

QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR
**prevention of
sexual abuse
in youth care**

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Introduction

1. Introduction

On 8 October 2012 the Samson Committee presented its report titled 'Surrounded by care, yet not safe'. In this report the Committee states that children and young people placed in youth care at the responsibility of national government are insufficiently protected against sexual abuse. This concerns both abuse by staff members of youth care agencies and by group members. This sexual abuse remains largely unnoticed.

Youth Care Netherlands was upset and worried about these outcomes and decided to take steps to prevent the risk of sexual abuse. An important step in this process was the establishment of an independent Committee commissioned to assess and determine the Quality Framework to be prepared by Youth Care Netherlands. The following persons were established as members of the Quality Framework for Prevention of Sexual Abuse in Youth Care Committee: Jacques Ament, Monique van Dijen, Leonieke Boendermaker, Marcel van Gastel and André Rouvoet (chairperson). Peter Levenkamp was assigned secretary (see Annex 1).

2. Assignment

With the measures to be carried out and independent reviewing, Youth Care Netherlands wishes to make clear that it takes the issue of sexual abuse seriously. In the Committee's assignment this was expressed as follows:

"Youth Care Netherlands takes full responsibility for a systematic and progressive approach to the problem of sexual abuse. It calls for an independent, autonomous committee of authoritative persons to establish standards for Youth Care Netherlands and its members and to guard the execution and embedding of these standards in the work of the members of Youth Care Netherlands. Youth Care Netherlands requests the Committee to apply a high level of normative standards for preventing, signalling and dealing with sexual abuse of children. All members of Youth Care Netherlands will fully cooperate in the work of the Committee, will commit themselves to the framework standards and will implement it." (Annex 2).

3. Working methods

One important condition to reach an effective approach is sufficient support in the sector for the measures to be taken. With a view to this, the development of the Quality framework has been prepared by the sector organization Youth Care Netherlands, together with directors, managers and experts in the field. The Committee has formed an opinion on the texts presented, based on the proposals prepared by the sector, the discussions with relevant agencies and persons in and outside the sector, and the many documents made available. The comments and suggestions made by the Committee have been implemented in the text based on an intensive dialogue and good cooperation, resulting in the final text of the Quality framework. Eventually the Quality framework has been established by the Committee, after some of the earlier discussion partners (among those the Youth Care Inspectorate, the Task Force Child Abuse and Sexual Abuse, the Children's ombudsman, and the National Reporter Trafficking and Sexual violence against children) had had an opportunity to comment on the framework. The Committee also spoke to young people in youth care (LCPJ/JWB) and parents, and both in the first phase and in the final phase of its work it consulted the victims interest groups Nederland Heelt, SKIP and KLOKK.

4. The Quality framework

The Samson Committee report clearly describes the existence of a taboo atmosphere and a considerable level of inability to provide adequate support in cases of sexual abuse. The youth care professionals who have direct contacts with young people should be equipped with current knowledge and relevant tools to signal sexual abuse, to address it, to act adequately and to treat children who have been traumatized as a consequence of sexual abuse.

When the report of the Samson Committee was presented, the sector indicated what is already being done to prevent and to address sexual abuse. The selection procedures for new staff members have become stricter. A certificate of conduct is required and references are checked. When abuse has taken place, effective measures are taken and the abuse is reported to the police. The rules on reporting incidents and calamities in youth care have become stricter and a reporting code is in place. There are also programmes that allow children and young people to learn about normal sexual development and normal sexual contacts. The screening of foster parents has been improved and a strong emphasis is put on professionalization and training of youth care professionals.

Nevertheless the report of the Samson Committee clearly indicates that more is needed to guarantee the safety of children and young people in youth care. Both the sector, the sector organization Youth Care Netherlands, and the Committee are fully aware that this is not just about the development of new protocols and prescriptions. It calls for the coming about of a change in culture, driven by the ambition to offer children a safe home. A change that needs to become visible at all levels of the organizations.

In the preparation phase the Committee indicated that it feels it is important that actions undertaken are sufficiently ambitious, concrete and verifiable, and that these become a systematic part of the quality systems that youth care organizations are already applying or will apply in future. Also with a view to the fact that the Committee is expected to monitor the implementation process of the Quality framework in organizations. The framework has been specified along these outlines at the Committee's indication and adapted several times. The Committee feels the results meet the needs felt in practice and offer guarantees that it will not be a once-only effort.

By implementing the recommendations and linking them to the existing quality systems in youth care organizations, the sector provides a sustainable foundation for the safety of young people in the field of sexuality and sexual abuse.

The Quality framework applies to all youth care organizations so it is not limited to residential youth care and foster care, nor limited only to mandatory youth care. Therefore the framework has a wider scope than that of the Samson Committee. Other professional care workers, for instance non-residential workers working at the request of parents, family guardians and youth probation officers, also have to deal with sexuality in their daily care practice.

