



# *Spring Exchange 2008*

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*Theme "Residents with unacceptable behaviour"*

*Red Cross, Denmark*

**'Toolkit for the participants'**

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<b>'TOOLKIT FOR THE PARTICIPANTS'</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>MADELEINE JOHANSSON</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>MIGRATIONSVERKET</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>COMMISSION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>DANISH RED CROSS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>THE STAFF</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>THE CENTRES:</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<i>Jelling centre</i> .....	<i>6</i>
<b>STROF PEDAGOGY</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<i>The pedagogy focuses on five factors</i> .....	<i>7</i>
<b>IN PRESCHOOL</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>IN SCHOOL</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>ROOM</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>YOUTHS 17-21 YEARS OLD</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>CHILDREN'S CLUB</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Children's club 6-13 years old</i> .....	<i>9</i>
<i>Children's club 14-18 years old</i> .....	<i>9</i>
<b>INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>LOST MONEY/ LIMITED PAYMENT TIME</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>SOCIAL WORKER/HEALTH NURSE</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>HEALTH CARE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>POLICE IN JELLING</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>HOUSING</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>PARTICIPANT DATA</b> .....	<b>14</b>

## **Commission**

I am working as a reception officer in Boden, a small city in the north of Sweden. Through the ENARO project I have got the commission to find out how Denmark handles residents with unacceptable behaviour. To find out, I have been a week in Jelling centre where the Red Cross works with asylum seekers.

## **Danish Red Cross**

The Red Cross has five centres under their management. They have a special contract with Danish Immigration service about how they are going to work with people that applies for asylum. When asylum seekers come to Denmark in purpose to apply for asylum, they need to go to Sandholm centre. This is one of the five centres which the Red Cross works at. After the application they go to another centre, f.e. Jelling which is the only centre without any specifications. Most of the directions are centrally decided by the Red Cross.

### ***The staff***

The staff has access to different kind of support when an incident have occurred, f.e. conflict management, support to staff and first aid.

To prevent unacceptable behaviour the staff has shaped the offices from safety aspects. To learn about safety the staff has been trained and they have also been trained about conflict management. The staff also works in pairs when they think meetings can be more difficult. They have the exit very near and a direct connection to the other offices through walkie-talkies.

The staff wishes to have further education in how to deal with residents after they have received a negative decision. They feel that it sometimes is hard to support families that lives in this situation.

When an asylum seeker comes from another centre the file will follow the person. In the file the staff can read about important issues. If the asylum seeker moves from the centre the file will also be transferred. Much of the information about the residents is obtained through conversations with the people.

I think it is very good to have a preventive thinking. When the staff is aware of possible situations that can occur, they can also handle each situation in the best way. The preventive thinking seems to work at Jelling centre because they have proved to have very few incidents through out the years. I also think that the good relationships between the staff and the residents are an important factor to create a good environment at the centre.

### ***The centres:***

- Sandholm – application unit but also centre when asylum seekers have received negative decision and have to return to the home country.
- Avnstrup – unit for returning to the home country but also for handicapped persons, f.e. wheel chaired persons.
- Kongelunden – unit for persons with mental illness and also for women.
- Gripskov – unit for children that comes without any parent.

- Jelling – unit for families and other asylum seekers.

## **Jelling centre**

The centre takes 180 persons and the staff report to Sandholm centre when house places are available. The people are staying in an area where they have access to health care, Danish teaching for adults, preschool and school for the children, organized activities, café but also to the staff at the Red Cross. The asylum seekers run the household by themselves. They have access to a laundry room in the area, but they have to cook their own food in their own kitchen or in a shared one.

They get lots of written information about the centre (different languages), where to find the different facilities, how the asylum process works in Denmark, start packages, interpretation and also the about the activities. They also get information from the staff about their rights and obligations. When needed there will be interpreters to help translate information, sometimes phone interpreters or a present interpreter.

The centre is always open for questions if the staff is at the office, but one hour per day (except Wednesdays) the asylum seekers can be sure to meet the staff.

