

Throughout the years, WIGWAM has become a welcoming home for the whole family. By offering daycare to toddlers and children, this childcare facility provides families with the opportunity to meet each other, and offer and seek support in different ways. This booklet, which is published on the occasion of Wigwam's 20th anniversary, presents the ins and outs of this inclusive facility.

This booklet and the picture book *Feest je met ons mee?* ('Come and celebrate with us'), published by Clavis Publishing are an initiative of vzw Wigwam. The publications are produced in cooperation with:

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CHILDCARE AND HUIZEN VAN HET KIND

The story of Wigwam, a welcoming home for the whole family with childcare as a gateway to the *Huizen van het Kind*

Clavis

This booklet is published on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Wigwam, a welcoming home for the whole family. Wigwam was established in 1995 with project funds granted by *Kind en Gezin* and became an accredited childcare facility in 2004. Wigwam also offers families a place to play and meet with others and provides accessible, preventive family support, primarily to vulnerable families.

We wholeheartedly dedicate this booklet to all the children and families that we get to welcome into our childcare centre every day. Each of them finds a place at Wigwam in his or her own way. Children, parents, neighbours, sympathizers, as well as Wigwam's staff members and its partners from various organisations make sure that each day is not only exciting and educational, but also full of fun. Our being together and sharing experiences makes each new step worthwhile!

To celebrate Wigwam's 20th anniversary, Clavis Publishing has also published a picture book by Kathleen Amant: *Feest je met ons mee?* ('Come and celebrate with us')

CHILDCARE AND HUIZEN VAN HET KIND
Text: vzw Wigwam and its staff members /
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CHILDCARE AND ENCOUNTER

As we have announced in our first booklet *Kinderopvang en Ontmoeting* (2010) ('Childcare and encounter'), the principles put forward by DECET, MISC and the Reggio Emilia Approach, as well as the theory of presence and 'basisschakelmethode' (basic chain method) have been and continue to be key elements of the three components of our operations. For further information, please refer to this booklet.

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FOREWORD

Following Wigwam's 20th anniversary, we published a set of two books in 2010. Firstly, we made a picture book for toddlers titled *Een dagje bij de vriendjes* ('A day with friends') which paints the picture of a typical day in the childcare facility. On top of that, we created an informative booklet that portrays how encounters and parental participation take shape at Wigwam.

Since then, five years have passed and it is time to celebrate once again!

On the occasion of Wigwam's 20th anniversary, we are happy to present to you a second set of books.

It contains a joyful picture book for toddlers titled *Feest je met ons mee?* ('Come and celebrate with us!') that helps them discover holidays from all over the world.

The informative booklet titled *Kinderopvang en Huizen van het kind* ('Childcare and *Huizen van het Kind*') is aimed at everyone involved in the sectors of childcare and family support services. In this booklet, we draw on our experiences to express how valuable integrative care services for families with young children are. Today, those services are provided in what we call *Huizen van het Kind* ('Homes of the Child'), on the basis of childcare for babies and toddlers.

We hope that this booklet inspires a new vision of the connection between childcare and family support services, which can be established in whichever way possible.

We like to illustrate these integrative care services in three sections:

1. Childcare of babies and toddlers as the seedbed of social development
2. Wigwam's integrated approach with three components
3. Cooperation under one roof in the *Huizen van het Kind*

Furthermore, Mrs Katrien Verhegge, administrator-general of *Kind en Gezin*, and professor Michel Vandenbroeck and Mrs Naomi Geens of the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at Ghent University present their vision on the recent developments in the sectors of childcare and family support services by way of introduction and conclusion.

We hope to share with you our enthusiasm for childcare: its diversity of people, its social function, its opportunity for encounters, parental participation and celebration, and especially its integration into the *Huizen van het Kind*.

Social support and social cohesion inside the childcare facility: of course!