There is one recommendation of the Samson Committee that this Committee will not adopt. The Samson Committee proposes to apply mediation more often in minor conflicts regarding the placement in care of children. Youth Care Netherlands acknowledges the importance of mediation but doubts whether it is right to use mediation in cases of sexual abuse. In such cases it is necessary to act quickly. There is little room for mediation in those situations according to the sector. The Committee agrees with Youth Care Netherlands that mediation is less suitable in cases of sexual abuse. However, this is different from conflicts regarding the 'normal' sexual education of young people. In those cases mediation could possibly contribute to an acceptable solution.

5. Professionalization

The Quality framework is not an isolated issue. On 24 April 2013 the Youth care Professionalization Bill was introduced in Parliament. The Bill obliges youth care organizations to work with registered youth care workers and behavioural scientists. In order to remain registered they need to continually train and develop their expertise. They also accept a professional code and disciplinary rules are introduced, making it possible for the professional group to monitor its own professional conduct. The professional associations commissioned the development of youth care directives. The design of a directive in the field of preventing (sexual) abuse of children is one part of the directive development programme.

Regarding the offer of training of organizations, training courses need to be delivered by certified trainers offering accredited courses. Participants receive re-registration points for these courses. The introduction of the implementation of this Act is being prepared at the moment. The Committee underlines the importance of incorporating the theme of sexuality and sexual abuse from the start. The Committee also recommends that the sector is actively involved from the start. In future this will allow youth care organizations for instance to promote that their staff members follow accredited courses in sexual education and addressing sexually inappropriate behaviour.

6. Quality framework and HKZ (Harmonisation of Quality assessment in the care sector)

The Committee considers it important that the Quality framework Prevention of sexual abuse is part of a comprehensive quality system. Most organizations already have a comprehensive quality system in place. Usually this is the HKZ certification. Within the certification the PDCA cycle is of key importance. By applying this 'plan, do, check, act' cycle the working methods of an organization are subject to continued learning and improvement processes in all aspects, and not exclusively on the themes that are explicitly mentioned in this framework. The actions considered by the framework actually form a specification of the HKZ schedule in the field of sexual abuse and healthy sexual development. At the request of Youth Care Netherlands, HKZ developed additions to the HKZ standards in youth care. These additions emphasize the relationship between the actions in the Quality framework and the HKZ standards.

7. Next steps

Implementation

Meanwhile youth care organizations have not been sitting back. Many organizations have already addressed the themes of sexual abuse and sexual development of young people. Therefore the level to which this framework leads to changes within organizations will differ from one organization to the other. As indicated before, the Committee will monitor the implementation of the Quality framework as assigned. The framework contains concrete dates for the activities to be undertaken, and the Committee will see to compliance with these deadlines. It goes without saying that this calls for careful alignment with the monitoring undertaken by the Youth care inspectorate which has a legal obligation to also monitor the actions that are part of the Quality framework.

The progress that has already been made by organizations justifies the expectation that the youth care organizations will be able to implement the Quality framework within the deadlines fixed in the framework.

Development agenda

An important consideration in many of the activities and measures in the Quality framework has been the level of detail with which issues are prescribed to the organizations. A balance has been attempted between on the one hand the necessary uniformity in the field of preventing sexual abuse, and on the other hand organizations' options to choose their own methods and tools. The framework outlines what is expected of organizations and leaves them free to select their own way of working while addressing these issues.

The Committee concludes that in the field of sexual development and sexual abuse the sector actually lacks clear and generally accepted standards, making it difficult to assess the many existing tools and methodologies. With a view to the importance of this theme, the Committee feels that the development of such professional standards is urgently needed and calls on youth care organizations to address this in the near future, jointly and in close cooperation with professional associations and knowledge institutes. This will allow for more convergence within the sector, making it possible to use the 'comply or explain' principle to address the issue of comparable quality of the tools applied.

This in itself suits the character of the Quality framework, which in the view of the Committee will have to function as a 'living document'.

8. Elaboration

During its work the Committee became more and more convinced that, no matter how important and urgent it is to follow up the recommendations of the Samson Committee, youth care actually needs to have a broader perspective: essentially it concerns the general safety of children and young people. The prevention of sexual abuse of course is a considerable aspect, but it is limited. There are links to other safety aspects, such as bullying, violence, a safe working environment and a positive living climate. These aspects have not been dealt with in the report of the Samson Committee, or they have not been elaborated on, for obviously understandable reasons. The same goes for the theme of early detection – very relevant for the prevention of sexual abuse – and the necessary connection to for instance youth health care in such cases.

9. Finally

The Committee is well aware that implementation of this Quality framework and dealing with both of the recommendations above will be a considerable task for the sector. All the more demanding since youth care currently is dealing with other no less important developments that ask a lot of youth care organizations and the sector organization, such as the transition of youth care to the municipalities and the subsequent transformation of their way of working. Taking up these responsibilities therefore calls for a wider commitment than exclusively that of youth care organizations. They need to be able to count on the fact that the efforts they undertake will be supported by others, including current and future funders. The Committee also finds it important that other stakeholders, including educational systems, research institutions, professional associations, knowledge institutes and Ministries, will actively engage in this process.

