



Huizen van het Kind

(Family Centres in Flanders and Brussels)

Their ambition.

Focusing on the health and well-being of families, their children and youngsters is an important task in society. Various local authorities, professions, field organisations, volunteers and citizens take this task to heart each day.

The Huizen van het Kind are there to concentrate the strengths even more in order to better support families.

This document consists of two parts.

In **part one** we focus on some core ideas about the Huizen van het Kind. We show the added value of the Huizen van het Kind at the local level.

In **part two** we deal with the rules and regulations with respect to the Huizen van het Kind.

Part 1: Core Ideas

Local collaboration for the benefit of families

A Huis van het Kind is a collaboration among a number of organisations that provides multidisciplinary, integrated and appropriate services in support of (future) families with children and youngsters.

“At a Huis van het Kind many people and organisations collaborate. In this way they are just as diverse and unique as the families they support.”

Each Huis van het Kind is accessible and can be recognised by each of its target groups, they are (future) parents, other caregivers, children and youngsters.

The challenge that prompts partners to come together at a Huis van het Kind is: “How can we together support (future) families as well as possible?” That is a huge challenge with many possible answers. That is why a framework has been created with a minimum of rules thus allowing for local solutions.

*“The challenge and the number of possible answers are great.
But fortunately the rules and regulations allow enough room to find the correct answer at the local level.”*

The local answers always depend on many factors. What organisations are active? What are the local needs and opportunities the organisations can work with? And in particular: what is the added value of the collaboration among so many different organisations?

Added value through collaboration

Thus, the crucial question is how can a variety of organisations create added value together? The goal is not collaboration for the sake of collaboration. The goal is a collaboration whereby diverse partners strengthen one another making their own contributions in order to create a stronger whole. In other words, there must be an added value for families, first and foremost.

Each Huis van het Kind should create added value in a different way because their contribution depends on the local needs and opportunities, and local organisations.

“At the Huis van het Kind diverse partners collaborate: local authorities, local organisations and families. Here collaboration is much more than only ‘working’ and ‘together’.

It is about a joint effort.

Thinking and doing together.

And above all, supplementing one another by making a contribution you are good at. Only in this way one will exceed one’s own strength, and together added value is created for others and for one another.”

How is added value created for all families?

1. Local needs - local opportunities

The aim to best support families means that a Huis van het Kind must cater to the needs and requirements of families, and to what families experience as support. To be close to the families is crucial. This also goes for allowing them to participate, also as far as the design is concerned.

“Each Huis van het Kind has the same commitment but has a different approach because that takes account of local needs and requirements.”

Besides, a Huis van het Kind intends to make further use of the opportunities and possibilities that were created over the years at the local level. The good practices that, in the meantime, were developed in Flanders, show that those Huizen van het Kind connect with the local reality. Therefore, it is the explicit intention to continue building on previous efforts and to optimise the current efforts. In this connection the following questions are asked: what collaborations already exist?; Where do families go to already?; Can we make services more accessible? What challenges can we deal with together?

*“At the Huis van het Kind we cherish what is already working.
At the same time we explore what can be done better tomorrow.”*

2. Improving accessibility and visibility

At this moment the service for families is too fragmented which complicates the accessibility and visibility of the service for families.

With regard to Huizen van het Kind organisations should seek to better know what each of them can offer. In this way they will be able to support families more effectively, to match the services to the needs, and offer integrated support. Furthermore, it is also important to ask the following questions. For whom are the current services accessible? For whom are they not? Are there any target groups that are left out? Are there any exclusion mechanisms at work?

In order to make the services more visible, it is important that there is one label and one logo for all Huizen van het Kind. In this way the services in Flanders will become more visible. Thus, organisations will be able to let families know at the local level that their services are interconnected. At the same time and within this framework it is also important that each organisation can keep its own profile.

The services that organisations at a Huis van het Kind offer concern a basic set of services to support children, youngsters, (future) parents and other caregivers. That is why accessibility and removing barriers are crucial.

*“A Huis van het Kind is visible and accessible.
Thus, anybody may find his/her way.
Thus, anybody may just step in.”*

*“A Huis van het Kind can accommodate many organisations.
Each with their own expertise, experience and strength.
Together they support families.”*

3. Offering integrated services

The support that families need cannot be divided into strict themes. For example, information for a caregiver about healthy food. Actually that is an answer to a health-related question. At the same time that information is only useful if children are also encouraged to eat healthy effectively. It should also be noted that healthy food is often more expensive (possible barrier to families having financial problems). And information about healthy food should also go with the emphasis on the importance of sufficient exercise and sport to be taken up by these families. Besides, the individual needs of the family members are often very much interrelated. Thus, good childcare and entertaining childcare during holidays are important for the parent as well as the child.

Without coordination service providers may involuntarily thwart one another, cause confusion for a family or offset the added value of good collaboration. The Huizen van het Kind offer an integrated package of services in order to support families and the individual members of a family.