We have long been aware that the social network of a family is its first and foremost source of support. Being able to rely on family, friends, neighbours and acquaintances makes all the difference. This social network can, however, come under pressure. Having young children often causes parents to have less time and energy to meet their family and friends. People also tend to move more frequently and farther away nowadays, which puts a strain on social relations because as they move, they leave behind the people who they could turn to and they are often not acquainted with their new neighbours either.

Many parents would like to be connected with their neighbours and their neighbourhood. They are looking for like-minded people who they can trust, turn to when in need of help and share personal stories with. But lasting, close relationships of that nature are not enough. They would like to connect to other neighbours as well: to nod at their neighbours as they walk by, have a chat about their children, reach out to each other ... Those brief encounters with strangers often teach them about the people around them and about themselves. In the context of increasing diversity, such encounters provide a good opportunity to acknowledge each other. They are fundamental links between members of a community. They make the city liveable.

For that reason, facilities that serve as a meeting point for a diversity of people (children, families, professionals, neighbours ...) can play an important role. Even if parents stress the importance of both brief encounters and sustainable contacts (in scientific terms: ‘social support’ and ‘social cohesion’), they may not find the support and connections that they are looking for. Our research shows that this even true for parents who visit a childcare facility each day.

Wigwam’s staff members know better than anyone that a childcare facility does not automatically become a house that is open to all people, or a place for people to meet each other. They strive each day, and at every moment of the day, to create a welcoming place for anyone who wishes to visit. Wigwam’s team recognises that providing social support is not as simple as providing the same care for everyone. They have experienced that their diversified approach pays off. All ideas, however crazy they may be, are taken into consideration. The examples in this booklet are a testament to their openness and willingness to join families on their journeys. They have the courage to accompany others on their quests, which shows their tremendous sense of professionalism. It is in this mutual quest that the families find support.

Professor Michel Vandenbroeck and Mrs Naomi Geens of the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at Ghent University

1. Childcare of babies and toddlers as the seedbed of social development

Wigwam now has twenty years of experience in accompanying children and families on their journeys of finding their own direction in different areas of life (family life, health, education, employment, housing, leisure time, relationships etc.) from its low-threshold access to childcare. Wigwam is pleased with its characteristics of the new concept of *Huizen van het Kind*. We have experienced that childcare can play a valuable role in these ‘Houses of the Child’. Childcare can offer a safe basis for various interwoven domains (playing and meeting with others, preventive family support) in order to set out a path along with the children and parents¹. In this way, childcare acts as a safe seedbed on the level of the child, the family and society as a whole.

Why childcare as the seedbed of social development?

Scientific research has repeatedly shown that the first three years of a child’s life are critical for his/her development. Therefore, it is important to us that children feel safe and at home at Wigwam, to fully develop their identity and their roots. Even at the early stages of parenthood, parents recognise the importance of a safe place for a child to develop and are open to discover how they can provide a harmonious upbringing for their child. This ties into a viewpoint expressed in the pedagogical framework² for childcare. We would like to refer to this vision text, which states that ‘families are competent’: ‘All parents want what is best for their children. Practitioners acknowledge this and build on the families’ strengths. Parents share their child-rearing responsibilities with practitioners who also have an impact on their child’s future. In addition, parents strive to provide their children with opportunities that they perhaps did not receive themselves. This positive way of child-rearing gives both children and parents a good feeling. It allows them to develop their capacities, talents, knowledge and confidence much better. Seeing that their parents feel at home with us also gives the children a sense of trust. Through daily interactions with the families, we can get to know their needs and living environments.

1 In this booklet, the term ‘parents’ refers to the parents and the primary persons responsible for the upbringing of the child.

2 The pedagogical framework is a vision text on quality childcare for babies and toddlers. It was commissioned by *Kind en Gezin* and developed by a team of cooperating researchers from KU Leuven and Ghent University.