The Ministries take the lead in creating the necessary adjustments in basic vocational education and university education, and in the close availability of diagnostics outside of youth care and the division of tasks between family guardians and foster care workers. Of course a reasonable caseload in child protection and a sound relationship between young people and staff in residential provisions are factors that contribute to being able to pay enough attention to the prevention of sexual abuse. Looking at the transition of youth care from the regions to the municipalities, it is of crucial importance that, in

addition to organizational aspects, quality and safety, including this Quality framework, receive the full attention and the commitment that are crucial to its successful implementation.

The value of this Quality framework lies in the fact that the sector has imposed very concrete and strict standards on itself regarding the safety of the children and young people entrusted to its care. The Committee feels that the sector, and the sector organization Youth Care Netherlands, deserve much respect and support from all stakeholders in their implementation.

The Committee is convinced that with the decisive efforts of each and every one this Quality framework will be a powerful tool for preventing and combating sexual abuse and guaranteeing a safe living environment for children and young people.

On behalf of the Committee,

André Rouvoet, chairperson

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Reading guide

The Quality framework prevention of sexual abuse in youth care aims to decrease sexual abuse in youth care and to promote the healthy sexual development of young people. The framework follows the recommendations of the Samson Committee in as far as these have been adopted by Youth Care Netherlands.

In the quality framework the recommendations of the Samson Committee have been clustered in five related chapters. A table has been established for each recommendation by the Samson Committee with a description of how the recommendation ought to be implemented. At the start of each table a summary of the recommendation by the Samson Committee that the table addresses is included.

Each table contains the actions to be undertaken, followed by a period within which they need to have been realised. The actions have been formulated in as concrete and measurable a way as possible. It allows one to determine if and when a specific action has concretely been undertaken respectively has become a fixed element of day-to-day practice (operationalisation and safeguarding). For a number of actions the working method needs to be determined before the action can be implemented. In such cases an additional check has been included. At least three months before the action ought to be implemented, the related working method needs to be (further) determined, so that enough time is left to prepare for its implementation (also see footnote 1 on realisation period).

Some of the actions in the quality framework are not relevant to all organizations. The quality framework indicates by means of colour coding which actions are relevant for Child and youth care services and which actions are relevant for Child and parenting support services.

-  Organizations for Youth and Parenting support
-  Youth protection services

Finally: when use is made of the term 'youth' or 'young person', both children and young persons are implied.

The framework can be downloaded from www.jeugdzorgnederland.nl

1 The basis

1.1 Vocational education and permanent education

Recommendation by Samson Committee

In all basic vocational education for future youth care professionals – not only in optional subjects – attention needs to be paid to normal and deviant sexual development and the issue of sexual abuse. In additional training of professionals in youth care organizations this can be built upon, from the point of view of the specific tasks of professionals and the specific target group with which they engage. This could be for instance youth with (minor) mental disadvantages and youth with a history of sexual abuse.

Explanation:

Sexual development is still a delicate subject in youth care. It involves a shortage of knowledge in combination with an inability to provide adequate support. All people working in youth care should understand that sexual abuse happens and that each and every person has an individual obligation to prevent abuse from happening. Professionals' basic knowledge on the issue is increased by learning about and keeping abreast of the knowledge regarding normal and deviant sexual development of youth. Through 'training on the job' and the involvement of experiential experts a foundation will be provided to build upon in order to address the inability to provide adequate support in the field of sexual development and sexual abuse and to realise an open atmosphere.

Youth Care Netherlands and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences agreed to develop a specific thematic 'sexual development' competency. This thematic competency has been designed following the system of the professional profile of the youth care worker and is directed at competencies in the field of healthy sexual development, registering abnormalities, and treatment.

Since 1 June 2013 the thematic competency will be available and the (regional) youth care organizations will arrange with regional higher vocational training schools to introduce the thematic competency in the curriculum and the internship assignment. The nationally determined qualification file pedagogic worker 4 Youth care is relevant for secondary vocation training schools.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term ¹
	1.1.1 The organization arranges with the regional higher vocational training schools to introduce the thematic competency in the curriculum and the internship assignment.	1 May 2014
	1.1.2 Secondary vocational training students in their internship in an organization, within the framework of key task 2 of the qualification file parenting and development of youth, perform a specific assignment in the field of sexual development and 'prevention of sexual abuse'. The results are included in the internship report.	1 May 2014

¹ When the framework indicates that a specific working method needs to be selected, to be further detailed and determined if necessary, the organization will do so at least three months before the realisation term mentioned is reached, if the realisation term allows for this. When this is not the case, the selection and determination need to take place as soon as possible before the realisation term mentioned. This allows the organization sufficient time to implement the realisation of the working method in practice.