Outside the Jelling centre there is a small annex, Thyregod. The people that stays there has to go to Jelling for the Red Cross services and activities.

## ***STROF pedagogy***

If we bring our thoughts down to a deeper level, we have to remember that people that abandon their own country comes from a very chaotic situation. They have left their only safety they know about. They have been raised, grown up and have lived their whole life in that special country. I don't think they leave their country for some small reasons, f.e. temporary financial problems. No, they have come to the line when they realise it's a danger to stay and maybe when the situation in the country is a danger for the children, the most valuable they have. It's important that we can try to understand that these people have made an assessment that they can not longer stay in their home country without being exposed to a risk. This is what people have in their minds when they apply for asylum.

A man named Lars H Gustafsson, a very famous child doctor and an author, has developed a method that from the beginning was called STOP-model, later it is called STROF-model. This man has written many teaching aids that is used in schools and other work that includes children. But he has also written a book "Children in wars" where he describes refugee children and wars. His method describes how to work with children that comes from chaotic situations.

In Denmark the Red Cross uses a model in their work, the STROF pedagogy. Its purpose is to make structure in asylum seekers stay just because they are coming from a chaotic situation. It stops the chaotic situation that the asylum seekers feel. It creates safety and a structure for the children's play and the staff encourages the children to talk about things by listening a lot. The structured play gives also very good possibilities to develop their language. The parents are also an important part in the work with the children. The parents need lots of support and guidance in the raise, and they are well aware about this pedagogy by information and meetings. Sometimes the staff even helps to build a structure in the families home.

This model's intention is not to disturb the free play because according to the model the free play is a way to enter deeply in their experience.

## **The pedagogy focuses on five factors.**

- Structure
- Time/talking
- Rituals
- Organized plays
- Family collaboration

Through this “mini society” the asylum seekers get very good relationships with the staff. The staff can have very good dialogues with the asylum seekers in spite they not always agree. All children staff has a relevant education for their work. The coordinator for the school means that the STROF model absolutely is a factor to the today existing environment.

The staff put lot of work in to planning and structuring to create this certain environment for the residents, they also set aside a lot of time for conversations with the residents. This work makes a good foundation for the STROF model to work in the everyday life. The model really stops the “chaos” which also is the purpose of the model.

## **In preschool**

Children between 2-6 years old are at this preschool. They are divided in two groups, a group with children 2-5 years old and also the group for children in age 6 years old.

When families come to the centre they always get the information about the compulsory presence in school or practice so therefore they have to leave their children at preschool or school. The children can be at preschool Monday-Friday 8.30-14.30.

The preschool has always practised this pedagogy and the staff has education for child-care but also internal education for the STROF pedagogy. The pedagogy wants to reach the children’s spiritual care and they do it by talking. The staff thinks it is very important to focus on every child’s individual needs and to let the children get the opportunity to express their feelings.

## **Information**

The parents always get information about the law according to corporal punishment. If the staff still suspects parents to use corporal punishment, the parents must come to a meeting with the staff. If it still doesn’t stop the staff gives information about their duty to report to the municipality. In the Jelling centre there is seldom cases with corporal punishment according to the staff.

Sometimes there can be a long acclimatization time for new children and one parent to the child/children is always taking part during the acclimatization time, usually for 1-2 weeks. Every day the staff has lessons to the children in age 6 years old. The staff is also teaching how to behave and what is wrong/right acting. If a child has done something very bad, the punishment can be sitting on the “bench” or in “the room” for exactly five minutes.

The staff is very concerned about the children and always make sure that they are feeling secure before the parents can leave them at the preschool all day long. The parents are always involved in their children’s participation in both preschool and school.

## **In school**

The school has several sections. However all asylum seekers are in the school in Jelling. Children, youths and adults can all be suspended from school if they f.e. behave very badly. There are always follow ups if someone is suspended for a day or for a longer time. The Red Cross in Jelling have seen very little of these events. The staff all agrees that the STROF model is an important reason. The staff also feels that everyone wants to go to school. There are few discussions about if the children are going in school arranged by the Red Cross or in a municipal school.

