

My first opportunity to experience learning about social pedagogy was a training course, run by Alex and Anthony. Alex was a social pedagogue from Germany who had experience with children who have learning disabilities and or complex needs, i.e. Autism, Down's syndrome, Angel man's syndrome and many more. After the training course I felt the pedagogical approach was an area I would like to expand on as I work with children who have learning disabilities and/or complex needs and liked the concepts of letting the children lead and focusing away from power roles.

We were given the opportunity to apply for the EU mobility project. To gain a place we had to do a presentation that showed how we involved the children in creating a recipe for a cookbook that would enable children of all abilities to access and use, regardless of age, ability, disability or communication differences by working with children and understanding how to use, work with and link the concepts of social pedagogy within the process. I did question whether this was right as the task had already been set and social pedagogy suggests going into an activity together as equals. It also suggests using a child centered approach and having full participation of the child in every step, involved in equal terms in all projects and phases from beginning to end.

Although the Common Third concept suggests we need to create a commonly shared situation, becoming a symbol of the relationship between the pedagogue and child – highlighting the use of an activity, to strengthen the bond between social pedagogue and child and develop new skills – it can also be an opportunity to bring a group together sharing an activity by having something in common. It means to be equal, whether that is to be within a group or as individuals, it should be on equal terms, with equal rights and dignity. It also suggests using a child centered approach and having full participation of the child in every step, involved in equal terms in all projects and phases from beginning to end but as the task had already been set, was I entering this process purely to benefit my chance of gaining my place on the social mobility project?

However once entering this task it gave me the opportunity to look and think closely about the children I work with and understand the positions I may be placing them in. It could have been easy, just grouping together the children who could communicate, but the whole aim of the recipe book was making it accessible for all. How can I do this without the children it is intended for? Some children require the use of Picture Exchange Symbols. We need to be careful as all children are at different stages with their P.E.Cs and this could be confusing to some children as they are in the process of now and next. To show some children different signs of foods would confuse them into thinking that is what they were having next (right now). This could bring out negative behavior which could then be classed as challenging. I needed to make sure I would not be putting them in a position that was challenging for them and perceived as challenging by others. All too often some of our children are labeled through no fault of their own; this is largely due to communication barriers. When staff get to know the children they understand their different ways to communicate.

All our children are on different stages with communication: some children are able to communicate verbally, bodily and or pictorially, some write, some are artistic, and all our

children have their own strengths and capabilities. I feel you need to work closely with our children, creating a fun environment to allow them to feel safe, which in turn brings out their individual personalities. This is the only way you will be able to understand and learn the different ways the child is able to communicate. This also builds a relationship with the child and you truly get to know the child rather than the labels that are placed on the child. I understand we have to come out of our comfort zones to be able to progress and learn, lots of fun can be gathered by doing this. I also understand where our children are at and how far I can allow them to come out of their comfort zones before they reach a crisis situation. This is not only distressing for the child; it is also distressing for the other children. This can be expanded on and they can grow further but each step at a time, little by little. Each child was able to shine in their own talents and showed how to work together and as individuals.

Sometimes we can be set in our ways and think we know the children well, until we do things that are maybe different or allow them to take control. We find different things, likes, dislikes and how they have grown over time. We all change, grow and move on to different stages. Doing different activities allows us to learn new things about each other. Sometimes we can be stuck in our ways and have the idea we have always done it this way, or have a feeling of 'it's quicker if I do it' or feeling 'they can't do it' so take over. A lot of the time this is unintentional but looking at the way we work can sometimes be overpowering and leading.

The children decided on making pizza. I felt this was ideal as all children can be involved at whatever stage of making a pizza and this can be increased as they learn 1 step they can progress on to the next. So we began making our pizza at the different stages the individual young person was at. Some children just made the dough and played with it – a lot of our children like to play with cloop (water and corn flour mix). They like the feel and texture, so they just made the dough and played with it, learning to make dough as a fun activity. It just shows that no matter what stage a child is at they can join in with the group activity just doing different things to get the end result.