Our cooperation with *Huizen van het Kind* allows us to make the best use of these daily interactions. By seizing the opportunities that are already there (the space available in the childcare facility, the childcare workers present, the encounters between parents and childcare workers etc.), we can create opportunities to bring people together and give them the feeling that they are not alone. In this way, our support - low-threshold and primarily preventive, but also intensive if necessary - can make a big difference and remain informal. This support is not limited in time. Even after the initial period of childcare, parents and their children remain welcome for a cup of coffee, to participate in games and activities, ask for direct support and referrals etc. This integrative service, on the basis of childcare, not only allows us to make efficient use of our funds and resources, but also to combat inequality of opportunity at an early stage, which benefits society in various areas. Through shared care and frequent interactions, a relationship of trust is created. This gives parents and childcare workers the courage to show vulnerability, and it enables parents to reveal their needs and questions to the childcare workers as well as other parents, in the same way that they share their moments of joy and success. At Wigwam, everybody (children, parents, neighbours, professionals, visitors) is welcome and appreciated. Meeting childcare workers and other parents is therefore a vital element at Wigwam. It is a place for parents to share experiences over a cup of coffee, play together, provide care together, celebrate together and chat about their children, upbringing and the small things in life.

2. WIGWAM'S INTEGRATED APPROACH WITH THREE COMPONENTS

Wigwam vzw was created as a project to counter inequality of opportunity and has developed an integrated service throughout the years. At this stage, Wigwam has been accredited by *Kind en Gezin* as a(n):

- inclusive childcare facility for babies and toddlers (33 spots)
- place for play and encounters
- centre for preventive family support

In our view, the first component, childcare, acts as a seedbed for joining children and their families on their journey. The trusting relationship that we have built and the frequent, informal interactions make a seamless and low-threshold transition towards our other two components possible: our opportunities for play and encounters and our preventive family support.

Our childcare facility acts as a place for play and encounters, which is its second component. These opportunities for play and encounters are provided for all₄ children and parents and take place at Wigwam's facility as well as the local consultation office for young children. As described in many documents by *Kind en Gezin* and *EXPOO*, parents and primarily young children can spend time together in these places for play and encounters. Parents and children can make contacts with each other, (learn to) play together, gain social experiences and expand their social network.

Children get the opportunity to explore their environment in the presence of their parents and can practice detaching themselves from them. In contrast to other places for play and encounters which do not moderate such encounters, Wigwam deliberately chooses to take this opportunity to engage in conversation with the parents. We bring the parents together and introduce them to each other. Offering a cup of coffee or tea is a key factor of these get-togethers. The childcare worker's encouraging and accosting attitude when inviting the parents creates a welcoming atmosphere and

reassures the parents that the childcare worker is sincerely interested in their personal lives. This serves as a basis for openness and spontaneously starts the process of establishing a trusting relationship. As is the case in the childcare facility, this relationship of trust makes it easier for the parents to place themselves in a vulnerable position by sharing their moments of joy and sadness, their experiences of success, their questions and their concerns with others. Those present can explore these areas of life by engaging in a dialogue with the childcare worker, and if they desire to do so, with other parents.

3 The childcare centre also has a pedagogical and social function, which were extensively dealt with in the book *Kinderopvang en Ontmoeting* ('Childcare and encounter').

4 Families whose children do not go to our childcare centre are welcome to partake in our play and encounter events as well.

In relation to our facility's component of play and encounters, it has implicitly and explicitly been made clear to use that parents benefit from the opportunity to have a conversation with other parents on a regular basis, without their children being present. Wigwam gladly helps out those who are in need of such an opportunity, for example by having a parent evening turn into a *Wigwamcafé*, at which parents can have a spontaneous conversation about the things that they find important at that time. We have noticed such events recharge the parents' batteries and give them the energy to interact with their own child and other families in a positive way. For our third component, preventive family support, we look to satisfy the implicit and explicit needs of the child and/or parents on the basis of the trusting relationship that we have built. Together with the families, we try to find the best options for their situations. We can provide support on three levels: the child, the parent and the neighbourhood/community. The levels flow into each other. Three core concepts are key: participation, inclusion and integration. At Wigwam, we aim to introduce families to other people, visions and values internally as well as interact with the external environments with which they are often not yet familiar.