How the services of the different organisations will be coordinated, always depends on the current need and how families wish to be supported. In this way added value is created at a very personal level.

*“At the Huis van het Kind the needs of the parents, the children as well as the contextual situation of the family require an equal amount of attention.
Because within a family each member is equally important: all members and everything are interdependent, a family is never detached from its context.
To give proper support to families it is important to provide integrated services.
This involves a broad approach to a need or requirement.”*

Integrated services and the relief for deprived children

Internationally, an integrated approach is regarded as a good practice in the fight against child poverty. After all, the fight against child poverty requires a joint undertaking from different policy domains and from different organisations.

In themselves the Huizen van het Kind are not the answer in the fight against (child) poverty but they are indeed able to make an important contribution because the services at a Huis van het Kind are focused on supporting the strength of all (future) families with children and

youngsters, and children and youngsters themselves, and because the integrated services provided at a Huis van het Kind can better meet the need or requirement of a family in a socially vulnerable situation, because often and at the same time they have needs in diverse domains. Thus, a Huis van het Kind as a whole can be more than the sum of the individual parts.

“As far as a Huis van het Kind is concerned the whole is more than the sum of the individual parts. Together they achieve more in the fight against child poverty than each organisation separately.”

4. Matching demand

Sometimes families are currently supported by different organisations. The Huizen van het Kind offer an opportunity to match the existing services to the local needs. Local requests for help usually reach the local organisations indeed, but the families are better off with a comprehensive answer. In that way local organisations will not focus on the same thing but will combine their expertise and strengths to meet local needs integrally and efficiently. By offering integrated services at a Huis van het Kind the matching of services will be facilitated.

*“Collaboration means combining efforts: by all kinds of organisations, the parents or other caregivers and the children.
In this way situations may be handled integrally and tailor-made.”*

5. Offering added value to all families

It is the ambition of the Huizen van het Kind to offer added value to all children and youngsters, (future) parents and other caregivers. This means that a family should not have any problem going to a Huis van het Kind. In addition, this means that a family will find support there in proportion to its need or requirement. Finally, this means that the services are accessible and create added value for parents, caregivers or children with a specific need for support. Only in this way the services of the Huizen van het Kind will be available to anybody.

The principle to provide services to anybody that take account of a specific need or requirement and that are proportionate, is also called progressive or proportional universalism.

Also this principle of a policy for anyone, with specific attention for those with more needs, contributes towards the fight against child poverty. In that way it wants to flexibly respond to a variety of needs and requirements that diverse families have.

*“A Huis van het Kind is there for anyone, in proportion to the individual need.
For many that is sometimes, for some people that is a lot. “*

6. The added value for organisations

The organisations that collaborate at the Huizen van het Kind want to create added value for families. As far as they are concerned the added value can be the result of:

- more familiarity with what each of the local organisations can offer
- exchange of competences and expertise
- using assets more efficiently
- achieving goals that cannot be done individually

“Collaboration creates added value for others but also for yourself.”

In conclusion

The Huizen van het Kind are there for families in any possible forms, for all (future) parents and other caregivers, for all children and youngsters, within any context. At a Huis van het Kind local authorities and organisations work together with families. Together they are committed to the support all families as well as possible.

They are doing this by:

- *making the services visible and accessible for anyone;*
- *integrating the services to enable working integrally;*
- *offering services that match local needs and requirements.*

In order to achieve this a local Huis van het Kind builds further on the opportunities and possibilities of the local reality, and the strengths innate to the families and their context.

Together they support families in their strength.

Part 2: Rules and regulations

A. Huizen van het Kind: what, why, for whom, with whom, how?

In view of the rules and regulations this section explains what a Huis van het Kind is, why it is there, what partners are involved, what it is doing, and how the field of operation is defined.

The decree of 29 November 2013 concerning the organisation of preventive family support applies and went into effect on 1 April 2014.

What is a Huis van het Kind?

A Huis van het Kind:

- is a local collaboration among various actors
- is there for families: (future) parents, caregivers, children and youngsters
- offers integrated and efficient services for the preventive support of families
- is a municipal or intermunicipal undertaking (it can also be organized at a intramunicipal level)
- is a unit that offers services that match the needs and requirements of local users and actors
- is an organisation that operates on the basis of certain principles and that aims at certain goals
- is an organisation that, fundamentally as well as organisationally, aims at maximising preventive support for families.

The decree lays down the framework for the Huizen van het Kind. It applies to the collaboration among actors from the domain of preventive family support insofar as they organise the services at a Huis van het Kind operating in Flanders and Brussels.

What are the objectives that the Government of Flanders wants to achieve with the Huizen van het Kind?