1.1.3 The organization applies a working method to pay systematic attention to the knowledge and skills mentioned in the thematic competency in regular team meetings, case consultations and/or work supervision / intervision. 1 May 2014

1.1.4 The organization determines a working method aimed at additional training in which systematic attention is being paid to the further development of the knowledge and skills mentioned in the thematic competency. This working method is described in a plan regarding the training and career opportunities (article 33.1 youth care collective labour agreement). 1 May 2014

1.2 Screening and attention paid to sexual abuse in job interviews and performance interviews

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Job and performance interview protocols always need to pay attention to the issue of sexual abuse. In performance interviews the personal circumstances and changes need to be part of the conversation, because these can indicate a risk of – eventually – committing sexual abuse.

Explanation:

The contact with children and young people may bring about tensions between distance and proximity. The position of power that professionals have with regard to the young persons in their care increases these tensions. In order to create a safe living environment and care provision process it is important that professionals are vetted to check their consciousness of this tension, but also to check on possible sexually deviant behaviour or liability to do so. The vetting will include the period before they started in their job up to the cycle of interviews regarding their performance. The vetting will not only include the interviews with the professionals, but also a check of references and a periodical certificate of conduct. The check of references will of course be discussed with job applicants.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
1.2.1	The organization will ask all job applicants for references that will include the subject of sexually deviant behaviour.	1 January 2014
1.2.2	In conducting job interviews, the organization will use a format in which the following topics are addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflection on the tension of proximity in combination with risks of sexually deviant behaviour; - Reflection on the applicant's own childhood and parenting situation; - Reflection on subjects that may lead to secondary trauma; - The organization's code of conduct. 	1 January 2014
1.2.3	Before entering into service, the organization asks for a certificate of conduct conforming to article 6.5 of the youth care collective labour agreement, and in consultation with the employees council the organization determines how frequently the employer can demand a certificate of conduct from its employees.	1 January 2014

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- 1.2.4 The organization uses a format to conduct performance interviews in which the following subjects are addressed: 1 January 2014
- Distance and proximity in combination with risks of sexually deviant behaviour;
 - Sexual abuse;
 - Changes in personal circumstances that may impact on sexually deviant behaviour. The interview results are included in a report.

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- 1.2.5 The organization applies a working method laid down in a document for dealing with suspicions or signals of sexual abuse and deviant behaviour. 1 January 2014
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2 Addressing the inability to provide adequate support

2.1 Addressing sexuality and sexually inappropriate behaviour in the team, in the group, and with (foster) parents and individual (foster) children

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Structural attention needs to be paid to a healthy sexual development, (sexually) deviant behaviour and sexual abuse, including abuse which takes place outside the grounds of the organization (for instance the issue of loverboys).

Explanation:

There needs to be a possibility to address issues of sexual development and sexually deviant behaviour widely, meaning both in the team and in the groups, but also when talking to (foster) parents and individual (foster) children and young people. This may be done in connection with (existing) more general conversations about behaviour, boundaries and respect, and use can be made of visual materials and role playing. Specific target groups need to be taken into account, for instance young people or parents with (minor) mental disabilities, young people with sexually traumatic experiences in their past, loverboy issues, cultural differences and religion.

There still exists a huge lack of knowledge and inability to address these issues on the work floor. However it is crucial that professionals are able to address sexual development and sexually deviant behaviour in a professional and open manner. By inviting open discussion of sexual development and sexually deviant behaviour and inviting signals from other people who are involved with the young people, for instance in school, the ignorance and embarrassment to act will decrease. The introduction of a basic method in this field, offering tools to staff members, contributes to decreasing their inability to act adequately.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
 2.1.1	The organization selects and implements a basic method to address sexual development and deviant behaviour with (foster) children, with (foster) parents, in the groups and in the team.	1 January 2014
 2.1.2	The organization determines which offer, in line with age and target group, is useful to inform and support children and young people in their sexual development and implements this in the organization.	1 January 2014
 2.1.3	The organization determines in which consultations ² the theme of sexual development, deviant behaviour and sexual abuse will be on the agenda and in which way the result of the consultations will be reported.	1 January 2014

² This refers to team meetings, meetings with children and young people, and meetings with (foster) parents.

3 The young person

3.1 Alignment within youth care³

Recommendation by Samson Committee

When a young person enters into care, a thorough risk analysis needs to be carried out, based also on what is known of the previous history. Group leaders and foster parents should be informed of the previous history of a young person.

Explanation:

The organization realises a safe living climate for young persons. This includes that the organization explicitly inquires after information regarding sexual development and sexual previous history when a young person is presented to youth care. It is important in offering care to be well informed of and take into account the previous history and the problems with regard to a young person's sexually deviant behaviour, in order to prevent renewed abuse (re-traumatization) and to deal with the abuse that may have taken place. This is why it is important that the day-to-day supervisors of the young people – group leaders or foster parents – are aware of the previous history and the problems, without focusing too much on it, which may disrupt the balance in care.