At the level of the child, we attach great importance to the early supervision of the development (pre-, peri- and postnatally), and the stimulation and discussion of that development with the parents (aspect of inclusion). Through conversation, we intend to reveal the child's needs, wants and feelings to the parents. Our proactive approach, which we initiate before the children go to school, helps the parents recognise their child's signals and allows them to react to them in a responsive manner. In this way, prevention of parenting and behavioural problems can occur at a very early stage. This also strengthens the relationship of secure attachment between the parent and child. It requires a large presence of and accessibility to assistance. In this context, we experience once again that the childcare facility is a rewarding and essential seedbed. The continuity and presence of assistance is ensured through our childcare services.

5 Wigwam reaches a very diverse and multicultural group of people.

By always lending a sympathetic ear and through the shared care of the child, a relationship between the parents and the childcare workers is developed, positive role models are presented and parents are provided with the opportunity to participate in a spontaneous or theme-oriented exchange of experiences. We have noticed that, by raising the child together, the families' capacities, pedagogical insights and competences grow. This allows children and parents to create more positive interactions, which facilitates a positive upbringing. At the early stages of the supervision of the child's development, we believe that it is important for the parents to get the opportunity to familiarise themselves, in an integrative way, with a number of important aspects of childcare, such as hygiene, play and interaction, safety and nutrition. These aspects of child-rearing are incredibly important for the development of the young child.

At the level of the parent, Wigwam provides the opportunity to encounter others on a daily basis, as well as weekly activities for families and parents of a relaxing, supportive, informative, formative, practical or social nature. One way of parental participation which we value greatly, is the voice of the parents. What do they find important, and what are their experiences with inequality of opportunity? We deal with these experiences in group, but discuss them privately as well, at their homes or at Wigwam. Subsequently, many initiatives are created on the basis of the parents' needs and ideas. If they are interested, Wigwam happily engages the parents in the preparations and clean-up of the activities.

In addition, the inclusive way of thinking is central to our activities. Wigwam reaches a very diverse group of people, which includes families coping with inequality of opportunity. Considering that Wigwam reaches such a multicultural group of families, it is highly beneficial for children, parents, family members, friends and colleagues to interact with and gain knowledge of other cultures. At Wigwam, families (often literally) get a taste of other cultures through the daily activities, as well as through (sometimes spontaneously) organised festivities or informal activities which have parents bring homemade dishes and materials from around the world. Telling each other stories, singing songs together and learning about each others customs brings along a broader perspective on living in a community. Besides the participative and inclusive vision, our integral thinking, perceiving and acting forms the basis of our activities. In this way, we (often simultaneously) support families in different areas of life: child-rearing, housing, finance, jobs, relationships, health, nutrition, safety, hygiene, administrative worries etc. The activities that we organise range from our *Wigwamcafé*, over a neighbourhood walk to an interactive session on healthy nutrition or toddler participation. Our second-hand events, which we organise on a regular basis, are key to the activities that we organise. In our *Open-Weggeef-Tent* ('Open-Giveaway-Tent'), which takes place in a tent in our garden, Wigwam parents and other interested members of the community can bring and take second-hand goods for free. This means that parents are supported (by each other) in finding the materials that they need, and can meet other people, have a nice talk, a drink or a bite to eat at the same time.

If our know-how is insufficient, we actively refer the parents to appropriate (support) organisations. We have also experienced that parents will sooner look towards education and/or (sustainable) employment when their sense of self-worth is activated and they get the opportunity to create more space in their personal lives. With this in mind, Wigwam can introduce the parents to different paths of education and employment as well as the health, welfare and support sector ('social card'). To many families, the support system is too complex. First and foremost, Wigwam aims to serve as an integral gateway for those families - familiarity, continuity and transparency are important factors of working with vulnerable and disadvantaged parents - and, on another level, refers families to specific assistance programmes if necessary.