The staff also think it is very important with educated staff because they are working with children that carries on several mental problems. Children has not always the will to tell their story to strange people and that's why it is so important to have a structure that guide you how to approach children, but also routines for how to make children feel security.

It's an obligation for the adults to attend school.

## **Room**

There is only occasionally that asylum seeker are not in school activity, but there are special reasons then.

- The children's school has room for 60 children, but for the moment the centre has approximately 30 children.
- The centre has room for 15 youths between 17-21 years old, but for the moment there are approximately 7 youths.
- The adult's classes have room for 45 and these classes are filled.

## **Youths 17-21 years old**

In youth's class there has only been one incident that can be remembered. It was about a boy who hit another boy because of provocation. The boy who got hit made a report to the police and the families got very upset. The school tried to solve the situation but it took two days to have both boys in class again. The biggest problem was the boys families who couldn't agree.

In class there is a good order. In lessons the teacher's prioritises mathematics, computer based lessons and of course the Danish language. The youths' studies 20 hours a week and it is distributed on three days. Sometimes some youths have some bad excuses for not to come to the school's activities but when teachers explain that it will be unlawful absence, then they accept the decision and come.

For a period the Red Cross made a try to work without the model, but they noticed very quickly that a total chaos began. The asylum seekers didn't know where to be, for how long or even if they were supposed to be somewhere.

## **Children's club**

The staff is teaching how to behave but also make demands on how to behave. The staff always intervenes immediately and the children are aware of this so they know about the consequences for bad behaviour. F.e. the children can be forced to go home, the parents will be involved and the school will have a meeting about the acting. The teachers always try to find out what the child wants because of their actions.

### **Children's club 6-13 years old**

It is very important that the staff can make themselves trustworthy as a listener. This will create relations and the staff thinks that relations are the reason to be able to change. It is also important that the child gets reflection time, which is done with f.e. free playing.

The staff also feels that it's big difference if a family have a permission to stay or not. Families with a negative decision have a very big need of advising and supporting for how to support the children in school. Sometimes larger problems can be discussed in a special family team and it has really appeared to be successful. Because of the discussion about the case in the team, the family will have more people that pay attention if there is any kind of problem. The staff can very quickly intervene.

The staff also set aside much time when it comes to say goodbye between the children. By doing this process very careful it has appeared to be easier for the children at school to welcome a new one. The school also takes lots of pictures so the moving child can have flashbacks and remember happy moments. The Red Cross is very clear to put children in focus. The staff works a lot with the children's social skills so they can take care of themselves everywhere. It is also important to show the children respect, appreciation and reward.

### **Children's club 14-18 years old**

Many children in this group have many thoughts in their mind, especially when they are considered to be teenagers. A method that the staff uses when the youths are much unfocused is to massage the youth in face, in the temples, on the head and on the shoulders, just for five minutes. Result by doing this is that the youth will calm down and it is possible for teacher to reach the youth in a relationship.

In this age the staff hardly notices bad behaviour. The transportations to activities in town are very close and the families are mostly happy on the basis of the situation. The staff also thinks that it is important to show good living because this will give good relationships with the asylum seekers. The staff can talk very honestly with the asylum seekers about how to act and what consequences the act can mean.

### ***Information***

The school always informs adults, youths and children about their way to work and what rules that apply. They are very clear about that violence and racism is totally forbidden and they also talk about consequences. All teaching is in Danish.

The centre has very seldom unacceptable behaviour and the school thinks it depends on using the STROF model. The coordinator for school says there are very few chaos situations and they have a very creative school environment. They can also see that it's often easy and possible to handle the few chaos situations that come up. According to the coordinator who has been working in an environment without STROF model, there are several differences.