In order to realise a safe living climate and carefully balanced care the risk inventory for the young person should include the subject of sexual development and, if relevant, the motivation for the selection of a particular living and therapy group. The group size allows the organization to guarantee that sufficient attention will be paid to counselling in sexual development and detection of signals.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
 3.1.1	The organization that transfers care to another organization will provide information about the (problems with) sexual development and previous history. The organization receiving someone in care, will include the information in the young person's file.	1 January 2014
 3.1.2	The risk inventory of the young person includes information on his or her sexual development, aimed at demonstrating or becoming the victim of sexually deviant behaviour, as well as – if relevant – the motivation for the selection of the living and therapy group.	1 October 2014
 3.1.3	At the start of the care process the organization informs the carers and foster parents involved of the previous history of the young person and possible experiences of sexual abuse or demonstrating sexually deviant behaviour, in order to be able to understand the behaviour and to acknowledge possible signs of sexual abuse. In the young person's file mention is made of this conversation and the fact that the outcome has been discussed with the young person.	1 January 2014

³ Combination of the recommendations 'diagnostics in out of home placement' and 'composition living group', as far as the recommendations were targeted to *Youth Care Netherlands*.

3.2 Increasing young people's empowerment

Recommendation by Samson Committee

As soon as a young person enters into care, whether voluntarily, mandatory, non-residential or residential care, a conversation takes place with the young person to discuss the (reasons and content of) care, the rules of conduct and the expectations. This includes healthy and unhealthy sexual behaviour. In this conversation the standards are discussed of what is not to be accepted, who the young person can turn to if harassed (sexually) by someone else and what will be the consequences for victim and perpetrator. These subjects can be included in a conversation about undesirable behaviour in a wider sense.

Explanation:

Sexual development, sexual behaviour and sexual standards are obviously very difficult subjects to discuss. However, they are important in the development and the later life of young people. Therefore it is relevant to enter into conversation with the young person as soon as possible to provide clarity on these subjects. Not only with a view to young persons' sexual development, but definitely also to outline clearly where they stand in this new environment or situation, who they can turn to with questions and/or problems and what are the boundaries. It is important here to try to reach a situation in which the young person feels he has a grip on his situation, has someone to support him, and that he feels that subjects can be addressed. Obviously the content of the conversations with the young person has to be appropriate to age and problem. This also goes for the point in time when sexual development is raised in conversation with the young person. It could be soon after the young person enters into care, although sometimes it may be advisable to wait until the young person feels slightly more at home in the organization.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
	3.2.1 The organization documents who the young person can turn to with questions and/or problems and what procedure will be followed. The organization produces a version that is readable for (young) children and young persons, or another age-relevant product. The organization presents the documents to the young persons in the organization.	1 January 2014
	3.2.2 The organization involves young persons in designing and maintaining the rules of conduct and produces a version that is readable for (young) children and young persons or another age-relevant product. The organization updates its rules of conduct for the subject of preventing sexual abuse.	1 January 2014
	3.2.3 In the starting phase of the process the organization, if possible and depending on the age and the problem of the young person, addresses the sexual development, sexual behaviour and the boundaries and standards the organization employs. This conversation is added to the file. The organization points out to the young person in which way and to whom sexually deviant behaviour can be reported and what will be done with such a report.	1 January 2014
	3.2.4 The organization applies empowerment training courses for those young persons who need it, considering their problems.	1 October 2013

3.3 Case discussions

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Every region should have multidisciplinary case discussions available in which all professionals take part who are involved with the young person, and where a case of (suspected) sexual abuse can be brought forward.

Explanation:

Bringing together all available information and expertise and connecting actions will provide directions including all partners in the chain, in a case in which (suspected) sexual abuse is brought forward. The aim is realised through multidisciplinary case discussions in which all professionals involved with the young person participate. It is especially important with a view to bringing in line the processes of prosecution and care and not have these interfere with each other.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
	3.3.1 The organization establishes a directive for the organization of internal multidisciplinary consultation in case of (suspected) sexual abuse.	1 May 2014
	3.3.2 The organization establishes a directive for the organization of an external multidisciplinary consultation in case of (suspected) sexual abuse. Arrangements are made with relevant partners in the chain to this purpose.	1 May 2014

3.4 Diagnostics and care following sexual abuse

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Following sexual abuse or sexually deviant behaviour between two group members, suitable care should be available for both of them. This implies that sufficient specialists are available at close range, both for diagnostic research and to provide matching care.

Explanation:

The implementation of research and care is done by the organization itself or in cooperation with chain partners, making it possible to offer care immediately. In case of specific problems the Child and Youth trauma centre or the regional mental health agency may be called in.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
	3.4.1 The organization determines an offer of care for victims and perpetrators, and makes it available when necessary.	1 May 2014

4 The organization

4.1 Organising the learning processes

Recommendation by Samson Committee

The further professionalization requires sufficient attention at three levels: the board, the management, and the professionals on the work floor. A learning organization implies that the board of directors also learns, professes the importance of continuous learning, promotes and facilitates it. Each organization has to establish a monitoring system to make progress and improvements visible.

