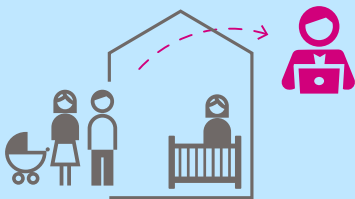
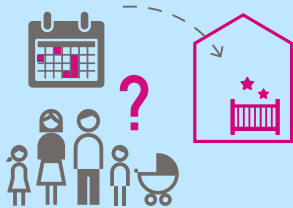
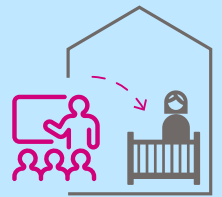


FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR UPSCALING

**Providing Access to Childcare
and Employment (PACE)**



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Based on research and collaboration with all PACE project partners and with Hilde Decorte from City of Turnhout and An Raes, Wendy Eerdeken, from Artevelde University of Applied Sciences in particular.

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INTRO

1. PACE is an activation project

Job creation and tackling (long-term) unemployment are crucial targets for the European Union and its member states. Paid employment is increasingly valued as the highway towards full participation in society and access to the labour market is seen as a crucial way to create a fair and well-functioning society. In some policy documents, employment is described or presented as a ‘right’. For instance, the active inclusion policy aims towards full participation of all citizens, notably the most disadvantaged and proposes employment as a way out of poverty, tackling social exclusion etc. Thus, employment is considered as a right that we should try to achieve for all, by tackling structural barriers and providing support to those who need it¹. Several if not all Member States have shown great enthusiasm for a policy that is based on the idea that everyone should work. In all countries the importance of activation policies is understood, in line with EU policy.

Activation should seek to support and incentivize job search and job finding; as well as productive participation in society and self-sufficiency by reducing dependency on public support.²

Activation policy can take different forms: in pursuit of the same goals, policymakers can draw on a range of tools including (conditional) income support, financial incentives and active labour market programmes, and childcare is at the heart of activation programs.³

1.1 Why “combining childcare and work” is worth an INTERREG project⁴

Childcare is a main barrier to employment. If there is a lack of childcare that is available on short term, parents moving from welfare into work cannot follow trainings, do job interviews, or start working. Expensive childcare or rigid funding schemes make it difficult for families with low incomes to move into work, or even start considering a trajectory into work.

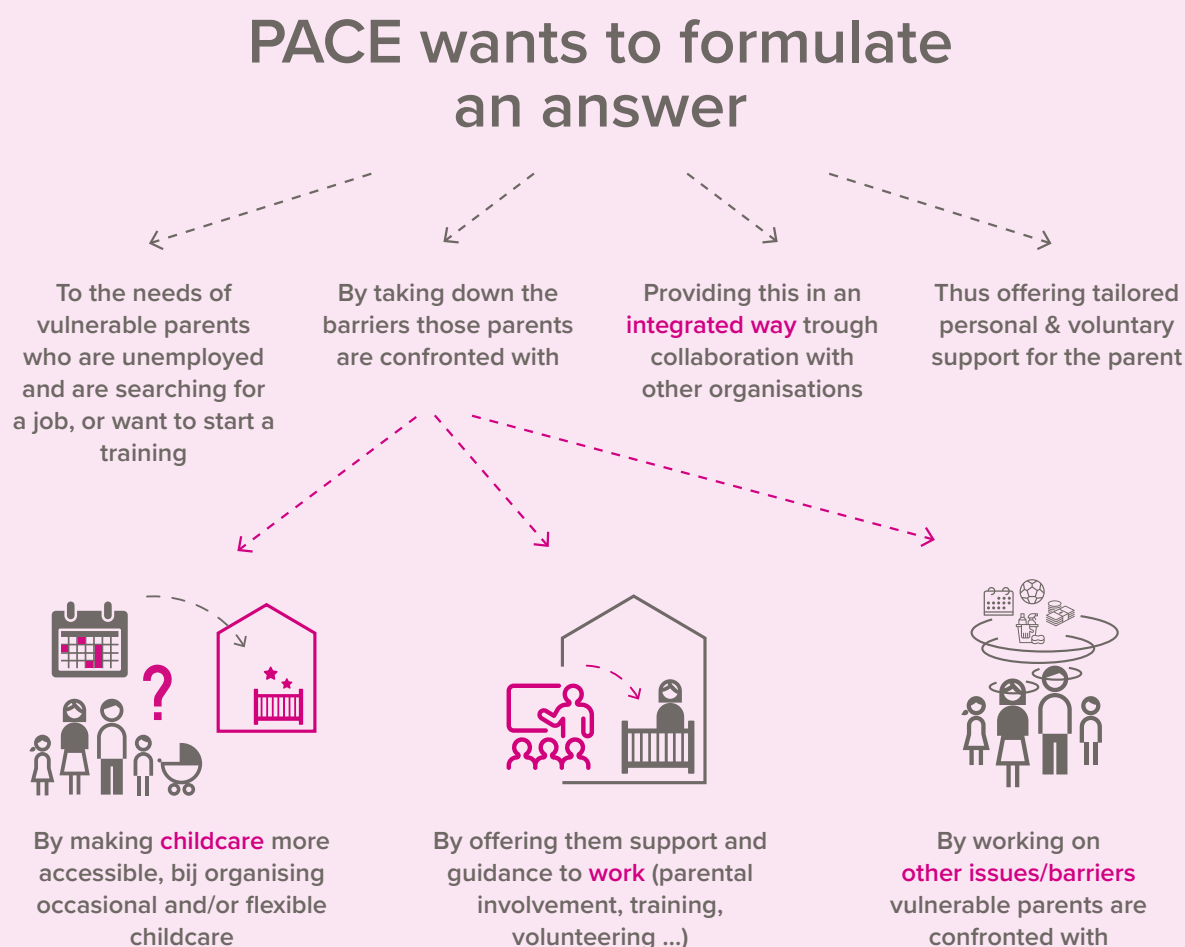
On the other hand, **unemployment can also be a barrier to childcare.** Being employed gives prioritised access to childcare and childcare can be more expensive if you do not work (enough). The **combination of care and employment duties** is challenging for most families, let alone for vulnerable families. Still, making the combination between care and employment it is mainly their puzzle to solve while having limited understanding of the systems.

1.2 Working in an integrated way increases accessibility

Vulnerable families with children experience multiple needs in different life domains, and the fragmentation of existing services can be problematic.⁵ It is therefore essential to join forces to better respond collectively to the complex issues at stake. By collaborating with services that support families in reducing existing barriers, childcare providers and other organisations reach more parents and children from these vulnerable groups.⁶ Integrated working also offers advantages for professionals and organisations, providing they get the support and training to do so.

1.3 PACE Method

Providing accessible childcare can improve chances of vulnerable parents in general and on the labour market. With PACE we want to explore organising occasional and/or flexible childcare. Work is demanding more and more flexibility from parents. The labour market does not offer flexibility in return to parents in low paid employment, and childcare remains oriented towards stability and continuity. If the right jobs are a problem, the same can be said for the right accessible support or guidance towards employment. As we are working with vulnerable parents, we have to be aware of their difficult living reality, where they face multi problems which will stand in the way of work and have to be tackled.



2. A Feasibility Study for upscaling

As the tests in PACE are performed in living lab environments, they sometimes do not need to follow all regulations of regular childcare. Also, some aspects of the tested method cannot be implemented in another region of the 2 Seas areas because of different local regulations.

Regulation can stimulate innovation or can be a barrier. Therefore, it is certainly helpful to uncover the legal barriers as well as the inconsistencies between goals, capabilities, and implementation at different levels.

A feasibility study on this is needed to allow largest possible upscaling of the tested methods.

Throughout the duration of the project, the PACE officers of the different participating partners in the 4 countries have continuously indicated where they encountered organisational and legal barriers to apply the PACE method(s).

Initially, these thresholds were mapped through desk (legal) research, results were exchanged through which it also became clear to the partners what might be cross-border upscalable and what might not, and why. It became clear that these thresholds were not only legal but were interrelated with social norms and organisational thresholds.

This information was discussed in focus groups of policymakers and childcare institutes from different policy levels in the 4 countries.

We conducted two focus groups in each country – so eight in total. Because the PACE Project has a double goal, Providing Access to Childcare and Employment, and because one is a barrier to the other, the ‘focus’ of the first series of focus groups was on Occasional and Flexible Childcare (in view of activation), while the second series emphasised on Activation (in connection with childcare).

FOCUS GROUPS ON OCCASIONAL AND FLEXIBLE CHILDCARE

4th April 2019	FG the Hague	participants from: Kinderdagverblijf Chouchou, gemeente Den Haag, Stichting Yasmin, Boink, GGD Den Haag
17th May 2019	FG Mechelen	participants from: Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, VVSG, Partena kinderopvang VZW, Kinderrechtencommissariaat, Vlaams Welzijnsverbond, ACV, UNIZO, VDAB, Kind & Gezin
22nd May 2019	FG London	participants from: DWP, The Education People, BHCC, Childcare Works Hemsall's, Coram Family and Childcare, PACEY
12th June 2019	FG France	participants from: Département du Nors, CAPSO, CAF St Omer, Pôle Emploi Longuenesse

FOCUS GROUPS ON ACTIVATION

7th Novembre 2019	FG London	participants from: PACEY, Coram Family and Childcare, Childcare Works Hemsall's, The Education People, Christchurch Nursery, Culverstone pre-school –Kent, Bright Beginnings – Kent, DWP
22nd Novembre 2019	FG Ghent	participants from: UNIZO, POD maatschappelijke integratie, PARTENA Kinderopvang vzw, Vlaams Welzijnsverbond, VDAB, Kind & Gezin, OCMW Gent, de Werkplekarchitecten, Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, Stad Gent, VVSG
29th Novembre 2019	FG France	participants from: Pôle Emploi Wattrelos, AADCMO St Omer, Mission Locale-Wattrelos, Ville de Boulogne-sur-Mer, Centre Social Connecté - Saint Martin Boulogne, Centre Social Roger Salengro - Armentières, Mission Locale - St Omer
5th March 2020	FG The Hague	participants from: Ikan Consultancy, Gemeente Den Haag, PeP, Werkoffensief 500+

With the focus groups we were keen to get feedback on the PACE methods/experiments. In what way could they be seen as upscalable? What works and could work elsewhere? What could the policymakers see as real opportunities? How could PACE methods be made sustainable? What needs to change?

This feasibility study reflects our research and especially the discussions, ideas and conclusions generated in the focus groups.

Finally, we make some concrete policy recommendations based on this study.

Since March 2020, all 4 PACE countries were hit with the COVID 19 pandemic, and of course this had especially consequences for childcare and our PACE project in general. Some of these consequences may have a lasting impact. Therefore, we present a small Corona epilogue.

In this book, we mainly speak of Flanders, not Belgium, because the project only ran in the Dutch-speaking northern part of the country and the situation in childcare differs between Flanders and the other parts of Belgium. For similar reasons, we mainly mention England instead of the United Kingdom, where childcare is concerned.

Official agencies – the nature of which differs from country to country – are mentioned at various points in the book. A list of these agencies in Flanders, England, France and the Netherlands and their precise functions can be found at the back of the book.

CONTEXT

3. Attitudes on motherhood & work

Throughout the PACE project, by talking with parents and staff on study visits, we noticed that social norms on parenthood (motherhood) are very important. If parents are expected to stay at home, this social norm becomes a barrier to childcare and work.

The labour market has its own demands. The demand -in all four country's- for a large increase of the labour market participation rate pushes every 'able bodied' man and woman into employment. Should young parents be forced into work, based on a discourse of duties and sanctions? Or is there another way?

Attitudes towards motherhood and women with young children at work was a heavily discussed topic on the different focus groups.

The presence of (small) children is an important determinant of a woman's decision to participate in the labour market. The effect of parenthood is reflected in the employment rate of women with children under the age of 6⁷, which is significantly lower than that of their peers without children in the UK and France. In both these PACE countries maternity seems to have the greatest impact on labour performance. The employment rate of this category women in the EU are on average more than 8 percentage points lower than the employment of women without children. In particular, the presence of children under the age of three has the most severe negative impact on the work opportunity.⁸

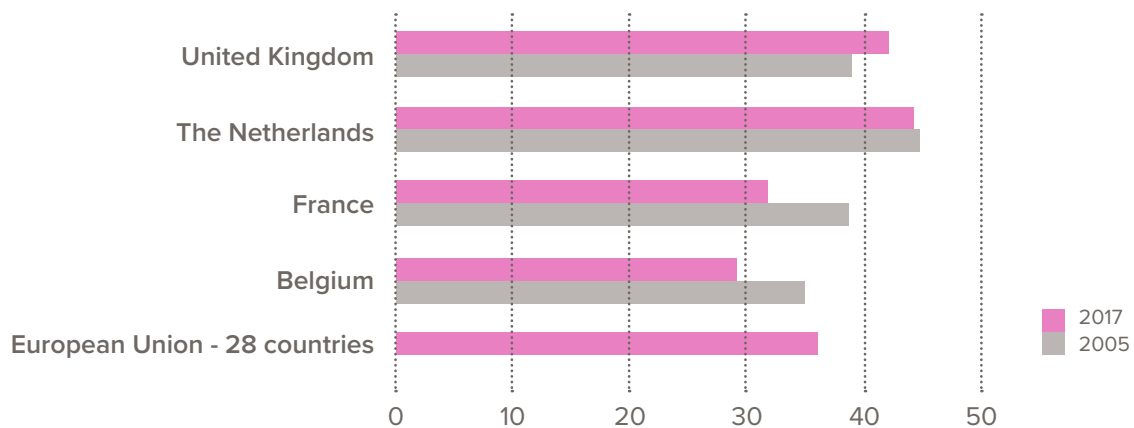
The employment rate for low-skilled young mothers in other similar situations is sadly low, especially as we see that the employment rate here has decreased over the years, except for the UK. Belgium shows a severe decline in employment rate. The lack of low-skilled jobs will be a reason for this, as well as the low wages which result in a lack of financial incentive to work (if childcare costs will be charged).

Part-time work is a strategy for mothers to be able to partially take care of their children themselves. Part-time work for women increases with the arrival of children in most countries, but it is recognisably 'the' way to reconcile work and family life in the UK, and the Netherlands.⁹ Moreover, in recent years we have seen changes in the structure of employment, a change away from sustainable employment and towards 'precarious jobs', especially in the UK and the Netherlands. Such jobs increase the risk of (child) poverty.

The motherhood culture is a big barrier that is often financially translated: the woman is expected to stay at home for the children and it is often assumed that when a woman works, her wages are 'only' used to pay for the childcare. So, she had better stay home as a mother...The question is, of course, what is cause and what is effect?

EMPLOYMENT RATE LOW SKILLED WOMEN 20-49 WITH CHILD 0-6 Y

Source: Eurostat LFS (lfst_hheredch&lang)¹¹⁶



There is also a large group that simply does not want childcare or does not know what the possibilities are. The motherhood culture is not only determined by the financial. The ways parents feel about any childcare, especially occasional care, differ: some parents and professionals think that mothers should stay with their children, some parents think 2-year-old children are too young to go to childcare. This can be culturally determined – even with lots of efforts and encouragement- it has not made a big difference. There is also a cultural expectation in terms of women not working as they need to stay at home with the children. This involves a lot of guilt but also social pressure from friends and family. This can also hinder women in their integration.

The participants in both French focus groups agreed that parental actions were needed on a regional level, to work on parental visions on work and childcare. A lot of mothers still think they have to stay home. It takes a long time to engage with moms. When there is an obligation, mothers agree to have their child cared for, and the family understands this, because there is an obligation. The idea of putting a child in day care when you're unemployed is still frowned upon.

Motherhood culture does not only exist with the parent but is equally persistent in the staff. More on this and the impact on trust towards childcare, in chapters 15 and 16.

4. Poverty gap

Do parents (mothers) make trade-offs to go back to work? Of course, work has to pay, but many people indicate that the lack of clarity about what they are going to get out of work is more of a threshold than the actual amount (if it is not too large). Moreover, it is difficult to find an answer to the question of financial comparison because the regulations are very complex and opaque. The total cost must be considered: mobility, childcare, social security contributions that disappear... so very complex but important to know for parents. That is why PACE Partner Brighton & Hove provides a service to look at the benefits of working. Doing benefit calculations and sorting out problems with current benefits. This builds trust and helps parents to move forward and improves their relationship with the Job Centre.

Of course, also other factors matter e.g. having social contacts counts, not only talking to a child all day long, ... so there is a trade-off.

5. Is everybody to be activated? Or do we make exceptions?

Does being a carer for a small child, say under 3-4 years of age, exempt a person from having to be available for work? Is this parent entitled to income support?

We see that there are marked differences between countries in legal conditions linked to the care of small children, and thus in the treatment of young unemployed mothers as well. First women started to work and then welfare states acted upon care-related demands, and some welfare states were more responsive than others. Broader cultural values regarding (maternal) employment matter as well. Work-family policies and cultural contexts are thus interrelated.¹⁰

In France and Belgium no exceptions are made: every person that applies for an unemployment benefit or social assistance support must be (fulltime) available to work, even when there is a small infant to be cared for.

In Belgium it is even made explicit that the care for children can never be an argument for not having to accept an employment, although the broader context, the complexity of one's situation can be considered. The net earnings in the new job, minus the travel expenses, should not be smaller than the unemployment benefits, but the cost of childcare is not considered! A job offer with working hours between 20 pm and 6 am will be considered inappropriate, but there are some major exceptions.