Because of all information that parents get about f.e. about corporal punishment when they come to the centre, I think that the risk minimizes for corporal punishment meant for the children. These parents have not learned other methods to raise their children because they have not seen other methods. Because they haven't learned or seen other methods they don't think it is easy to try some other method. When parents learn other possibilities from educated staff the corporal punishment minimizes.

When a youth comes to the centre they get a meeting with the teacher. A plan will be drawn up according to the youth's potential. Goal will also be set up together with the teacher for what is realistic during the stay but also with consideration to the future. The youth has influence over the plan.

The Red Cross is working a lot to inform the asylum seekers to be on time. Because of this information they seldom comes late and if it's happening there is a natural explanation. The single times can be seen as acceptable but if it happens repeatedly it often leads to meetings between teacher and the youth. Very few times it has conducted to decreased money from the Red Cross, the reason has often been unlawful absence.

## **Payments**

The asylum seeker gets cash payment every fourteen days. To get their money they have to show their ID-card and they also have to sign a list. At this moment they get a list for the current activities that he or she is going to attend for the next two weeks.

There are rarely any aggressions and never violent acting on payment day. Only one incident has occurred many years ago and the event involved gun threat and the staff lost some money. After this event the staff is always working in pairs when they pay the money. The system that involves payments is not always so easy to understand which sometimes creates irritation among the asylum seekers. If someone doesn't agree to the cash sum, they will be directed to the staff that is responsible for presence control in the activities. The asylum seekers have to take contact by themselves and sort out the situation.

The guidelines for these payments every fourteen days and also the money levels are centrally decided by the government. Danish Immigration service are responsible for money during the asylum seekers stay and after reports from the Red Cross administration they transfer money to an account at the Red Cross. The Red Cross has nothing to do with the money only the practical handle.

In these situations when payments are being done there could be more aggressions and resistance against the staff, but there isn't. And the staff can not really explain why. Could these good relationships, all this information and maybe the structures that are created around the residents be the explanation?

### ***Lost money/ limited payment time***

If an asylum seeker loses their money they can borrow money from the Red Cross. The case will be presented to the chief of staff at the centre and the chief also decide the amount. However it is a very low sum and the loan will be repaid with the next payment. The asylum seekers only have a short time to collect their money. If they don't collect their money within the limited time and they don't have left an acceptable reason, the money will be seen as "spent" and they goes back to an account at the Red Cross.

The staff who is responsible for payments has not done anything to prevent unacceptable behaviour. They never feel any problems about the payments that they cannot handle. The staff think that they see more problems in the housing.

### ***Information***

The asylum seeker always get information about the routines about payments and also what affects the sum of money. When they come to the centre the asylum seekers can establish an agreement about activities. If they have activities and attends they can get more money than the basic sum. Sometimes the staff meets people that don't want to take part of the activities and school and they also have bad excuses. It has been turned out that asylum seekers think that they can get asylum in an easier way if they have some health problems. The contract time lasts for 6 months at a time and is being renewed regularly. The contract writer is always following the asylum seeker for an introduction in school or some other activity just because just to get the person to feel secure about the activity. If the asylum seeker has absence from the activities he or she will have a decreased money sum.

### **Activities**

The Jelling centre offers lots of activities. F.e. kitchen course, sew house, café house, garden work, administration work, craft work, cleaning in common areas, information work, babysitting and bike garage. The adults has activities two days a week and school two days a week.

Because of all activities the residents is very often occupied. In spite of the situation and waiting for the different decisions the asylum seekers don't need to sit at home with nothing to do. They can be activated through this tough time of waiting. I think it is very important to have something else to think about and something that makes them to feel useful. We all need to feel useful just to feel that we play an important part in the overall picture. But also to feel solidarity to the group.

### **Social worker/health nurse**

The purpose with the social worker is to make it easier for the staff and to make it easier in cooperation with other institutions. They helps with social meetings and the main tasks is to work with families and adults.

