

## On the storytelling process

### Filtering quality factors out of stories

More than 300 stories have been collected in the frame of Quality4Children. Children, youths, carers, parents and other people have had their say and talked about their very own version of Good Practice, i.e. about good experiences they have made with out-of-home care. The starting point for these stories was just one question: What proved to be best for the child after he or she had to leave the biological family to be placed in out-of-home care?

Each story was then analysed for key factors, which thereafter were compared to those of other stories, organised into main issues and summarised in standards. Below are two examples of these stories:

Peter who works as an educator in a group home for children and youths once again witnesses a temper tantrum of seven-year-old Max. Max is in rage and throws various objects around the room. As the educator team has agreed on, Peter sends the boy to his room to protect his flat mates and to make clear that this is not tolerated. Max is to cool down in his own room.

On this day, Peter for the first time accompanies Max to his room and watches, yes even supports him in letting out his anger and carrying on. The boy seems puzzled, gets into an even stronger rage and continues until he tries to also strike at Peter. But Peter holds him firm and calmly talks at him. The boy starts to cry, does not resist the embrace and talks about his worries. He says that he is sad that his mother and father do not visit him regularly. Peter listens to the boy and together they try to find out how Max could, in the future, express his sorrows and feelings differently to avoid such tantrums.

Peter feels good because he has not only reacted to the symptoms but has managed to discover the root of the problem and has therefore been able to look for solutions.

Guidelines:

- Having time for individual care
- Finding individual concepts and means of expression

Educator interview - Issue: Parental work

I am telling the story of a boy who joined our group at the age of six after staying with two different foster families. A year earlier he had lost contact to his mother who had not got in touch with him on her own initiative. As a group leader I consulted my team and together we decided that we would include the mother.

So we really courted her: we went up to her and were flexible when she had difficulties keeping appointments. We again and again stretched out our hand and called her when she once again did not show up.

For the boy this attitude of calmness, patience and flexibility was very important to be able to learn to deal with this mother on whom he could not always fully rely on. He also had the security that we were there, even when his mother missed the visit or was late.

I particularly remember one situation (and so does the boy because he still talked about it years later): It was Christmas Eve, the mother had to work and we had agreed that I would take the boy to her house in the evening (to avoid her forgetting to pick him up). The boy enjoyed that day alone with me, he was very calm. When we then arrived at his mother's house in the evening she was just getting ready to go out. She then was very happy to see the boy; she would have really forgotten to pick him up. And even though the boy certainly was disappointed by his mother he had the security that someone was looking after him, would not leave him alone and was making exceptional efforts to avoid that he would be forgotten by his mother.

The mother little by little changed and improved her behaviour so that the boy could go home at the age of 12. The boy himself benefited from these years of stability and security. The educators taught him how to get on with and accept his mother the way she was.

#### Guidelines

Showing flexibility and patience towards difficult family situations

Communicating security via stability and model learning