



Pilot project: Family Sponsorships

A short profile of the commune

Nuremberg is the second largest city in Bavaria and the fourteenth largest commune in Germany. With its 500 000 inhabitants Nuremberg is the economic, service and cultural center of northern Bavaria and the hub of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region where 2,5 million people live.

Equating „family“ and „household“, there are just 49.000 families with at least one child under 18 years living in Nuremberg. But when you take a closer look you notice, that there are 173.200 persons who live in those families. These are at least 34 % of the population in private households.

More than one quarter of the families are single mother or father, in the majority of cases single mothers with one or more children. In comparison with the national average the family-proportion is at a lower level, but the percentage of single mothers or fathers is higher. In 11.400 households the youngest child is still under three, in 8600 all children already go to kindergarten. In about 21.300 households, that means in 50% of all families, live exclusively children who have attained compulsory school attendance.

Target and target audience

The family sponsorships are intended for those families, which need support in organizing their everyday life or household but don't have a partner, friends or family members. The sponsor of a family takes on this role and try to encourage the family members to become active themselves. The focus lies on the systematic set up and the preventive strengthening of neighbourly networks.

Initiation and involved actors

On the initiative of the Alliance for Family in Nuremberg the pilot project „sponsorship for family“ was created in 2003 by the Center of Active Citizens (ZAB) and the Common Social Service (ASD).

The supply is open to all regional-departments of the Common Social Service, to different institutions and organizations, which work with families and to families themselves. A sponsor of a family isn't meant to be connected to his attachment family for life, but just as long as both sides require it. The offer is free of cost.

Steps for implementation

It is a full-time social pedagogue in the ZAB who is responsible for the procuring, the professional support and the education of the family-sponsors in „their“ families.

The focus lies on the systematic set up and the preventive strengthening of neighbourly networks. So the full-time social pedagogue of the ZAB tries her best to bring together a

family and a family-sponsor, who live in the same or a close-by district. Furthermore she utilizes the already existing network of social institutions in the city Nuremberg. The volunteers have different professional qualifications and experiences. The spectrum ranges from the retired teacher to the pensionary department manager or saleswoman. Some family-sponsors are even still full time working.

Actual condition and the next steps in terms of sustainability

After over four years it is detectable that a long-term employment of family-sponsors provides a preventive strengthening of the family-network and simultaneously supports professional facilities. Even temporary employments lead to the slowdown and the discharge in acute situations of the family's everyday life.

In September 2005 it has been possible to start with the development and the advancement of the project because of the resources from the trust Deutsche Jugendmarke. This is a practice research project and its' resources are limited to two years. During that time the project Family Sponsorships is ought to be placed on a expanded base. Moreover it is planned to be differentiated concerning the sorts of support (child care, help in household, advice in authorities matters, economic advice, etc.) and the target groups of families (single-mother or -father, families with handicapped children, families with social troubled environments, families with members in need of care). A further aim is to establish relationships in the direct living-environment of the affected families and the sponsors (associations, congregations among other things). In addition advanced training modules, instructions for the implementation of family-sponsorship and strategies for the cooperation between volunteer-work and youth welfare service are planned to be developed with the help of childcare-institutions.

Conclusion

The present findings argue for the fact, that prevention, support and discharge result in the avoidance of higher social costs. The assignment of family-sponsors in the social environment of the family encourages and navigates the existing potential of the voluntary engagement and connects full-time and voluntary engagement in the social sector in an exemplary way.

The concept links adjacent task fields and institutions in the direct social environment of the concerned persons and designs social "Nahräume". Social services aren't able to provide a preventive discharging and supporting offer. In the voluntary engagement we see a comprehensive resource for the advancement of the social infrastructure in the city Nuremberg, especially in terms of the development of a children- and family-friendly society.

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