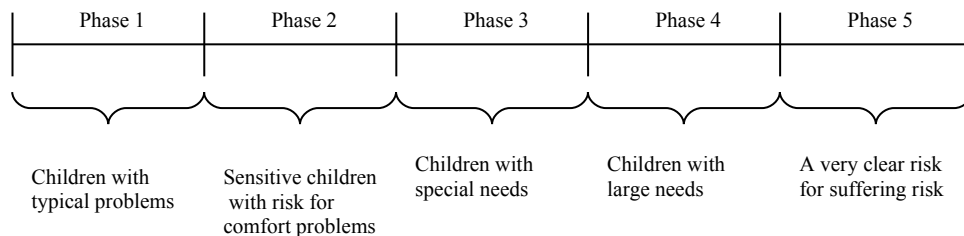
They hardly sees an aggressive behaviour but they also think it is very unique for the Jelling centre. They think it depends on the good relationship between staff and asylum seeker. If incidents take place the staff always have to establish a report. They also have to meet the asylum seeker and make him/her aware about the report.

The asylum seeker should also confirm the incident by signing it. The coordinator has not been in a meeting when the asylum seeker don't want to sign the report. In common they very seldom need to establish any incident report.

If there is problems that cannot be solved the social worker can get help from the team where there is also a child nurse and a health nurse. There are routines for how the administrative work should be, both central and local directions. The Red Cross and Danish Immigration service have an agreement for how the Red Cross must work with asylum seekers.

The rules for asylum seekers children are the same as for Danish children. In Hanstholm there is a special centre (municipality management) where children with special needs can come.

The health nurse supports families and she is working with a process which can be described in five different phases:



- Phase 1 – The health nurse is working on the basis of her knowledge.
- Phase 2 – The health nurse collaborates with f.e. preschool or school.
- Phase 3 – Now the team (social worker and child nurse) will be involved. The child can have prolonged problems.
- Phase 4 – The municipality will be involved. Discussions about extra support.
- Phase 5 – There are the same rules as for the Danish children. A placement in a foster-home can become an issue.

The social worker has been involved in one more extensive incident, a man who threatened to burn the centre down. A report was established and thereafter they had a meeting with the asylum seeker and it turned out he was in a temporary mental stress. Before and after this event the man has never caused any troubles.

## Health care

At the centre the asylum seekers has access to psychologist, psychiatrist, a male and a female doctor, health nurse, nurses but also an distance psychiatrist. When asylum seekers come to Jelling they will have written information about what help they can get. F.e., if the doctor decides there is a need, the asylum seeker can have three meetings with the psychologist and also three meetings with the psychiatrist, for free.

When bad behaviour has come up, the health care staff is very clear about that it is not acceptable. Some occasions they have had to call the police. When a person is very sick and maybe acts very indignant the staff always give medication and meetings at psychologists.

## **Police in Jelling**

The centre has a specially police officer that is available for the centre. He comes when centre need but he has also opening hours at his office once a week. The staff describes him to be among the asylum seekers all the time. Two times per year the police officer gives information to the asylum seekers about his tasks and also about the Danish laws and rules.

### ***Information***

- Obligation to identify
- Theft/receiving stolen goods
- Criminal and sexual actions
- Drugs
- Penalties
- The right in driving car
- Cyclists/pedestrians
- Threats to civil servants
- Illegal workers
- Weapon law
- Heavy rubbish
- Parent responsibility

## **Housing**

There are several rules (not legally binding) about how the houses must be taken care of and the Red Cross will follow up the cleaning. The rules concerns how to behave but also practical routines surrounding everyday life. The Red Cross teaches what things that is allowed to do and also what is unacceptable behaviour. By setting a good example, the staff f.e. helps to clean around buildings. The staff doesn't see much problems in the housing, they never need to give any kind of punishment for not following the rules. Its normally enough for the staff to tell how it should be done. The residents almost never complains about the house rules. The most common issue is to change from one house to another. The rules are normally set by the staff. If the asylum seekers are indignant and sad, the staff is calming the person down by talking and f.e. give a little massage. They also show compassion and respect.

The centre has a wireless internet that everyone at the centre is using. Most of the houses has a computer.

## Participant data

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