Although I suggested I felt the task was already set, it just goes to show even with pre paid plans you can still work as equals, bringing the children in from the start. Most of our children have autism; this means they may struggle with communication, building relationships, understanding etc. Many need an opportunity for someone to initiate a task, opening up their chance to participate. Some of our children would find it difficult to initiate play and struggle in knowing where to start. Guidance around different activities opens up opportunities to build relationships. When children are in a fun environment they do learn – I have seen it loads of times. They connect different staff to different situations, More importantly we should be playing together, as happens in most cases and children learn and some start to initiate play, even children who are classed as unable to do so, but still at times you may unintentionally control or lead different situations, and we need to be aware of this. I took my information to the presentation day and successfully gained my place on the EU mobility. After successfully gaining that place I went to Scotland to meet other people going on the mobility and meeting

Charlotte and Gabriel who would be our mentors through the mobility project. I soon found that the people who were attending seemed to be a great group and I was looking forward to the trip.

In preparation for the journey, I also tried learning Danish but must admit I found this very hard as the words are written very different to how you say it. I did do some very basics but that was as far as my intellectual ability would allow; maybe if I had a year or so I may have been a bit more fluent in the language. I also did some baking with not only my own children but did some basic Danish recipes at work: Basic Danish Pancake Balls (Æbleskiver) went down a treat, although never looked like the picture. I also read a fair bit on the culture of Danes and learnt the weather would be very cold, not to arrive late at our placements and to greet women first. We did receive information on what not to do as this would upset the Danes. Although shopping is a nightmare, do not dawdle, they like to go in, know what they are getting and come out, so whatever you do don't hold the queue up as they get easily frustrated. On another note when they realize you are foreigners they do allow for slowness so my advice would be to subtly let them know you are not Danish. I must say though I found the Danes we met on our placements in the restaurants, museums etc to be very friendly and welcoming, so do not rely on everything you read.

I was really looking forward to gaining an insight into how social pedagogy really works in real life, I had my buddy and my placement sorted before I returned from Scotland. Reading up on my placement I found information about the placements that I would like to look in more detail at. My training agreement contained the following information I would like to explore.

1st placement: I would like to see how they work closely with the children in a pedagogical way looking into the 'freedom with responsibility' appreciation and multiplicity values and how it could be used in my unit back home under the constraints of our risk assessments and policies. Using the concept of children being able to take risk and learning understanding through real life barriers, rather than building our children up in a protective environment unable to take some risks that prevents our children being set up for the real world and gain true independence. I like their 'all behaviour is communication' value as many times behaviour is seen as a challenge in our units rather than communication issues.

2nd placement: Again I want to see how different it is to our unit. I aim to get as much information on social pedagogy and look into the culture differences to see what differences are in place. I would like to see how they do risk assessments, if they do and compare them to our system. I would also like to learn and gain an understanding of the true values of social pedagogy and how our children can benefit from a different view point and approach to how I can work.

I feel a lot of polices in England are on the rebound of tragedy, although I agree to a point that we need to keep our children safe. They focus on preventing risk rather than allowing risk to be able to learn and progress into adulthood, thus also taking away the

care aspect as it is seen as safe care, which again I feel our children would benefit from a more caring environment; although it is a caring environment I'm looking into being able to do activities without having to risk asses it first and how we are with our children. Rather than the policy stating it is not the right way, I do feel that to be able to show you care through touch, a simple hug, benefits children as they feel valued and builds on their self esteem knowing someone actually cares.

I think I will learn a lot from the opportunity of the EU Mobility, being a part of working in a truly social pedagogical way. I feel this will give me a greater understanding, and I do learn and understand better when actually doing. I am really looking forward to the equal status of both adult and child and doing things based on the child and letting them lead the way, rather than the adult leading and guiding the child. I would like to get an insight into the social pedagogues and their work with a child from admission to discharge and the differences to our key worker system and social worker roles.

I feel I take a holistic view of the child and aim to try and do what is best for a child in my care. To understand a little about how I work I will give an example of recent events at my place of work.

