down to me so I could grab it and she pulled me up. I was touched by this gesture, and thanked her then when I was stable did the same thing to help up the others. It was a great example of team work, which was made even better by the fact that a five year old had introduced this method. When we were all at the top of the bank the children showed me how to slide down. We all just slid down on our bottoms without worrying about getting dirty. The children loved this; some did it again while some sat around the fire and ate a snack. The children seemed very happy and content and were enjoying being connected to nature. On the walk back some children picked flowers and foraged for interesting natural things to take back with them.

I was there for four days and although the same structure remained every day there was something different introduced to the children. By the last day I felt completely relaxed and in tune with the rhythm of the day and the children. I thought I had known what it meant to be holistic, but until experiencing working in this environment I don't think it is possible to fully understand what it really is. The love that I felt and mutual respect between children and adults was incredible. I realised that it is about 'being', rather than just doing, it is about allowing children to be themselves and following the natural flow and rhythm that they create. On my last day I had asked if I could do an aerobics activity that I had observed in a British nursery based on different beans i.e. runner beans, you run on the spot, broad beans, you stretched your arms out, string beans you stretched upward etc. The children really enjoyed this. Later on a couple of girls were pirouetting in front of a mirror, I started joining in with them doing ballet type moves, they copied me, this then developed into me doing yoga moves, and I

ended up having around ten children copying these moves. Later on some girls were dressing up in princess dresses, I said I thought they needed tiara's and proceeded to cut doyley type cuts in paper which I then cut into strips and then attached a strip of paper to make a band, but measured each one around each child's head to make them custom made. The children were intrigued as to what I was doing and watched carefully. I then managed to communicate to them to get the coloured pencils and encouraged them to decorate them. Again around ten children did this including a couple of boys and spent about half an hour calmly and happily doing this. They were so pleased with their tiaras and wore them for the rest of the day. Neither of these activities had been planned and I had never made a paper tiara before, but because I was following the flow and rhythm of the children it just developed as I went along.

While we were making the tiaras a little girl had a tantrum in the next room, and was spitting on other children. Andus calmly got up and told me that there was conflict next door that he had to deal with. He then came through carrying the girl who was kicking and screaming and took her into the cloakroom and shut the door. A couple of the girls looked through the window of the door, but I asked them to come over and help make the tiaras. There was very little disruption and the other children were not affected by this. Eventually Andus came back into the room and explained to me that he had to hold her until she was calm as she could not regulate herself. Once she was calm enough she was sent outside where the other pedagogues and some children were to get some fresh air and relax. This was the only occasion that I saw a child distressed and it was interesting to see how it was handled. When it was time to leave the Kindergarten for the last time I felt quite emotional. We presented them with gifts we had bought from home and they sang us a goodbye song. I felt completely filled with love and happiness. When we said goodbye all the children and staff hugged us and wished us luck and said they would miss us, and how much they had enjoyed our visit. This was the most enriching week of my life and although I was sad to leave, knew that it would stay with me forever.





My second placement was in a residential home for fourteen to twenty three year olds called Rymarksvænge. This consists of 'The pension', which is a unit for fourteen to eighteen year olds who need 24 hour fairly intensive support and care. This is a seven bedded unit and has pedagogues there 24 hours a day seven days a week. The pedagogues cook and clean for the young people but encourage them to clean their own bedrooms. Pedagogues manage their money and buy their food, toiletries etc. The 'Rooms', are for young people who require more independent living, either because they cannot manage being part of a group with adults overseeing them, or that they are able to manage independence. These young people are given a budget to buy their own food and toiletries as well as pocket money. They do their own shopping and cooking, although once a week a pedagogue cooks for them and they eat together. The rooms we saw consisted of three bedrooms, a bathroom and kitchen. It was based in the same building as the Pension and young people have access to a pedagogue 24/7, although pedagogues are not based in the flat. Pedagogues check in with the young people regularly and help them with their life plans and independence. If young people in either unit are struggling and need to be moved to the other unit this can be done if space allows. There are also flats called 'The Hoobla', which are based in Copenhagen. These are for eighteen to twenty three year olds where they

live independently. These young people meet with their key worker every week to discuss how they are and help them with life plans. They can contact a pedagogue any time they need support.