Explanation:

Through the establishment and embedding of learning processes, existing practices regarding the detection of signals of sexual abuse and ways to deal with it will be systematically studied for effectiveness. The organization will learn from this and existing practices will be improved. The HKZ Quality assessment schedule for Youth Care contains a quality management system on the basis of a PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle. The organization will analyse the processes on the basis of measurement outcomes, signals and trends. The organization will evaluate on the basis of the analyses whether improvements are necessary, desirable and/or feasible.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
 4.1.1	The organization determines in which way signals of sexual abuse and sexually deviant behaviour will be reported and analysed, based on which improvement measures will be taken.	1 January 2014
 4.1.2	The organization implements a tool to structurally map the safety experienced. The outcomes will be evaluated by the teams and by management and will, if needed, lead to actions for improvement.	1 October 2014
 4.1.3	The board of the organization evaluates reports and incidents in the field of sexual abuse and sexually deviant behaviour at least twice a year, discusses the results, decides on measures if needed and sees to their implementation.	1 January 2014
 4.1.4	The organization determines a plan of action for the establishment of a local learning environment aiming to learn from current case histories through reflection and discussion with chain partners.	1 May 2014

4.2 Complaints procedures

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Organizations should provide a clear and accessible complaints procedure. The young person and his parents/carers should be sufficiently informed of this procedure.

Explanation:

Article 4.2.1 of the Youth Care Act indicates that Youth care offices and organizations for Youth and Parenting support ought to have a procedure for dealing with complaints about their behaviour or the behaviour of people working for them towards young persons or towards their parents, guardians, stepparents, or others who care for and raise a young person as if belonging to their household. They are obliged to present the

complaints procedure and the rules and regulations to at least those who have been appointed complainants in a clear and suitable way.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
 	4.2.1 The organization employs a procedure for the treatment of complaints as meant in article 4.2.1 of the Youth Care Act, in which are included the way in which complainants are informed of the decision regarding the complaint and the organization's reaction to this decision.	1 October 2013
 	4.2.2 The organization makes the complaints procedure sufficiently known by at least: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informing the young person and his/her (foster) parents of the complaints procedure at the introduction; - Having (written) information available within the organization. 	1 October 2013
 	4.2.3 The organization draws up a public report each year, consistent with article 4.2.1 Youth Care Act, in which once every two years the opinion of complainants regarding the way their complaint has been dealt with are included.	1 May 2014
 	4.2.4 From the year 2013 onwards, the organization will annually analyse the number of registered complaints regarding sexually deviant behaviour on the basis of which measures for improvement have been taken.	1 May 2014

4-3 Supervisory Boards

Recommendation by Samson Committee

Intensification of the supervision of the content of the work, explicitly including the issue of sexual abuse.

Explanation:

In recent years Supervisory Boards received an increasingly serious duty in supervising public duties. The boards are now widely exploring this development. In order to prevent sexual abuse, the supervision of this topic has become intensified explicitly.

Youth care organizations employ the governance code 2010 for the whole area of care. Quality and safety are explicitly appointed within the Supervisory Board.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
 	4.3.1 The Supervisory Board annually has a discussion with the Board of directors concerning the performance with regard to quality and safety. The following subjects are discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preventing sexual abuse; - Signals of sexual abuse; - The outcomes of the safety monitor conducted, its analysis and the measures for improvement undertaken. The outcomes of the discussion are reported in writing.	1 January 2014

5 Foster care

5.1 Screening of potential foster parents

Recommendation by Samson Committee

The sector has to develop a (concrete) national standard that the preparatory training of foster parents needs to meet. Foster care organizations are obliged to always ask for references and provide references when potential foster parents apply.

Explanation:

One element of the protection of and care for foster children is a careful counselling and screening of potential foster parents, both in cases of enlisted foster care and extended family foster care. The organizations for Youth and Parenting support have chosen to design a joint quality framework to describe this process⁴ and to provide clarity, unambiguity and transparency to this process. The elaborate screening of potential foster parents, among others by requesting references, is part of this process.

A foster parent and all persons of 12 years and older who are registered as living at the address of the foster parent, dispose of a certificate of incorporation that has been issued by the Child Care and Protection Board before the start of the parenting and caring for a foster child. Since January 2013 the Child Care and Protection Board indicates when issuing the certificate whether or not the foster parent has applied for a certificate before. The organization will then be able if necessary to inquire from the other organization whether the certificate has been issued or denied before deciding on selection.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
	5.1.1 The organization applies the revised 'quality framework preparation and screening potential foster parents', in which the subject of sexual development and sexual abuse is explicitly addressed.	1 January 2014

5.2 Preparation, support, evaluation and supervision of foster parents

Recommendation by Samson Committee

The foster care organization has to prepare the foster parents for the arrival of a young person with a (sexually) traumatic previous history. The foster care organization also needs to provide support, for instance by professionals such as a psychologist or a remedial educationalist, if this should be called for. In addition the social network can be used to support foster parents, to prevent social exclusion of foster parents and if necessary also to signal undesirable developments.

