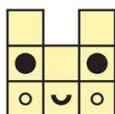




This project has Received Funding from the European Union's Rights , Equality and Citizenship Program (2014-2020) under grant agreement 764255 BADEV. The content of this analysis represents the views of the author only and is their sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.



L A S T E M A J A

Group therapy in Barnahus Estonia.

Analysis.

1. Introduction

One of the aims of the BARNAHUS development project was to test the group work / group therapy approach in working with vulnerable target groups. The target group of Estonian BARNAHUS service is children who are sexually abused and suspect. In the spring of 2019, due to the clearly identified abuse, high sensitivity of the children, the delicacy of the case, and the high time span of occurrence of cases in one area Barnahus team decided to work with groups with sexual abuse suspicions and their caregivers not actual registered victims of abuse within this therapy model.

Organizational leaders signed email agreements in May and June to conduct groups with their clients and staff. The prison service (the target group of juvenile detainees) was the only one to refuse to cooperate, who said they already had sufficient coverage of social programs.

Group therapy / group work with vulnerable target groups was performed during the test period for over 50 children and adults (parents, caregivers, substitute home workers):

1. Children under the closed program at Nõmme tee Center in Tallinn Children's Safety Center, ages 12-17
2. Parents and Social Workers of Tallinn Children's Safety Center Nõmme tee Shelter
3. Tallinn Children's Home Pähkli Children's House, age 8-12
4. Children of Tartu Christian Youth Home, age 8-16, place south Barnahus
5. Tartu Christian Youth Home educators, held in the same institution
6. Tallinn Children's Home Pähkli Children 's House personnel
7. NGO Ruacrew Youth Camp children, age 12-18, 2 groups (in Estonian and Russian) Venue Haimre Community Center

The group work was carried out by Anna Frank-Viron, Ave Kasenõmm, Kai Hallik, Lilia Tkats and Merit Korbe, specialists of the BARNAHUS. According to the child welfare approach, the facilitators provided the participants with a light snack (cookie and flavored water) during the group work. Participation in the group was voluntary for all and unpaid for the organizers - they did so in the course of their main job and also outside of working hours and sometimes premises.

The effectiveness of group therapy was analyzed by a qualitative method . Project manager Ann Lind-Liiberg conducted open-ended oral interviews with all promoters and transcribed them for further analysis . The questions are listed in Annex 1.

Qualitative responses were analyzed on the basis of 12 categories, which were either positive or negative, respectively (eg, ET- or ET + indicates whether the subject had prior knowledge or no prior knowledge). The categories are set out in Annex 2.

2. Physical environment influencing group work

Although the partner organizations were initially very cheerful and happy that the BARNAHUS experts could come to their building for training, there were some obstacles along the way.

The first 2 groups in Haimre Community Center (76 km from Tallinn) worked there in the framework of the NGO Ruacrew youth summer camp. The NGO RuaCrew was established in 2009 with the aim of preventing and contributing to the resolution of social problems and offenses among young people. RuaCrew's main working model is mobile youth work, a social-pedagogical model that includes street work, with youth groups as well as individually with young people, and community and networking . The young people were familiar with each other and had met before. The cozy rooms of the rural community center were all the more suitable in summer time.

"It was a very nice place, the room was very suitable for such an event, the window was open, the nature, the children were calm thanks to it. The place still influences how we put our tables and things, but there we were in a circle, the right size. "

On the other hand, after a while, a group of children followed in the Pähkli House of the Tallinn Children's Home, where the arrival of teamworkers was unexpected, both emotionally and physically.

"The venue was the house where the renovation started. Big empty space, unprepared , we had to wipe the floor. The board was on our side. Each child had to bring their own chair. The beginning was very stressful. "

Implementing a youth group in the Nõmme tee Center of Tallinn Children's Safety Center was versatile but also difficult, as children are not volunteered there.

Currently, Nõmme tee Center is a 48-seat facility for young people aged 10-17 with addiction problems and behavioral problems. There are two units in the center of Nõmme tee, which in turn are divided into two 12-place girls 'departments and two 12-place boys' departments. Working with children with addiction problems is only successful in the long term and children stay in Nõmme tee Center for 6-9 months. If this does not work and the child develops problems again after the program, the child can be redirected to the center.

The Center has clearly defined rules of procedure which include requirements for imported and consumed food / drink; bonus system for good behavior and oversight.

"There are enclosed spaces on Nõmme tee and the children only move with their socialworkers. In the case of children, the issue became clear about volunteering. It was clearly a voluntary program for us, but the kids didn't know it at first. One boy decided to give up, but it seemed that it was because he was given this opportunity. The room was a bit small, but there were also many children. There was a whiteboard and a projector. The bad thing was that you couldn't open the window and you didn't want to open the door because there were socialworkers at the door and it would lock the children in asking questions. "

It was also pointed out that the partner organization believes that the trainers are familiar with their rules from previous contacts .