In France, the personal and family situation of the job seeker is noted in the PPAE (*projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi*) - a PDP to access employment at Pôle Emploi, the French Public Employment Service. It helps to define the scope of the job search and its evolution. For example, jobs whose hardship is incompatible with the job seeker's

health situation, or jobs whose hours do not allow a single parent to look after or have looked after their child, may be excluded from the scope of the job search.¹¹

In the Netherlands, the view remains that mothers stay home for the care of small children or work part-time. A single parent who has the full care of a child up to the age of five years will be granted exemption from the employment obligation, on his request.¹² During this period, the person in question is obliged to undergo training. This is set to get people back to work as soon as possible after that period. E.g. Someone with care responsibilities can request exemption from the obligation to perform a 'Tegenprestatie' (mandatory voluntary work).

In the UK, there have been significant changes throughout the PACE project. At the start of the project in 2016, lead carers did not have to be available for work when caring for children until the youngest child was 5 years old. This has changed. Now, lead carers have to attend work-focussed interviews with a work coach when the child is one. When the child is aged 2, the parent will be placed in the 'work preparation' group: he/she won't be expected to look or apply for a job but she will be expected to take part in activities to improve his/her chances of getting a job in the future. When the child is three, parents are expected to work (earn) 16h at minimum wage rate or spend 16 hours a week looking for work.¹³ Childcare expenses¹⁴ that would result from the fact of starting to work and are unreasonably high in relation to the expected income, should be considered as a good reason for not having to accept work.

However, since Universal Credit and the benefit cap reality is quite different for parents that depend on Universal Credit and see their income 'capped'. They do not have a choice about working – they have to work. If parents do not work, they have no income: the government thinks they should be at home with their children. But ... they are on the benefit cap so in fact they are forced to work.¹⁵

6. Employment policies are based on conditionality

Instead of considering (sustainable) paid work as a right that is not easily accessible for everyone, most member states seem to consider being in paid work as responsibility, a duty rather than a right. Focus will be put more on sanctioning those who do not (want to?) work rather than on supporting people towards work.

In some Members State policies, we see a clear push towards paid work and welfare conditionality with welfare reforms being aimed at 'getting people off benefits and into work'.¹⁶ The vision behind this welfare conditionality is that welfare systems should function not as much as a protection for individuals against the risks ... but rather as a 'lever for changing behaviour'.¹⁷

Universal Credit was introduced in the UK during the PACE project. The idea of this scheme is that people receive all their benefits at once. They get one fixed sum once a month, for all benefits they are entitled to. The sum replaces six previous allowances and the scheme is combined with a Benefit Cap which is a limit to the total amount of

benefits that people of working-age can receive. If someone is claiming Universal Credit and is not earning at least the amount one would get for 16 hours a week at national minimum wage, the total benefit of that person will be ‘capped’. At the introduction of the scheme in 2017, it was believed that this motivates people into work because most families will *be better off in work than in unemployment*. However, research shows that the system brings more harm than good.¹⁸

The French government decided to create by law in 2020 a *Revenu Universel d’Activité* (universal income of employment), which merges as many benefits as possible. It mentions *Activity* because it is indeed a question of allowing a return to employment, to activity, and therefore it entails, in addition to the allowance, additional rights and duties.¹⁹ Most participants in the focus group do not feel comfortable with those guiding principles: they fear that more emphasis will be placed on duty than on rights in this type of injunction. Others feel this could be a fairer system for everyone because there will be no difference between allowances anymore and it simplifies what is too complex for both parents and professionals.

The Dutch *Participatiewet* is felt as being harsh by the participants of the Dutch focus group. Too many obligations and tasks are placed on welfare recipients with the result that sometimes claimants drop out. Sanctions often also have financial consequences that make it even more difficult to get to work. Rewarding good behaviour might be a better idea, sanctioning often has the opposite effect. If you want to help people, you need a relationship of trust, which you cannot achieve with sanctions.

There is a broader range of welfare domains in which conditionality is being applied, such as the domain of social housing, homelessness and child protection and welfare.. For instance, in Flanders, one of the conditions for renting social housing is that within 1 year after the start of the tenancy agreement, the tenant will have to prove that he has reached language level A1 for Dutch.²⁰ If the exam is not passed, the tenant gets fined.

7. Employment policies need to change

To increase the labour participation rate, the ambition is to broaden the current activation policy in Flanders. In addition to the unemployed, many other groups of inactive people should be reached, stimulated, and encouraged to take up work from now on. These include, for example housewives/men, former self-employed disabled persons and so on. The Flemish social partners stated (SERV) in their ‘Everyone on board’ agreement²¹ that addressing groups other than the unemployed can be an answer to the problems of tightness and mismatch in skills on the labour market. E.g. in Brussels, an attempt is made to give people without legal residence access to certain (active) vocational training courses, in order to fill in certain bottleneck professions.

A large part of these groups does not receive benefits, have no obligation to work or apply for jobs, and can therefore not be sanctioned. The question remains whether the VDAB will be ready to support parents and communicate in another way. This commu-

nication dilemma of the Public Employment Service was also mentioned in the Flemish Focus Group where someone remarked that now many ‘difficult-to-reach’ people consciously choose not to be registered with the VDAB, simply because they are afraid of all those obligations and are not allowed to do what they choose to do. They are prepared to work or to follow training courses, but they say: “I join the VDAB and something is forced upon me that doesn’t suit me”. VDAB also gets these signals because their way of communicating is based on rights and obligations.

Now the VDAB still provides services based on a category. As a benefit recipient you will be placed in a priority category. This means that the VDAB puts most of its energy into the benefit recipients. The service to inactive people or people who register voluntarily or come from another scheme, is insufficiently developed. It was decided that it is no longer the status or the benefit system, but skills and distance from the labour market that determine whether you get access to services.

However, there are also such things as the rights and obligations associated with a certain status. Someone who chooses to be a housewife without a claim to benefits, has no duties, and cannot be sanctioned. An unemployed person has other duties and rights than a social assistance receiver. Treating everyone equally based on competencies sounds fair, but they are not equal, there is a big difference in rights, duties, and possible consequences. And meeting the same requirements in terms of skills and distance, but still being treated differently also raises concerns.²² The participating partner in the focus group from the VDAB indicates that control will be tightened, so it is an ‘and-and story’.

In the future, the accessibility of services would be determined based solely on someone’s *distance from work* and by his competencies. This profile would be used to estimate the time needed to get out of unemployment and the kind of trajectory that you need to enhance your employability.²³ But there is only one (shortest) route described, and this route leads to the labour market? In the Flemish focus group, there was some resistance to this exclusively linking individual competencies with the labour market.

If I have a woman with a migration background who has 7 children. How do I serve society best? By forcing her to go cleaning? or by giving her chances to improve her language (and other) skills so that she can better guide her children? So, a social activation trajectory might be a better idea? (*Participant Flemish Focus Group on Activation*)

The Flemish example above already highlights the fact that *distance to the labour market*, or lack of employability, is primarily regarded in terms of competences to work. It does not take into consideration other barriers²⁴ a vulnerable parent is confronted with when looking for a job. On the one hand, not thinking in terms of predefined target groups offers the possibility of a more holistic approach and individual tailoring. This way, an employment counsellor could take much more into consideration the barriers that a job seeker is faced with. On the other hand, the profiling model²⁵ that the Flemish VDAB developed based on historical input, concentrates on:

- Socio-economic characteristics of the jobseeker (level of education, age, gender, place of residence, knowledge of Dutch, ...).
- Labour market history (previous unemployment, previous jobs, sector)

- Behaviour of the jobseeker (information about the online click behaviour on the VDAB website, *(very limited) assessment by the VDAB of peripheral problems*)
- Local labour market (bottlenecks, unemployment rate)

The same observation can be made for the *Werkverkenner*, the Dutch unemployment profiling model.²⁶ Here the jobseeker is also asked questions about whether he is open to work in atypical time schedules.

However, not being able to work or to find a job is often the result of having other problems and these need to be tackled (first). A tailored approach is both necessary and desirable. If, for example, access to affordable childcare is the threshold to get started, then you must do something about it and not just threaten it with sanctions. It is often just a number of shortcomings in policy that make people disappear from the labour market. All policymakers in the different focus groups agreed on this principle.

In the Netherlands budget surplus because fewer benefits are paid out (Participation Act), should be invested in supporting vulnerable people tackling their issues like addiction, debt, domestic violence, or psychological problems. Too little attention is paid to this now.

The focus is too one-sided on helping people with a short distance to the labour market to get a job. That is easier to get results. One of the reasons is that people, who are mostly motivated to go (back) into work, do not get the support they need to find employment. They are left to 'do it yourself' online job searching and hover in and out of work.²⁷

Poverty-related thresholds and multi-problems are an integral part of the 'distance to the labour market' and should be fully taken into account. If a public employment service ignores this, the 'reasonable duration of unemployment' is not realistically estimated, which again leads immediately to culpabilisation. And, if these issues are not fully recognised as being of underlying importance, there is also a risk that the necessary actions will not be proposed.

8. Employers expect too much flexibility and childcare is becoming more rigid

Employers expect too much flexibility and childcare is becoming more rigid. Government should link policy on work and on childcare and put in support on the combination. (*JCP Kent, 2018*)

Participants in the focus groups think this a difficult proposition.

From the childcare point of view, there are limits to flexibility. The rhythm of the child, the well-being of the child, make it is necessary to have a quality framework. The need for attachment for children and the fact that children need a fixed structure is important and means that we cannot start hopping and dropping children, because that will have consequences in the long run.

Does the government need to make the link between work and childcare and support the possibility of working and having small children at the same time? Few participants feel the government cannot find a solution to everything. Parents also have to adapt to certain ways of functioning. But most attending policymakers think it important that the government limits opening hours of childcare providers. Without any limits, we will end up with an extremely flexible labour market and a childcare setting that must be very flexible as well, consequently. This will create attachment problems in children, who will have problems in finding a job because they also have problems, etc.

Advocacy groups on poverty tell us they are against extending opening hours of childcare settings because this, in turn, could lead to flexible working hours being regarded as an appropriate employment given that parents have childcare facilities at their disposal. Accessibility of flexible childcare can be a reason for further flexibilization of work.

Sectors where more flexibility is required are mainly the sectors where people with a low level of education end up e.g. hospitality industry, sales, security, ... One of the sectors involved is the distribution/sales sector. Pressure of foreign competition provoked in Flanders quite a debate on legislation on night work, summer work, etc. in the previous legislature to make working conditions more flexible. Employers are asking for this under pressure from citizens, who state they would like to go shopping late in the evening. The question is whether consumers can look beyond their own immediate interests and see what consequences this has for the employees' working conditions, childcare needs, etc ... if these questions were put to them.

When extending opening hours in childcare, occupancy is sometimes particularly low. For example, childcare that is sometimes open until 8pm only to accommodate 1 child. This did not pay, and the question was raised if this was really necessary. In Flanders the Action Plan Flexible and Occasional Childcare in 2007 formulated 8 actions. About 10 years later several actions ceased to exist, amongst others the 'shift places' from 6am to 10pm. This is also a way to show that this is not the future.

Maybe we can expect some activation from employers as well?

ROLE OF (LOCAL) AUTHORITY

9. Importance of direct public intervention

Structural constraints in childcare provision matter everywhere and tend to limit the uptake of childcare, especially for vulnerable families. This means that more investment in the provision of childcare services is necessary to achieve ambitious policy goals.²⁸ Research shows that private childcare providers settle less in vulnerable neighbourhoods, so fewer childcare places are available in and for those disadvantaged communities.²⁹

From the economic function of childcare, it is logical that childcare follows the women employed, and that may explain why there are more places in areas with higher incomes. However, from the social function of childcare it is important that there are enough places available in the proximity of where vulnerable and unemployed families live.³⁰

This is confirmed by the Project partners and by the policymakers who participated in the focus groups, especially in the Netherlands and the UK, where childcare is essentially provided by the market, and where the lack of public initiative has its consequences.

In the UK, the childcare market has grown enormously over the past 20 years. The evidence suggests that there are two distinct childcare markets in operation. More affluent areas are mainly served by private providers and services are typically shaped by market forces. Deprived areas are reliant on government intervention and children's centres to redress market imperfections and the reluctance of private providers to establish themselves in those areas.³¹

Childcare is not distributed evenly and there is more choice in some neighbourhoods than in others.³²

With the introduction of the 2005 Childcare Act in the Netherlands, childcare providers concentrated in the richer neighbourhoods and more urban areas, a development that is a consequence of the total liberalisation of the market.³³ Dutch childcare providers will choose more often those neighbourhoods where there is more certainty regarding financial income. Moreover, childcare providers feel that working with vulnerable parents is more difficult were this requires a wide network and cooperation with other services because they need more support.³⁴

We see the same uneven distribution in the other countries, even though there is more direct public investment there. In Flanders, the 'unmet need' for formal childcare is about twice as high among vulnerable groups.³⁵

It is clear that a specific focus on occasional and flexible childcare by local authority is all the more necessary because these types of childcare increase the cost for a childcare provider. Private initiatives are certainly not inclined to organise those types themselves if they are even present in these neighbourhoods at all.

10. How can a Local Authority intervene?

Local Authorities can intervene in many ways:

1. They have a duty in assessing sufficient availability
2. They can act as providers themselves, for
 - childcare in general
 - childcare in deprived areas
 - occasional and/or flexible childcare
3. They can subsidise providers (additionally)
4. They can support private providers to start childcare and facilitating them in upholding their standards.
 - business support for new childcare providers and those requesting guidance regarding sustainability
 - information and support for those wanting to become a childminder
 - providing locations that are set up as childcare facilities,
 - providing logistical support to childcare organizers,
 - organize training for childcare staff
 - ...
5. They can take up a coordinating role working with the private providers.

10.1 Securing Childcare Sufficiency

An English local authority must secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare in order to enable them:³⁶

- to take up, or remain in, work, or
- to undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

Local authorities are required to report annually on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents. The report should zoom in on the sufficiency of childcare places for children from vulnerable families, children with parents who work irregular hours, children aged 2, 3 & 4 taking up free childcare hours and children needing holiday care.

In addition, the report should give information about the current and projected supply and demand of childcare, but also on the affordability and accessibility of the provision; and details of how any gaps in childcare provision will be addressed.³⁷

Local authorities need to consider local patterns of employment, including shift work and atypical hours and consider how the childcare needs of these families can best be met. They should also have strong links with Jobcentre Plus to ensure they are aware of the needs of those looking for work in their area.

From the Brighton & Hove Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2018 we learn:³⁸

There is a good supply of and demand for childcare in Brighton & Hove. Childcare is high quality and take-up of early years free entitlements for two, three- and four-year olds is higher than national averages.

Parents are generally satisfied with childcare but have concerns about its cost and would like it to be more flexible. There is insufficient childcare during atypical hours (outside 8 am to 6 pm on weekdays), particularly for school-age children, and for parents who need childcare at weekends and overnight.

In France, a municipality or cluster of municipalities has subsidiary competence in matters of childcare. Each municipality can adopt a multi-annual strategic plan for childcare services.³⁹

This plan, developed in consultation with the private childcare providers, (1) makes an inventory of the supply of providers, services, types childcare and places, (2) identifies the needs in this area, (3) specifies the prospects for the development of the necessary childcare services and their estimated cost.

Special attention must go to facilitating access for children from families experiencing difficulties due to their living or working conditions or due to their (income)vulnerability.

In Flanders the local authority co-determines the childcare policy in the municipality. This means that they have control over how the Flemish childcare policy objectives are implemented in their area and what they want to focus on. This local policy is based on an 'environmental analysis': a local government that wants to respond to the needs of parents and children, needs to know them first. This analysis visualises in which neighbourhoods the priorities could (or should) lie when new childcare places can be attributed (assigned by Kind & Gezin). For example, the local level can strengthen the social function of childcare. That way local authorities can steer more easily the expansion and implantation of the number of childcare places and determine the priority rules more strongly.⁴⁰

In addition to an expansion of income related places, Kind & Gezin also wants to make a link with deprivation rates, so that more income related childcare places are created in more deprived neighbourhoods. But to know where these vulnerable neighbourhoods are located, the agency is depended on the local authorities. There is currently an agreement with some cities on the basis of pre-financing of places (where they want them, based on their environmental analysis, so that they have more control over where new places can come) and where the Agency is committed to licencing them in time. This is a story of shared responsibility of both the Flemish and the Local authorities; of working at it together, everyone must play his role at his level.

10.2 Are local authorities in the possibility of organising childcare themselves?

A lot depends on the interpretation of Childcare as being a Social Service of General Interest -SSGI-, which are social activities that public authorities identify as being of public interest and that would not be supplied (or would be supplied under different conditions) if there were no public intervention. If they are, then a local authority will be able to become a childcare provider and/or a local authority can provide 'state aid'. EU Member States are in principle free to define SSGI, and to establish related organisational principles. The government can decide to either perform them themselves or have the services performed by other profit or non-profit entities.⁴¹

This is the case in France and Belgium where no objections for a local government exist to become a childcare provider, although these local authorities will often set up separate associations for this purpose. An example is the childcare association of the city of Turnhout 'vzw Kinderopvang Turnhout'.

However, big differences in choices exist between cities/communities based on the different political views within the reigning city council/municipality. Do they favour a broad offer of public services or do they rather believe in the primacy of the free market? The city of Ghent e.g. has an extend Childcare Service, consisting of 44 settings (26 nurseries, 6 play groups, 12 childminders). They also pay attention to the social mix, with special focus for the accessibility for vulnerable parents:

Because we want the day care centres to be a mirror of the neighbourhood and we pay attention to accessibility, a number of places are reserved for specific target groups, such as one-parent families, parents in training and participants in integration programs. On the other hand, we give priority to families that meet specific characteristics such as mother tongue foreign language, low-educated parents, and parents with a low income from work or replacement income.⁴²

The Flemish government tries to facilitate access to childcare for vulnerable groups by creating special places and higher funded providers under conditions that priority is given to specific target groups.