I had a key child who was classed as very 'challenging'; she was struggling to settle into the unit. I worked closely with her, I am not saying it was easy at first, but I got to know her and we began building our relationship. I took a step back trying to understand when and why her behaviour became 'challenging'. We were asking her to go to places within the unit and mainly this was when most of the issues of her 'challenging' side came out. Her parents had already requested they did not want her using P.E.Cs (which is a picture exchange system, useful for children who may have communication difficulties). Their reasons were because she understood spoken language. I also understand how confused she may be feeling and went back to parents and explained I would like to give the use of P.E.Cs a try due to it being a new place for her and it may help her settle quicker. I also explained I would just use actual photos of items then as we ask her where she is going we show her the photo. I explained to parents I felt she was getting upset as although she understood spoken language she didn't understand the environment and may be getting confused and frustrated, and I felt showing her where she was going may benefit her greatly. The parents allowed me to implement a system of pictures to help her settle into the building, I also explained to her parents this could be an opportunity for this young lady to communicate and choose what she wants to do if she is given the options to be able to communicate her way. I then devised building a schedule of morning, afternoon, evening and night time. I communicated the system and worked closely with staff to pass down and ensure a consistent approach was used with my key child. The system worked well and after supporting this young person she became settled and happy to be in the unit, showing her true mischievous character and was a pleasure to be around. She was also able to use the pictures to tell staff when and where she wanted to go, which reduced the negative behaviour. It is all about taking time out to put yourself in the child's place and thinking about what you may be feeling if you were in this situation. I try to take the true identity of the child and

feel it is best to get to know an individual child rather than the information that is given (although still important) as all children react differently in different situations and with different people – if it will benefit the child I always suggest alternatives if possible. I currently have 11 years experience with working with children who have learning difficulties and disabilities, but while I have many years experience I also still learn new information and different ways of working and doing things and would never say I am an expert in my profession.

I feel I have various skills and experience in working with children who have various needs. I am a firm believer of most behavioural issues our children may express are enlightened when communication differences arise. I feel it is essential to understand how an individual child communicates to be able to break down these barriers, providing them with an opportunity to express themselves, thus reducing what may be classed as 'challenging behaviour'. I also believe children who access our service come for a break and to have fun; this can also be obtained at the same time as children learning where their boundaries lie, but in a fun environment. Children learn through play and by having fun and enjoying their time. Working closely with parents to ensure we are following the same consistent approach they use to ensure the same boundaries are met, yet also being able to discuss other options that may benefit the child. I work on building a relationship with the individual(s) while supporting them with living their lives, promoting independence and wellbeing. Building individual care plans around the individual and their capabilities, ensuring they are safe whilst still getting the most amount of satisfaction from their activities. Whatever the needs of the individual, I feel I support them at a level that is appropriate for their needs, working closely with professionals and families who know the individual well. In my current role as support worker I have worked with young people with varying levels of intellectual ability/disability. This has taught me the importance of monitoring my communications with people and checking for comprehension in order to facilitate understanding. It has also made me aware of reducing the level of 'jargon' and explaining concepts in a way that the person can understand. I feel you have to have a natural caring side to bring the best out in children and make them feel secure and happy in your presence. I also feel that most answers can be found by common sense and taking a step back and looking at each individual child to help them develop. I think this is why social pedagogy for me stood out as, although I feel I understand to a point and work in a kind of pedagogical way, I struggle to put name, psychologist, reflection and analyse situations so was hoping I would be able to understand this in more detail.

My time in Denmark

First day of placement

On arrival at our first placement which was an institution for after school care, looking after 125 children age from 5-10, the first shock for me was the name 'institution'. Back at home that would be a place that held children and adults, locked them away from society in large groups. We have come a long way from the name homes and centres being named with more welcoming names like Meadow view and Felix house and integrated into society, smaller homes. But for the Danish people this is what they were called and it was a happy place to be, nothing like what institutions were like back in the UK.

I rang the bell waiting for someone to come down; my buddy had to ring the pedagogue we were meeting. He came and advised us to just ring the bell and walk in. I must admit I was a bit shocked by this. Back in the UK every place that has children attending would be locked and identities checked. The Danish appear very trusting of people and the security side of things left me feeling the children are vulnerable, but this is probably highlighted from our systems back in the UK, even though due to numerous incidents I feel back in the UK it is needed to protect our young. I also remember when I was little we didn't have to lock our doors at home, but now everything is locked and triple locked. With crime rates increasing and more awareness of many tragedies regarding children, policies have come about to protect children from the above. Does Denmark not have such terrible people in their society? Surely they are around, and my feelings are the children are vulnerable, but I also found it worked here and everyone is relaxed about it; likewise the pedagogue was astounded when it was suggested about the security back in the UK.

We were shown round all different sections of the rooms, computer, dress up, dance and Wii, Lego, arts and crafts and fish room. We were then told not to worry if people just walk in, they live upstairs, so if we saw somebody just walking upstairs that is fine. Again I was shocked that everything was so open, this would never happen in the UK.

