NATIONAL REPORT

Abeona

AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO CARE LEAVERS' PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION

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GROUPE SOS EMPLOI

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Introduction

The tools were disseminated into two institutions: the Luxembourg department of "l' Acceuil Familial" (Foster Care service) for which Philippe Coibion, Belgian participant in the Abéona training at Louvain-La-Neuve, works and "Amarrage", for which Bernard Kottong, second Belgian participant in the training, works.

As far as "amarrage" is concerned, Bernard introduced, in a first step, the 6 tools to the psychosocial workers of the institution. After this introduction, Bernard and his colleagues discussed within a team meeting the most useful and interesting tools to implement. They chose the "target" (ego-centered map). Secondly, Bernard introduced the target to 6 educators and equally showed them the tools "in situation" when this was possible.

As for "l' Acceuil Familial' Philippe first shortly introduced 4 tools to his colleagues. Secondly, Philippe introduced the tools in a co-intervention situation. Thirdly, he introduced all the tools within a team meeting to all his psychologist colleagues.

Within "l' Acceuil Familial", 5 tools were chosen: the Ardoino grid, butterfly circus[1] (short movie invoked by the Polish partners at the end of the training week in Belgium), the identity molecule (cross-introduction tool introduced by Daniel Martin during the first 3 training days), the Polish river and the target.

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[1] http://eopfestival.be/fr/2013/detail-du-film/707

Within "amarrage", one tool was chosen: the target.

The tools were mainly used during personal interviews with young people. So, not within a social group working context .

The two institutions in which the tools were disseminated and implemented have very different missions. In each institution, a decision was made to solely implement the tools that were most suitable to their target audience as well as to their work context.

It should remind us that in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, in the youth support sector, the vocational integration of young people in its strictest definition (that is the vocational training and the support in seeking employment) does not constitute an "official" mission. Steps related to the integration of young people are nevertheless made by most institutions. The empowerment of young people is however one of the missions of this sector, despite the fact that it is worked on in a less central manner in some institutions.

So, with respect to "l'Acceuil Familial", the empowerment of young people is not the first mission of the institution. Working towards autonomy depends on the individual status of the young people. These may actually be in very heterogeneous situations. For instance, some foster families closely follow young people until they reach their majority at financial and administrative level, whereas other young people need to rely on the social workers of "l' Acceuil Familial" to guide them through various matters.

Most of the time, if young people make the decision to be on their own, (and if there is no support from the foster family for the various matters), "l' Acceuil Familial" asks services specialising in empowerment to take over (autonomy support service).

The "amarrage" substructure where Bernard works (see description at paragraph 2) deals however directly with the empowerment of young people.

The encountered specialists consider that all the Abéona tools are potentially interesting but that they must be used depending on the young person's situation. Indeed, during interviews, young people sometimes bring elements that must be dealt with as a priority, "hindering" then the use of the tools. By contrast, young people may sometimes bring up elements that create an area that favours the use of a tool. For instance, confronted with a young person who raises the topic of a training that he would like to follow, the social worker may decide to use the target to see what resources he has at his disposal. Another example: confronted with a young person that thinks low of himself, the social worker may decide to show him the butterfly circus short movie.

Therefore, in both institutions, the use of tools is decided upon on a case-by-case basis, through meetings organised with young people and depending on the needs of the latter.

Dissemination of the tools within "l' Acceuil Familial"

The Ardoino grid

For instance, the grid was used in the case of a 12-year-old child within the context of an interview for his reintegration into the family. The aim was to understand what was going to change for the child throughout his reintegration and which resources the child had to comprehend the new situation at the individual level, at the relationship level, at the school level, at the neighbourhood level, etc.

The grid was drawn on a sheet of paper, the social worker and the psychologist used marker pens to insist upon the striking elements.

The tool enhanced the young person's confidence, to the extent that this tool allows someone not to find himself/herself directly opposite a social worker or a psychologist. It is equally an interesting tool to mobilise when a young person doesn't talk much. Moreover, according to the social workers that made use of it, it may be relevant when the young person is faced with a conflict (the grid allows the deconstruction of all the conflict levels).

Butterfly circus

The short movie was showed to a young person with respect to whom specialists "didn't know what to do anymore". The aim was not to make a "cruel electroshock" but to make the young person understand that "it is worth stating your objective". The movie shows a man that is severely disabled (he almost has no limbs left) who succeeds against everything in achieving things. For our speakers, the fact that it is a media that uses image makes the tool easy to mobilise in the case of young people.