In France, childcare can be organised by public bodies, and the regulations make no difference in the conditions to organise regular places or more flexible/occasional places. However, this results in funding problems for occasional childcare (See 10.3 Funding). Special attention is paid to the group of vulnerable groups and parents in activation trajectories⁴³ by assigning a number of places (1 per 20 places)⁴⁴ for children from poor families, e.g. the Département du Nord is reserving some childcare places to the parents on Social Assistance (RSA).⁴⁵

The Netherlands and the UK tell a different story. Childcare is governed by a market-based as well as (mostly demand-based) provision of services, although the government plays a controlling role (guaranteeing quality). This marketisation of childcare as guiding principle is determined by law: the provision of childcare is a private initiative and not the task of the (local) government.

The Netherlands is very strict in this, and since 2005 childcare is fully marketed. Exception is being made for vulnerable target groups for who the municipalities can subsidise childcare hours. However, becoming a childcare provider themselves is not an option.

In England, a local authority may not provide childcare^{46,47} for a particular child or group of children unless the local authority is satisfied:

1. that no other person is willing to provide the childcare, or
2. if another person is willing to do so, that in the circumstances it is appropriate for the local authority to provide the childcare.

The interpretation of this lies with the local authority and according to the political view of this local authority and on the priorities that are made here, interpretation will vary:

- Brighton expressly chooses to play an active role as local government. They have council-run nurseries and subsidised childcare -mostly full day care- especially in the most disadvantaged parts of the city where private providers are less likely to start a business. They put out 400,000 pounds in (additional) funding a year and two nurseries in very deprived areas get the highest funding. Most families in those areas are taking their free childcare.
- In Kent, a separate company has been set up that seeks to influence the private players from sufficiency, influencing, mediating and advisory roles. They run 3 nurseries themselves -as a private company 'The Education People', but not in the most deprived areas⁴⁸ and often only offering shorter hours sessions (9 a.m. -3 p.m.) which does not work for working parents.⁴⁹

To secure flexible delivery, local authorities should^{50,51} **encourage providers** to offer flexible packages of free hours, while considering the following standards that focus on continuity, stability, high quality of the childcare provision. In this way the aim is to reconcile the best interests of the child with the demands made on parents regarding flexibility and the importance of stability for the provider.

10.3 Funding

THE NETHERLANDS: CHILDCARE ALLOWANCE

Dutch childcare is provided by private childcare settings that determine their rates freely. The parents can apply for a Childcare Allowance if they meet the conditions. This allowance is calculated based on a maximum hourly (fictitious) rate set by the government⁵², and the part of the fee above the maximum hourly rate is not eligible for childcare allowance.

While the national government is responsible for the childcare allowance, the municipalities are responsible for the financial compensation to the group of parents who are not entitled to a childcare allowance because they are not in work and/or breadwinner families with one parent working. Each municipality has the discretion to determine the best way for the family in each situation can be temporarily supported. The aim is to let the parents participate in it work process again.⁵³ In short, it is not possible to organise childcare for a local authority, but financial interventions are possible, be it restricted to the/a target group.

In The Hague, parents of toddlers (2,5 – 4 years old) **who are not entitled to childcare allowance** can apply under this scheme from the local authority for an income-related toddler allowance for a minimum of 240 and a maximum of 320 hours a year.⁵⁴ Funding for extra hours is possible, but only in the context of Preschool Education, which *does not allow for any form of flexibility*, but demands -on the contrary- a compulsory presence on fixed half-days.

Another scheme that offers financial help to vulnerable parents with childcare is the ‘**Social Medical Indication**’ (SMI). It gives municipalities the opportunity to provide financial support to families on a temporary basis in childcare costs when they show medical or social circumstances that cause them temporarily ineligible for the childcare allowance.

Main barriers for organising occasional childcare or flexible childcare are cost driven. If providers want to offer this service, they will charge a higher rate for it, because on average the service will be more expensive, even more so because of the strict conditions that must be met (e.g. stability, ratios, ...). This will be unaffordable for vulnerable parents.

Most problems are put on the parent’s plate:

- No extra funding for parents for childcare for children up to 2,5 years old
- Too restricted amount of hours/week: childcare cost is only relieved for 6-12 hours a week
- No possibility of occasional childcare: parents need to conclude a contract with the childcare provider
- Flexible childcare is possible, but it will be more expensive (no regulated tariffs...)

Funding through parents puts the responsibility and the risks with the (vulnerable) parent. Fraud investigations by the tax authorities have led to childcare allowances being reclaimed from already vulnerable parents-with up to 5 years retroactive effect. This has brought financial hardship to many parents, even though they were not at fault.

The current national government is aware of the problems and “embraces” the advice to consider, for example, publicly funded childcare as a promising alternative to the childcare allowance, in which different variants are possible in terms of implementation and costs.⁵⁵

ENGLAND: FREE HOURS AND A JUNGLE OF DEMAND-SIDED SCHEMES

There are three government funded childcare schemes that offer free childcare for children aged two, three and four. Each of the free childcare schemes has different eligibility rules:

- 15-hours free childcare (570 hours) for 2-year-olds, for children of vulnerable parents
- 15-hours free childcare (570 hours) for 3 to 4-year-olds, for all children
- 30-hours free childcare (1,140 hours) for 3 to 4-year-olds (extended scheme), for parents that work at least 16h (or equivalent)

Free 15- and 30-hours childcare can be taken in childcare settings that are registered in the Early Years Register.

Parents -(for hours) that don not meet the requirements for the free hours of childcare- can get financial support by other schemes like Tax Free Childcare and Universal Credit for childcare. These schemes can also be used to make occasional and/or flexible childcare, administered by more flexible providers that are registered in the 'voluntary register', more affordable. Such hours can be combined 'on top' of the above-mentioned Free Hours.

For these 'additional' hours it is up to the parent to recuperate part of the massive childcare cost. But this parent is confronted with a jungle of schemes, all of which require a separate application ... This 'puzzle' of different systems is challenging to anyone, but to vulnerable parents in particular.

There is chicken and egg in terms of engaging parents with the 2yold funding to raise demand and funding services to support parents with understanding the funding. The offer to parents is very complicated there are so many different funding streams. For vulnerable families to understand all the different funding streams is very complex. It is very important to fund information services to help parents.
(*Caroline Parker, BHCC*).

The additional funding is only available when the childcare is provided by a setting or carer that is registered in the voluntary register. Not that many providers register because they do not feel under enough pressure by parents to register so parents can get help. Providers do not have anything to gain: they always have full occupancy anyway.⁵⁶

Parents have to pay childcare costs upfront, which is problematic especially the first month. It may prevent them from taking full advantage of the possibilities.⁵⁷ Help in bridging that first month may be requested from the Flexible Support Fund of the Jobcentre Plus.

Free hours are not always as free as they seem. Because of the difficult financial situation childcare providers find themselves in, they will place several charges and restrictions on their offer, such as additional costs (charge for food, for activities), restriction in hours or in days, ...

The revenue of childcare services is a mix of the free early education entitlement (FEEE) and parental contributions. On average, settings receive less per hour for 3-4-year olds from the FEEE than from parental fees.⁵⁸ A lot of providers are scared to have to organise childcare for a smaller price. For childcare providers it is about a good business model.⁵⁹

This evolution is what makes the organisation of occasional childcare virtually impossible. High occupancy rates are only obtainable when all children attend in the same periods of time, and on a regular basis.

This also explains the concerns about the viability of childcare provision in the most deprived areas. One of the reasons day care settings serving high concentrations of vulnerable children can struggle to achieve high quality care is that they are least able to cross-subsidise using parental contributions.⁶⁰

PSU IN FRANCE: SUPPLY SIDE FUNDING

In France childcare is subsidised by the PSU (Prestation de Service Unique), a subsidy regulated on the national level. The PSU is the same for regular and occasional childcare places, but this is felt as problematic, because occasional childcare is much more costly to organise. The 70% minimum standard of occupancy rate encourages providers to increase the number of children per square or, to favour families that consume the most hours, which is a constraint to reserve occasional childcare places. It also does not encourage to open the childcare very late or very earlier during a day, because then the occupancy rate might be impacted. This happened to Centre Social Eclaté in Saint-Martin-Boulogne (See 12.2 Occupancy Rate)

The CAF is the subsidising agency and local authorities have also a role to play in additional funding. It should be a shared policy.

Municipalities have not enough money on their own to make an impact, so it is the inter-community partnership⁶¹ that will carry it, not the municipality. E.g. to start a crèche (or even a MAM) involves high investments, for which start-up subsidies are provided, but not covering the costs, even if a provider finds his way through the different channels.

INCOME-RELATED TARIFFS IN FLANDERS ... OR NOT

In about 75% of all childcare places, parents will pay income based. This means that the other 25% of the providers can set their tariffs freely. It is still a problem for vulnerable parents to find an affordable income related place, especially when not working.

The higher funded providers have to prioritise vulnerable families (e.g. minimum 30% of the children they care for have to come from vulnerable families).

Recently the budget for places that focus on vulnerable children and flexible childcare increased. On the one hand it is being used to provide 250 extra higher funded childcare places, and on the other hand the range of flexible childcare is being expanded, so that it becomes easier for parents to find childcare at atypical hours or to find occasional/urgent childcare⁶², for example because the parent has suddenly found work.⁶³

With a local subsidy, a local authority can emphasise its own choices, increase the accessibility for vulnerable families

A local government can attach additional conditions to a local subsidy for childcare facilities. E.g. the city of Antwerp where the city is currently coordinating childcare offers. They provide an additional childcare allowance of up to 14€ a day (depending on the childcare situation) and that way they create more affordable childcare places than if they would have organised the places themselves.⁶⁴

This method was also used by some PACE partners to increase accessibility.

OCMW Turnhout agreed to cover the childcare bill for the parents attending the PACE program that could not get a childcare place at income related tariff. To find a childcare place at free tariff -even on occasional basis- is most of the time possible if you have a good childcare broker (See 10.6 Brokerage), but it is unaffordable. When the city takes up the bill, or part of it, the problem is temporarily solved.

The minimum occupancy of 80% as a subsidy condition is experienced as problematic to be able to offer occasional/ flexible childcare (See 12.2 Occupancy Rate) For the special type 'urgent childcare place', the provider achieves an occupancy rate of at least 60% per calendar year; this is the only provided deviation.

10.4 From information to Brokerage

However, cost is only one piece of this bigger puzzle. Parents also need to find local childcare suited to their individual needs. For many families this is simply not the case. A complicated system of support continues to limit the overall impact of investment in childcare. There are seven different ways families can get help with childcare in England alone, and many parents find it difficult to find out what is available to them. Parents tell us that a lack of straightforward information can mean they do not know they are eligible for support or they do not know how to find a funded place.⁶⁵

10.5 Information

A good knowledge and insight are key for both parents and (candidate) childcare providers.

Parents looking for a childcare place are confronted with a variety of providers, different types of providers, operating under different conditions and tariffs.... And of course, in some countries they are confronted with a 'jungle' of compensation schemes, that are applicable in combination depending on the type of childcare they use. This is not easy to get a grip on, especially for vulnerable parents who might face additional barriers with language, digital literacy ...

If it is impossible to simplify the system of support, at the least the information should be available and comprehensible. This information may come from the childcare providers but should also be provided for some general aspects by the local authority or the assigned local network.

Providers – and starting providers in particular- may have a hard time coping as well with all the do's and don'ts, with funding schemes and other rules, so a clear information to the childcare organisations is imperative as well and may support them to start up a childcare setting or to organise occasional/flexible places. Of course, this information needs to be accessible too.

Every now and we have seen an advertisement sponsored by the Flemish community to promote Flemish articles, like fries, cheese, and Flemish beers by means of expensive beautiful TV ads. Perhaps a campaign could also be organized about finding childcare: where you need to be, how it works, how timely you should be with this... Also, places where pregnant women come could be targeted, e.g. at a gynaecologist, or in a consultation centre, ... (*participant Flemish focus group*)

10.6 Brokerage

A brokerage service goes beyond giving information. A local childcare brokerage service not only centralises all information about childcare in a municipality or city, it will also actively support parents who are looking for a suitable childcare place. This implies that the childcare brokerage service is part of a network of organisations within childcare and with other family support services. The brokerage service mediates between parents and childcare and looks for tailor-made solutions for parents. This is more than just a digital platform with an overview of childcare providers.

Within this service, the figure of the childcare broker is central. This must be someone with a good knowledge of the sector, the neighbourhood, and the target group, and an excellent communicator. A childcare broker must not only know what is possible, he/she must also know the sensitivities and concerns of the different parties.

The local brokerage service can only function properly if there are enough members of staff, and they are backed up by a robust back-office. This requires a solid investment.

Brokerage has to pay sufficient attention to occasional and flexible childcare; the staff must be aware of the specific characteristics of such care. They also have to be able to take on and support vulnerable families. To do so, they must have a clear mandate from the service, the network, and not in the least, the local authority. For example, a local authority may decide that it will only support parents for whom the childcare system is too complex.

A brokerage service cannot create additional childcare places and depends on the provision in the area. It therefore cannot guarantee that every family will find suitable childcare. Nonetheless, it can increase accessibility to childcare (and to work) enormously.

FLANDERS

Flemish cities and municipalities are since 2012 required by law to organise a Local Childcare Desk (*Lokaal Loket Kinderopvang*).

The object of these Local Childcare Desks is to make childcare more accessible. This Desk can organise different ways and initiatives to make childcare more accessible, and Childcare Brokerage is one of them. In most cases, municipalities take the lead, and in many cases they are part of a larger network such as '*Huis van het Kind*' (House of the Child). The umbrella organisation of cities and municipalities [VVSG] recommends combining a digital 'brokerage' service with an office where families can meet support workers. At the beginning of 2020, 150 of the 321 municipalities in Flanders had received or applied for a subsidy for a Local Childcare Desk.

The Flemish framework is built around three large assignments: 1) follow-up of supply and demand 2) service provision to parents and vulnerable groups and 3) networking and cooperation

The local desk, as 1 single point of entry, has many advantages for parents, but it can generate new barriers for parents. Most of the time, parents are referred to websites where they must register and log in with 'a token' ... so it is not very accessible to vulnerable groups.

With a local desk, the digital part is just a puzzle piece of the story. Think carefully beforehand about what you want to organise. The advice is to take enough time when starting up a local counter to talk to each other locally about what can offer added value for vulnerable families and what you want to invest in. Front line workers often see the need for face-to-face support, especially with vulnerable people with a language and /or digital barrier. E.g. support in filling in forms, email address, etc... Extra information is often requested by mail, but parents often do not understand the information they receive. They also often lack information. For example, a request for confirmation when their child is born. (*participant Flemish focus group*)

Some Local Desks work well. E.g. in the city of Leuven, from the moment emergency care is needed, an email is sent to all organisers and experience shows that there is often a place, and this is passed on immediately. It is of course all closely monitored by the employees of the city services of Leuven.

In Mechelen, the local childcare brokerage service offers tailor-made childcare services. It has existed for a long time and has also received government subsidies since April 2019. Parents can make an appointment and drop in or contact the service by phone or email.

The childcare broker helps parents to make a choice from the services on offer and weigh up the pros and cons. For example, he can look at whether the lower price charged by a facility that is further away outweighs the extra travel costs and time to get there. In general, he has found that parents have difficulty assessing the differences between the options.

Sometimes the childcare broker offers extra support, for example by making an appointment with a childcare facility or arranging an interpreter if parents don't understand Dutch well enough.

The most difficult queries are those from parents who are looking for childcare at very short notice and from parents who don't yet know how many hours of childcare they need and when.

'Such requests for care are when the parents need to start work at short notice, usually within two weeks, or to go on a programme.'

(*Coordinator of Local Childcare Brokerage Service, Mechelen, 2020*)

ENGLAND

Local Authorities must establish and maintain a Family Information Service (FIS) providing information, advice, and assistance in accordance with this section. This service has to provide to parents information which relates to (a) the provision of childcare in the area of the local authority and (2) any other services or facilities, or any publications, which may be of benefit to parents or children in their area.⁶⁶

The childcare system underwent a lot of changes these last years and these changes resulted in new challenges for FIS that had to get this information out to the entitled parents. Despite their importance in assisting in the delivery of those schemes, FIS have not been offered the necessary additional funding to help them discharge this role.⁶⁷

In Brighton & Hove, the local council set up a local childcare brokerage service. The childcare broker is familiar with childcare facilities and coordinators in the area, has a thorough knowledge of childcare policy, regulations and funding rules, and is therefore able to find tailor-made solutions for parents. The childcare broker has an online system with data on childcare facilities, so she can respond quickly and appropriately to questions from parents. She is also part of a strong team that can step in to ensure that the service is available at all times: if the childcare broker goes on holiday or is sick, the team members can stand in for her. This prevents all the expertise residing with a single person. The childcare broker helped many of the parents who took part in the PACE-project with their childcare needs. These parents identify the following as the main reasons for contacting the service:

- unusual working hours or shift work
- a need for childcare at short notice
- a need for childcare during an education or training programme
- a child with a specific care need

The Brighton & Hove example shows that a committed local brokerage service can lead to childcare organisations changing their approach. For example, one facility decided to stay open later after staff had heard a number of times that parents were unable to find childcare after 6 pm. Again, many nurseries were only offering the funded hours to which parents are entitled at unpopular times. The local brokerage service repeatedly argued in favour of providing these hours at times that suited families, until a number of nurseries eventually adjusted their policies⁶⁸.