A meeting took place to decide the staff picking the children up and which staff had overall responsibility for each section. This was placed on the board for the children to see when they arrived, helping the children understand which adults were working in which section so if they needed an adult they knew which one to ask for that particular day. Once the meeting was over the place was then set up for the children.

Going to pick the children up from school, a short walk from our placement, some of the children were already lined up waiting for pickup. It was suggested as all the children were not there yet so we would go into the school. The pedagogue told the children to wait. We went in. The children in the school were collecting their bags and going either to join a queue or to meet their parents. It was nice seeing young children from the age

of five independently collecting their belongings and then going out of school to whoever was collecting them. Back in the UK parents would go into the class and pick their children up; none of the children would be allowed to leave the school until an adult picked them up. If a different adult was picking them up parents had to inform school that day; if not, the child would not be able to leave the school until a known adult was collecting them. I was informed they have always done it this way, so from a very young age the children were already accustomed to taking responsibility for themselves. It is the way they are brought up in their culture, so it is no different to them, it is the norm.

When we returned to the group they were all still waiting patiently and had formed an orderly queue. I was impressed as our children would not have had that opportunity – adults wouldn't have left them and if they did, they would either be arguing or running around. However, if they had been brought up the way Danish children had, they would probably be forming orderly queues, but our children have never had that opportunity. It got me thinking we kind of molly coddle (overprotect) our children, treating them like they can't as they are too young. Although I doubt we would ever let it happen with all the tragedies that have happened in the past, I still can't get my head around, yes, in a perfect world, but we don't live in a perfect world and there are people out there that just want to harm children. I do also feel that children in Denmark are left vulnerable. But then again it works for Danish culture, but surely they have people like we have in the UK? So I guess our culture on protection is for a reason but have we gone too far, I feel we do overprotect, so our children are brought up unaware of the dangers of society. Again, are we placing them in more danger unable to understand the value of taking risk?

Walking back to the institution the pedagogue spoke in Danish to the children leading at the front. We were coming up to a road, my buddy was at the front with the children and instantly took over – car plus child equals danger. The pedagogue told her to stop and let the children lead, she did this but I could see she was on tender hooks just like I was. Well, we were new in Denmark and every day we nearly got knocked down by a cyclist, so found at the present time that it is very dangerous to cross a road in Denmark. After we crossed the road, led by the young children, it was then explained what the pedagogue had said to the girls leading the group: "if they were at the front they were the leaders and had to make sure everyone got to the institution safely". Maybe I and my buddy should have learnt more Danish, or the pedagogue could have told us what he had said. But then I suppose if he did, we would have missed that feeling of difference on how we raise our children. I will have to keep in the back of my mind the cultural difference and the raising of responsibility with the Danish children and this is how it is done.

Once back inside the institution the children hung up their bags, coats and got into their slippers. They all signed themselves in, then went to where they wanted within the unit. I went to have a wander in the computer station. There were 12 boys and 6 computers, all watching or playing. There was a time sheet and the children had put their names down next to a numbered computer and time slot. Back in the UK kids just take turns

and there are sometimes disagreements. The Danish way the children know who is on the computers and when it is their turn. This I found a good idea and could be used back home if done over a length of time; the children would get used to the system and probably reduce disagreements. I walked around the different sections, Lego children busy making models, Wii adults joining in with the children dancing, dress up children on their own doing their own thing. Arts and crafts, although children and adults were busy making Easter decorations, children could just go and cut with sharp scissors, hacksaws, Stanley knives and heated glue guns. I did want to go and oversee but held back, got to remember the children have been doing things like this from an early age. Back in the UK the children would be using safety scissors, and a risk assessment would have been completed on the individual child and their ability to use them.

I found even though the children are very independent and taught responsibility from a young age they still play like children. One of the things that is said back in the UK is children grow up too fast, giving them responsibility and independence at such a young age would take away their childhood. This I found not to be true: they still used imaginative play and were still children and played as such, they just appeared to have a mutual respect for each other. Two boys ran through the cafe area, and instead of saying 'don't run' the pedagogue suggested it might be better if we walked fast through the cafe area, which the boys did. A good example of changing the way we say things, I know many children would have reacted differently if the saying was 'don't run'; it would have given rise to back chat. Offering the boys an alternative rather than being told what to do made them stop and think and comply. I will take a look at how I word things in different situations.