"I was familiar with people in the institutions and it was rather bad. They expected me to know their rules, even though I hadn't worked there for 4 years. At the same time, it made it easier to contact the organization. "

The suggestion from the trainers was that the training should be accompanied by a guidance material for the host organization, how to talk to the children about the group, how to support them, what kind of room and staff preparation we need.

"Everybody should feel good - we are not pressuring you, but you are welcoming us."

The BARNAHUSes also offered the opportunity to have groups with them, and the partners took this opportunity. A plus was the increase in children and adults' real understanding of BARNAHUS services . The downside is the cost and time of transporting children and the unfamiliar environment in which thawing takes time.

3. Character of participants and performers as influencing group work

The groups included young people aged 8-18 and adults - parents and professionals working with children. Teamworkers are experts in the daily work of children, 3 of whom have long experience in group work and 2 who first used groupwork as a method. Their training ranges from psychology to social work and has work experience in both law enforcement and child protection systems.

Regarding the closed child care facility, the facilitator commented that the children were partly like prisoners, but nevertheless very open, diverse, curious and cheerful. At the same time vulnerable and cautious. We gave them more physical freedom than usual. They were very surprised to be allowed to volunteer.

The situation was more difficult in both groups of BARNAHUS with younger children.

"Most of the group were children with multiple diagnoses, hospitalized, and special needs children. Restless, unsteady, with little attention. Broken children, anxious, very active, disturbed. "

There were also physical battles between the participants in the two groups and the organizers believe that the maximum number of participants in such a group is 7, certainly not 10 or 12 as initially planned.

Group builders had on several occasions decided on the individual needs of the children rather than their suitability for the group.

"The group had a complicated sister and brother who had a burden on each other and he was the only girl. Came to me, looking for closeness and hug. "

"There were 3-4 prominent members in the group. We had to split the group into two, and we each made our own small group alone. "

"The children did not know where they were being brought. They were anxious and the three boys didn't let anything happen at first. Their opinion was not sought and there was resistance. The second time, we were better prepared, putting things like a dollhouse or a stroller that would take too much notice. The first time was very confusing, the second time was very cute and they also gave us energy. We had two meetings and two different groups, although they had the same children. "

For adult group members, there was a sense of inactivity - for example, sitting in a 5-member group on their phone as well as overactivity - one specialist talks to everyone else and the perpetrators cannot continue with the group work.

The organizers also distinguished the difference in the temperament of Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking children, the latter being more active and simple in group work, the former emotional and concentrated.

"At first I was in the cold north - afterwards in the hot south. I had to completely change the approach and nature! "

4. Pre-knowledge of group implementation - children and organizers

In the case of prior knowledge, there are two different kinds of prior knowledge. One is knowledge based on previous work and life experience on how to implement groups with children of a certain age and specificity. The second is the prior knowledge that the partner organizations provided to the trainers about the characteristics of the particular group, which at times were known in advance, but most of them became clear on the ground and required a great deal of experience from the group leaders.

The lack of prior knowledge was also due to the fact that in a closed institution a cookie and flavored water were taken from the children.

"Things we gave were later removed from them, though it was thanks to them for their good participation. Rules of Procedure. And that certainly affects their motivation to come next time. Now as we failed them, even though we didn't know. "

The exact size of the group was unknown.

"It would be good to know how many groups are coming in so we don't have any surprises."

In the case of partner organizations, it is also good to know people's minds, previous work experience and working principles. For example, in a Christian youth home, the educator felt that some terminology was unfamiliar or not used, while educators were more open and child-rights oriented.

5. Previous group work experience

The three professionals who had previously done group work took a more leadership role and supported two professionals who had previously done individual work with the target group.

"Since I haven't done groups before, we initially had an agreement that he was the lead group leader and I was a helper, and we shared the topics that someone could carry and that actually worked."

Those with experience also pointed out the vital wisdom that there are no two identical groups. New nuances always come up and you have to be prepared for different things. For groups of children, flexibility was highlighted without which the group cannot be made. If the whole program was not implemented, you would rather be present, present to the children and answer their questions.

"We were relatively flexible and didn't finish with the topics, but there's nothing about it and I'm not worried. We will try to reach more next time. "

6. Cooperation with each other and partners

The role of the partners in carrying out the children's groups was primarily to bring the children to the Barnahus or to direct the children to the right space on the other side.

"The adults brought the kids here, they went away, they came afterwards."

The lack of a partner organization was expressed in the cooperation between the trainers.

"We were doing well, but next time we have to deal with something that is not really our fault, and there is definitely negativity against us. Although we had a very good cooperation with the group. "

In several interviews, it became clear that doing a group of two leaders is crucial to clearly defining roles and responsibilities. Whether you are a manager or a support staff, your messages need to be clear as it creates a sense of security and reduces tension between them.