Many local authorities offer a childcare brokerage service, which mainly supports vulnerable parents in their search for affordable childcare. It is the Statutory Guidance for local authorities on Early education and childcare⁶⁹ that clarifies that setting up a brokerage service is what local authorities should do to support families encountering obstacles to childcare. Not all authorities offer this brokerage service: some only organise an information point, while others only work for specific target groups, such as unemployed parents.

FRANCE

In France, the Relais Petite Enfance⁷⁰ (RPE) are closest to this a brokerage service. Municipalities can set up such a network on their own or together with other municipalities. According to a recently introduced law, it is 'their role to inform families about all

types of childcare, both group settings and childminding, and to support them in choosing the care that best suits their needs, taking the applicable guidelines into account...'. The way the service works differs from municipality to municipality. Usually it supports families, but also professionals.

The government does not set any rules for such services, leaving local authorities free to provide a service according to their choice, principles, and budget. As a result, an on-line information point is interpreted in some cases as also including extensive personal support

THE NETHERLANDS

In the Netherlands, to find childcare, parents can use the National Childcare Register⁷¹ - a web-based search engine with all recognised childcare providers. A further possibility is provided by the Childcare Map⁷², which also makes it possible to compare childcare providers on rates or quality criteria. But initiatives like the Childcare Map already depend on the will of private providers to respond to this and share their data publicly. This is not happening in a sector that is completely privatised. This is also the problem local authorities are facing, so most of them will provide some information and support to parents, about the available childcare in their area, although they usually confine themselves to practical information.

Also, local authorities do not feel it as their duty, since Childcare became a national matter in 2005, and municipalities have no competence in this matter.⁷³ In some cities, families can consult an additional service, sometimes only on a specific aspect such as funding. In the Hague, for example, the Childcare Office provides advice by telephone on additional funding for vulnerable families.⁷⁴

Because of the reluctance of providers to share data and because of the limited involvement of local authorities, it remains next to impossible to set up effective Childcare Brokerage systems. A Brokerage Service would disturb free market principles ('the invisible hand').

Policymakers thought that – even if a municipality set up a brokerage service based on general social interest – many of the childcare providers have too little staff for providing the necessary information, besides the fact that they are also very diverse. They feel it would entail too big an investment for the providers.⁷⁵

10.7 Co-operation/Coordination

There are various options for local authorities to take the initiative. A local board can be an actor or organiser for occasional childcare, but can also take on a coordinating role, by taking the lead in creating a network of providers. That way, the local government has various possibilities to facilitate and ensure high-quality childcare.

FLANDERS

The Local Childcare Desk, as a network, also provides the opportunity to reach agreements between the various partners (e.g. also integration) to strengthen the accessibility of regular childcare.

We also notice that OCMW's (the local public social services centres) will also engage in cooperating to procure affordable childcare places for their parents. If an OCMW finds there are not enough income related childcare places, they invest for 'their clients'. Some OCMW's issue a tender for childcare on an independent basis, but in which priority places must be provided for vulnerable families and for which they also take up part of the

bill of the parent. This way extra childcare places for vulnerable parents are created in a more selective way (based on which clients need them most) and the organiser is guaranteed of sufficient financial resources.⁷⁶

Most Flemish municipalities and VVSG, the umbrella organisation of municipalities and cities, are also in favour of using coordination of childcare to ensure the 'social mix'. If a Local Childcare Desk is the only one access point to a childcare place in a city, this 'Desk' can allocate childcare places in such a way that a real social mix is ensured.⁷⁷ If there is a network in place, we see them often working on the basis of 'convincing the partners'. Arguments are put forward and are discussed and tackled together. Most of the time there are no other, more 'persuasive' instruments -like financial or legal instruments- available. Financial instruments can be, for example, to make a part of the partners' resources dependent on the participant/contribution to certain objectives. What is possible here though is that you only get resources if you cooperate in achieving certain objectives.

The objectives of the coordinating local authority must therefore, of course, be moving in the right direction. Possibly the local authority does not set goals for the vulnerable groups. Of course, objectives have to be set in consultation with the partners. The same applies in linking up with other policy areas and sectors.

But what if a local authority is given more coordinating power, but does not consider the needs and requirements of the citizen? And what if the partners are placed in a dependent position of local government? what can you do then? What if organisations have to compete with each other for subsidies? Quality guarantees must be provided so that attention is paid to organising it from the point of view of the needs of the citizen.

We need to tread very careful and make sure this cannot be a caricature of a local authority in a leading role that bosses other organisations around. We have to be much more nuanced about this and learn from it.

ENGLAND

In the England the Childcare Act 2006 places a duty for local authorities to work in partnership with providers to influence childcare provision as far as reasonably practicable to ensure that there is sufficient childcare and to secure flexible delivery of childcare for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment.^{78,79}

The Kent experiment was successful, but without help of the local authority it might have been difficult. Kent County Council supported the process by providing the knowledge, the contacts, the practical organisation and funding (of the cooperation process and the childcare places).

In Gravesham, Kent, the supply of childcare is exclusively offered by private providers. The local government was able to convince several private providers – five nurseries and two childminders with who they set up a network – to start occasional and flexible childcare. The start-up turned out to be difficult. The biggest obstacle was the views of childcare workers, regardless of their role in the whole. For them, occasional and flexible childcare facilities were unable to meet the needs of children and did not allow pedagogically high-quality operation. Occasional care also clashed with the local custom of getting children used to childcare for a long time.

Those reactions were logical in view of the national childcare policy that is based on the principles of continuity and familiarity for children. Also, the financing rules focus on this.

The local government used two strategies to convince the nurseries. First, they organised working visits to childcare providers in other EU countries that operate fully on an occasional basis. The calm and structure the childcare coordinators saw there, reassured them. Subsequently, the Local Authority organised group discussions and intervision groups, so that the well-being of the whole family came into the picture, instead of focussing only onto the child. Third, the government funded the occasional places, and supported the participating providers to work out a business plan to keep the places when funding stopped

Brighton & Hove City Council decided -based on the results of their Childcare Sufficiency Assessment to:⁸⁰

Continue to support the recruitment and retention of high-quality childminders, and encourage them to offer the extended entitlement, and childcare at atypical hours (flexibility)

Continue to support the recruitment and retention of Family Information Service at home child carers (flexibility)

Encourage childcare providers to offer tax free childcare (cost)

ORGANISING FLEXIBLE OR OCCASIONAL CHILDCARE

Young parents are involved in different domains -like their family, the workplace, the labour market- and those domains have different rhythms which make them hard to combine. Especially young mothers struggle in meeting the demands of family and work. The family domain signals that flexible or occasional childcare might not be good for children, because of the need for stability and developmental criteria. Childcare providers feel they are bound by quality requirements and financial means in a way flexibility in organisation becomes (im)possible to organise, and they stress their working conditions need to be considered as well. The labour market demands the use of occasional and flexible childcare. Finding work and preparing for work demand occasional childcare possibilities and emergency childcare. Employers demand more flexibility, and flexibility of workforce means flexibility of parents.

But should childcare follow this trend? In what ways can childcare be offered flexibly or occasionally? And, can (or should) less traditional partners such as the employers or the parents themselves play a role in this?

The focus group in Flanders tackled the question whether it is necessary that today so many jobs are as flexible as they are now. (See 8 Employers expect too much flexibility and childcare is becoming more rigid). Depending on this, part of the cost may be borne by employers or society.

They stated that the labour market's expectations towards flexibility are probably the most difficult to change. It is a given that we must deal with realistically in the context of change, but it should not be a reason to for a 24hour availability/accessibility in childcare. Socially there are several professions that can best be shifted to daytime, e.g. cleaning does not have to be done at night.

Another possibility to deal with this is flexibility given by the employer, by bridging the needs of his domain with that of the family of his employee. This way a win-win situation is created. The example is given of an employer in dealing with an employee who has co- parenthood after a divorce. The employer shows more flexibility in the week where the employee is responsible for the children. During the other week, on the other hand, greater flexibility is required from the employee. Flexibility that works in two directions is important, thus increasing the employee's involvement with the employer.

In the Netherlands occasional childcare is considered like babysitting, and not as childcare. Childcare is first and foremost education, upbringing, and only then care. In this view childcare (education) demands regularity and this is given shape through the contract which has to be concluded on a mandatory basis and which includes an obligation

to pay. So, technically a parent who only wants childcare for the duration of a training can enter a contract, even if this training only lasts e.g. 2 months. A private provider can do this, but few will offer this, because this will require a lot of work. And, as every participant in the Dutch focus group agrees on- occasional childcare it is not good for the child, the other children in the group or the staff.

In the UK, the participants of the focus group felt that – at atypical hours e.g. in the evening homebased childcare would be most suitable for the child. But on the other hand, it is not the childcare providers' job to support poor working practice – zero hours contracts and “on call”. Besides, the workforce in childcare is already in under paid workforce, then it is not a good idea to introduce anti-social hours since many of them have families of their own. It is already very hard to recruit childcare workers now, so asking them to work until later would not be attractive.

Initiatives will be more sustainable if they can count on regulation & financing that is tailored to the reality of flexible and occasional childcare. But this presupposes the recognition of the importance of flexible and occasional childcare by the authorities. Declarations to that effect are still rare, e.g. in the Coalition Agreement of 1/10/2019 of the Flemish Government 2019-2022 we find:

The aim is to evaluate the priority rules and to ensure that children of working parents or job seeking parents -who are undergoing training- are given priority. Flexible and occasional childcare will be provided for parents with irregular working hours.

Childcare is mentioned as an important factor to support working parents or job seeking parents undergoing training. The aim is to provide childcare that is sufficiently flexible and affordable to support parents in combining work and private life.

11. Exclusively occasional (or trajectory bound)

An exclusively occasional nursery offers occasional childcare only, and families can use it at short notice and for a limited period. There is no care plan, or only a short-term one. The group of children in a certain setting may be different every day, with a ‘constant’ new arrival of children. This way of working requires a staff that is prepared for this, both practically and mentally. The workload is high, and staff often feels the need for extra training and coaching. Employees must be given the opportunity to talk to parents, so that they can find out what the childcare they are providing means to parents and adjust their way of working accordingly.

Flexible and occasional childcare is regulated by law in Flanders, but there is no framework for working exclusively on an occasional basis. Most nurseries that do so do not rely on extra funding (except sometimes from local authorities).

In Flanders there are a few examples, most of which originated in a project or on the initiative of local government.

11.1 Practical examples

PACE experiment 38 VOLT in Mechelen (Flanders) is an exclusively occasional nursery that combines childcare with reintegration services for parents. Two family support officers work in the building. Parents wishing to find short- or long-term work and seeking support with this can go to them, and the children can go to the nursery in the meantime. This is also possible if the parents attend training, apply for a job or gain initial work experience.

The access to childcare is very low threshold. Parents can join their children in childcare, they can stay with them for as long and as often as they want. This helps them to build trust and, in the end, to leave their children in childcare while they are in training, at work, ... Parents feel wonderfully at home in this nursery, perhaps too well ... There is no direct link with a regular nursery, and the big difference in methods used between 38Volt and regular nurseries result in a problematic transition from exclusively occasional to regular nursery.

During the PACE project, the city of Turnhout in Flanders moved the existing occasional nursery Het Lindeke to a building that already housed a regular nursery and after-school care facility. The nurseries have one coordinator. If parents' needs for childcare become more regular, the family can move on to the regular childcare facility. This way of operating has major advantages: the nurseries are all at the same location and the family is already familiar with the coordinator of the regular nursery, so trust building is less of an issue here.

Places are limited and the question arose whether parents that are in an activation trajectory could make a reservation so they **can rely** on their place. Since they also want to be accessible for emergency childcare, the decision was made as to who was allowed to book and who was not. For parents who would get into trouble, the PACE officer actively looked for solutions at other childcare facilities.

In France, the haltes-garderies (PACE partner Wattrelos) can offer occasional childcare without a care contract. Parents can bring their child there for one or more half-days per week. The parent has the choice to establish a contract or to register his child on an (real) occasional basis. Financing is on the same basis as for other types of nursery, which makes it challenging to organise for providers (See 10.3 Funding)

In England occasional childcare is not mentioned explicitly in regulation, nor is it prohibited. Exclusively occasional childcare settings -however possible in theory- will not be organised because of factors concerning funding and staff on the one hand, and educational norms on the other hand. Parents who have an urgent job interview, who need to start workshops ... can address the children's centres and creches that set up care arrangements without register requirement.⁸¹ Such care lasts a maximum of two hours.⁸² Many children's centres offer such crèches during activities for parents.

Occasional childcare is not against the law in the Netherlands either, but the rules and -above all- the above-mentioned vision make it quite impossible to set up.

12. Occasional Childcare Places within Regular Childcare Nurseries

This prototype involves nurseries that offer occasional childcare places alongside their regular places. The providers clearly define the target group based on their local analysis and childcare assessment. Providers work together on different levels (outreach to parents, allocation of places, priority rules, ...).

This way of working needs a form of childcare brokerage, a system of guiding the parents to the available places. In Flanders e.g. you have on the one hand providers that have specific places within the regular childcare combined with a local childcare desk that knows where they are. Besides, many local desks/brokerage systems that are already operational have systems where you can request 'emergency' childcare (e.g. within a month). Places that are available will then be sent to all providers and this way you also have an overview on overall availability (See e.g. Leuven p. 29)

In France, a multi-accueil (a group care setting) can also combine regular and occasional childcare. However, in lots of cases this does not concern occasional in the sense of emergency care, but a very limited number of hours (less than half-time) of childcare that is also contractually agreed for a certain duration. Normally, around 15% of the capacity is reserved for such places. Since there is no obligation (anymore) to report the distribution of places between regular and occasional care, occasional places will be 'left-over' places,⁸³ as childcare settings will prefer regular (full-time) contracts, as they are the best way to meet the required occupancy rate, and therefore to keep financials positive.

The nurseries of our PACE Partner the Centre Social Eclaté in Saint-Martin-Boulogne (France) offer a combination of regular and occasional childcare places.

Occasional childcare can refer to two different situations.⁸⁴ The first one is called 'occasional childcare' for which families have to make a reservation two weeks in advance, and children have to be enrolled. The facility tries to meet all care requests, but places are limited. A local committee keeps an eye on the balance between regular and occasional places and decides about priority rules.

Separately from this occasional care, the nurseries always keep one place available for 'emergency childcare', where of course no reservation is needed.

A combination of regular hours with 'occasional hours' is possible and is propagated by the provider. Critics, however, warn against the incorporation of this practice, real questions for occasional childcare may be pushed aside by it.⁸⁵

This danger of displacement is also mentioned in England. On the one hand there is more flexibility than we know about where childcare providers are more likely to be flexible for their existing parents, although they do not advertise it and it is not guaranteed. So, if a 2-year-old is using a nursery already, the nursery will try to accommodate the family but not so much for new children. This can impact the number of 2-year-old places available as providers accommodate existing 2-year-old places for 3-year olds wanting 30 hours.⁸⁶

12.1 Adjustment period & occasional childcare

Adjustment policy is important: both for the individual child and for the group, and it gets a lot of attention from childcare. Especially with emergency occasional childcare, the obvious lack of adjustment period is seen as problematic by childcare providers.

In France, this is the case with all the ‘multi-acceils’ (in the Département du Nord) where the parent comes with their child and spends time with them during the adjustment. For emergency care, the adjustment period is a problem. The idea of the project here is to work with parents and professionals.

Our PACE partner Turnhout worked around this by combining the importance of the adjustment period with an offer of occasional childcare. (Emergency) Occasional childcare could be seen as an adjustment period. By getting acquainted with childcare, parents can become motivated to use (regular) childcare.

VVSG – the umbrella organisation of municipalities and cities in Flanders- makes a few suggestions in the event an adjustment period is not possible:⁸⁷

- Invite the parent to come to the setting earlier: in this way the parent and the child can be together for a while;
- bringing familiar items from home as a comfort, can also help the child;
- try to keep the first childcare moments short.

12.2 Occupancy rate and maximum capacity

In Flanders providers acknowledge the need for occasional places, but on the other hand they have to meet the required occupancy rate of 80% and are not allowed to exceed maximum capacity. Providers will sometimes decide to temporarily surpass their maximum capacity because they want to take care of children and offer an answer to the question. The legislation does not offer the necessary flexibility to do so, but there is a legislative proposal in place and for now there is an implicit agreement with Kind & Gezin, that as long as the quality remains within standards (sufficient staff), the Agency tolerates this because they support the idea of flexibility.

Flemish providers that are funded specifically for places in emergency childcare have to comply with a lower occupancy rate of 60% for these occasional places. This is only a possibility for the providers of income related nurseries that were assigned such places by the Kind & Gezin, and is an arrangement to broaden the possibilities for parents who ‘suddenly’ start a new job or a training.

In France, providers are explicitly allowed to exceed maximum capacity temporarily. They consciously make intensive use of this possibility to be able to fulfil the function of occasional childcare.

13. At home childcare

When children are cared for in their own family home by a professional childminder who works individually or through an organisation, we speak of home care. At home childcare is an answer to the needs of parents who have irregular working hours, who find it difficult to bridge the transitions from home to school or nursery (wrap around care) and vice versa, or for parents who are looking for childcare at night or at the weekend.⁸⁸

In Flanders, there is a Decree for at home childcare, but this has not yet been transposed into implementing legislation.⁸⁹

When I think of flexible childcare, I think of the cleaning lady who starts working at 4 o'clock and has 2 children. Do we want a system of more childcare that is network-driven -and where the government ensures that someone comes to the house- so that the child does not have to leave the house, or do we want a system where you have to leave your house with your child at 3:30 in the morning because your employer asks you to? (*participant Flemish focus group*).