The identity molecule

The encountered social workers did not have the opportunity yet to use it in situation. According to them, it would be interesting to use it during a situation of mental block, when for instance a teenager refuses to talk. The tool actually allows another person to speak about himself/herself throughout 5 key words. It could be adjusted to co-intervention situations: for instance, a young person authorises the social worker to speak about him/her to the psychologist. This shows that one sends things back to the other one and this allows someone to speak about himself/herself without going too fast.

The Polish river (river and collage)

The tool has not been used in situation yet. According to the social workers, it would allow someone to approach a young person's life path. It provides a metaphor to allow the young person to talk about himself/herself. The meandering river allows someone to mark a special event: a new school for instance. Symbols may be used as well for the identification of positive elements: a tree for a teacher that was of a particular help for the young person for instance.

The target (ego-centered map)

The target has not been used in situation yet. According to the social workers, it could be interesting to use in the case of young people who say that they plan to live on their own. There are some young people that are "fed up" with the institutional interventions. They

wish to live independently. The target would allow the objectification of their representations with respect to independence. For instance, when some young people say "I have a network", this statement allows someone to objectify what exactly this network means to them.

Dissemination of the tools within "amarrage"

The chosen tool to implement is the target. It was mainly used by the psychosocial workers and only by some educators, but in a more "furtive" manner. The difficulty for educators resided in using the tool in the long run due to their particular role in the institution (see paragraph 2).

The goal is to use the target at the very beginning, in the middle and at the end of the take-over in order to see the progress of the young person's path and of his/her representations. However, this type of usage is only possible if the take-over duration is relatively long (it is indeed difficult to see the young person's progress within a take-over of 4 months for instance).

The target was used with a view to improving the awareness of the young person's situation during the first interviews. When someone approaches the young person's path and his/her current situation, the target allows someone to see the persons and services the young person can rely on (the things that the young person knows with respect to the network and the contacts he has). This is important in particular with respect to the empowerment as the goal is to prepare the young person to reach majority and therefore to work with the network by handing it over to the persons and institutions that make up this network (for instance by getting things done with the Public Social Care Centres (CPAS - Centres Publics d'Action Sociale), with Support Associations in Open Environment (AMO - Associations d'Aide en Milieu Ouvert), health centres…

Either, the young person is not familiar with the institutions of this network he is spoken of, or the young person already came into contact with these institutions (with AMO for instance) but he does not always realise the services and tools proposed by them (the CPAS for instance are often deemed to be "banks").

The target also allows someone to see the young person's relationship support at the family level as well as to work on the relationship between some young persons and their parents: for instance, one may see whether a young person puts his/her parents at the very heart or far away from the heart of the target.

The target may be used in a very different manner (with the same young person). One may use it with respect to the institutional network (school for instance), the relationship network (friends for instance), the projects (more specifically it allows the young person to clarify his project so that one can see what a school seeking young person for instance is interested in) and one may equally use it as far as the family, therapeutic network is concerned…

The target was effectively used in the form of a hard copy kept by the social workers. It is ideally achieved at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the take-over: this allows someone to see the progress in the young person's path, the issues that still need to be worked on and to objectify the young person's needs. Is it, for instance, in view of these needs, necessary to ask for an extension of the take-over?

According to the social workers that used the target, the strength of the tool is that it brings clarity, visibility and simplicity. This tool is more difficult to use in the case of a young person who forgets things, or who does not know things, but according to the social workers, even with a young person that knows nothing to place on the target, it still brings new pieces of information.

All the tools must be suitable to the young persons' situation. Neither of these two may be deemed to be a „recipe" to apply in each situation. According to our speakers, every tool must therefore be regarded as a baseline that needs continuous adaptations and improvements.

Comparison of the two structures

Within "l' Acceuil Familial", two projects in connection with the autonomy and integration of young people were launched further to the part played by Philippe Coibion in the Abéona project. The first one concerns the organisation of a workshop on the autonomy and integration topic during a greening day intended for the overall departments and social workers of the institution. Philippe would introduce the Abéona tools to the specialists of the other departments there.

The second project concerns the department for Luxembourg. This department launched a debate with a view to organising a day intended for young people on the autonomy topic. Young people would be invited to share their experiences and representations regarding their autonomy and their integration.

The two institutions in question lack sufficient perspective in order to analyse the effects of Abéona on young people. If the target was for instance mobilised in case of some young people, it is too early to make a connection between the usage of the tool and the autonomy and/or the integration of the young person. Furthermore, the intervention context of the two institutions does not allow someone to mobilise the tools among a large number of young people. The social workers quite often lack time and the emergency in some situations does not always allow the mobilisation of the tools.