Together with the parents, we look for the best solution for their situation, without creating a relationship of dependency. If desired, we keep offering a listening ear and even follow up on the care services. Introductions to other facilities may occur through informative activities, visits etc. These facilities include the consultation office for young children, the education shop, the community health centre, the maternity care and breastfeeding expertise centre, the 'inloopteams' (supplying educational support to deprived families), the library, schools etc.

It is one of Wigwam's goals to get to know the educational system with the parents. Education is indeed a crucial factor in combating child poverty. Wigwam tries to make the transition from childcare facility to pre-school kindergarten as smooth as possible by organising a yearly info session on toddler participation that entails a number of 'custom' visits to local kindergartens.

At the level of the community, and to strive for inclusion, Wigwam considers the daily interactions between parents (and their family members, friends etc.) through our services an opportunity to encourage them to make informal contacts and build a social network with other parents and members of the community and our society.

Encounters, as we have mentioned before, are key to Wigwam and are an underlying idea behind all activities and at any moment of the day. Parents can meet other parents, community members, childcare workers, professionals (such as the regional nurses and the *Kind en Gezin* family supporter, who participates in the get-togethers at Wigwam at regular intervals) and build a social network that they can rely on. In this way, the families will feel the support of others and will sooner be integrated in the community or society.

This also encourages them to share their experiences and creates interactive educational moments to participate in. On top of those moments of exchange, we believe it is important to explore the neighbourhood with the children, community members and sympathizers to encourage integration. Together, we often visit the library, local kindergartens, the park and playground, the zoo etc., to (literally and figuratively) cross the first barrier. The families will then be more familiar with these places, and can more easily visit them independently or with other families in the future.

As we have mentioned, the participation of community members is a valuable component of our services. Their visits during an activity or a conversation over some coffee, and their helping hand at our facility creates a bridge to the community. That is where families can expand their social network.

Participation, inclusion and integration are central ideas at Wigwam, which are introduced through the families' multiculturalism, the team's (multidisciplinary and multicultural) team, our openness to new ideas and initiatives and our 'open-door' policy for children, parents, neighbours, sympathizers and professionals. That is how we embrace many kinds of diversity at our facility.

In short, we constantly aim to connect children, parents, community members and professionals to each other. Different sources of knowledge, skill, capacity and self-confidence are brought together and form one robust unit, because ‘sticks in a bundle are unbreakable’ (African wisdom). In this way, we want to offer our support to parents, without patronising them, which will make them more likely to seek and accept help from others in the future and bring (back) joy to their child-rearing and overall lives. Connections to other families, to the community and society, to institutions and to care and support providers are established.

3. CO-OPERATION UNDER ONE ROOF: HUIZEN VAN HET KIND

Because of the fact that the components that we have mentioned earlier flow into each other, we are convinced that both the families and the cooperating organisations highly benefit from the cooperation between our partners under one roof. That is why we are happy to announce that Wigwam will move to a new building in the second half of 2016, which will also be the new home of the consultation office for young children (Kessel-Lo) and the regional team of *Kind en Gezin*. This ‘cooperation under one roof’ will allow the partnership between these partners to grow further, which will be especially helpful for the families. A number of improvements, such as the availability (the facility will be open from 7h00 to 18h00 every day, because of our childcare department), accessibility, approachability and continuity will lower the threshold. Our visitors can come in through a single entrance, be offered a cup of coffee in the play and encounter area and, if they like, be informed on which office to contact. If necessary, the facilities at the new building can actively play a guiding role.

Wigwam has already functioned as a miniature village on the basis of childcare; one place for everyone to come together. The new Wigwam village will be even bigger, and will be open and accessible to everyone looking to encounter others, in whichever way.

Our centralised way of operating under one roof with our partners, which we will establish as of 2016, will be similar to how the *Huizen van het Kind* operate at their physical locations, which we referred to in the foreword of this booklet. Wigwam, like the partners that we have mentioned before, is a part of the network of the *vzw Huis van het Kind Leuven*. Our network partners and other external services will be present and work at the new Wigwam home to help accomplish the tasks that are linked to the concept of *Huizen van het Kind*.