The above observation, together with the fact that earlier attempts of extending opening hours of group care failed due to very poor occupancy rates.

In France, there is a limited supply (2 places/100 children) of professional at home childcare.

In the Département du Nord in France, the big municipalities have systems that are a mixture of occasional and flexible care at home arrangements called “Easy to Care” [Facile à Garder]. It is an at home childcare system with flexible working hours that can be called upon on short notice but on a temporary basis, until a ‘regular’ crèche place becomes available. In the short term, it is not too expensive. Needed a full month or longer, it becomes more expensive.

The ‘Solu Garde’ arrangement is a similar at home childcare arrangement for children under 6 years old. Other children of the same family can also be taken care of. Solu Garde is a temporary solution where a nanny is assigned only until the parent found another childcare solution. For ‘Solu Garde’, conditions are to have a job already or to get back to work and the parents have to experience an emergency. It is always linked to professional steps (employment, restarting training). But parents want a childcare solution before they go back to work, and in a broader context, to take some time for themselves. There are initiatives in place for vulnerable families, however, certain conditions remain.

The parent can get financial support⁹⁰ of the CAF by making a request for the Allowance of Free Choice of Childcare Mode. This financial support amounts to max. 85% of the total cost if the parents gets the nanny through an organisation and certain conditions are met (work, activation trajectory ...). The amount of the benefit can be higher for single parents and for parents who need childcare at atypical hours. Parents can use a simulator on the CAF.fr website to find out if they can benefit from it.

Another feature is the tax credit, which can reimburse half the cost of home childcare. To benefit from it, the parent has to indicate the amount of the paid wages to his home childcare provider on the annual income tax return.

Finally, also shared care (*garde partagée*) can be considered. The nanny will look after children of different parents at the same time (on Wednesdays, for example). Care takes place alternately in both homes, and each family pays for the hours worked, according to the terms and conditions set out in the employment contract.

In England, in deprived areas childminding is a good solution especially if there is not enough demand for a nursery. However, the number of childminders is in decline, in England as well.

Brighton is the only local authority with an at-home childcare service. This investment (2 staff members) is made because at home childcare proves to be a valuable affordable childcare alternative to accommodate parents that work atypical hours.⁹¹

At-home childcarers are on the voluntary childcare register, so parents can use universal credit and tax-free childcare. Parents would rather use the free sessions, but they are not delivered flexibly enough.

HOME SERVICE – VOLUNTARY SERVICE /RUN BY COUNCIL (BHCC)

In Brighton & Hove the at home childcare service has existed for more than 10 years. The local government set up this service to help parents who are unable to attend regular childcare. Thirty-five professional nannies with training as a childcare worker, provide home care. They work on a self-employed basis or are employed by a family. They mainly work for families with atypical working hours, families confronted with a sudden emergency and families looking for at home care for a longer period.

A service of the local government (2 staff members) supports the nannies administratively, practically, and substantively. The service also plays a crucial role in matchmaking with families and in drawing up a tailor-made roster. The parents also receive support. The service alerts them to the possibilities that exist to offset costs through their taxes and will negotiate on behalf of the families for a “childcare package” that is affordable. The childcare is also affordable for less wealthy families because the service, which acts as a networker and matchmaker, does not pass on any costs to the families. For families who cannot find any other solution, this type of childcare does mean a great deal of support⁹².

In the Netherlands, opening hours of nurseries are generous and many locations are open 11 hours/day. So, the problem is mainly with working evenings, weekends, ... In that case, parents that are looking for formal childcare, best contact a childminder (*gastouder*).

Flexible childcare is available, but there is not enough demand for it, either because it is too expensive, or because the quality is perceived too low. It requires a lot of childminders, so they often stop, and the number of childminders has gone down very fast in recent years. The quality of host parent care fluctuates enormously.

14. Employers for parents

If society says 'yes' to flexibility in employability, perhaps part of the cost can be put to employers? This question was raised in the focus group on occasional childcare in Flanders.

If the employer is going to provide childcare, even greater flexibility may be required. In Flanders there are not many 'company creches', though they exist e.g. in hospitals, universities ... Usually these crèches have evolved to non-profit organisations in the meantime. There is not necessarily a guarantee that everyone who works in the hospital will get a place there. What is possible, however, is that the opening hours will be adjusted to the demands of the employer.

Within the framework of the project with the single parents of the VDAB, interviews were conducted with both job seekers as with employers. One employer had an interesting way of working. When people came to apply for a cleaning job, he would ask questions about the family situation and about childcare and then he felt that they had a problem. He also stated that mediators (e.g. VDAB) were far too little prepared for these people. The employer would tell the jobseekers he wanted to employ them but that this was not possible with those family circumstances. He then gave the person concerned about three weeks to look for solutions in their own network/environment. Approximately 90% of them did find solutions and then he started to think along with them for the last 10%.

What can he contribute from his role as an employer?
Maybe less traditional solutions can be thought of as well.
(participant Flemish focus group)

The VDAB reimburses childcare cost for parents attending training courses. This way they contribute to the affordability of childcare for vulnerable parents looking for a job. For PACE, there was a joint success in Turnhout to look for free places in the 'expensive' non-income related childcare and the OCMW has taken up part of the bill. AGII⁹³ (The Flemish Integration Agency) also reimburses childcare costs, but only when parents have completed their integration trajectory. Pre-financing is also possible for the most vulnerable clients. If they find an income related childcare place, they can usually pay for it. But affordability is usually not the problem. The bigger problem is that parents do not find a place or do not know how to handle it. So, the price is not so much the threshold, it is more about the availability of the places. Moreover, an integration programme runs for more than 6 months, and the occasional places are sometimes limited to 6 months. As a result, after a first level of Dutch, someone suddenly has the problem of childcare again. The occasional childcare stops and there is no place in the regular childcare.

In France it is possible to set up a childcare solution while Pôle Emploi is working with the parent on the professional project at the same time. The so-called Crèches AVIP⁹⁴ (Crèches with a view to professional integration) have to offer 30% of places to job-seeking parents for at least 3 days a week and have an educational project that promotes this type of care. The parents themselves undertake to participate in the

meetings, workshops and events offered as part of the enhanced job-seeking support they receive, and Pôle Emploi has set up this support. The CAF will be able to organise meetings with parents to inform them of their rights. These joint Childcare provider/ Parent/ Pôle Emploi contracts are valid for six months, but once renewable. Pôle Emploi must adapt to the childcare structure.

Companies, training centres and other support providers could make available a list of childcare settings they work with or organise childcare themselves directly at the workplace. Companies could open to organisations and e.g. provide them with a room to set up e.g. a child carer who looks after the children. At St. Omer's Hospital,⁹⁵ the children have a crèche and it is right next door to the company. Part of the childcare places in this nursery can be reserved by other companies, training centres, and this way it can play a role in the trajectory towards professional integration. Each training centre should be able to have reserved places in childcare centres.

15. Parents for Parents

Some interesting interventions were made during the focus groups concerning the possibility of engaging vulnerable mothers actively as child carers. E.g. interviews were done by the VDAB with inactive women who practically did not speak Dutch, but who wanted to become a childminder. Huge barriers in terms of language and quality requirements made this impossible, but maybe this should be further explored and perhaps a trajectory could be developed?

So maybe we should arrange it differently: put the experienced supervisors in the occasional childcare and give these mothers a chance in the regular childcare where a good structure and supervision is present. *(participant Flemish focus group)*

Childcare can be open to volunteers, but that does not alter the fact that a childcare professional should be honourably paid to value.

I once saw a documentary about the very low wages in aviation. Certain chains can offer very low prices and people think that that's good for underprivileged people, but it's precisely those people who work there and are underpaid who end up in a poor situation as a result. Today there are also a lot of people who work in childcare who have a poor salary. *(participant Flemish focus group)*

Now there are certainly people who belong to the target group who work in the childcare sector and we think they should earn a full and decent wage.

There should be a volunteer framework in place. Volunteering has to fit within a global vision and it also needs to be well organized. In many countries it is difficult to do so due to elements such as legalisation, liability, etc. and that this is also a threshold. The fact that everyone has to be vetted (e.g. in the Netherlands on a continuous basis for everyone who is structurally in childcare) makes it sometimes very difficult or impossible to create a mix of professionals and volunteers. With PACE we experienced it was dif-

Dream Flemish Focus group

We are going for a neighbourhood-oriented open house where occasional childcare is possible and integrated into the regular childcare, where informal childcare is also integrated or linked to it in cooperation with other actors. The ‘nannies’ will also be sent from there. The employer or employment agency works through an integrated desk. There is a professional team as a staff that is diverse and a mirror of the society in that neighbourhood. They are also well trained to deal with people in various circumstances: vulnerability, diversity, etc. People who would not yet find their way to this very recognizable neighbourhood-oriented operation, are then given extra support. But above all, proactive attention is paid to informing parents about childcare and familiarising them with childcare from the moment of pregnancy or childbirth. Guidance to finding an affordable (income-related) childcare place is also very important.

difficult to create a cross-border framework due to differences in context and legislation, but guiding principles were formulated.

Within the Kind & Gezin Agency in Flanders there are ongoing discussions whether specific projects such as KOALA (child and parent activities in the context of child poverty, network driven) or AMIF (for young mothers) are to be considered as real childcare activities. If childcare is needed, but only in the margin of a parent and child activity, and only for a short while, do we have to consider this care as formal childcare? Do they fall under the licence requirement?⁹⁶ The position of the Agency is that these methods should be seen as a transitional form, but lawyers have a hard time with that. If they are subject to a licence requirement, new barriers arise instead of the goal they want to achieve, a soft transition form, getting to know each other... On the other hand, no licence (requirements) also means no funding, no clear rules and this has consequences as well: locations have to be found, working with volunteers is possible, but only to be recommended when guidance from professionals is provided for them.

The same goes for informal initiatives, based on volunteering.

PACE partner De Mussen in The Hague was looking for possibilities to organise childcare adjacent to their training facility De Werkplaats, and to do so in an informal way, providing care by parents and neighbours on a voluntary basis. Why? Because the strict entitlement criteria for childcare allowance excludes a lot of PACE participants from entitlement which makes formal childcare too expensive. To this end De Mussen has been in contact with the inspection services of GGD since 2017. Until very recently, however, they did not obtain permission to organise this because quality standards did not give permission to use volunteers in formal childcare situations. After much consultation and explanation, GGD has agreed with the approach and permission has been granted. This was about the same time that parental creches in the Netherlands have got more leni-

ence,⁹⁷ and after the inspectors came to know PACE much better. Information and advocacy do help.

PACE partner Arques is looking at the possibility to work with a (semiformal) childcare network of mothers and grandmothers, who would be able to accommodate to the needs of parents in irregular work by providing childcare in the evenings or in early mornings, a mummy-granny network.

When working with volunteers and parents, guidance and support from professionals is provides.

MUTUAL TRUST – THE PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE

16. Parents distrust formal (occasional) childcare

The Dutch Emancipation Monitor shows that confidence in formal childcare is not always present and that parents feel that small children do not always belong in childcare. (See 2 Attitudes on Motherhood & Work). Especially our target group of vulnerable parents is less often convinced that it is good for (small) children if they go to day care a few days a week and they are less confident that it’s safe for their child.⁹⁸ There is some kind of misplaced distrust in formal childcare⁹⁹ – it is compared with ‘it is better at home’, this while we do not know what that quality at home is.

The parents have worries about themselves as well: the fact of entrusting their child to someone else develops the fear of being judged themselves in the way they look after the child. While for other parents, entering school, frees them from the burden of the child’s responsibility.

Childcare is seen as lazy but early education¹⁰⁰ is seen as more positive, where it brings an extra child does not get at home. On the other hand, early education can also put off other parents who think that “putting children” into “school” is too early.

In the Flemish focus group, the comparison with problems and actions in residential care was made, because of some similarities in terms of the gap between the setting and the home situation. In the residential sector as well, efforts are being made to let older people still ‘cook their own meal’ because of this gap. At home they still do a lot themselves and then they suddenly find themselves in a completely different situation because the health inspection simply cannot abide this. That is certainly a problem. We see the same tensions in childcare, where parents are feeling they are placed opposite to professionals.

“We send our son here because he can learn a lot here, at home he cannot learn these things. He comes here twice, three times a week. Very important is having confidence and trust in childcare. In other places this did not work. My wife is very strict on food and behaviour, here in 38 Volt this is not a problem. We do have trust in this system, and thanks to the trust no problem to come even more than is necessary.”
(a father from Mechelen, 2018)

17. Staff Attitudes

Some front-line staff colludes with parents and did not give positive messages about childcare. Some of these staff members had their own beliefs that children should be at home. Staff did not realise that childcare can be safeguarding and give parents space to improve their lives and make changes.

Childcare staff show little enthusiasm for occasional childcare especially because of the so-called harmful consequences for the children, based on educational criteria.

Research¹⁰¹ during the PACE project has shown that a lot of childcare staff still thinks that working parents have absolute priority and that parents should not bring their child when they do not have to work. Also, PACE partner Arques refers to a recent study on CAPSO childcare where professionals were interviewed, and only part accepted that although parents are not employed, they can leave their children in a childcare setting. Childcare Staff members traditionally focus solely on the child and do not address the perspective of the parent, of the family. But child poverty is a problem of poverty in families. It is the parents who should be able to obtain an adequate income, and childcare is a way to ensure that the combination of work and family is possible. Child carers who can see the parent's perspective can achieve more.

Changing the social norms about the profession of childminder and childcare professional – which is currently an undervalued profession- would also make a big change. In some areas, the number of childminders is decreasing, and this makes it more difficult for parents to find (flexible) childcare. However, the shortage of professionals leads to policy decisions that are not compatible with a revaluation of the profession. E.g. the Flemish Coalition Agreement states that the conditions for childminders will be relaxed again, this also concerns the level of childcare. Again, this is managing the deficit.

18. PACE-partners work in different ways on building trust between parents-staff¹⁰²

18.1 Pre-childcare trust building programs

Some partners work with a specific programme to introduce parents to childcare. Most of these programs already existed before PACE. Examples are 'Samenspel' in De Mussen (NE), Learning Links in Kent (UK), Mama Leert in Turnhout (BE) and LAEP Lieu d'Accueil Parents Enfants – *Meeting Space for Parents and Children*) in France in which parents and children meet and play in a safe environment.

Within the PACE project, the city of Ghent tried to work on trust building through the experiment of the PACE POP UP childcare, a specific form of emergency childcare.

The city of **Ghent** set up a **POP-UP** childcare setting during the PACE project. The childcare can be transported in a van and can be set up and dismantled within a few hours. The childcare meets all quality standards: there is room for eating, sleeping, playing and communicating with parents. There is a pedagogical framework for intake interviews and there is staff specifically trained for the pop-up. The childcare is embedded in a large childcare organisation with a lot of experience. Nevertheless, the experiment did not go as planned.

The organiser wanted to offer childcare to the parents who were the target group of the PACE project: parents with a distance to childcare and work.

Starting in 2017, the pop-up appeared at locations with a concrete labour offer for vulnerable families: fairs, events and training days. At that time, it turned out that especially parents who were already familiar with childcare were using the pop-up. In fact, the organizer wanted to reach parents for whom the concept of childcare was still new. But they did not accept the offer.

They did not want to just leave their child in a temporary shelter with employees they had never seen before. The experiment failed because there is no time to build up trust in a temporary facility. As a result, the shelter was not usable for the parents for whom it was intended.

The city of Ghent reoriented the experiment and now uses the pop-up to introduce parents to childcare. Organisations that work with parents in poverty, with newcomers or with parents with a distance to the labour market can 'hire' the pop-up during a training or event. Parents get an explanation about childcare and can ask questions. Children can play or sleep there while their parents are around. This introduction can make the step to a regular nursery easier. For that purpose, the pop-up childcare is useful for families¹⁰³.

18.2 Staff training & coaching

Staff trainings on poverty, cultural diversity and communication skills have been offered to staff members from childcare in all countries. For instance, PACE Partner Wattlelos has offered trainings to support the childcare professionals' attitude in working with parents in line with our PACE family involvement framework e.g. working towards a non-judgemental attitude, understanding the personal situations and behaviours of families ...

Two of the Flemish PACE settings – Het Lindeke Turnhout and Volt38 Mechelen – received **pedagogical coaching** from PACE Partner Karel de Grote university college who supported them also on the level of parental involvement. Evaluations overall have been very positive.

18.3 Parental Involvement

Parents involvement and participation in childcare is seen as an important element in making childcare ‘work’. Parental involvement, in the sense that parents are listened to and listening and working together with parents is obvious for childcare staff, is one of the recommendations to make childcare more accessible for vulnerable parents.¹⁰⁴ The way in which parents are welcomed and perceived by staff can be very influential in determining the accessibility of a childcare provision.¹⁰⁵

This approach was chosen to bring the parent’s perspective into childcare: to underline that parents have more roles in life than being a parent and to make clear that children’s needs are sometimes intertwined with parents’ needs.

