



The film **Childcare Stories** as a discussion tool

Suggestions for use in a discussion with early childhood provisions

Some examples:

- Formation or guidance tool for employees and those responsible in an early childhood provision
- Local consultation in childcare
- Test project Childcare Centre

Possible applications

The film can be used in the following situations:

- **You are planning to discuss the announcement and subscription policy**

Some groups are underrepresented in childcare. This is for example the case with deprived or allochthonous families. The subscription policy (both the moment of subscribing and the selection criteria), the reputation of the childcare centre and the announcement policy play a crucial role in this issue. This policy has to be considered carefully if childcare desires to be accessible for everyone in society and hence fulfil its social function. This film shows that there is a need for a well-considered subscription policy. The parents' stories illustrate that this policy should be based on the diverse needs of the parents in childcare.

- **You wish to develop your own approach to flexibility and childcare.**

As a consequence of the increasing employment of women and the increasing flexibility on the market, the need for flexible childcare is growing. It is a core theme in this film. Various parents testify that they experience difficulties in finding flexible childcare. They also talk about the solutions that came up and what they mean to them. Childcare





employees tell us how they deal with the increasing need for flexibility. This makes *Childcare Stories* an ideal lead to develop a personal approach to flexible childcare.

- **You wish to encourage the discussion on parental expectations**

As this movie shows, most parents have clear expectations about childcare. They appreciate the fact that the childcare centre is willing to redeem these expectations. Currently the lack of available childcare threatens to limit the discussion on parental expectations. They have little choice in early childhood provisions and tend not to mention their expectations that often. These film shows examples of good practice, which allow the discussion with parents to take place.

- **You wish to develop your own approach to childcare as a parent's partner in education**

Childcare is considered to be more and more supportive of the early childhood education offered by parents. This film is a lead to develop a well-considered approach to this matter. Several parents testify that childcare provisions are crucial for the education of their children. It is where they learn to play and live together and discover new ways of playing. They learn how rules and regulations work. Childcare is moreover a good lead to the first days at school. Some parents find it important that their child learns the Dutch language. Parents themselves learn from the approach in the childcare centre.

- **You wish to discuss father participation in childcare.**

The role of the father in a child's education has changed over the last decennia. Fathers are more and more involved in the daily process of educating. For example: they assist in bringing the little ones to the childcare centre, and picking them in the evening. An early childhood provision will certainly benefit from investing in this particular relationship – even though fathers tend to be less 'present' than mothers. Various fathers testify about their experiences in this movie. Their stories are a good lead for reflection on the approach and participation of fathers in childcare.





How do you start working with this film? Some suggestions.

Introduction to the film

It is best to give a small introduction before looking at the film.

We already mentioned that Childcare Stories can be used for various purposes. Tell your participants what the aim of your showing the film is. Let them know what issues will be discussed afterwards. This way the participants clearly know what aspects of the film they have to pay attention to.

Tell your participants what the aim of watching this film is. Are you going to focus on the discussion? Or is the discussion a first step in a process towards change?

Looking at the film

The film consists of 4 chapters:

- Chapter 1 is the general introduction.
- Chapter 2 contains statements of parents. They talk about the difficulties they experienced while looking for an early childhood provision that answers their personal needs and expectations.
- Chapter 3 focuses on childcare employees. They clarify how they try to meet the needs and expectations of parents.
- Chapter 4 focuses on the parents. They explain why they are satisfied with their current childcare centre.

After having watched the film, it is possible to repeat one or more chapters (e.g. chapter 3).

You can also use the extras on the DVD. These are 11 separate, short interviews with parents who are also present in the film. Depending on the issue you are planning to discuss, it is possible to look at one or more interviews.

Extras and themes on this DVD:

- Antero:
 - Announcement and subscription policy, esp. the impact of the welcome and the administration on the accessibility
 - Partner in education
- Ayda:
 - Announcement and subscription policy, esp. the impact of the waiting lists
 - Dialogue with parents
- Ertan and Nürtin:
 - Partner in education
- Fatma:
 - Partner in education
- Lisete:





- Announcement and subscription policy, esp. the impact of the waiting lists
- Flexibility, esp. early-morning and late-evening care
- Partner in education

- Melanie:
 - Flexibility, esp. childcare throughout the day
 - Dialogue with parents

- Nico:
 - Partner in education
 - Father participation

- Ronny:
 - Dialogue with parents
 - Father participation

- Samira and Mohammed:
 - Flexibility, esp. night care
 - Partner in education
 - Father participation

- Stefan:
 - Dialogue with parents
 - Partner in education
 - Father participation

- Tatiana:
 - Announcement and subscription policy, esp. the reason for choosing childcare



After the film

After having watched the film, you start the discussion by referring to your own practices and approach to childcare. Next you find a couple of questions that you can use during this discussion.