It also appeared on several occasions that the practical approaches of group leaders differ according to personal experience and beliefs. For example, it was acknowledged that the program was too busy and that group dynamics were not best monitored. Some also take too much responsibility and does not share it with a companion. However, it was pointed out that cramping with the methodology does not affect the group well, the children notice the pretense and are uncomfortable with themselves.

"I was happy this time because I was able to be myself and felt free. The kids understood it and liked it. "

Group leaders are divided into whether it is better to do the group alone or alone.

"I can't tell if it would be good to do it alone. I'd rather still have two group leaders, even in a small group, to be prepared for the unexpected. "

"It's good to have two group leaders, that's proven. I myself have to deal with it. I actually had a personal experience of being able to make a group with another person. I think I would have done better alone, but maybe it's my ego. "

7. Preparing of the programme

Preparation of the joint programme started in May 2019 and unfortunately partly overlapped with summer vacations for professionals. This situation and different work experience in group organization initially made the situation a bit confusing.

"I think it was difficult that we did not have a clear vision of what it should be and who it was aimed at. How widely we do or do not. In terms of material picking, we gave everyone their own topics to look for and everyone found a lot of interesting material that they couldn't go through, but made suggestions. "

It was also pointed out that it was difficult to run the programme remotely in two cities at the same time, finding a common time was difficult, and the responsibility ultimately fell on the most experienced teamwork specialist.

Group preparation time was significantly reduced when several groups were behind, even if the target group changed slightly. However, this also meant some modifications to the material as well as self-tuning, for example using age-appropriate terminology.

"Although the target group was older and larger and more homogeneous, it still made things easier because I had already completed the programme."

8. Methods used

Most groups used the method that one is the group leader, and the other is either fully assisting or coming in at certain moments. Life brought unexpected things, and for some groups, things changed on the spot as difficulties arose. For example, one group had to be split into two because of aggressive children, and the group leader for their smaller group was a trainer who was not ready.

"While doing the first group, we were still able to start working, even though I was doing my part alone: getting the kids attention! Group was also small, all inevitable in this situation."

For the first time, the group leaders were able to apply their skills and knowledge from earlier working lives, such as active listening and focusing on the child, and giving them individual attention. The children had to be able to express their emotions because, because they were not told where they were coming, they were frustrated. For example, they were therefore deprived of their weekly significant training.

The group leaders also relieved the difficulty by playing with the children, so that they had time to calm down.

"It's not in our program, but playing with them is very necessary and progressive. They're kids. "

Active and ADHD children should also take into account their desire to exercise more and sit less.

Children's characteristics must be taken into account. For many, movement, active means, was a useful method. In the shelter, however, the children were more cautious, felt safe sitting in their seats and in the crowd, and so they were allowed to be.

Early life experience is also useful in dealing with critical situations in aggressive group members.

"Already coming in, I was screening who plays the biggest role in creating disorder. I made contact with a main man to help me keep another at place. It helped me a lot later. "

" We agreed that we have so many participants and so little time, the topics are sensitive and we are trying to control ourselves. There are rules and agreements, we don't comment, raise the voice, etc. And when a situation arises, I have the custom of going to stand with the child, that he understands that he has been noticed. "

9. Feedback from participants

By our agreement, the intention was to gather feedback from all participants each time after group work. Although group leaders always had printed feedback sheets, they were not always completed.

"We lost our feedback. A colleague was still chasing children around the house. One boy threw water on the floor and she collected it. "

Children also left written feedback and some was collected by Barnahus mailbox.

"A kid with previous BARNAHUS experience wrote in the mailbox that it's nice and I want to go here."

There were also some children who were more mentally damaged than expected. It was very difficult for them to create uniformity with the group and also to gather adequate feedback.

"The feedback pages were on paper and my colleague had to help a 13-year-old boy write his 3-letter name. It was very difficult to associate him with the group. "

Many times the model of children there volunteering was the biggest and most positive feedback for the organizers.

"If they have the opportunity to leave at any moment and they don't, then that is important feedback for me. And when they sometimes come back voluntarily the next time, that's it! "

10. Thoughts for the future

For all our specialists the groupwork during the project was very minimal in assessing the needs of the children.

"It's still a good run-out right now. This model should definitely be applied somewhere in the future."

"It's just a gram of water in the ocean. All children need both group and individual work. At the substitute home, they get nothing much about that topic right now. There is a lack of knowledge for them and their educators. "

Our specialists found different frequencies for meeting children, for example, twice a month during the school year, but also that students should be listened to, asked for their feedback, and checked their knowledge in every six months, for example, to see if anything was still in their memories about our meetings.