Most of the young people are placed in Rymarksvænge voluntarily, usually because their behaviour has become aggressive. For most it is their first time in care, some have been in other residential placements but had to leave due to their violent behaviour.

They have a non-violence policy and if a young person physically attacks a pedagogue or another young person they are removed. Pier (pedagogue), told us that they are currently in discussion about this and looking at why a young person would get to the stage of physical aggression, i.e. could it be that the pedagogues have done something to escalate or provoke them to this stage.

Usually one pedagogue sleeps over at the pension, however if things are unsettled an unqualified person will also sleep over for support, but the pedagogue is the first point of call. They work on 'non-discussion' when a young person is unsettled or aggressive. They explain to the young person that they are not in a place to discuss things right now, so will leave them to calm down, and when they are calm and able to talk, they can discuss what it was about and what they can do to make it better. I asked what they did if they felt a young person was at risk of hurting themselves when they are in this escalated state. He said that they would stay in their room with them, and explain that this was because they felt they were unsafe and it was their duty to keep them safe, but they would not enter into dialogue until they were calm.

In Denmark it is legal to have sex over fifteen so they are allowed boyfriends and girlfriends to stay overnight but not during the week. Alcohol and drugs are not allowed, but they can smoke cigarettes in their rooms. Young people are allowed to leave the unit when they want. Twenty four hours have to go by if a young person absconds, before they can report them missing to the police. Pedagogues encourage young people to take part in activities and all young people receive a free pass to the gym. It was explained that young people want to attend further education as they know how difficult it is to get jobs. Some are in school, others are in specialist education such as sports training, cooking schools etc.

On our first visit a sixteen year old girl was talking to Peir in Danish, she was smiling and it looked like a nice conversation, but when finished Peir told us that she had called him a "fucking arsehole". He told us he had said to her that this was her opinion which is fine as she is allowed to have her own opinions. He said she was annoyed as he wouldn't let her do something she wanted to do, he said that he is quite firm with the young people and no means no.

On our second day we were asked to cook a roast beef dinner for a boy's fifteen birthday. He had asked for this with Dauphanoise potatoes. I decided to add to this Yorkshire pudding as they hadn't tried this before and made a rich onion gravy. A seventeen year old girl came in and asked what was for dinner, she said she didn't like this and would not eat it. I asked if she was going to make herself something else, but she said she doesn't eat. When the meal was ready and everyone came to the dining table, this girl sat next to me. She was not made to join us but chose to. I asked if she was going to try some

of the food and joked about my Yorkshire pudding not being as it should, she smiled and asked what it was. I suggested she try a little and if she didn't like it she could leave it. She smiled sweetly and gave me her plate, I put a little of everything on it. She said she liked it and asked for more, she ended up having everything with second helpings. Mark who was the pedagogue on shift that night told us previously that this girl was going into rehab the following day. She had been partying and taking drugs when she first arrived around six months previously, and had gone through quite a journey to get to this point. She had brought back her boyfriend that night who is twenty three. Mark said although this was not ideal it was better than the men in their thirty's that she had been dating previously. He told us that he was allowing her boyfriend to stay over that night as she was nervous about going to re-rehab the next day and would need comforting. The fifteen year old boy who's Birthday it was also came back with a girl. Mark said he thought he would allow her to stay over too as it would be unfair if the other girl was allowed and he wasn't. He also said as it was his Birthday it was a special occasion and it would be leverage for him later if he was trying to negotiate with the boy about something. He said it also helps to build a positive respectful relationship. He did say that he would check with the girl's parents first to make sure this was ok. All the young people were polite and smiled and answered questions when we asked them. They all said thank you for the meal when they had finished.