The policy contexts on parental involvement (and volunteering) differ between the four member states, and so do the practices in parental involvement within childcare of the PACE project partners. They have engaged in a wide range of activities to encourage parental involvement. Two examples:

The French Partners bring together parents in specific activities such as coffee groups (Café-Parents), lunch breaks for parents and children together. “The Café-Parents is once a month. The child can then go to nursery. The nursery also knows this in advance and gives PACE parents priority. This is an extra day on which the child can go to nursery. The parents receive the information and data on time, it is clear, and it can thus be passed on to the nursery.” (a mother from Wattrelos, 2020) These activities are supported by childcare staff. In the mummy/granny network of PACE Partner Arques, parents support each other and actively discuss topics related to raising children and childcare. Parents learn from each other and are supported in this by staff. Creating an informal volunteer network to provide occasional and flexible childcare during courses and activities for parents. Working together with parents to organise activities from within childcare.

Parental involvement is very important in **De Mussen**. Parents become a member of De Mussen and are asked if they would be willing to participate. More than 100 parents are available who are involved in the activities and are willing to assist during activities. Examples are the initiative of “Ontbijt je Wijs” or taking part in the parent committee. De Mussen supports parents to climb the participation ladder. They include parents in the staff training sessions. De Mussen offers integrated family support with active involvement of the childcare settings.

ORGANISING THE PACE TRAJECTORY TO WORK

Training and developing skills is often a key to work. With our PACE Trajectory, training and soft skills coaching will be organised, and parents will get guidance in building up their own PDP -personal development plan. As the parents are already involved in the childcare, they will be more confident to start and continue training and they will be supported by their peers in the childcare. Many training and coaching will be on the premises of the childcare so at the same time the distance between parent and child will stay sizable.

The PACE trajectory takes shape in a tailored, personalized way, based on needs and competences of the parent: actions can vary from information on benefits, helping parents to navigate the system over soft skills training, labour market training, apprenticeships, education and so on... They can focus on soft skills or be more directly aimed at a job, but also parental involvement within the nursery, or volunteering opportunities within or outside childcare come into the picture.

PACE is a voluntary and a personal trajectory. Time & respect are essential to create trust. Respect means that we look at the parent not as being personally accountable. PACE is parent-led, flexible and on their pace. This does not detract from the fact that there may well be guidance e.g. there are, examples within PACE where there is a strong insist, for example about the type of work parents are looking for. PACE wants to empower parents, give them control of their trajectory: the keyworker must provide the tools, not “turnkey” solutions.

But parents are not ‘pushed’ into work. We should however bear in mind that part of our participants are benefit recipients and thus accountable to public employment services.

The parents don’t usually know the link with work in the beginning, it is added while already in the project. They don’t feel obliged to work. They always have the choice. *(PACE-Officer CSEclaté)*

Some principles of PACE method were more extensively discussed within the focus groups.

Every parent is assigned a key worker, that helps to bridge childcare-work. This can be a social professional or a volunteer. We will discuss what the role of this key worker is, what the main competences of this keyworker are, and what the conditions are for a volunteer to be able to function in this role. Second, we will discuss the PDP and the importance of process-based working (or not?). Last, we will look at the advantages of

investing in a peer network of parents and show examples of how PACE partners work with parents to reach and work with other parents.

19. Role & Competences of the Case Manager/Keyworker

What is the role of a keyworker in guiding vulnerable parents to work? Which competences, skills, attitudes this social professional needs to have?

- A case manager needs to be able to **engage** parent. Engaging with families where they are and going to the family. Able to listen to and empathise with the family and her needs.
- **Building a trusting relationship** and be visible for parents, so they can get the support they need, someone to go to.
 - Personal experience is deemed important here. A keyworker who can use his personal experience will be more credible and trustworthy. It will often make it possible to bring out sooner other barriers (mobility, childcare, etc.) in relation to employment.
 - Key workers are therefore from the same community, sharing the same experience and understanding families and individuals. They will have knowledge of the background, the barriers, the stay at home culture, ...
- They must have a good **knowledge** of the social map; they need to be able to have access to adult training, signposting to other services for example, mental health problems, food banks, housing, crisis, etc. They need to understand the complexity of the benefits system and be aware of the different types of childcare that is available/on offer.
- They should have a **network** around them to support with wider issues such as benefits and childcare, training, mental health, wide range. In Brighton fits with Family information Service wider remit to offer family support.
- They need to have the right attitude: instead of steering, starting from the strengths of the person to be guided
- They need have a lot **resilience**, patience, and keep working with the parents, trying to pull together the different services for the parent, and bringing organisation to come together.
- There is a variety of different families, and some families are not thinking about work or childcare but will be thinking about the future of their child. They will need **diversity** knowledge, intercultural communication skills

20. Conditions to engage Volunteers as Keyworkers

Participants in all focus groups had outspoken opinions and experience about this, sometimes in relation to the PACE Project. They felt overall that a large part of the tasks of a keyworker can be taken over by volunteers. Main conditions had to do with taken care of volunteers and preparing them for their tasks.

Most participants certainly see the advantages of working with a buddy system (*pareinage*).

20.1 Advantages

The volunteering ‘buddy’ should be someone *who thinks along* with and *supports* them in the way they go. But that person needs to have some knowledge or know where he can find the necessary information to pass on to that person again. Going along *at the pace of the people*, with the ups and downs, is important. Feeling, listening, and thinking along is more important than pushing the person into work as quickly as possible.

With vulnerable parents, people who have a hard time getting to work, the main goal is that they regain a grip on their own future, parents have to become self-reliant, take control themselves. To work on some basic psychological needs a person needs support and a mentor will help someone who wants to go back to work to regain their self-confidence. For this you a number of competences are needed: to be able to listen well, to build a relationship of trust, to be able to give someone a push and to switch very well between content and the process. What often happens is that the person is sent from one place to another, and this way it is impossible to build a trusting relationship.
(*participant Dutch focus group*)

A volunteer has inherently more possibilities to work more tailor-made because he is less **under pressure** from ‘having to finish X files’ or being only ‘allowed to put so much time in one file’. Also, there is the possibility of **matching personalities**: matching the right (competences and background of the) volunteer with the right (needs and requirements of the) parent. E.g. a parent who does not directly need substantive support but just needs someone who takes the first steps, and another parent may be very insecure and therefore needs a different guidance.

There are **mutual gains** for the volunteer and the parent. For a parent who is looking for work and who is having a very hard time, it will be harder to ask for help from a professional than to be accompanied by a buddy. For the buddy it is also more interesting because you learn something as a volunteer which is also an added value.

20.2 Conditions

Volunteers/buddies have to be **guided/supported** themselves. It is important to have a **common thread** in the accompaniment, whether it is on the aspects of employment, childcare, etc.

Someone working as a professional trajectory counsellor can work with a team of volunteers, meeting them from time to time, setting up InterVision groups, making sure of follow-up and evaluation, providing training This way more can be achieved. **Training** is an absolute prerequisite.

At De Mussen volunteers are trained with tools to help people in the neighbourhood, which is one of the keys to success for a project like De Werkplaats. Mentors often have only one goal in mind and that is to achieve a result and often ignore the relationship, creating trust. It sometimes takes 1-3 months before you have the confidence of people and can get them moving. Result is great, but first have confidence. Volunteers need to be well equipped with skills. We must be careful not to think too much in terms of results, but tailoring is so important. Sometimes very small steps can be so valuable (getting up on time is sometimes a lot for someone who has been out of a normal rhythm for years). Not thinking too much in results requires time, patience, and a tailored approach. Also, from the objectives that the municipality sets, people are very pushed and pulled from all sides, but when results are lacking we keep on pedaling, they drop out, or we get rid of them (or they get sanctioned away). (*trajectory coach at De Mussen*)

But this result-driven way of working is a main characteristic of tenders and projects, and so are subsidies for programs that work with volunteers. So, the danger remains that culpabilisation and sanctioning peek from behind the corner.

Working with volunteers can only work if it is really a **story of complementarity**. Guiding parents on a trajectory to work is not only about going along with people, paying them a visit, giving them a plan. It goes further than that and requires **professionalism**: considering what a parent is able to do and what the trajectory towards could be, mapped out based on competences, or what the estimate is of the maximum step on the participation ladder. It is an added value if professionals can be relieved of a number of tasks, but the relation is also a different one. A mentor/buddy is actually **an equal relationship** with the parent.

A volunteer has to be aware that he is limited, that there is a **limit** to where his guidance can reach and that at some point, he has to transfer a case to the professional. E.g. as a volunteer you could also cause damage by filling in forms. It is dangerous to fall into the role of counsellor. Regulations are important, e.g. in the context of Refugee Work in the Netherlands volunteers had raised 1000 euros to donate to a man, a nice warm thought, but ... the benefit of that man was stopped because he had received a donation.

Time and work (and money) can be saved, doing this with volunteers.

But we have to question to what extent is there a danger that **volunteers displace paid jobs?** We need to think about which society we want, and reflect on recent trend and methods like volunteering, digitalisation ... We value personal contact, but do we val-

ue professionalism as well? Working with buddies is a different way of working, not a cheaper way of working that can be used to save money and throw professionalism out of the window. It requires investment, coordination, training, ...
With PACE we developed a framework for volunteering with some guiding principles to that effect.

21. PDP is a tailored plan on the future

The Personal Development Plan (PDP) makes it possible to accompany parents differently than before. It allows to prioritise and set stages in the accompaniment. Setting common objectives contributes to the parents' confidence. The PDP creates transparency, it allows us to set things out clearly. At the same time, the parent is an actor in her project, which is different. Before, we had referred this mother to our offer e.g. workshops because we felt it was good for her. Now she makes the choice herself.

The PDP's have helped them explore their own feelings and encouraged them to try out new opportunities. PDP's make small successes visible!

22. Process-based working

Process-based working is essential in order not to make a certain operation dependent on one person. E.g. partners have noticed that some activities go very well, and parents have a lot of praise, but that a very personal and driven functioning also depends on the supervisor himself. If he or she falls away, everything falls apart like a house of cards. A system, a process- is needed that does not make the operation to dependent on one person. Working with PDP's is helping in this respect. It gives a structure. Some partners however feel it stands in the way of delivering a more organic personal, tailored approach.

Policymakers in the different focus groups all testified to the effect of working by process, while offering a personalised follow-up for those clients who are far from employment. This is the best way to provide support. Room for this personalised approach is provided by most regulatory frameworks, but also the social worker's discretionary room gives leeway by which personalised guidance can be interpreted for someone.

Ownership for the parent is important, but walking the walk together is important as well, say the policymakers in the Flemish focus group.

For persons who have to follow an Integration Trajectory, an ‘action plan’ is drawn up. The initial plan is more or less one sided, but gradually elements are included on which they want to work themselves (it becomes a personal action plan) and in this way they eventually reach the goal. This way you get a personalized approach. You have to obtain a kind of ‘ownership’. Doing it together is also important.

The love-hate relationship between employment counsellors and a PDP is also related to administration. Sometimes it may seem too forced; spontaneity is also important. However, it is important to think about short- and long-term goals for the client.

In this respect it is vital to keep the processes as **simple** as possible. Elements in a process are, for example, the InterVision meetings, that take place every once in a while, where the professionals and the volunteers discuss the cases with each other. In this way the effectiveness and professionalism can increase. On the other hand, protocols (steps to achieve a certain result) are a hindrance and it’s better to stay away from them. They can put a brake on a tailored approach, both the good and the underperforming clients will work towards average. Nobody benefits, clients benefit when you can ‘meander’.

A PDP is a handy tool that shows where the parent is in the process, and to look back at how certain things have gone, and at what the person concerned has already learned. How it is noted is less important, e.g. on a magazine or in a diary, ...The sense of purpose is much appreciated. But whatever the case, if the objectives are not achieved, once again we may enter the sphere of sanctioning. Another advantage is that the small successes are named effectively.

23. How to actively engage parents within the PACE-program?

Policymakers tend to agree that it is very interesting to gather testimonials from earlier participants, ask them if they would like to share those experiences and thus become Ambassadors or Role Models for current participants.

But of course, parents in a similar situation meet through PACE, and knowing that they are not alone, the ability to share experiences, reinforces them.

This is a method in which there is a lot of interest today. E.g. the VDAB in Flanders wants to set up a tendered mentoring for non-Dutch speakers. In this concept the volunteers are ex-parents who were on the same trajectory, succeeded, and therefore can be ideal mentors. They want to use the involvement of inactive people with a migration background and use them as a lever to work. They already received reactions from the care sector because they count on many volunteers ...

Especially our PACE partners that have their experience as community centres – the French partners and De Mussen in the Netherlands- showed us how it is possible to create a working group of parents that can be deployed in outreaching for candidates, in reinforcing the group, but also to become the basis for a self-reliant after-care.

23.1 De Mussen¹⁰⁶: outreaching

In the Schilderswijk women are often still stuck in a traditional gender role that prevents them from entering the labour market. De Mussen holds regular group meetings to discuss these gender roles, to provide information about employment and the role that childcare centres can play in this. In addition, their ‘contact women’ meet with individual women to discuss this and support them if necessary.

De Mussen tries to reach and activate isolated mothers by means of trained voluntary mothers from the neighbourhood. The ‘Schilderswijk Moeders’ go on home visits in the neighbourhood and signal things that often remain hidden from the regular social workers. If necessary, they make sure that the help gets going. In this way they fulfil a bridging function between informal and formal care. They bring other women (e.g. future PACE Parents) to De Mussen and so it becomes a familiar environment here as well. When they are referred to them, contact is maintained.

Conversely, teachers and other employees of De Mussen identify women who need a helping hand and refer them to the Schilderswijk Moeders. These practical questions are often the starting point for contact and building a necessary bond of trust in order to assess whether there are any other problems. In addition to offering a listening ear, the Schilderswijk Moeders refer women to activities in De Mussen and/or beyond. They motivate women to participate in sports activities, language, computer and creativity classes and introduce them if necessary.

These women have activated many women in recent years, and they also develop themselves. Some have followed an education last year; others have found a job. This makes them a role model for women in the district.

The Schilderswijk Moeders project continues to be a great success. Many women are reached and activated. Because of the approachability they reach a lot of women in the neighbourhood and even occasionally outside.

Meanwhile, Schilderswijk Mothers has registered dozens of clients who were on welfare, registered for the STIP scheme or registered at De Werkplaats (PACE parents).

Sharing success stories can also turn on this way of working. Let people tell how their lives changed after they received the right support ... This is what we did with the Schilderswijk Mothers and with PACE Participants who shared their experiences.

IN AN INTEGRATED WAY THROUGH INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION & JOINED UP WORKING

Integrated working, with exchange of information and better referrals, can make (childcare) services **more accessible to vulnerable groups**. This is essential because vulnerable groups are lost trying to find their way in a fragmented offer of services, thus risking a non-take-up of rights.

Integrated working also offers advantages for professionals and organisations.¹⁰⁷ Childcare practitioners and teams are not always equipped to deal with 'wicked problems' such as poverty, social exclusion.

The coordinator of the exclusively occasional childcare setting Het Lindeke in Turnhout works closely with the training centres of the Dutch and Civic Integration classes. "I try to have regular contact with these supervisors about the childcare plans of the parents who have to attend the Dutch and Civic Integration classes. I indicate what is possible. It often happens that the training partners adjust or postpone the timetable of the parent's lessons until they have a childcare place available at our childcare setting. In addition, we give a certificate of absence for the parents that have to follow Integration classes but were unable to obtain an available childcare place. This does take away the stress for the parents. Sometimes both parents have to go to class at the same time, so only half a day of childcare is needed.

(PACE employee, Turnhout, 2020)

With PACE we have organised a collaboration network with a diversity of partners. Childcare facilities and solutions to different types of problems exist, but parents, staff and employment services have limited knowledge of the possibilities. Vulnerable parents who want to work, can be confronted with other problems they have to tackle first before they can focus on their route to work. Such a collaboration will make referrals much easier, but also enable sharing knowledge, and promote reflecting about the target group and on professionalism from different viewpoints.

Frontline workers working with parents on employment are based in childcare (e.g. Children's Centre's in the UK), not immediately associated with (more rigid) employment agencies.

Frontline Workers of PES are invited within childcare setting (PACE Mechelen). Or the other way around. In Kent (UK) a PACE trajectory counsellor has a weekly day at the employment service to help parents find work. Parents in need of childcare can contact her immediately for information or can embark on a customised trajectory that combines childcare and guidance to work. In addition, the counsellor provides information about childcare to the staff of the employment service. They are now more aware of the barriers in the current system. Recently agreed to have a lead role in the JCP for a childcare lead in each district in Kent.

My PACE key worker is the nicest person in the Job Centre, even if she does not work there. *(a mother from Kent Gravesham, 2020)*

24. Working towards a shared ambition?

Working in an integrated way brings together organisations that traditionally have different values, ambitions, a different client view. How do we bridge those differences?

Cooperating with different organisations that offer different services will bring together different objectives, visions and rules together. They may serve different target groups or age groups; they may be funded in different ways (e.g. public or private); their goals may have a different focus; they may report to different authorities, or function under different monitoring mechanisms...

To develop a smooth integration, there has to be a common ground, a shared ambition that is the drive of the network. While partners require space to maintain their own identities and possess their own visions and missions, their connected work within the integrated setting requires them to agree upon at least some fundamental issues within any given policy context. This is not easy and takes a lot of time. Identifying the different goals of each organization is a good start for such a process.

There are also difficulties because we do not know the actions of others. We often have the impression that others are walking on our own turf. E.g. It is true that we do not imagine that social centres can provide personalised solutions. The risk lies in the fact that the other will not react in the same way. *(participant French focus group)*

Only when organisations know each other well can they discover a common interest. A network should create extra opportunities for each partner¹⁰⁸. Therefore, occasional, and flexible childcare facilities invest time and energy in a network, even if they have little capacity. After all, it helps to realise their mission and vision.

