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## **TITLE**

Evaluating 'Best Preventive Practice' – The development and wellbeing of vulnerable children assigned a preventive practice by municipalities.

## **ABSTRACT**

Municipalities use preventive practices in a growing extent to improve the behaviour and wellbeing of vulnerable children. This abstract builds on a study focusing on what works for whom under which circumstances in preventive social work with children and youth in risk of being placed in out-of-home care. Furthermore the aim of the project is to draw a picture of the practices and experiences fragmented between the 98 municipalities in Denmark.

In order to evaluate and develop the preventive work 23 interventions from a total of 10 municipalities are studied during a period of three years. The selected municipalities represent the Danish municipalities in relation to main circumstances such as geographical placement and population-facts.

The study draws on a mix between quantitative and qualitative methods. Inspired by the Integrated Children's System (ICS) model (Cleaver et al. 2008) the analysis target key indicators of child development. Examples are health, education, emotional and behavioural development, and family and social relations. One of the indicators included in the questionnaire is the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman 2001). An evaluation is carried out by gathering information about the key indicators of each child and youth in the selected interventions by the time they start, for every six months if the intervention is a long-term intervention, at discharge, and six months post discharge. This enables us to look at both short-term effects as well as the more long-term effects of each intervention. Social workers fill out the questionnaires about the children, youths and their families.

Besides the evaluation, the interventions are studied using qualitative case studies. The aim is hereby to nuance the findings from the evaluation by coupling these with the perspectives of the social workers and the families involved.

## **Key References**

Cleaver, H., S. Walker, J. Scott, D. Cleaver, W. Rose, H. Ward & A. Pithouse (2008): *The Integrated Children's System – Enhancing Social Work and Inter-Agency Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Goodman, R. (2001): "Psychometric Properties of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)". *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 38(8), 644-651.