Going back to the children in the dress up section, they were talking to me and I found it hard to explain I did not understand. They found it amusing my hand gestures were obviously not that good; they were in fits of laughter. I was pulling faces in the mirror to which they copied. Another girl just sat there chatting away to me, and after lots of laughter and giggles I found out her name and I told her mine. She did seek a staff member and was talking to him, he told me she had said "why does she keep talking to me, I can't understand her". It got me thinking about my place of work. I work with children who have learning difficulties and many communicate through picture exchange symbols (P.E.Cs). How must they feel when everyone around them is talking in a room and they don't understand? I found it funny that the children in Denmark were having a laugh at my expense and I was the goldfish in the bowl, which I was glad about as it meant they were relaxed about me being there and didn't feel like I was constantly watching them. But going back to the children I look after I could put myself in their place and I could have felt vulnerable, excluded and feeling of not belonging. That is something I feel I will be more aware of back in my unit.

Going outside into the play area at this placement was another eye opener to me as the gates were not locked. I must admit none of the children attempted to go through them but still at the back of my mind it is other people I am more aware of strangers. Then again that shows the difference in cultures where we are more aware of what could

happen through past experiences and events that have taken place, where the Danish appear as though they are trusting of everybody. The pedagogue and a co worker worked together during a game several kids had joined in and there were two groups, the pedagogue was outside the game and the co-worker was in the game. The pedagogue explained this was in case there was a disagreement, which there was. Instead of stopping the game which sometimes happens, the game continued and the pedagogue was able to take the two children out, who had a disagreement, and the game continued without them. Once the disagreement was discussed between the children they rejoined the game. I found this excellent even though it was simple, as why should the rest of the children have to stop mid way through a game just because someone had a disagreement. This ensured there was no disruption for the others and quickly forgot.

I played football with one of the girls, then she showed me a bit of break dancing and asked me to try. Trust me, I am not the slimmest of people but I did have a go; she liked my attempt, pretty cool I thought so myself. The children then climbed on the football goals and asked if I could do it, straight away my thoughts were I would not be allowed, however I thought back to social pedagogy and allowing children to explore and adults joining in. So I climbed the goal posts. Back home I would be classed as an irresponsible adult and how I had put the children at risk of injury, not to mention the risk assessment that would have prevented that activity going ahead. This I saw as an opportunity to engage with the children and build up a relationship and took it with both barrels. Afterward we came back inside, the girls wanted to show how they do hockey dokey. We danced and they showed me their moves, although out of puff I carried on as the young girls were clearly enjoying themselves. Two lads kept coming in laughing at me then walking out, I just smiled each time eventually they came over and found out each other's names. I let the children come to me rather than me intruding on them, I didn't want to make them feel uncomfortable. Although the institution catered for 125 children you would not have thought there was that many in there and all my time with them they appeared happy and relaxed, kind of like a big family unit, where everyone appeared to respect one another's space.

We got to see the youth club which was for the older children age from 11-23. Again the security struck me: the youth club was attached to a school, yet in the school on the top floor was a dentist surgery, so the general public were entering the school during the day. This again would not happen in the UK. Everyone that enters a school has to show an ID, is not able to walk in through the doors, security cameras are watching, although I can understand why with so many children's murders, many people walking in and harming the children, I feel it is needed, but then I think if someone intentionally wants to harm others they will find a way despite all policies and procedures put in place to protect.

A lot of money is pumped into childcare in Denmark. This is due to high taxes and the government putting value on providing good care for children. We were able to speak to some young girls age 18-23 who used the youth club every Wednesday. They were

very open enjoyed going and glad they had somewhere to meet up. When my children were growing and still now they bring all their friends back to my house to chat. I know where they are and they are not getting in the wrong crowds and ending up in trouble. This is mainly due to our government closing down many youth clubs due to lack of funds. This over the years has caused the young generation to get bored and end up turning to crime and getting in trouble. The young girls we spoke with were all in the process of higher education, some training to be nurses, pedagogues, dentists etc. Discussion was held around the education system: they don't pay for their education, the only qualification they have to pay for is if they want to be a pilot. They also receive money for attending college/university to help pay for books etc. Back in the UK our children have to pay for further education unless parents are on low incomes, which in turn ends up with many dropping out, and if they do successfully gain their qualifications they struggle repaying their student loans. Again in Denmark this is due to the high taxes the public pay, knowing the government place value on providing for their young.