On our third day we were meeting Christopher who runs the sports project within Rymarksvænge. When we arrived at the building we struggled to get in. The sixteen year old girl we had met the previous day arrived back from the shops and let us in. I asked "how are you today", to which she replied, "Not good, I am depressed". We empathised with her, but I thought it was very brave of her to tell us this and to be able to take ownership of this emotion. When we entered the unit everyone was forgatherer for the team meeting. They sat round a large table with candles burning and snacks and fresh coffee. Tina the manager told us that they have a meeting all day, first of all with just the 'pension' staff, and then the staffs from the other projects joins them. This takes place every two weeks.

We met Christopher who runs the sports project. He has an office at the 'pension'. He told us that when he was offered the job he insisted that he only spends 25% of his time doing admin, as his priority was working with the young people. He explained how the project is run and that he had just been successful in applying for a £10,000 grant for the project. He told us that they never force young people

to take part in sport, but they say they would like them to join in, and they are welcome even if it is only to sit and watch. He explained that they have a five point system. Young people who are only just joining the programme are at stage one, and need a lot of encouragement to attend. Stage two is when young people are interested but still find a lot of excuses not to go. He said he always believes them and tells them that he is sorry they are not able to join them but he hopes they can come next time. Stage three is when young people are getting into sport and are enjoying it but still need encouragement, and he phones and texts them several times to make sure they are attending. Stage four is for young people who are fit and committed but he still phones or texts them to remind them to attend. Stage five is when a young person is totally committed and does not require any reminders as they always turn up.

We cycled to meet a eighteen year old young man who lives in the 'Hoobla'. He phoned him before we left and said he would bring him some breakfast. When we arrived Christopher discovered he had two girls in his room, neither of which were his girlfriend. He told Christopher he had only had a couple of hours sleep and was feeling a bit rough. Christopher was very patient and teased him about this. He told him to have some breakfast and get himself ready and we would wait outside. We went to the gym where we all did a work out, however this was cut short due to M feeling tired. Christopher explained that M had an important course that afternoon and it was more important for him to get some rest for this.

We said goodbye to M then cycled to the Pedagogue seminarian. This was quite an experience to be in a college where everyone was training to be a pedagogue. I could feel a real energy in the atmosphere and all the students seemed happy and enthusiastic. We were introduced to Christopher's colleague who has an office in the building. They explained that the sports project relies heavily on volunteers, and this is the ideal place to recruit as student pedagogues need experience and to be able to add this to their CV. They said it is not easy to get a job when graduating as a pedagogue and there is a lot of competition.





James and Sarah at the little mermaid

We were introduced to Sarah, who is training to be a Pedagogue and is a volunteer with the sports project. Sarah then took us on a sightseeing tour of Copenhagen on our bikes before taking us to another gym where we were meeting a seventeen year old girl from Rymarksvænge, who is training to be a gym instructor. I was struck by how confident this girl was and kept having to remind myself that she was a seventeen year old in care. She had planned a well thought through two hour work out in the gym. She was incredibly motivating and funny, and through this I wanted to please her and pushed myself to my limits. When we finished we chatted to her and she told us that although she was doing this training, she was only going to do it in her spare time and that she was training to be a waiter for which she had to train for two and half years. I was amazed at how positive and focussed she was.

Our last day was spent with a pedagogue from the 'Hoobla'. We cycled to meet a twenty three year old young man who had told her he had not eaten for three days. We were to meet him at the supermarket where she would buy him some groceries. She explained that as he was twenty three he was actually supposed to be with adult services, but that they had tried him with two male social workers from this

service and he refused to work with them, saying he only wanted to work with her as she had supported him for five years. She told us that his mother had died when he was fourteen and he had nobody in his life. She also said that he had ADHD and psychological problems, and found it really difficult to function in society and form relationships. Because of this it had been agreed that she could continue working with him. When we met him he hugged her and shook our hands. He was well presented and polite. Unfortunately he was having a difficult day and although the pedagogue took him around the supermarket, he was unable to select any groceries so left the shop empty handed. He spoke to the pedagogue outside and said goodbye to us. She told us he had said it was not anything to do with us being there but that he was really struggling that day. I was worried that he would still not have any food; the pedagogue said she would speak to him the following day to check how he was. I felt that without her being allowed to continue this work he would probably not survive.