The specificity of the trainings was also highlighted. Many teenagers no longer need basic training, but for example interest in different sexual attitudes and conditions, pregnancy, etc., which would already be appropriate for sexual health training, no longer focused only on child rights and abuse prevention like this group work session. It is also important to regularly evaluate the knowledge and concerns of children and to provide the training they really need.

The provision of therapy and group work at Barnahuses must be supported by broader networking and support services for at-risk children.

"Who goes to a psychotherapist; who at the children's clinic, most don't have regular services on site."

The professionals themselves also found expectations for self-development that could be met in the future. For example, newer teamwork techniques were introduced, with external trainers to stay up-to-date and interesting.

11. Fears

Even professionals with little teamwork experience surpassed their initial fears and found themselves in a fairly confident position at the end of the teamwork session.

"If, for the first time, I was rather anxious, then I would be delighted now because our program was actually working!"

It was a great concern for the staff of the Barnahus that they saw closely the children of the substitute homes and the network working with them, as well as the mental and educational status of the children.

"There are very difficult children in the substitute home. There are many who have been sexually abused in the past and children practice sexual activities with each other. These few times for meetings cannot be enough. The curriculum should be to integrate issues in everyday life, however, substitute homes, group activities, after all, do not do, though it could be done. For example, a social worker who worked there for 5 years told me that she had never received any training on it. "

12. Wins

A big victory for the group leaders was that the children were able to self-regulate over time and volunteering to work in the group improved the cooperation.

"There were such lovely situations. For example, at the end we asked what you think, how many of you are coming back to us, most of them thought they will. In the meantime, the girl next to me whispered things to me and opened herself up about her issues."

" One boy attacked the girl, but after a while he spontaneously begged her to apologize. Once he had the opportunity to talk about his substitute home experience (how his father is imprisoned and he has been 7 years in a substitute home), he worked beautifully and was there for her to succeed."

13. Estimated time

There are several ways to estimate the time spent.

It took the longest time to prepare a joint program.

The group work program, set up in the middle of the summer, swirled between several professionals and ended up largely on the shoulder of one Barnahus worker. While others were ready to help, it was not effective as a shared work and did not progress at the desired pace. It took her at least a full week to work. Subsequently, the program was adapted to the target group shortly before each meeting.

As the groups took place all over Estonia, transport took a lot of time. A very gloomy example was the procedure where a specialist drove from Tartu to Tallinn (over 180 km) and it was only on the spot that the organizer of the partner organization knew nothing about the event taking place soon. Only five adult participants came together with the on-site educators. Groups also require a specialist to ride 5 hours by bus or train, 2 hours to implement it on spot, and 1 hour preparation and completion time, which takes one full day to implement one group in another city.

In turn, it took quite a while for each group to prepare individually. It was also necessary to communicate with the contact persons of the partner organizations, to arrive earlier, to visit the premises, etc.

"As this was the second group, the preparation was largely over. View and print materials, discuss with partner - it takes about two hours per group. "

14. Summary

Implementing group work / therapy was a very interesting and educational process for Barnabus professionals, but also a tiring and time consuming process. At the moment, we plan to present the results to our partner organizations as well as to those who provide daily training. The Barnabus team will soon expand from 5 members to 7, but with the rising number of cases, we do not see that we are able to regularly provide group work / therapy services within our own small team. The waiting list is too long. However, we very much hope that the work we do will become enthusiastic for our partners who can provide children with broader sexual education, and we will also give our training program free for access to them.

Appendix 1. Open questions during interviews

1. What was the age of the target group?
2. Please describe the venue
3. What was the duration of the work with the target group?
4. What was the time spent on other training?
5. Were you previously familiar with the target audience? (e.g., former colleague or Barnahus customer)
6. What was the time for group work? How much did you personally spend preparing for work?
7. What was difficult about the preparation?
8. What went easy in preparation?
9. What group did you work locally? Please adjectives per group.
10. What was your role in the group? How did the partner work?
11. What was difficult about doing the group?
12. Were there any prominent/too active/passive members in the group?
13. How did you manage the risks?
14. What was your experience of success - what were you particularly pleased with?
15. How did you ask for feedback from the group?
16. What further work / needs do you see for this group in the future?
17. What development needs do you see for yourself in the future?
18. How do you feel about doing the next group?

Appendix 2. Categories for performing the analysis.

The name of the category	Positive	Negative
Physical agents / environment	M +	M-
Character of participants	K +	K-
Preliminary knowledge	ET +	ET-
Work experience	TK +	TK-
Cooperation	CO +	CO-
Preparation	PREP +	PREP-
Methods	W +	W-
Feedback	FB +	FB-
The future	FU +	FU-
Fears	H +	H-
Wins	V +	V-
Estimated time	A +	A-