An annual evaluation by the foster care organizations should pay particular attention to the stability of the family situation and explicitly look at changes such as divorce, unemployment or illness.

Explanation:

The organization carries responsibility for a safe living environment in foster families.

⁴ 'Quality framework preparation and screening of potential foster parents', version 2.0 October 2013.

This responsibility commences with the selection and preparation of foster parents. For a foster child this becomes concrete and relevant when it is placed in a foster family. Therefore the responsibility of the organization also includes the counselling of foster parents, an offer of training, regular evaluation of the placement and support in employing the social network. In foster parent counselling structural attention is being paid to sexual development of the young person and the prevention of sexual abuse, but this counselling should also include the support that foster parents may need when caring for a young person with a (sexually) traumatic previous history.

As part of the earlier mentioned responsibility of the foster care organization, it will carry out a safety check during the periodic evaluation. This safety check includes indicators that look at the safety of the young person, and it lists risk factors that deal with issues such as divorce, illness, unemployment, domestic violence, housing and social exclusion. A conversation with the young person regarding the safety experienced and the subject of sexual development are part of the periodic evaluation if the age and development of the young person allow for it.

If the organization deems it's necessary it can decide that foster parents need a new certificate of incorporation from the Child Care and Protection Board. This may happen when foster parents have been on a waiting list for more than two years or when the composition of the family has changed.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
●	5.2.1 The organization always includes the subject sexual development and sexual abuse in the foster parent support plan, as well as the involvement of the network of the foster parents during the foster care placement.	1 October 2013
●	5.2.2 The organization determines and makes available a care plan for the preparation and counselling of foster parents who are going to receive or have received a young person with a sexually traumatic previous history.	1 January 2014
●	5.2.3 The organization determines and makes available an education and training offer for foster parents, aimed at sexual development and (preventing) sexual abuse.	1 January 2014
●	5.2.4 During the periodic evaluation of the foster family placement explicit attention is being paid to the subject of sexual development of the young person and changes of circumstances.	1 October 2013
●	5.2.5 The organization carries out the periodic evaluation of the foster family placement in compliance with the revised 'quality framework preparation and screening potential foster parents' considerations regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The safety check; - The intermediary screening; - Requesting a certificate of incorporation. 	1 January 2014

5.3 Managing safety and working with uncertainty in a foster family

Recommendation by Samson Committee

When sexual abuse is suspected in a foster family, all those involved need to collaborate, acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, including the uncertainties that might not be solved immediately. They need to make proper arrangements with each other to heighten security and minimise risks.

Explanation:

When sexual abuse is suspected in a foster family, professionals may have to face the difficult choice of having to take the young person from the foster family for safety reasons, with the inherent risk that it is wrongful and with (attachment) damage for the young person. At the other hand there is a risk that, if the young person remains in the foster family, sexual abuse may continue unhindered. If there are suspicions of sexual abuse, security may be heightened and risks minimised through the efforts of chain partners and the social network of foster parents and foster child, so that the foster child does not need to be taken from the family. This can only be done in situations where the signs do not (yet) indicate that the foster child needs to be removed from the foster family.

	What needs to be done to realise the recommendation	Realisation term
●	<p>5.3.1 The organization determines a policy and a plan of action for dealing with suspicions of sexual abuse in a foster family, when the decision has been taken to let the foster child remain in the foster family. Part of this is to establish a safety plan including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concrete, practical agreements with chain partners, foster parents, the social network of foster parents and foster child to increase the security and minimise risks;- Arrangements, included in a safety plan, about supervising compliance with the agreements, and sanctions in case of non-compliance.	1 January 2014
●	<p>5.3.2 The organization makes and registers agreements with chain partners concerning the policy mentioned in 5.3.1.</p>	1 January 2014

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Membership of the Committee

Committee Prevention of Sexual Abuse in Youth Care

André Rouvoet (chairperson)

Rouvoet formerly was vice-premier and Minister of Youth and Families, and currently his duties include the presidency of the Association of Care Insurers in the Netherlands (Zorgverzekeraars Nederland).

Leonieke Boendermaker

Boendermaker is senior lecturer Implementation of Youth care at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and senior researcher Remedial education at the University of Groningen. She is also a member of the Advisory Committee Directive Youth.

Jacques Ament

Ament is a former member of the board of Stichting Jeugdhulp Maastricht (Youth care Maastricht). He is a supervisor at Mensana, RIBW North and Central Limburg and at the organization for general practitioners HOZL. Ament owns a management consultation agency.