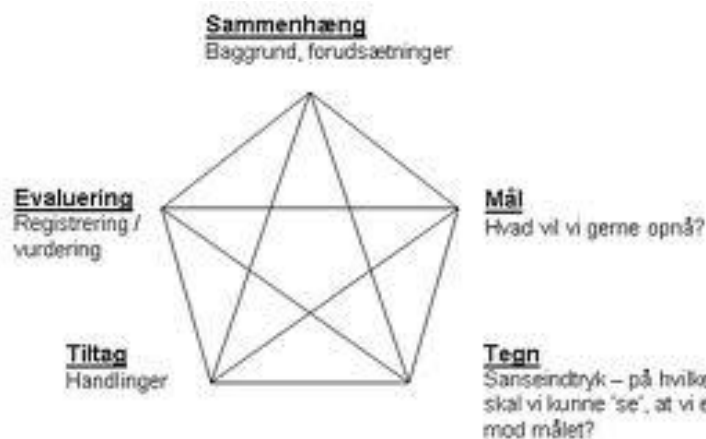
We then visited an eighteen year old young man in his apartment. It was compact but had everything he needed. He told us that he was in a 'Grime' band and showed us a video they had produced and put on 'You tube'. I was amazed how talented he was, he does rapping, and how professional the video was. He told us that they do gigs around Copenhagen and someone from America was interested in signing them. He had a lovely warm character and was quite relaxed when speaking to us. We went for lunch with him and had good conversations about his situation and his passion to be a musician.

By the end of the week I was exhausted, however deeply touched by the young people we had met and their drive and hope for the future. I reflected on the young people of similar ages I worked with in Scotland and how we need to find that spark that is within all of them and nurture and encourage it.

As well as doing the two placements, we met regularly to reflect as a group and discuss our experiences and what we had learned. This was an essential part of the mobility and helped me to understand and make sense of my feelings and emotions, by analysing what I have learned and how I can use these findings in the future, as well as hearing how other people in the group had got on and were feeling, and learning from their reflections.



We learned how to use 'Kolbs reflective learning cycle', to help us to evaluate what we had experienced and learned.



We also learned the 'Smtte Model', to help us to plan how we would take our findings back to our own work places and disseminate this to the people we work with.

As well as reflecting we did many team building type activities, which were great fun and helped to bring us together as a group and created a positive energy between us.



We also did many cultural activities both as a group and individually. The first day of the mobility we were taken as a group for a walk around Copenhagen, looking at the architecture and the shops, and also went on a wonderful boat trip where we saw sights such as the 'Little Mermaid', the opera house, and amazing buildings, sculptures and quaint waterways with low decorative bridges. We also went for several meals as a group, including a meal in Christiania, the alternative hippy area, which was an exciting experience, due to the slightly intimidating entrance to the area with graffiti everywhere and open drug taking, however the restaurant was warm, cosy and inviting, with interesting art work on the walls and the food was delicious with unusual taste combinations that stimulated the palette. I wanted to revisit Christiania the following day, so Gaynor and I did this, visiting other museums on the way, such as 'The museum of Resistance' and 'the Museum of Art and Design'. We also saw the palace with the guards outside, although did not wait to see the change of the guards. Christiania was vibrant with many market stalls selling bohemian jewellery, clothes and cannabis smoking apparatus. It felt strange seeing stands with drugs being sold openly and smelling cannabis in the air, but also felt safe and happy with families with children walking around also. I bought some jewellery for my husband and a poster. I also enjoyed looking around the shops, especially when I discovered the bohemian area around 'Lars Bjorn's street and Sct. Peters Street'. As I had previously worked as a fashion designer I was delighted to find a 'one off design' clothes shop, where I met the designer and looked around her shop which had her work station visibly at the back of the shop with her sewing machine etc in. She designs and makes all the clothes herself which were truly original, and I bought a beautiful coat there which is giving me so much pleasure.