We think that the concept of *Huizen van het Kind* generally forms a positive evolution within the sector of family support and have experienced that, by joining this concept, we add value to our integrated approach, with childcare as the seedbed and lever. This added value will benefit:

a. the children and their families

Bringing the organisations together under one roof makes it easier to cooperate, exchange information and make sure that our services are in line with the families’ needs. This results in a more efficient approach. Parents and children can benefit from more transparency concerning the services and the procedures of the organisations. The families will certainly become more familiar with the services that we offer and will feel more inclined to ‘use’ them.

Bringing together parents and regional nurses in an informal way

b. the *Huizen van het Kind*

If childcare can play an active role, this will be very beneficial for the *Huizen van het Kind* in relation to:

- accessibility: childcare is very accessible to young families, and can be an informal link to other organisations and services, such as community work, parenting support, perinatal support, the community health centre, pre-school kindergartens etc.
- knowledge: the daily interactions allow childcare workers and families to get to know each other very well, which makes it easier for the families to seek support.
- presence: the childcare workers encounter the parents twice a day, which means that they can follow up on the families in a fast and smooth way. The childcare team is also accessible and available at any time of the day to answer possible questions.
- continuity: the staff members at the childcare facility usually have regular contacts with the families during a period of two years, or even longer if multiple children of the same family go to the childcare facility.
- a relationship of trust: the shared care of the children creates a relationship of trust between the parents and childcare workers, which lowers the threshold for further support; childcare is the linking factor in this process.
- critical stages of development: childcare reaches the children and families during the critical stages of the child's development (ages 0 to 3). During this period of time, the basis for the child's later development and identity is formed. Parents also have a certain dynamic during these stages which can be utilised and maintained.
- community development: by providing opportunities of encounter, we give the families a chance to experience the diversity in other families (cultures, beliefs etc.) in an informal way, through the shared care of children. This is an important element of our society, in which many families live in isolation and many conflicts occur. When people get the opportunity to get to know each other in a casual way, differences melt away like snow before the sun. On the other hand, what is unknown will remain unloved. Childcare therefore plays an important role in the *Huizen van het Kind!*

c. society

When we look at the benefits that childcare has to offer, it is clear that it is of value to society. Reaching out to families and getting to know them, building a relationship with them and following up on them becomes much easier and more efficient. As we have described, the childcare facility is an accessible place for families to visit if they have various questions, especially if the childcare facility and its partners are located in the same building. As a result, better results can be achieved with less resources.

In addition, numerous studies have shown that investments in high-quality childcare deliver an eightfold return for society.

d. the childcare facility itself

Our participation in the *Huizen van het Kind* is valuable for the childcare facility itself. At Wigwam, we aim to offer more than just childcare. Of course, this requires extra effort; having more meetings and cooperation certainly takes time and energy. However, the benefits for the families, facilities and our society are substantial. To us, this is a part of our social responsibility. We intend to create as many benefits as possible, in various domains, starting with the families themselves. We also experience the advantages of a smooth cooperation that can take place under one roof. Offering as many services as possible under one roof is also the goal of the *Huizen van het Kind*. For example, as we

have discussed, Wigwam ensures an active cooperation with the regional nurses and the *Kind en Gezin* family supporters, who follow up on families and regularly visit our facility. Having a good relationship with such contacts enables them, and us, to offer care at an early stage and take preventive measures in agreement with the families.

The staff members of facilities that are part of a broader network of organisations know each other better and, as a result, will easily contact each other, learn from each other and cooperate on projects relating to certain families, certain issues and certain themes.

IN CONCLUSION

Wigwam has been contributing to a more caring world for 20 years. As we have described, we aim to provide a warm welcome and various supportive services tailored to the needs of every child and parent in which childcare for babies and toddler, preventive family support and opportunities for play and encounters flow into each other. All children and parents can be who they are at Wigwam and make the childcare facility a trusting environment, a 'home', alongside others. Offering a warm welcome is essential to Wigwam. On the basis of this warm welcome, we join children and parents on their journeys, on which everyone's needs can be met if desired. Since its foundation, 20 years ago, Wigwam has been fulfilling many roles in an integrated way on the basis of accessible childcare.