Classic problems that arise in the search for a shared ambition are:

- Clash of cultures: especially when both public and private organisations are involved
- behaviour and understanding of services and methods that creates a divide among partners and prevents them from reaching a shared purpose.
- When working with families in vulnerable situations, certain perspectives on society, on poverty, on conditionality, and even on ideologies.

Thinking about the collaboration between PACE and the VDAB towards training and so on, I am reminded of communications from the VDAB to parents. In the context of PACE the way in which the VDAB communicates with parents is not in line with what the parents can handle. It is too high threshold. PACE counsellors indicate that they cannot do otherwise because this is the standard for them, and they have to present the communication in this way. So, there are barriers that have to do with what they can and are allowed to do from their organisation. The communication from the VDAB is based on rights and obligations. *(PACE Officer)*

We are also working with VVSG and local authorities, for example, and then you are also dealing with various domains. The question in this cooperation is ‘what is your angle/end goal?’ is it work or is it welfare? *(PACE Officer)*

A shared ambition is not something that is discussed and agreed at the start of a cooperation and can then be regarded as finished. It is an ongoing process on which work must continue. Organisations have to keep the conversation going, not only about their common goals, but also on the ways and methods they want to reach those goals for their parents. For this reason, PACE partner Kent made a local PACE steering group with representatives of the main partner organisations in the network to discuss and decide about the project progress.

25. Other Conditions to work in an integrated way

The PACE network is a **parent centred** network. It starts with the parents. The main driver behind integrated working is providing a more accessible response to the needs of vulnerable young parents. Therefore, it is only natural to involve those parents from the start and base an integrated way of working on their needs and find out what they think about the offer made to them. This means e.g. involving them in evaluations.

Working towards a common goal within a network can be quite a challenge for the professionals involved. For this reason, **guidance and support** need to be in place at a

network level. This can be achieved by facilitating reflective practice, continuous professional development, setting up learning communities, and by scheduling enough team meetings, working groups, study visits, and so on ...

We meet every 2 weeks, to solve problems and talk about the issues between co-workers and problems they encounter in the context of PACE. (PACE Wattrelos)

Giving workers repeated updates, sharing objectives, and understanding their motivation. (PACE Kent)

Meet regularly, **keep the contact alive on the different levels** is vital in this respect. “We meet every four months with everyone who is working on employment”. (PACE employee, Brighton & Hove, 2019) By meeting regularly and making appointments, employees from different organisations are better informed about each other’s offers and the needs of parents. This increases **mutual understanding and trust**. The partners of the PACE project indicate that there are strong links between organisations that previously had little contact with each other.

Through collaboration we often make agreements at a higher level/ management level, but then it turns out that the consequences of those agreements have not been discussed at the operational levels of e.g. public services like OCMW and VDAB and sometimes things still go wrong. (PACE Gent)

It is necessary that -most certainly in more hierarchic organisations- management **includes the employees** concerned in the conversation about the collaboration. This can only improve the quality of the change.

Success is important to a collaboration; if it feels good and it makes you stronger to continue working. That is why ‘**Quick Wins**’ are important because they show that getting results is feasible, and they have a positive effect on the attitudes of those involved.

Different **roles** must be defined and included to achieve a functioning cooperation. the **mandates and responsibilities have to be clearly defined and accepted**. when this is not the case, misunderstandings will arise, partners assume that another service or person will take up a certain task and people may feel less committed.

Connecting communication and information sharing between services and providers is extremely important for integrated working. Cooperating with others also presupposes the ability to enter dialogical relationships, to be able to listen to another person’s needs without falling into line with them. **Dialogue** and **reflection** are required on the network’s shared vision and purposes, processes, and actions. A shared follow-up requires a **coherent discourse** for a mutual unambiguous understanding between the different professionals.

When sharing information on vulnerable persons, clear deontological rules should be drafted¹⁰⁹.

The vision and framework is all good but you keep feeling that in reality there is a difference in the way each team works -depending on the personal feelings of the people who are in it- about how strict they have to deal with rules. For example: privacy, what can I say and what not?

So that is very decisive for your cooperation. Some organisations say “it has to come from my client”, others say ‘no problem if they believe it is in the interest of their client”. Anyway, professional confidentiality is a factor in sharing information. (*participant Flemish focus group*)

Someone with a helicopter view is needed, a coördinator who can bring parties together in a natural way and increase mutual understanding between them.

Parents have a frontline worker who works with them specifically, but both the parent and the frontline worker must be able to count on a ‘broader network’ coordinated by a social professional. This network connects internal services and external services, providers, and businesses. A flexible structure with clarity about the coordinating mechanism and the internal structure of the partnership

For a cooperation to be successful and to ensure continuity, it is important to introduce **systematics and processes**. Ultimately the collaboration can ensure that change no longer takes place on an ad hoc basis to help a specific family but is built into the system.

We developed the “Maintenant!” (Now!) application in collaboration with the Pôle Emploi. However, following a change of management with Pôle Emploi, there is no visibility on the use of this application.
(*PACE Officer Saint-Martin Boulogne, 2019*)

Community centered. The strength of De Mussen and the French partners is that they are located within the neighbourhood, so that works very well. It is important that you can reach the people, keep the support close, and go from there. **Co-location** is ideal. A very large building where everyone works together or e.g. the practice of inviting employment service professionals within childcare (or the other way around).

The **link with the (local) government policy** is important to get ahead¹¹⁰. E.g. professionals from private organisations cannot increase affordable available childcare places. This can only be done by childcare politics. So, it is important to have local authority as a partner in the collaboration. Collaboration to weigh on policy by way of joint **advocacy** is always a good idea. This is linked with the need for the requisite financial resources. (Local) Authorities can stimulate and support networks, and legislation may provide the required setting – but without any **funding**, networks are difficult to sustain.

The impact provided by integrated working (for children and families, for professionals and organisations, and for policy) should be regularly **monitored and evaluated**.

26. PACE Bubble?

PACE parents are, to a large extent, benefit recipients of unemployment or social assistance who also follow a trajectory to work with the relevant official public services. Sometimes they even 'negotiate' a kind of PDP (PPAE in France, GMPI at OCMW in Flanders). If they become PACE parents, they have another such route. Within PACE, of course, it is a voluntary trajectory.

But is this not creating another extra layer? And doesn't this mean double work and energy for parents and staff?

We asked the question whether it was not possible to create a PACE Bubble. Isn't it possible to make PACE a fully-fledged alternative to the route at the official services? Could PACE be considered as proof of engagement from the parent? Or are agreements possible on this? At least on an individual level, but preferably on a project level?

A real PACE Bubble was not considered possible, and for different reasons.

26.1 On a case level

PACE trajectories cannot replace formal mandatory activation programs that parents have to follow when they are benefit recipients. In all country's policymakers were very clear on this.

There are legal conditions to be met, claimant commitments, but integration of the PACE project/methods can be done and in a way to avoid double work for both staff and parents.

Policymakers do not always see how the PACE method could be a substitute for more formal trajectories. E.g. in the Netherlands, integration is seen as a totally different domain all together, not as a trajectory to work. And the conditions for unemployed with unemployment benefits on the one hand and with social assistance benefits (after 2 years) on the other hand, are totally different. The first group must apply for a job 5 times a month. The second must prove this 5 times a week.

But on the other hand, they think it should be possible, because the goals of the different programs are the same. More in particular, they think about the support and workshops for the benefit recipients, where now there is an overlap in the training offered.

Some agreements can be made, and PACE made it possible to evolve from a case by case collaboration to a more systematic collaboration/based on mutual trust relation and openness between PACE officer and public service staff. This however, we feel is still very depended on persons.

As long as the parent -who is on a social assistance benefit- is in a participation process, because he is not yet sufficiently employable, being engaged in a program at De Mussen is a fully-fledged trajectory for me. If a parent is going to participate in some kind of activities in an organisation, for example coffee morning participation, this activity

can be reported to me and I can justify it as part of the trajectory by responding to social indicators (she comes out of the house, she builds a network, she meets people, she works on the language...) and so she can be left alone for a while. We can discuss how often a parent must come.

The municipality remains the leader for this target group, so if they think the participant is ready for work, then the rules are much stricter. And if the municipality does not know enough about which training and support packages are on the market¹¹¹... they cannot buy these services. Now I know about PACE at the Werkplaats/De Mussen and the results it has, we are interested! (*counsellor of the program Werkoffensief 500+¹¹² from the city of The Hague – participant Dutch focus group*)

The jobcentre still has legal requirements to meet with parents but will take PACE into consideration and change the interview they have with parents. Just checking in with how PACE is going. Jobcentre agrees that working on PACE counts as seeking work and moving forward (*participant Jobcentre Plus focus group UK*)

In Flemish Social Assistance, benefit recipients (most of PACE parents) must negotiate¹¹³ an individualised trajectory GPMI -*Geindividualiseerd Project Maatschappelijke Integratie*- which maps their (mandatory) route to work. In the Flemish focus group, we discussed whether the PACE PDP could not replace this GPMI for the PACE parents. This GPMI is considered a PDP as well, but there are of course fundamental differences. The goal of GPMI is that it is a route to bring people back to the labour market (or to society if work is not possible). So that is more or less the same. It can include all kinds of things of what the client/stakeholder wants to do and what the institution wants to offer. Also, the GMPI is a mandatory trajectory, while PACE is voluntary. Here again problems of time, pace, respect ... results and sanctioning may arise.

The PACE trajectory can never be a fully-fledged alternative to the GPMI, because the law provides that GPMI has to be agreed upon, but it can be integrated. The parent *Leefloner* can comply with his GPMI by following a PACE trajectory if this was negotiated in the GPMI. The OCMW social worker remains in charge of the trajectory. Double work can be avoided were it is in the discretion of this social worker to appeal to an alternative route. The parent will not have to make 2 plans with 2 sets of objectives and actions. He has to make them one time in PACE and can integrate them in/as the GPMI. The parent will also have to account for this when he or she is invited by the OCMW social worker who manages the file. But that is limited at the moment to only a few times a year.

In the Flemish focus group participants were convinced this should not be limited to contacts with social workers on a case level. On a policy level a click should be made that the PACE trajectory can be integrated in the GPMI. It is important to do so, because without a framework, the discretionary room case managers in the public services have, could lead to arbitrariness. Conditions to make such a framework are excellent with the Flemish partners Gent, Turnhout and Mechelen.

26.2 On a Program level?

In Ghent and Turnhout, the PACE networks were able to go a step further and influence local policy. There is now continued attention to flexible and occasional childcare in combination with employment from the viewpoint of vulnerable families. And through local policy, the national level was also reached.

The city of Ghent, VDAB and the social partners will launch an ambitious Labour Pact¹⁴ for Ghent on 2 July 2019. With twenty actions, together they will help 2,500 jobseekers or other active Ghent citizens find work. The pact also focuses on the labour market of the future: inclusive workplaces, lifelong learning and workable work are central. The Labour Pact is the result of successful social dialogue in Ghent, without taboos and with a view to concrete actions.

During the launch, the first twenty actions will also be presented, including:

- Improve preconditions for applying for a job through childcare. Pop-up childcare at locations where parents are brought into contact with employers (job fair, conferences...).
- Use of day-care centres for the start-up of guidance projects to work.

(<https://stad.gent/nl/werken-ondernemen/nieuws-evenementen/arbeidspact-zet-2500-gentenaars-extra-aan-het-werk>)

In this way, the PACE actions and methods were sustainably integrated into a broader employment policy, beyond the duration of the project.

27. The Future

The previous example of Ghent already indicates where the future of PACE may lie post-project.

The main question here was whether PACE would be implemented within existing structures, or whether it should be developed as something separate from existing policy initiatives.

In France, where PACE was experimented with in 2 Centres Sociaux it was suggested during the last focus group to talk with the Fédération des Centres Sociaux (made up of 180 social centres) in order to help spread the practices developed during the project. There was a lot of enthusiasm in adopting the PACE approach for this would be useful for parents.

In Flanders, the focus group members were aware of the good practices in Ghent and Turnhout, where the PACE method will be continued. The future lies in fine-tuning the method and have it embedded in existing structures and not to start new initiatives, separate op existing services and trajectories. The message is to find policy opportu-

nities to attach the PACE method to. E.g. if it is seen as a service to families, we should look e.g. at the Houses of the Child – Integrated networks for family support in Flanders. We can hook up our PACE method where we have opportunities in terms of welfare policy but also, for example, in terms of policy changes, e.g. the public employment service is looking for new target groups -the inactive- which we have proven to reach through childcare and by working according to non-conditional principles.

In Ghent this is completely embedded: PACE is an instrument to lead to childcare. In the other direction, the childcare is also used as a finding place for that vulnerable target group and from there to activate, to take the route to work together, and also to make that distance smaller.

In the UK PACE is embedded in the structure of the partners, were staff and Family Information Services are upskilled. Children's Centres will have PACE embedded as well.

Outreach worker is part of the future planning and changed ways of working are making the difference. The linking with Job Center Plus is sustainable in Kent, with the collaboration meetings. Inviting childcare lead to the meetings, suggestions to make use of collaboration meetings, to filter information to the wider settings. However, funding is a major problem to make a number of issues sustainable.

In the Netherlands, in general, there also exists more of a culture of buying in services when they prove successful. PACE De Mussen has received such offers, but will they be able to continue to work on a voluntary basis?

Be mindful when you become a part of the structure that has characteristics you do not really want to have on your PACE track. Who is calling the shots, coordinating, who are the driving forces is very decisive in this respect.

Recommendations

The dominant discourse is that we all have to work sooner, more and longer. Flanking policy is not provided. The toll is currently being passed on to the people themselves. But if that is what is expected by society (and its citizens), investments should be made to enable people to make the necessary combinations. This means not only investing in childcare, but also in mobility and public transport. It is that **mindset** that will have to change, and this is difficult.

More **resources** are needed in and within the childcare sector. But also, the mindset to work in another way, more community centred, more interdisciplinary, and more together with other services. Collaboration and networking are not free of charge. There is not too much staff as it is.

We **need a new way to guide people to work**, one that is **not based on conditionality** and sanctioning. This is necessary to be able to reach groups that are less employable, but also to be able to guide new groups that voluntarily offer themselves to the labour market. The PACE method can be used to reach and engage new target groups, because it is a method based on voluntariness, based on the needs of the parent and on the rhythm of the parent

Advocate for regulations and policies that allow childcare to achieve what is expected from them. The current policies and regulations push early years providers towards a very stable and overregulated system with little room for flexibility. There should be organisational flexibility combined with continuity and stability on the pedagogical level.

The Role of (Local) Authority

- Childcare should be a public service, affordable and accessible to all. If private providers face tension between making profit (or not making losses) and accessibility, accessibility loses the case.
- Target areas where there are not enough childcare or particular groups that are poorly served such as parents working atypical hours
- There should be an affordable (free/income related) childcare place for every child and a reserved place for flexible or occasional childcare (vulnerable families) if needed.
- Simplify childcare systems, in terms of different forms as well of funding
- Funding information services are vital to supporting parents
- Invest in a brokerage system and a local childcare desk to support (vulnerable) parents in search of childcare, to get an overview of the available places, and to achieve a social mix within the childcare facilities
- Make sure the Brokerage Service is accessible!

Organising Flexible or Occasional Childcare

- An exclusively occasional facility needs a well-defined intake and transition policy to determine who it is intended for and at what point parents should start looking for regular childcare.
- Separate funding or subsidise without looking at the occupancy rate can be advisable for occasional childcare, given the fluctuating occupancy rate

- All nurseries should reserve at least 1-2 places as occasional (emergency) places.
- Invest in a network of at home childminders to address demands for flexible childcare
- Combine different forms of childcare, and get an overview through a broker-age system

Parent's Perspective

- From the parent's perspective: to change the mindset of the parents, we need to start from the parent's view, needs and wishes. The way we inform the public is not tailored to what vulnerable parents understand or relate to. We have to empathise with those we want to reach, we must ask them, and review our processes.
- Invest in (in)formal networks of parents through low-threshold activities, bringing parents together,
- Invest in childcare through involving parents as equal partners and as 'complete persons', being more than parents.
- Revalue care professions and the role of childcare in society: Invest in continued coaching and professionalization of professional

Organising the PACE Trajectory to Work

- Provide a divers 'package offer', including a wide range of offers in volunteering, training and education, (group) activities and concrete employment support (writing CV, mock interviews, etc.).
- A Personal Development Plan can be used to formulate shared and understood targets and to make progress visible. Start from the parents own goals, their needs, wishes and possibilities. Parent should be in charge of their own trajectory from the start.
- Provide a designated keyworker for every parent, who is knowledgeable and sensitive to parents' needs and invests in a trusting relationship with parents is key.
- The keyworker helps parents to navigate childcare and employment services and to access other services. To achieve this, the keyworker needs access to the local network of services.
- Keyworkers need to be agile, updated and supported. This requires a strong support system, internal coordination, and case management.
- Engaging volunteers to guide and support parents to work can be interesting and effective under certain conditions. Volunteers need proper support and training by professionals. Engaging volunteers is an investment, not a way to cutting costs.
- Invest in a peer network of parents, engage them actively to reach out to new candidates, as ambassadors, as post PACE support group ...
-

Working in an Integrated Way

The worlds of childcare and employment are two separate worlds. They are not well aligned, nor on policy level, nor in daily practice. This fragmentation is especially challenging for parents in vulnerable circumstances, for whom childcare and employment are less accessible.

