

# ICELAND

## - a good example

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# Our presentation

- Anna Margrét Guðjónsdóttir
  - Facts on Iceland
  - Protective and risk factors
  - Cooperation
  - Positive parenting
  - Positive teaching
  - Barnahus
- Jón Björnsson
  - Strategy for eliminating corporal punishment of children
  - Arguments against corporal punishment of children

# Some facts about Iceland

- Population about 350 000, relatively homogenous regarding language, social class and education.
- In some ways the smallness of the population is an advantage, in other ways it can be a hindrance/obstacle.
- Compared to many other countries it is relatively easy to cooperate in Iceland; partly because of the smallness/homogeneity mentioned above, partly because of cultural tradition.

# Some facts about Iceland

- Short distance between the general public and authorities/politicians.
- A rich country and living standard high\*
- Iceland is one of the Nordic/Scandinavian countries and there is a close cooperation among them in many fields. These countries are all very ambitious regarding the conditions of children.

\*See Eurostat

# 'The Icelandic Model'

- This term is mainly connected with drug prevention for adolescents, where Iceland have achieved considerable positive results.
- ... but we still have too many serious problems facing children and young people .. bullying, obesity, social media dependence etc...
- We use 'The Icelandic Model' to deal with these problems as it refers to a method; a successful strategy in prevention.

# Protective and risk factors

- Some factors in the life of children/young people are likely to protect them from faring badly in life: we call them **protective factors**.
- Other factors in the life of children/young people are likely to increase the likelihood of faring badly in life: **risk factors**.
- Through (longitudinal) research protective factors and risk factors can be identified.
- Through preventive measures the protective factors can in many cases be strengthened and the risk factors weakened or eliminated.

# Examples

- Participation in structured, organized youth work (clubs, sport, travel etc) is a **protective** factor.
- Participation in unstructured activities, in absence of responsible grown-ups, is a **risk** factor.
- Caring, interested parents which spend much time with their children is a **protective** factor.
- Starting substance use (tobacco, alcohol) early in life is a **risk** factor.
- Praise is a **protective** factor.

# Two crucial things

Sometimes it is said that above all two things have been crucial for the success of the so called 'Icelandic model':

- The first one is to identify these factors – in order to have reliable **INFORMATION**.
- The second is to gather those parties/individuals/institutions who can strengthen positive factors and eliminate negative factors together and make them join their forces, make them **COOPERATE**.

# Other actions

- At local level:
  - Parents movements in schools
  - Strengthen organized extracurricular activities
  - Activate NGOs
  - Support young people at risk in schools
  - Anti-smoking / anti-drinking campaigns
- At National level:
  - Anti-normalization of tobacco and alcohol (including beer and wine).
  - Raise age for allowance to buy tobacco and alcohol.
  - Ads on tobacco and alcohol banned.
  - etc

# Positive parenting

- A parent training event for all parents of children between 6 months to 7 years old. Part of the public health care system.
- The course aims at making parents more suitable for upbringing, creating optimal childcare conditions, strengthening parent and child relationships, and preventing childhood and parent developmental difficulties.
- Teaching parents positive education methods, being good models, setting goals and being involved in the upbringing.
- Emphasis is placed on not applying physical punishment not only because it is in violation of human rights for children (cf. the Children's Covenant), but studies have shown that it is not an effective method and can harm children and the physical for longer and short term.

# Positive teaching

- Educational strategies that supply teachers with all kinds of tools to discipline the students.
- Focus on the general attitude in the school.
- Encourage the well-being of the student with the use of a positive and strategic teaching approach as well as cooperation of all parties related to the child.
- Positive school culture, where teachers have a positive attitude towards the students, leads to less behavioral problems.
  - Emphasis on cooperation and trust.
  - Mutual caring and respect characterizes the teacher-student communication.

# Positive teaching - legislation

- All schools should develop a general vision and a policy regarding student welfare and publish it in their curriculum.
  - Student welfare.
  - Drug prevention.
  - Children's rights.
  - School culture and school spirit.
  - Democracy and responsibility.
  - Form a policy that prevents and reacts to physical, mental and social violence against children as well as social isolation.

# Barnahus

- The European Barnahus Movement benefit from the 20 years of experience in the **Barnahus Iceland**, and the evolution of the format as it launched in the Nordics and beyond. The many international legal frameworks laid the groundwork, a robust exchange of knowledge and expertise from professionals at all levels took it to the next level, and key actors in the centre brought it all together. And of course, without the tireless efforts of the national-level change makers there would be no new services.

This is still just the beginning of the collective work to make Barnahus the default European practice. New services are working to ensure sustainable funding, political will, and the increasing commitment of professionals to work multidisciplinary. Experienced services are working to constantly improve their offerings and share their best practices internationally.

# **STRATEGY AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

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Jón Björnsson, psychologist

# Strategy for the elimination of corporal punishment of children

## TARGET AREAS

1. Laws – legislation
2. Enforcement of laws
3. Professionals working with children
4. Parents
5. Children
6. General public
7. Research
8. Cooperation

## The most important arguments against corporal punishment

- Children have independent human rights and CP always violates these rights
- Corporal punishment goes against the rule of law in all civilized countries
- Corporal punishment is an old-fashioned, obsolete custom, out of date in the modern world
- Corporal punishment can be harmful and cause (serious) damage to the child, to the emotional relationship between parents and child, to the person who uses CP and to the society in general.

## More arguments against corporal punishment..

- There is no clear demarcation line between corporal punishment and violence. By definition CP is considered to be violence and can indeed be very dangerous
- More and more modern states prohibit corporal punishment altogether by law, like other kinds of violence towards children
- In (this country) corporal punishment is prohibited by law. Those who use it are breaking the laws and may even risk punishment themselves.
- The absolute ban of CP by law has nowhere in any country led to any problems regarding discipline. On the contrary ; only a dwindling minority in these countries still regrets the change and miss corporal punishment.