We strive to be and remain 'a welcoming home for the whole family' every day.

That is why we are pleased with the recent developments towards the concept of the *Huizen van het Kind*, which is creating serviceable facilities as well. This new concept reinforces the long-standing cooperation at Wigwam, which has always and will continue to prioritise offering opportunities and support tailored to the families' needs, as well as transparency and continuity from a single physical location. The concept of *Huizen van het Kind* gives us the opportunity to further expand our integrated offer of services in cooperation with our many partners.

Together with the partners that have supported the creation of this set of books, we hope that the philosophy of the *Huizen van het Kind* inspires many organisations to put its ideas into practice in their own ways. Above all, we hope to see childcare evolve into an important factor and partner of these 'Houses'.

Of course, the integrated offer at Wigwam and the cooperation that is linked to the *Huizen van het Kind*, require the appropriate infrastructure to be in place. Therefore, we are pleased to be able to move into our new Wigwam home in 2016 after 20 years of hard work and growth. In this new home, other partners will find a place as well, including the consultation office for young children. As we have described before, we have indeed been cooperating intensively with the regional team of *Kind en Gezin* for years. Our cooperation with the organiser (*vzw Kind en Preventie*) and the volunteers at the consultation office in Kessel-Lo has evolved as well, especially in relation to our offer of 'play and encounters'. By joining all these forces, we can create benefits for everyone: the children, the parents, the facilities and society as a whole.

We have stated this in our foreword, but we would like to conclude on the same note: we hope to share with you our enthusiasm for childcare: its diversity of people, its social function, its opportunity for encounters, parental participation and celebration, and especially its integration into the *Huizen van het Kind*. The diversity, the many partners and the benefits that we have created will be very rewarding and make for a pleasant working environment, giving us something to celebrate every day at both the childcare facility and the *Huizen van het Kind*!

Come and celebrate with us!

The Wigwam staff

AFTERTHOUGHT

It is vital for each family and child to feel part of society. To ensure that they do so, Wigwam joins children and families on their journeys. Through Wigwam's atmosphere and operations, different stories connect to each other. Besides making sure that every child feels good about himself, Wigwam makes sure that children feel connected with the people and the world around them. On the basis of this engagement, we appreciate that Wigwam has created a playful area which is strongly linked to the *Huis van het Kind*, an area that allows children to explore, grow and be who they are. We hope that this can also be a meeting area in which parents can find each other through their strength as parents. Above all, a *Huis van het Kind* aims to be a place for families to connect and share stories and for partners to cooperate to support the well-being of each child and parent: 'together we are strong'. Everybody is welcome at a *Huis van het Kind* and this is the message that Wigwam sends to its community.

A colourful community full of stimuli can be truly enriching for families and children. It's also very admirable that Wigwam focuses on solidarity. From birth, children need to feel supported and connected to other children, adults and the world around them. Positive, warm relationships contribute to a basic feeling of emotional security. It's the relationships that lead to solidarity. They give the child a sense of belonging and make them feel part of a greater whole. At the childcare facility, children develop relationships outside of their families for the first time. Every day, Wigwam strives to actively support these relationships by encouraging the children to interact with others in an empathetic and respectful way. The interactions with the Wigwam staff members and other parents is also a great source of support for the parents. In this way, parents can expand their network and feel connected to their community. Wigwam joins the parents on their journeys and supports them in carrying responsibility.

We must not underestimate the importance of social support from a network (of family, friends, neighbours and members of the community) which can offer psychological, material and, above all, emotional support if desired. A strong social network is essential to combating child poverty. Together with its partners, Wigwam devotes itself to creating resources and opportunities for parents and young children in the community. On the basis of warm relationships with others, Wigwam aims to support all children in growing up to be confident adults who can contribute to an open-minded, democratic society in which we treat each other and our environment with care and respect.

Katrien Verhegge

Administrator-general of *Kind en Gezin*

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