The domain of preventive family support should contribute towards the strengthening of the rights and interests of children, and strives to promote the well-being of future parents and families with children and youngsters by supporting them in the field of welfare and health. Primarily this should be realised by:

1. giving suitable support to future parents, families, their children and youngsters in the field of health, development and the upbringing of their growing children;
2. promoting and supporting the social, informal networks around families and their children and youngsters;
3. detecting at an early stage, any risks, problems with the health, development, upbringing and education of children, and following up on these and/or making referrals;

4. preventing children from contracting infectious diseases, through vaccinations, among other things;
5. supporting vulnerable future parents and families with children and youngsters in the fight against child poverty;
6. making eligible persons susceptible to, and promoting supportive measures to future parents and families with children and youngsters, and contributing towards a family-friendly climate in society in general.

Through the Huizen van het Kind it is endeavoured to better realise these objectives by bringing actors together. In that way preventive family support will be maximised as for content and organisation.

Furthermore, the Government of Flanders determines what it wants to realise through the Huizen van het Kind with respect to the individual user and with respect to the actors.

Realisation with respect to the individual user by:

1. Making the whole of measures and offered services concerning preventive family support at a Huis van het Kind accessible for all families to the maximum extent, and matching the services to the demands and needs of the users.
2. Bringing the measures and offered services within the reach of socially vulnerable families.
3. Making the offered facilities accessible for all professionals who work with families in the field of preventive family support.
4. Facilitating the matching of care to needs.

Realisation with respect to the actors of preventive family support by:

1. Striving for the improvement of the competence of the actors involved by also exchanging knowledge and expertise.
2. Increasing efficiency through maximising the effectiveness of the means that each actor involved uses for the communication, coordination and infrastructure, and by combining strengths where possible.

For whose benefit are the Huizen van het Kind?

At the Huizen van het Kind care is given to children and youngsters, (future) parents and other caregivers.

Naturally, all these groups cannot be reached immediately. At the local level this can be realised with respect for the specific pace of the collaboration.

The rules and regulations indicate that the range of ages for each Huis van het Kind depend on the demands that the Huis van het Kind receives, and that the offered services to be organised should match the local reality.

Who is doing what at a Huis van het Kind?

Initiative

The initiative for organising a Huis van het Kind can be taken by a local authority as well as a local actor working in the domain of preventive family support. If local actors do not take the initiative, then the local authority will do so.

Local authority

At the Huizen van het Kind there is always collaboration with local authorities. This can take shape in different ways, connecting with the local reality.

It is thereby of importance that the Huizen van het Kind are in line with local social policy as defined by the local authority. After all, the local authorities are important coordinators with respect to the local policy for families, and in this way existing structures and policy options can be further built on.

Local actors

Organisations/ actors bring in services and expertise and commit themselves to the objectives of the Huizen van het Kind. The rules and regulations make it clear that preventive family support is not only realised through formal support but also through the interaction with informal support. In that way the socialisation of the provision of care also takes place at a Huis van het Kind. The voluntary commitment also plays an important role here.

Each organisation/ actor may voluntarily commit itself to the collaboration called 'Huis van het Kind'. The actors wishing to provide services based on the rules and regulations must join the Huizen van het Kind. Furthermore, also the preventive medical consultations and consultations performed by the regional team members of Kind en Gezin (Child and Family) [covering the whole population] for families with young children, are also integrated.

(Future) parents and other educators, children and young persons

The absolute starting point of each Huis van het Kind is the needs, demands and strengths of future parents, parents, educators, children and young persons. Besides, it is important that each of these groups feels that it is involved in the Huizen van het Kind. After all, a Huis van het Kind must be accessible, and its offered services must match the local needs. Therefore, the decree dictates the participation of the user.

What do they offer?

A Huis van het Kind stands for integrated service to families. A Huis van het Kind brings together diverse services and facilities in the field of preventive family support.

These services and facilities are based on the principle of progressive universalism.

This means:

A. Offering a basic set of services and facilities to each child and each family

This basic set of services and facilities has at least the following pillars:

1. Preventive healthcare, including vaccinations, early detection of health risks and health problems and health-promoting actions;
2. Upbringing-related support, in the rules and regulations defined as ‘accessible, layered support for educators in the upbringing of children and youngsters’;
3. Activities for promoting meetings and social cohesion, for supporting social networks that play a supportive role for families, and for facilitating the creation of a social mix that reflects the local population.

B. Integrating supplementary offered services in this basic set of offered services and facilities thus matching the needs of specific families

In that way universal service, for all children and youngsters, and all (future) parents and other caregivers is intended.

Where do they offer these? Defining the field of operation

The field of operation is defined by the municipal boundaries. If it would not be interesting locally to use the municipality as the field of operation, one may also opt for operating on a smaller scale (intramunicipal) or on a larger scale (intermunicipal).

The decree dictates that each Huis van het Kind has a unique field of operation. This means that the fields of operation of the different Huizen van het Kind may not overlap.

Although the field of operation of a Huis van het Kind may be defined, families decide for themselves whether they will use any offered services. They are also free to choose on which Huis van het Kind they wish to rely.