Going to my 2nd placement, this was a home for children who have been moved out of other care homes due to not complying with the rules. On arrival I was a bit shocked as everything was locked and cameras in operation. This was completely the opposite of what I had been witnessing. The younger children have freedom and the older children are secured. It kind of gave an impression the children were trouble and were locked up. Once inside we were met by the owner who was very welcoming, we had a chat over a brew and she described what they do.

The children come in to be assessed for three months, maybe longer depending on the individual child. The pedagogues work closely with parents, social workers, doctors, everyone who is involved with the child. The pedagogue's opinion counts, and they are listened to by all agencies. They work very closely with the child's parents implementing their values and ask for their opinions on discipline. The child would then move either in the unit or into flats just below or into apartments darts around the area as they get older 18-23. These apartments allow the young adults to live independently yet still have the option for support close by if needed. Back in the UK children are classed as adults when they reach 18 years and are then out of the system to fend for themselves. This I feel needs to be looked at in the UK. As many of our young adults go off the rails into a life of crime, I feel if we had a system that still supported our young adults 18-25 this would help in reducing the above. The children do have free access out of the institution but have to buzz to get back in. I didn't get to the bottom of why it was locked up, as once inside you forgot that was the case.

Back at my second placement I felt I didn't want to intrude on the children as they had had different workers last week and I felt at the end of the day this is their home and this is the second week they have had strangers coming in. I spoke with the owner and asked what the kids liked doing, they apparently love chocolate cake. I decided I would do some baking and hope the children would join me in the kitchen. Going shopping in Denmark was another story. They do not use self raising flour, so I had to use baking powder. I was just hoping the cake would rise. None of the children joined me but that

did not concern me. I left the cake for all and finished for the day. That night I downloaded some recipes and found the correct measures of baking powder to use instead of self raising flour. I was going to do chocolate brownies, something I had never made before. On our return to the placement my buddy went talking to a social worker and I busied myself in the kitchen, children kept popping in and out and spoke, one young girl had the flu so was understandably not up for major discussions. That evening a few of the children joined us for dinner; we found the reason some did not want to join us was because they struggled with English. I felt bad because that was a barrier if I had taken more time to learn Danish we could have overcome. However we were still able to laugh and joke. I felt the children were well supported and had that family atmosphere. The children had brilliant relationships with the adults, kind of like aunt and uncle. The adults were very welcoming also and you could see they loved the job they were doing and it showed they were there for the children. I was hoping this is how it is back in the UK in the mainstream units. It is how I would presume it is. Although I can't comment much further as I don't work in these units.

Spending time with my buddy was another eye opener; I had the pleasure of budding up with a very clever and informative lady. She had experience in all fields of childcare, from working with children, social worker and training foster carers, so she had a wealth of information to share. I learnt a lot from her and valued my time with her; she also taught me a lot about myself – we were pretty similar in a way. I am aware that I do struggle to speak up in large groups, however, I am working on this and also aware of my weakness, my buddy had the same issues. I did feel a bit guilty as I didn't take the time to truly make use of the reflective days and the evenings in the main flat to discuss the day's events. During my time in Denmark I was also informed I needed to have more confidence in myself through my buddy as she suggested I do hold valued opinions and I underestimate my abilities and put myself down. We had a lot of discussion on our way to and returning from our placements, so we kind of reflected on our walks. The experience was not only a way to learn about differences in working with children, it was also a way to learn more about myself as an individual. Again this is something I am now aware of and need to work on. We all have strengths and weaknesses; the problem occurs when we feel we have no weakness, what can we improve on? Recently on my return from Denmark I went on a course for work and role play was offered. I actually held my hand up to do it. Whether this was to do with the reflective days and realising at the end of it nobody puts you down and they take on board things you have to say in whichever way you say it, or because my buddy gave me valuable feedback I don't know but it is confidence I was lacking prior to my journey. I hope this will carry on thanks to my experience with the group and my buddy.