I learned that Denmark is a clean, vibrant, creative place with amazing art, design and architecture wherever you look. There was a calm, unhurried atmosphere and people seemed happy and relaxed. Bikes are the most popular method of transport, and although slightly frightening to begin with, once I got to grips with the system of bike lanes etc. I enjoyed walking and cycling around the city and felt very safe.



Denmark is a democratic country, and this can be seen in the way people are, look and behave. They believe in individuality and are accepting and embrace creative people who think 'outside of the box'. Danish citizens pay a high level of income tax, around 42-63% of their income, however this is not begrudged by the people I spoke to, as they can see the value of this in the social welfare and benefits to society such as quality free health care, free training and grants for students and care systems that people can trust. There have been budget cuts recently however, and changes are being implemented which has been causing a certain amount of unrest and concern.

EVALUATION

Following the mobility, I have already noticed a difference to my own practice. I have learned that although it is necessary to have some structure when working with children and young people it is good to allow things to flow and unfold, through listening to the children, the environment and weather and to be open to diversifying. An example of this is at a small girls group we run; when we met recently it was a beautiful sunny evening. Instead of holding it in the hall we usually use, I suggested going outside. I discussed this with my colleague and asked the children if they would like this. We walked along the river to the park, the girls were picking daffodils on the way, then when we arrived at the park the girls began playing on the swings etc. One girl ran up a steep grassy bank and someone mentioned rolling down it. I encouraged everyone to do this and we all scrambled up the bank then rolled down, including my colleague and I. We were screaming and laughing, some of the girls were concerned about their clothes getting dirty but we said they get washed so not to worry. We then put a blanket on the ground and did the planned activity of making stress balls with flour and balloons, in the sunshine. I encouraged the girls to help each other rather than depending on us. They worked well together and appeared to enjoy this. One girl said she needed the toilet and couldn't wait until we returned to the building. I took her to a corner where there was a bush so she was hidden, but I was still in view of the group. She told me she didn't know how to do it and I realised she hadn't experienced doing the toilet outside before. I modelled how to do this with my trousers on and she copied. She thought this was great and it was a good way of connecting with nature, and feeling free. The girls were allowed freedom to run around and play in the park if they wanted to and thoroughly enjoyed this. I reflected on this with my colleague later and we both agreed it was a very pedagogical approach, although this had progressed naturally rather than being forced and planned.

I was aware that the older young people I met at Rymarksvænge, were so in tune with their emotions, their capabilities, and seemed much focussed on their talents and futures. I have been aware when working with teenagers since returning to work of seeing and encouraging their potential and supporting them with this. I have made a point of letting them know that I am here to help them realise their potential and that I believe in them. This has had a notable effect on their self-esteem and determination to do better. I realise that all children and young people have a spark within them and it is up to us as adults to seek this out and ignite this, but also help them to realise they need to take responsibility for this with our support.

I was impressed with Rymarksvænge approach and structure. I think that the idea of having independent living for those young people who would benefit from this and are able to manage this, but with the support of pedagogues when they need it would work well within Care visions. I am currently supporting a couple of girls who are in the process of moving out of foster care and this provision would be ideal for them. I think that supporting young people to live independently until they are twenty three, rather than eighteen is vital. I was incredibly touched by the pedagogue who has been allowed to continue working with the young man, even though he should be with adult services. A girl I am currently supporting is likely to be moved from her foster care placement, although she is only sixteen, and will possibly be placed in a youth hostel. I do not agree with this practice and will do everything I can to persuade the authorities that she should continue living with her foster carer where she is settled and happy, however if the move does take place I am going to ask if I can continue supporting her and use the example of the young man at Rymarksvænge.

I had no idea that this mobility would have such a profound effect on my life, both personally, professionally and privately. It has been a strange process returning to my life and has taken a lot of time to adjust. We are planning to re-group from Care visions in the near future, which is essential as I am aware we have all had similar experiences and will need to support each other through this process. We will be discussing how we are going to disseminate the information gained from the trip, to our colleagues and what this should include.



Care Visions Group.

This mobility has been life changing for me, I have learned so much about myself as well as learning about social pedagogy and gaining a real insight into what it is about.