In general, the social workers consider the tools to be interesting and relevant as they represent mediators between young people and the institution that allow someone to bring clarity and simplicity and as far as they "speak the young person's language".

Within "amarrage", this tool allowed a young person to realise that the support could be extended as some elements of his situation still needed to be worked on together with the educators and social workers.

The institutions do not particularly look for any tools. The missing resources are first of all structural (absence of financial and human resources, absence of time, absence of consistency at the level of public policies, difficulties in terms of networking with other institutions…).

 "l' Acceuil Familial" also has already some tools that the institution has been using for some years.

Facts and figures about the structure

"amarrage"

"amarrage" services aim at: "organising collective accommodation and education of young people that are in need of specialised support outside their family life environment"; "Implementing support programs for the reintegration of young people in their life environment after an accommodation period; "ensuring the supervision as well as the

educational and social integration of young people living in an independent dwelling following their accommodation period"[2].

"amarrage" is an institution consisting of several "sub-structures" providing different services: accommodation, urgent assistance, break-up stay, "action-internship", projects for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors…

Each sub-structure has its own specificities either with respect to age, or the take-over duration (for instance structures of a more family nature with take-overs on a longer run or structures suggesting relatively short take-overs such as the "teenager centre", a community centre for which Bernard Kottong works). Young people get here starting from the age of 16 and a half (sometimes later) and therefore the take-over takes place during maximum 18 months. The aim of this community centre is to empower young people.

Overall, all the "amarrage" structures can simultaneously take over 81 young people[3] and total 60 staff members.[4]

There are two types of social workers within the institution: the psycho-social workers and the educators. The educators are responsible for the support and the daily affairs of young people. The psycho-social workers are responsible for the psycho-social support. The latter for instance carry out individual interviews with young people. Most of the time, the educators do not carry out this type of individual follow-up.

Each psycho-social worker operates within a sub-structure.

"l' Acceuil Familial"

"l' Acceuil Familial" is a Youth Support service, that helps the child build his/her life project through a follow-up and cooperation with his/her parents and his/her foster family."[5]

"l' Acceuil Familial" carries out two types of follow-ups: either the child awaits a foster family and the institution prepares and organises the intermediate stages of the placement, or the child is already in a foster family and the institution then directly ensures the follow-up of the situation .[6]

The institution is divided into several geographic departments. In each department, there is a pedagogic head, one or two psychologists and social workers. The institution totals about 45 social workers.

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[2] Amarrage, Global Pedagogical Project, p.7. https://amarrage.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/projet_peda_global_ensemble_des_services_amarrage_2011-2.pdf
[3] Amarrage, annual report 2016, p.1. https://amarrage.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RA-2016-FINAL-2016.pdf
[4] Amarrage, annual report 2016, p.8. https://amarrage.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RA-2016-FINAL-2016.pdf

[5] http://www.accueil-familial.be
[6] http://www.accueil-familial.be

Within the institution, the psychologists always cooperate with a social worker. Within the context of the follow-up of young people, the social worker in charge of the follow-up asks the psychologist for his/her intervention. His/her intervention aims at creating an area for the young person and "playing a third-party role" in the relationship between the social worker and the young person. This intervention of the psychologist may be required as a precautionary measure or in a crisis situation. It is especially about supporting the young person in the construction of his/her background. Therefore, the psychologist does not carry out a therapeutic follow-up with young people of the institution. If there is a need for a therapeutic follow-up, the institution then calls on the network. One must also note that the psychologists carry out the follow-up of the foster families and birth families.

The young people of the two institutions could not be interrogated. According to the social workers, the tools were received well by the young people as long as the tools were mobilised when the situation made it possible.

The social workers lack sufficient perspective to find changes at the level of the young people's conduct with respect to the vocational integration.

Conclusion

Within "amarrage", the tool was adjusted at the approach level. Indeed, during the Abéona training at Louvain-La-Neuve, the tool was introduced as the same target for the family, education issue and at the level of the network. Within the institution, a decision was made to subdivide these sectors for added accuracy in the approached topics as it seemed that, when the topics concerned the same target, it became difficult to read.

Within "amarrage" as well, the tool is more difficult to use by the educators as they do not have many opportunities to have individual interviews with young people. Nevertheless, the educators used the target, but in a more furtive, more punctual manner. It is indeed difficult for them to mobilise this tool with a view to supporting the young person's path for its duration. So, some educators used it with a view to organising the summer holidays with the young person: the young person had to place activities that he really wanted to achieve during the holidays at the core and the activities that he did not want so much to achieve on the periphery.