

Promoting Positive Parenting in Genk

<u>Organisation(s):</u>	City of Genk	
<u>Country:</u>	Belgium	
<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> <i>Which principles does your practice cover? Check the 20 principles here.</i>	☐ 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> <i>Please summarise the practice in maximum 3 sentences. This will be the disclaimer of your</i>	The City of Genk's "Baby on the Way" support system provides low-threshold, trauma-sensitive support for expectant parents, particularly those in vulnerable situations, through an integrated network of health, social care and family services. The initiative combines referral, assessment, tailored support and preventative parenting courses to ensure the best possible start for children during their first 1,000 days. In the past two years, the programme has supported 40–45	

project on our website. Example here.	referred families annually, with referrals expected to increase significantly following the introduction of a new screening tool in 2026.
<u>Context/ Social issues addressed</u> Please explain the problem you attempt to solve with your practice.	Many pregnant women and families experiencing vulnerability or high support needs face barriers in accessing appropriate health, social and family support services. As a result, risks associated with adverse childhood experiences, social exclusion, poverty, housing instability, mental health difficulties and limited support networks may remain unidentified during pregnancy. The “Baby on the Way” support system was developed to provide an accessible entry point to care, strengthen collaboration between perinatal and mental health services, and ensure that vulnerable families receive timely and appropriate support before and after birth. The initiative also recognises that preventative support benefits all expectant families and contributes to improved outcomes for children.
<u>Objectives:</u> Please provide a maximum of three objectives in bullet points.	1. Ensure the best possible start in life for children by providing early, integrated and trauma-sensitive support during the first 1,000 days. 2. Improve access to appropriate services for vulnerable pregnant women and families through a low-threshold referral and support system. 3. Strengthen collaboration between health, social care, mental health and family support services to deliver coordinated and sustainable support.
<u>Activities:</u> Please describe the activities put in place to achieve the objectives (maximum 400 words).	The “Baby on the Way” support system operates as a low-threshold referral point within the Primary Care Zone Kemp & Duin. Referrals can be made by professionals, community members or pregnant women themselves. Following referral, a practitioner from the Child and Family Centre contacts the expectant mother to clarify support needs and identify suitable services. Through home visits or consultations at the centre, practitioners assess the needs of the woman and her family using a systemic and family-centred approach. The programme employs a trauma-sensitive framework designed to reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences and improve support for vulnerable families. This approach strengthens collaboration between perinatal care providers, mental health services and other local support organisations. The initiative follows the principle of subsidiarity, making use of universal services whenever possible while involving specialist services when additional support is required. In addition, the programme delivers a seven-week “Baby on the Way” training course twice a year for all expectant families. The course promotes positive parenting, prepares parents for pregnancy and early childhood, and emphasises prevention as a key factor in achieving better outcomes for children. Support can continue beyond the first 1,000 days and is adapted in frequency and intensity according to each family's needs.
<u>Outcomes:</u> Please explain what the results were/are so far and how you evaluated this (i.e. statistics, a study, or feedback)	The initiative has strengthened collaboration between perinatal, social care and mental health services across the region and has increased awareness of available support pathways for vulnerable pregnant women. During the past two years, the programme has received approximately 40-45 referrals annually, following awareness-raising activities and the implementation of its trauma-sensitive framework. Professionals report that the service lowers barriers to seeking support and improves coordination between services.

	Evaluation is primarily based on qualitative feedback from pregnant women, practitioners, care providers and experts by experience. Key indicators include referral numbers, participant satisfaction, diversity of referral sources and participation in the parenting training programme. Practitioners involved in the trauma-sensitive approach report increased confidence, knowledge and capacity to support vulnerable families. With the introduction of a new screening instrument in 2026, referral numbers are expected to triple, enabling the programme to reach more vulnerable families at an earlier stage. The strong inter-agency networks established since the programme began in 2017 are considered one of its most significant and sustainable achievements.
<u>Funding Source</u>	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:
<u>Links to supporting documents:</u> <i>e.g. project website or report of the practice, articles</i>	Startpagina - Campus O³ Pragtige Baby Op Komst - OverHoop Traumasensitieve zorg Eerstelijnszones
<u>Comments and tips</u> <i>i.e. for people willing to implement your Practice in their service</i>	Qualified practitioners: counsellors who can listen unbiased, feel confident to act (fast) when the situation requires it and have the time en room to do so and finally counsellors who have extensive knowledge of (social) services to refer to depending on the questions or needs of the family in question A strong professional network that is familiar with the initiative through repeated communication via all sorts of channels. Most clients find their way through referrals from health or social professionals. It is quite rare that clients register themselves. This also requires a performative service. After all, lasting referrals depend on the speed and quality of care given to clients.