Marcel van Gastel

Van Gastel is former deputy-secretary at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the programme ministry of Youth & Family and currently works at ABD Top Consult of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.

Monique van Dijen

Van Dijen is a Partner at Ernst&Young and vice-chairperson of the sectoral board Health Care & Life Sciences. She obtained her PhD with a thesis on quality and safety systems in health care. Van Dijen is a supervisor at the Groene Hart hospital.

Peter Levenkamp (secretary)

Levenkamp is former director Judicial Youth Policy at the Ministry of Justice.

Annex 1 – Description of the assignment

Committee Prevention Sexual Abuse in Youth Care

Introduction

Sexual abuse is a widely known social problem that emerges in all layers of society. Society as a whole has a responsibility, and the youth sector in particular, because vulnerable children are victims of sexual abuse more often, and especially those children and their parents make use of the help that the sector is able to offer.

In order to prevent sexual abuse and to be able to support victims, it is necessary to connect to a child's day-to-day life. Therefore the efforts of youth care need to be applied in cooperation with the environment. Institutional solutions in themselves do not offer solutions; a child seeks his or her own way and the threshold for turning to a professional agency or worker is often quite high. Embedding care in a child's normal life, addressing abuse and thus breaking through the silence, are important responsibilities of society and youth care. Youth care needs to pave the way.

Samson Committee

The Samson Committee, commissioned by government, conducts independent research into sexual abuse of minors who have been placed in the care of the government in institutions or foster families. The nature and proportion of sexual abuse are taken into consideration. The study concerns the period from 1945 until the present.

The Samson Committee presented its findings on 8 October 2012. There have been close contacts between the Committee and Youth Care Netherlands and we have been shocked by the serious nature and the proportion of the abuse, despite all the efforts of the sector so far. Youth care so far has not been able to fully shape its social responsibility with regard to this issue. In its report the Samson Committee makes a number of recommendations both for the youth care sector and for the Care for Youth system that yet is to be designed. Youth Care Netherlands will not wait any longer to take its responsibility.

Prevention of Sexual Abuse in Youth Care Committee

Youth Care Netherlands takes full responsibility for a systematic and progressive approach of the problem of sexual abuse. It invites an independent, autonomous committee of influential people to set the standards and to safeguard the implementation and embedding of these standards in the way of working of members of Youth Care Netherlands. Youth Care Netherlands requests the committee to set a high normative standard for prevention, signalling and approach of sexual abuse of children. All members of Youth Care Netherlands fully cooperate with the work of the committee, and they engage to accept the standards framework and implement it.

Assignment

The committee is responsible for the design and the establishment of the Quality Framework Sexual Abuse Youth Care Netherlands and for supervising its implementation, execution and embedding by (the members of) Youth Care Netherlands.

To that end the committee:

- explores the current situation and existing standards frameworks;
- judges the draft quality framework and protocol that will be drafted by the members of Youth Care Netherlands, adapts it where needed and subsequently independently determines it binding for the members of Youth Care Netherlands;
- ensures that the recommendations of the Samson Committee are adopted;
- monitors that Youth Care Netherlands implements the Quality framework and the protocol;
- monitors the embedding of the Quality framework and the protocol;

- offers binding advice concerning the Quality framework and the protocol following incidents;
- regularly reports independently and publicly on the progress of this process.

Mandate

The Committee has the following authority:

- to design and determine the quality framework and the protocol;
- to monitor the implementation, embedding and execution of the Quality framework and protocol on sexual abuse, among others through visiting members of Youth Care Netherlands;
- to issue binding advice to Youth Care Netherlands and its members concerning prevention, signalling and approach of sexual behaviour.

Scope of the Committee

The Committee is expressly requested to direct its efforts towards improving the quality of the approach of sexual abuse in youth care at the system level. It is not the committee's responsibility to investigate individual reports or incidents. Should the committee be confronted with these, it will – with the permission of the reporter – refer the report or the incident to the appropriate agency. It goes without saying that the committee in the course of its duties is able to converse with stakeholders and to translate the lessons learned from incidents into the Quality framework.

Connection to board and members of Youth Care Netherlands

In the process of development and implementation of the Quality framework the Committee will be the commissioning authority and Youth Care Netherlands undertakes the work. A core team within the agency, led by the director and supported by an expert feedback group of board members, will prepare the draft standards framework in close consultation with professionals from the member organizations, and will present it to the committee for reviewing. In this way the actual work for the Committee will be limited to a minimum, and at the same time the support by members will be guaranteed as much as possible, both during the process and with the result. This concerns the quality of the full sector (certification, quality mark), the quality of the organizations (HR management, professional level, moral standards, etc.) and the quality of the professionals (vocational training, in-service and continuing education and supervision).

Membership

The committee will consist of five members, including the chairperson. The members of the committee will not represent the field of board members or employees of Youth Care Netherlands and its members. The committee will be supported by a secretary. The committee reports directly to the chairman of the board of Youth Care Netherlands. If required, the committee can request external support.



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