Conclusion

I feel the staff pedagogues and trainers all who I have met on my placements treat all children with respect and are aware of individuality and take an overview of their social, physical and emotional impact of their lives and how these may impact on their wellbeing. Staff members develop strong relationships with each individual child, trying

to piece together what they have missed in their social upbringing, helping the children build up their self esteem and provide opportunities to develop responsibilities for themselves, helping to build relationships using everyday activities, cooking, outings, cleaning and homework. Their living areas are based around “normal” home life and appear to adopt a friendly family atmosphere. It appears to be a system of fitting the unit around the child and taking an individual child approach rather than, like in the UK, fitting the child into the unit, i.e. this is how we do it, this is what we have, we don't do that here etc.

I do also feel it is cultural based, children learn respect and responsibility from a young age, where in the UK we tend to molly coddle our young, i.e. scissors, children in Denmark have learnt how to use them at a very early age and are rarely hurt, yet back in the UK our young use safety scissors and by the time they become of an age to use 'normal' scissors they end up hurting themselves as they have never learnt they are sharp and can be dangerous, so are we setting our kids up to fail from a young age? If from an early age they had the opportunity to use 'normal' scissors they would be aware of the dangers.

Although in the UK where I work we do run a key worker system, which I feel is similar to the pedagogic model. We work closely with parents, social workers, school and any professional involved with the child; all information is gathered to take a holistic view of the child, but our voice is rarely heard as we don't have the respect from other professional to make our views count on the child. Would gaining an education as a social pedagogue change their views as community support officer does not come with that valued role?

There have been a lot of policies in the UK highlighting the need for multi-agency working. To name a few, the 2003 Every Child Matters described a vision of a multi-agency integrative approach to children's care and improving and reforming services to children and young people and families through the five outcomes, emphasising services for children, child welfare, childcare education and health should all work closely together; the Children's Act and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasise listening to children, children to be seen as people in their own right rather than problems to be managed; the Valuing People white paper 2001 highlights the need for multi-agency working using a holistic approach and using person centred practice highlighting the need to change the service to fit the child rather than changing the child to fit in with the service which is generally what happens. So we have policies in place that underpin social pedagogue values, although, like you can see, this is just a few and have been around a while – I am just starting to see change with multi- agency working. In Denmark all people who have involvement with the child appear to work closely together and no one feels the need to bring in more hierarchy, everyone values each person's opinion, and the pedagogues – the ones with the closest relationship, who work closely with the child and their parents – their opinion counts and they are listened to. I feel that needs to happen more in the UK. Sometimes it is the professionals that make decisions over a child that may not have seen them or

only seen them once in a year – rather than the people that work closely with the child, the parents and care workers who see the children often and the child making these important decisions that affect their lives.

Although I feel you need to have that caring role inside you, you can't learn that and treat the children with respect and build relationships by having fun and getting to know the individual child, which I feel is the majority in Denmark, where back in the UK some staff I have worked with talk the talk, but lack that caring quality. I also don't feel that would be corrected from having to have an education to be able to work with children, or in the care setting as I also know many social workers without that caring and understanding nature.

The way the Danish rethink the wording they use I will definitely take back i.e. the boys running through the cafe area and a member of staff said to them "you can walk fast if you want to"; this made the children stop and think and choose to walk through the dining area. This is not challenging to them but make them think of their actions and thus change their behaviour. Where if he had said stop running it may have been a different story, so I feel the way we talk to children can be challenging at times and will make me more aware of my actions.

I found the children were very responsible, independent and knew their routines. They seem to enjoy the placements, yet I still feel this is how the children are brought up being independent yet still being allowed to be children growing by being allowed to take risks and learning from them risks. This opens up my eyes to how much we molly coddle our children doing everything for them because we feel they are not capable, yet if like the Danes we brought our kids up learning about doing it for themselves it would become natural and they would know no difference. I do feel you can still work within the remit of the social pedagogical values, treating all with respect and as equals although I do not feel in the UK we could go back to open door units as then our children would be unsafe. Although it appears to work in Denmark but is this because it is a smaller place, everyone appears to respect each other. I know one thing; they leave their bikes outside shops with their shopping still on them, while they go into a different shop. Back in the UK not only would their shopping have disappeared but their bike too. I think even if we utilised the Danish system of responsibility which would take years to take into effect I doubt in the UK crime rates would drop and all children would be safe. So in a way I understand that policies are needed to protect our children but it still makes me wonder how come it is so safe in Denmark. My last thoughts I will be taking back is not making people change, and having the opinion of they don't want to. I will be giving different options for them to think about and make the change for themselves.