

Aarhus Municipality: Transformation of welfare services for children and families.

“Welcome, you're in the right place!”

<u>Organisation(s):</u>	The Department of Children, Families, and Communities, Aarhus Municipality	
<u>Country:</u>	Denmark	
<u>Contact:</u>	policy@esn-eu.org (we will function as an intermediary between you and interested organisations who want to learn more about the practice)	
<u>Theme:</u> Choose at least one option	☐ Ageing & Care ☐ Asylum & Migration ☐ Young People ☒ Support for Children & Families ☐ Community Care ☐ Integrated Care & Support ☐ Co-Production ☐ Disability ☐ Housing & Homelessness ☐ Artificial Intelligence ☐ Digitalisation ☐ Quality Care	☐ Labour Market Inclusion ☐ Social Inclusion ☐ Technology ☐ Workforce and Leadership ☐ Social Benefits ☐ EU Funding ☐ Social Services' Resilience ☐ Mental Health ☐ Person-Centred Care ☐ Research & Use of Evidence ☐ Management & Planning ☐ Other, please specify:
<u>Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights:</u> Which principles does your practice cover? Check the 20 principles here .	☐ 1. Education, training, life-long learning ☐ 2. Gender equality ☒ 3. Equal opportunities ☐ 4. Active support to employment ☐ 5. Secure and adaptable employment ☐ 6. Fair Wages ☐ 7. Transparent employment conditions ☒ 8. Social dialogue ☐ 9. Work-life balance ☐ 10. Healthy, safe work environment	☒ 11. Childcare and child support ☒ 12. Social protection ☐ 13. Unemployment benefits ☐ 14. Minimum income ☐ 15. Old age income and pensions ☐ 16. Health care ☐ 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities ☐ 18. Long-term care ☐ 19. Housing and assistance to homeless ☐ 20. Access to essential services
<u>Current status of the practice:</u>	☐ Concept and Design Phase ☐ Testing or pilot phase ☐ Temporary practice that has terminated ☐ Temporary practice that is ongoing and has a termination date ☒ Established and ongoing practice ☐ Scaling Up and Transformation Phase ☐ Other (please specify):	
<u>Summary:</u> Please summarise the practice in maximum 3	“Welcome – you’re in the right place” is Aarhus Municipality’s transformation of welfare services for children and families, moving from a system-centred approach to a relationship-centred approach. It focuses on early preventive support built on families’ own strengths and aspirations. Through close collaboration across social,	

<i>sentences. This will be the disclaimer of your project on our website. Example here.</i>	health, and education sectors, the model ensures timely, coordinated, and trust-based help for every family.
<u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> <i>Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.</i>	Families seeking support in Aarhus should feel guided, respected, and understood—not lost in the system. The transformation tackles fragmented services by creating coherent, relationship-based support shaped by families’ own perspectives. With a strong focus on early prevention, accessibility, and trust, the initiative ensures that families’ insights—not bureaucracy—drive the support they receive.
<u>Objectives:</u> <i>Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.</i>	1. Develop a welfare model grounded in relationships, trust, and citizens’ own strengths. 2. Strengthen cross-sector collaboration to ensure early, coordinated, and holistic support. 3. Empower families as active partners in creating solutions that promote children’s well-being and family resilience.
<u>Activities:</u> <i>Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 400 words).</i>	The Department of Children, Families, and Communities in Aarhus Municipality is leading a large-scale transformation called <i>Relational Welfare</i>, involving around 750 employees and supporting approximately 4,000 children and their families. The initiative redefines how welfare is delivered—shifting focus from systems and procedures to relationships, trust, and collaboration across sectors. The transformation is built around three key dimensions: Culture – “Welcome, you’re in the right place” A new learning culture, inspired by action learning principles, enables employees to share experiences and reflect on practice. Through open dialogue, professionals move from a problem-solving mindset to a partnership approach—asking families, “<i>How can I support the change you want to see?</i>” rather than trying to “fix the problem.” This shift fosters mutual respect, curiosity, and shared responsibility. Structure – “Together we create opportunities” Employees are organised in interdisciplinary teams, often based at local schools, where social workers, teachers, psychologists, and health professionals collaborate closely. This proximity ensures early, preventive, and coordinated interventions tailored to families’ needs. The structure strengthens teamwork, enables quicker responses, and enhances continuity of care across professional boundaries. Approach – “Everyone is doing their best” Collaboration across professions encourages creativity, flexibility, and shared problem-solving. Families are recognised as active partners with valuable insights into their own lives. Ongoing professional and leadership training—supported by digital learning tools and action learning methods—ensures continuous development, innovation, and quality in practice. Partnership-“We start with community”

	Partnerships with civil society are an integral part of the transformation. Local associations and volunteer organisations provide complementary, community-based support for children and families, expanding the reach and sustainability of welfare efforts. Together, these initiatives form a coherent and relational model of welfare that places trust, collaboration, and shared purpose at the heart of helping families thrive.
Outcomes: <i>Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this (i.e. statistics, a study, or feedback)</i>	External evaluations of earlier pilot projects demonstrated clear positive trends, including early and coordinated support for vulnerable children and young people, financial savings through reduced need for intensive interventions, improved satisfaction among families and children, and stronger professional collaboration and workplace cohesion. These positive tendencies continue in the ongoing transformation. Families describe greater accessibility, coherence, and confidence in their interactions with professionals. Employees report enhanced creativity, autonomy, and engagement in their work, while emphasising the importance of visible and supportive leadership as new ways of working evolve. At the same time, the transition has shown that shifting from traditional structures to a fully relational model is complex and requires time, persistence, and patience. Building new habits of collaboration and trust takes continuous dialogue and reinforcement across all levels of the organisation. Quantitative indicators show sustained improvements in the efficient use of resources, and continuous external evaluation ensures that learning, progress, and long-term impact remain at the core of the transformation.
Funding Source	EU Funds: ESF+ ☐ INTERREG ☐ ERDF ☐ ERASMUS ☐ RRF ☐ other ☐ ☐ National Government Funds ☐ Regional Government Funds ☒ Local Government Funds ☐ Private Sponsorship / Public-Private Partnership ☐ Financial contribution of People using Services ☐ Other, please define:
Links to supporting documents: <i>e.g. project website or report of the practice, articles</i>	Relationel velfærd
Comments and tips <i>i.e. for people willing to implement your Practice in their service</i>	Begin by developing a shared narrative and common values across sectors. Draw on local experiences through action learning and cross-professional collaboration to anchor the change in practice. Secure strong leadership involvement and ongoing evaluation to sustain trust, coherence, and long-term commitment to the transformation toward relational welfare.