- Coordinate and integrate the support of parents into childcare and employment.
- Build your collaborative approach on a shared ambition, with attention to occasional and flexible care in particular. A mindshift in childcare and in employment services is crucial to create an integrated offer. Childcare needs to be aware that parents are ‘more than parents’, employment services and agencies and employers need to acknowledge that childcare is a crucial condition for parents to get (back) into work.
- Joined up working means that childcare, employment and other organisations ‘work together to make it work’. Childcare can offer occasional sessions, adapt opening hours or offer more flexibly. Employers or public employment services can be ‘activated’ as well: they can adapt working hours, buy in occasional childcare places. Include local organisations in the network that support vulnerable families.
- The collaboration takes shape in the person of the keyworker who links childcare and employment (and other issues). These keyworkers can work from within childcare settings or they can work closely together with childcare.
- Invest in sustainable collaborations by negotiating shared ambitions and actions, setting up agreements. Transparency and communication are vital, so are clear roles, mandates, and responsibilities. The collaborative network needs to be maintained, updated and re-evaluated.
- Share success stories: important as a motivator, for the participants the staff, for the collaboration, but also important for possible further rollout of the method elsewhere

Future

- Find policy opportunities and/or networks to attach the PACE method to.
- Negotiate PACE bubbles on a policy level – as much as possible – Frameworks of integrating PACE method in PDP’s used in mandatory schemes ... but ...
- Be mindful of becoming part of the structure that has characteristics you do not really want to have.
- Reflect on the fact that buying in services, tendering, result-driven is a way of working that may be inevitable but may come at odds with certain guiding principles of PACE like voluntary, at the pace of the parent, based on the needs and wishes of the parent ...
- Be mindful that a balance is kept. Strengthening the social function by making childcare more accessible and focussing on the quality of childcare are essential. Childcare should not feel used as a ‘location for parents that can be activated’.

Epilogue: PACE Corona-Style

With the surge of the COVID 19 pandemic during March 2020 and the ensuing lockdowns in the 4 countries of our PACE project, the situation for parents and childcare providers drastically changed. Moreover, we feel that the world after COVID-19 is unlikely to return to the world that was.

Parents were faced with unemployment, furlough, and an increase in poverty. Or at home combining the roles of being a teacher/child carer, employee by telework, and a parent. Some are also very worried and afraid and want to stay home with the children even when childcare providers are open to them. More people will be looking for jobs, needing occasional childcare and guidance, while on (too) low income.

Childcare providers were closed during lockdowns, but with the notable exception for 2 categories, critical key workers, and children from vulnerable families.

- For critical keyworkers: during lockdown, informal care e.g. grannies were not available, which meant an increase in demand of flexible childcare. Providers were asked to show flexibility in these circumstances (UK), or sometimes providers were requisitioned for critical workers (FR) eventually to 24/7 (NE)
- For vulnerable children: this was the case in the UK and in Belgium

To guarantee some income for the childcare providers, countries put compensatory schemes in place. The question is whether this will be enough. Moreover, some parents are very worried and afraid and more distrustful of childcare, wanting to stay home with their children. Especially with demand sided funding, the **availability of childcare places is in danger**, e.g. in the UK, the prognoses is that 150.000 places will disappear.

Women are being treated as “sacrificial lambs” as the UK economy contracts, with half of working mothers unable to access the childcare they need to return to work¹⁵

This underlines the importance of childcare to any employment policy.

It also makes it clear that the organisation of **flexible and emergency childcare is possible**. Parents had to locate their children ‘overnight’ into a new unknown childcare provider, but staff saw that this was in fact possible, even without the usual adaption period.

Occasional Childcare becomes problematic because the pandemic strengthened the rules focussing on group stability. In most countries, childcare has to work with the same group-bubble of staff-children-location. Also, **no parental involvement** is admitted any longer.

How did we PACE Corona Style?

During Lockdown PACE partner CS Eclaté was fully active (requisitioned by the French government), as well as the Flemish Partners Gent and Turnhout, and Mechelen from mid-May. The English partners were active in showing more flexibility', keeping the overview, placing vulnerable children.

Overall, those active partners observed an under-occupancy, so less work (pay) for staff and more sanitary constraints. The prohibition of parental involvement meant that there were no activities in the PACE room within childcare to guide parents to work.

COVID-19 has forced us to be more inventive and innovative:

Virtually all partners stepped up their digital support towards families, children and staff.

- They maintained the social link with the families through Facebook, workshops and face-to-face sessions. Also, ideas for family activities are shared on Facebook & Blogs. Digital face-to face remains difficult. Vulnerable parents do not all have wifi and not everyone has the required digital knowledge or has a quiet enough place to make a call.
- Support for children over 3 years old without access to digital tools to do their homework during the crisis
- PACE partner Kent shows us how offering specific Webinar training can further support staff and supported staff supporting children e.g. on the matter of changing provider, loss & bereavement

The PACE trajectory to work went online as much as possible as well. Partners were looking at how training courses, PDP meetings and contacts with parents could be moved online. In the Hague PACE Partner De Mussen continued his Mentor/Mentee system by phone/internet/Whatsapp ... online job seeking, interviews and coaching continued as well.

Some partners made special efforts in outreaching to vulnerable families (Flemish partners). Key workers specifically trained to reach families in another way, so they knew what and how to ask questions by phone. Scripts were developed to find out who needs special attention. Parents who needed follow up could count on a home visit, possibly in the form of a sidewalk visit.

The link with a range of other services was maintained during the entire period. We kept on working in an integrated way, tailored based on the needs of the parent.

Recommendations

- Funding of enough affordable available places, irrespective of occupancy. Childcare places are essential to activation and gender policy. We see the destruction of available places, while there will be a higher demand from (vulnerable) parents needing support to (find) work.
- We need to step up and broaden our offer of digital support. Many trends already are being accelerated by the impact of the pandemic. This is especially true of digitisation. But then we should also extra focus on actions to bridge the digital divide.

- Think about involving parents and organising urgent occasional childcare in other ways/on other locations, in an integrated way e.g. through childcare centres
- Keep in close contact with the most vulnerable families, in (semi) lockdown situations, and develop adapted scripts and tools to avoid anyone slips through the net.
- An urgent transition of provider, without adaption period, is not as problematic as previously thought by the staff

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NOTES

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- 2 OECD 2013, p. 5
- 3 Bonoli, G. 2013.
- 4 Based on the Impact Report by Raes, A., Eerdeken, W., & Naert, J. 2020.
- 5 Van Haute, D., et al. 2017.
- 6 Vandekerckhove, A., et al. 2019, p.84
- 7 European Semester: Thematic factsheet – Women in the labour market – 2017.
- 8 Del Boca et al. 2009.
- 9 Lewis et al. 2008.
- 10 Boeckmann et al. 2015.
- 11 Article L. 5411-6-1 Code du travail; Circulaire DGEFP n° 2008/18 du 5 novembre 2008 relative à la mise en oeuvre du projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi et à l'offre raisonnable d'emploi.
- 12 Art. 9a Participatiewet
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- 14 Chapter K2: Good reason 716/admk2.pdf
- 15 Interview with Caroline Parker, BHCC, 27th June 2018.
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- 17 Dwyer & Wright 2014, 27.
- 18 Wright et al. 2018.
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- 20 Decreet van 22 februari 2017 tot wijziging van artikel 92, 93, 95, 98 en 102bis van het decreet van 15 juli 1997 houdende de Vlaamse Wooncode. *BS* 10 maart 2017
- 21 SERV 2019.
- 22 Copers 2019.
- 23 Desiere et al. 2018.
- 24 Piessens et al. 2017.
- 25 Desiere et al. 2018.
- 26 Guiaux et al. 2018.
- 27 Stewart & Wright 2018.
- 28 Pavolini, et al., 2018.
- 29 Van Lancker, & Vandenbroeck, 2019.
- 30 Piessens et al., 2017.
- 31 Dickens et al., 2012, p.5
- 32 BHCC 2018.
- 33 Roeters & Bucx, 2018, pp. 133-134.
- 34 Focusgroup on Occasional Childcare den Haag
- 35 Teppers et al. 2019.
- 36 Section 6 Childcare Act 2006.
- 37 Early education and childcare. Statutory guidance for local authorities. June 2018 .
- 38 BHCC 2018.
- 39 Article L. 214-2 of the Code of Social Action and Families
- 40 Van Lancker, W., & Vandenbroeck, M. 2019.
- 41 Coates, 2009, pp. 62-64
- 42 Stad Gent, 2014.
- 43 Article L214-7 Code de l'action sociale et des familles (Version consolidée au 1 avril 2018) Modifié par LOI n° 2014-873 du 4 août 2014 - art. 30
- 44 In accordance with Article D. 214-7 of the Code of Social Action and Families (Casf)
- 45 Focusgroup France on occasional childcare
- 46 Section 8:3 Childcare Act 2006.
- 47 Childcare provisions by a school, that is funded by a local education authority or 'day care for children in need' doesn't follow this rule of subsidiarity.
- 48 <https://www.theeducationpeople.org/our-expertise/early-years-childcare/our-nurseries/>
- 49 Focusgroup Policymakers on Occasion Childcare London
- 50 Section 8 Childcare Act 2006.
- 51 Model Agreement Early years provision free of charge and free childcare, f
- 52 Art. 1.7 Wet KO
- 53 Focusgroep Den Haag on Occasional Childcare; Zo werkt de Sociaal Medische Indicatie 2018.
- 54 Subsidieregeling tegemoetkoming kosten peuteropvang Den Haag 2019.
- 55 <https://www.kinderopvangtotaal.nl/content/uploads/sites/3/2020/05/aanbiedingsbrief-kabinetsinzet-toeslagen.pdf>
- 56 Interview with Caroline Parker, BHCC, 27th June 2018.
- 57 House of Commons Treasury Committee, 2018.
- 58 Blaine & Paull, 2017.
- 59 Focus group London on Occasional Childcare
- 60 Butler & Rutter, 2016.
- 61 We call it an inter-communal partnership: a 'communauté de communes' is a partnership between French municipalities that has the status of an independent legal person. France has relatively small municipalities and through such a partnership with surrounding municipalities, certain matters can be arranged more efficiently and cheaper.
- 62 Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 9 november 2018 tot wijziging van het Subsidiebesluit van 22 november 2013, wat betreft flexibele openingstijden en dringende kinderopvang, *BS* 18 december 2018
- 63 Focus group Vlaanderen on Occasional Childcare
- 64 Focus group Vlaanderen on Occasional Childcare
- 65 Dali-Chaouch & Parlett, 2020.
- 66 Section 12 Childcare Act 2006.
- 67 Rutter & Stocker, 2014.
- 68 From Flexibility in Childcare by Raes et al. 2020, p. 69
- 69 Early education and childcare. Statutory guidance for local authorities. June 2018.
- 70 <https://www.monenfant.fr/web/guest/les-relais-assistants-maternels>
- 71 <https://www.landelijkregisterkinderopvang.nl/pp/StartPagina.jsf>
- 72 <https://www.kinderopvangkaart.nl/pagina/view/Project>
- 73 Focus Group the Hague on Occasional Childcare
- 74 Den Haag s.d
- 75 Focus group The Hague on Occasional Childcare
- 76 Focus group Vlaanderen on Occasional Childcare
- 77 idem
- 78 Section 8 Childcare Act 2006.
- 79 Model Agreement Early years provision free of charge and free childcare, f
- 80 Early Years Strategy BHCC 2017-2019.
- 81 The Childcare (Exemptions from Registration) Order 2008 N° 979, available in <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2008/979/made>
- 82 Or care for children for 4 hours or less per day for the convenience of the parents who remain on or very close to the premises and where there is no long-term commitment to clients, e.g. some crèches provide an open access scheme
- 83 «on a un agrément pour 80 places d'accueil régulier et 15 places d'accueil occasionnel, mais en fait on remplit les 95 places chaque septembre sinon ça serait impossible, on serait and sous-effectif constamment » dans Candiago et al. 2012, p. 45
- 84 Centre Social Eclaté 2017.
- 85 Candiago et al. 2012.
- 86 Interview with Caroline Parker, BHCC, 27th June 2018.

- 87 Feedback by VVSG on our Brief Legal Barriers in Occasional Childcare - Flanders
- 88 Definition from Raes, A., Piessens, A., & Willockx, D. 2020.
- 89 Kind en Gezin s.d..
- 90 Complément de libre choix du mode de garde (CMG) - Garde à domicile <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F31101>
- 91 Interview with Caroline Parker, BHCC, 27th June 2018.
- 92 From Flexibility in Childcare by Raes et al. (2020) p. 121
- 93 Responsible in Flanders for the organisation and follow-up of the mandatory courses new arrivals/refugees have to follow.
- 94 Les crèches à vocation d'insertion professionnelle
- 95 À l'hôpital de Saint-Omer, la crèche est ouverte aux entreprises privées 2016.
- 96 Somewhat comparable to the children's centres and creches that set up care arrangements without register requirement in the UK See p. 30 11.1
- 97 In the Netherlands, crèches organised by parents were not allowed, and it is only very recently that that concessions were made to allow this to happen. It was/is still assumed that parents cannot offer the necessary guarantees in terms of quality.
- 98 Roeters & Bucx, 2018, p. 147-148
- 99 Hoe 'goed' is kinderopvang?
- 100 Emphasising childcare is foremost education, is most typical in the UK and the Netherlands, where Childcare also resorts under the Department of Education and with the consequence that the focus on pedagogical criteria makes the organisation of occasional childcare even more difficult.
- 101 A questionnaire designed by the UK partners and knowledge partner Karel de Grote university college
- 102 General information based on Raes, 2019.
- 103 Based on Flexibility in Childcare by Raes et al. 2020, p. 78-79
- 104 Vandebroek & Lazzari, 2014.
- 105 Based on Raes, A., Piessens, A., & Willockx, D. 2020
- 106 De Mussen 2018.
- 107 Vandekerckhove et al. 2019, p. 84
- 108 Vermeiren et al. 2018.
- 109 Vermeiren et al. 2018 p. 16
- 110 Both the importance of the proximity with the neighbourhood and the link with local policy are confirmed by Vermeire et al. 2018.
- 111 The latter relationship between the municipality and the organisation is not a collaborative or network relationship, but a market-based relationship (this is offering services based on a price). However, typical for the Netherlands, we find also We also find this way of working in the other PACE countries (tendering by the public employment services). This will entail a result-driven way of working. Organisation will cherry pick those parents with whom they can achieve good results within a within a limited (specified) period of time; see Provan & Kenis 2008.
- 112 Den Haag, 8 januari 2019.
- 113 The GPMI provides in the possibility that the client/parent can be assisted in negotiating the trajectory. This could be a PACE keyworker. Negotiating sounds as something that happens between 2 equals, which here is not the case. Perhaps assistance of a PACE keyworker could make the power balance more even, but consigning the agreement is not a good idea. It is the social worker of the Social assistance Service that decides ultimately.
- 114 Stad Gent, s.d.; Stad Gent, 2019.
- 115 Topping, 2020.
- 116 http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfst_hheredch&lang=en

In this book we regularly refer to services and forms of welfare provision in the different PACE countries. An overview is given below of the most common terms and the names used in each country. The table at the end shows the specific services in each country.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Public employment services connect job-seekers with employers. They are structured differently in each country, but their essential function is to match supply and demand on the employment market through information, activation and training.

SERVICES RESPONSIBLE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS AND LIVING WAGE

In most countries, employment services are responsible for unemployment benefits. The type of benefits provided differs from country to country. In France and Flanders, benefits and premiums for young families are sometimes overseen by services other than those that regulate unemployment. In England, all of these functions are the responsibility of Jobcentre Plus.

SERVICES FOR THE ACCREDITATION AND INSPECTION OF QUALITY CHILDCARE

Childcare settings are supervised by an inspectorate, which checks whether they are complying with the rules on the use of space and on hygiene. The inspectorate also checks the pedagogical quality of childcare. Again, the way these services operate varies from country to country. In England, Ofsted inspects the quality of childcare and schools. In the other countries, quality inspections are conducted within the education system for children over the age of three (Flanders, France) or four (the Netherlands) by services other than those in charge of checking the quality of childcare.

SERVICES IN CHARGE OF CHILDCARE BENEFITS

Flanders and France subsidise childcare. In the book, we describe this as supply-side funding. In addition, parents themselves also receive a childcare allowance, which is paid by services with broader competence for childcare and young families. In England, France, Flanders and the Netherlands, parents can reclaim childcare costs through the tax system. Free funded sessions are also offered in England.

SERVICE	FLANDERS	FRANCE	ENGLAND	THE NETHERLANDS
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE	Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (VDAB)	Pôle Emploi	Jobcentre Plus	Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen (UWV WERKbedrijf)
SERVICE RESPONSIBLE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS	Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening (RVA)	Pôle Emploi	Jobcentre Plus	UWV
SERVICE RESPONSIBLE FOR LIVING WAGE	Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW)	Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (CAF)	Jobcentre Plus	Local authority
SERVICE FOR THE ACCREDITATION AND INSPECTION OF QUALITY CHILDCARE	Kind en Gezin	Service départementale de la Protection Maternelle et Infantile (PMI)	Ofsted	Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdiensten (GGD)
SERVICE THAT PAYS CHILDCARE ALLOWANCES TO PARENTS	Agentschap Uitbetaling Groeipakket in conjunction with five payment bodies. Payment of the 'Growth Package' to which this agency's name refers takes place automatically. Control of the package lies with Kind en Gezin and the tax service	Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (CAF)	Parents must apply directly to the government for their 15 or 30 free hours of childcare, or for tax-free childcare. A local authority can help them with this	The tax service pays a childcare allowance to families who apply for it and meet the conditions