Tip

Adapt the questions to the group you are working with. If the group consist of early childhood provisions that wish to cooperate as an integrated childcare centre, it is best to focus on what they have already achieved and what can be done to improve a cooperation.

Theme: announcement and subscription policy

Possible questions:

- What are your first reactions after having seen this movie?
- Childcare is not very accessible for some parents. Do you recognise these situations?
- What are the possible consequences of non-accessibility for this group of people? Consider the consequences for the families themselves and for society.
- The film shows that parents need childcare provisions for several reasons: professional, educational, medical, educational or social (the possibility to meet new people) etc. For what reasons do parents use your childcare? Are you aware of this?
- What are the most common hallmark of the families in your neighbourhood or area?
- Which parents do you reach and which not? How does this influence your announcement and subscription policy?
- How do you welcome new parents? Does this influence the accessibility in a positive or in a negative sense?
- What changes in the announcement and subscription policy are possible to improve the accessibility for deprived groups?

Theme: flexibility

Possible questions:

- What are your first reactions after having seen this movie?
- Many parents are confronted with the issue of flexibility. What forms of flexibility are they? Do you recognize the parents' stories? Why?
- What are the possible consequences when parents and children are confronted with childcare that is only slightly flexible? What are the possible consequences for society in the long term?
- How do you think you can meet the growing need for flexible childcare?
- In the film one of the employees mentions various conditions for creating a flexible childcare. There has to be a balance between quality and flexibility and having a flexible staff that supports this approach. Finally a good cooperation is required. What do you think are the most important conditions?



Theme: dialogue with parents

Possible questions:

- What are your first reactions after having seen this movie?
- A dialogue with parents about their needs and expectations is a major issue for the early childhood provisions in this film. The parents in the film stress the importance of the matter.
- When do you take the time for a dialogue about the parents' needs and expectations?
- How does this work?
- Does this happen on an individual basis, or in a group of parents?
- What are your experiences? Does this formula work or not?
- Do you have sufficient knowledge of and insight in the parents' needs and expectations in your neighbourhood or area? If not, how could this be improved?

Tip

A discussion with employees and parents about needs and expectations can be very instructive. The DVD can also be used in this situation. The film itself is a good introduction to a further discussion on needs and expectations. The DVD is also useful when employees and parents focus on particular aspects of childcare such as:

- *Getting to know childcare*
- *flexibility*
- *childcare is a partner in early childhood education*
- *qualifications and attitude of the guide in childcare*
- *father participation*

See 'Parents – Discuss parents' expectations' for more tips.

Theme: partner in early childhood education

Possible questions:

- What are your first reactions after having seen this movie?
- Many parents consider childcare as an important part of early childhood education. Do you recognize the parents' story? Why (not)?
- What does it mean to be a partner in early childhood education?
- How can you be a partner in that education?



Theme: Father participation

Possible questions:

- What are your first reactions after having seen this movie?
- What particularly struck you in the fathers' stories?
- Does your early childhood provision employ men? Do you think it's important that more men join the team?
- How do you make contact with the fathers: while they bring or pick up the children, by exchanging information, while participating in parties or and activities, by letting them help or brainstorm in the childcare centre?
- Are there fathers you cannot get in touch with? Are there any alternatives to address them? How can you go along with their interests and good characteristics?
- Does your communication (e.g. letters or pictures) underline that you wish to cooperate with fathers and mothers?

Tip

The brochure 'Parents' participation is also father participation' has been especially developed to promote this issue. It is useful for early childhood provisions that wish to stimulate and support father participation. The brochure consists of practical tips to involve fathers in childcare and, a working instrument to evaluate the father's place in your childcare centr and put your suggestions in an action plan. You can download this instrument on www.vbjk.be