

It takes a village to raise a child

Working against school delay, early school leaving, school drop out, is often described as a kind of struggle, a battle against

Indeed, it often feels that way for many professionals.

It often feels that way for young people and their parents as well.

And if it is indeed a struggle, a battle, then we should not be surprised that we sometimes get discouraged, feel desperate, even give up.

Perhaps there is a need for some kind of battle song, an anthem?

Don't worry, we won't sing.

A kind of anthem, that energises, that makes us persevere, that celebrates successes, lessons learned and above all that gives hope. Hope to professionals, so they can give hope to children, young people and their families.

It takes a village to raise a child was/is our anthem.

Our challenge within VRAC was to look for ways to positively influence the process that can lead to school delay and dropout in both school, neighbourhood and home contexts.

A challenge that gave a positive direction to our ambition.

A colleague of VRAC ones wrote: Ones you go VRAC, you never go back!

And we won't.

The VRAC vision, approach and actions will continue at the SESSAD and CMPP at Lille, Community centre at Wattrelos, East Sussex community voice at East Sussex, MAP at Norwich, PIT, SOL, the city of Leiden, SAAMO and the city of Mechelen. But also in the organisations we worked with, the networks we build. We all learned a lot.

We learned that:

A positive approach on a challenge works

What is feasible? What can be done? What gives you energy?

What are your dreams? What I can do for you is ...

The challenges were great, the goals ambitious. And yet, within the experimental space Interegg gave us, we set to work.

A search for new ideas, approaches, frameworks, ... always in a positive mindset: wraparound care, talent, new authority, etc.

But also searching on how we could connect certain approaches from one sector to another.

If it works there, maybe it will also work here? What and who do you need for that?

Shared vision

Finding a shared vision on education or support is very hard. It is about finding a common ground from which we can start off. Within this common vision diversity can be present. The different perspectives are an asset.

And don't forget to think about the vision on the collaboration itself. It can provide a common framework and can generate action. And taking action together, connects.

The wrap around care principles are a helpful framework. They are a good framework for any organisation to review how they work with people and use them as a guide to consider and reflect upon.

Networking in action! Go and get the expertise where it is and find the support needed

People need time and opportunity to see what more cooperation and connection outside their own organisation can bring them.

To offer these opportunities, there should be an ongoing input or incentive for more cooperation and creating a shared vision. Local governments can make a difference.

Schools need to be at the forefront of making these relationships stronger, this in turn leads to inclusivity, accessibility, and young people and parents having that sense of belonging.

The village is out there, intersectoral networking works when it's put into action.

Other children, young people and parents are in need of this integrated support, so it's paramount we continue to work in a joined up way, utilising our resources in times of hardship, with the cost of living and poverty on the rise there are so many vulnerable families needing these services now more than ever.

Investing in intersectoral networking, is investing in the future.

Put the voice of students and their parents at the center

Really listen to them, stop trying to convince them! Professionals are not always right. And anyway, it is not about being right, it is about what works for this young person, for this family. Keep building the bridges between school and home and community contexts. Even if it seems like a bridge too far.

These are all proven key factors for making more impact together.

A genuine partnership between children, young people, parents, schools, welfare, youth work, community work and all the other professionals living in the village, really offers the best learning opportunities and support for children and young people.

It does takes a village to raise a child.