Health care from a children’s rights perspective

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My story

The background of my story:

- Children’s rights commissioner’s office?
- Children’s rights?

A children’s rights perspective on health care:

- Children, young people and the society they live in
- Integral approach of health care
- Participation and integrity
- Children and young people in vulnerable situations
Children’s Rights Commissioner

Regulated by a Parliamentary Act of July 15th 1997

- Independent spokesperson for children and young people
- Monitoring the CRC in Flanders

Mandate of 6 years (renewable for another 6 years)

Two main tasks:

- Ombudsperson for all minors living in Flanders
- Policy recommendations on all different topics (Flemish Parliament, Federal Parliament)
Ombudswork as a “running thread” throughout the work of our office

Makes it possible to "feel" and "experience" today’s problems of children and young people

From individual cases to structural problems

Research
Ombudswork – Who is contacting us?

2015-2016

- Parents and family
- Professionals
- Minors
- Authorities
- Others
Ombudswork – What are the complaints about?

2015-2016

- **Education (sanctions, special needs, bullying...)**
- **Family matters (divorce, parenting, adoption...)**
- **Youth- and healthcare (participation, privacy, access, ...)**
- **Child in public spaces (sports, mobility, housing, work...)**
- **Migration/asylum**
- **Justice and police**
I am a donorchild and do not have a father. I am 14 years old, started looking for my father, but with no results. I have read that in Belgium it is nearly impossible to know who your biological father is. Do I have the right to know my father?
I have dyslexia. In elementary school I was well supervised and teachers helped me a lot. In the secondary school it became more difficult. There are more teachers and not everyone of them is familiar with dyslexia and my special needs. This year I have a new teacher for language who does not allow me to use my laptop or other tools. Even though I have a certificate which confirms my dyslexia. Now I can no longer participate in class and my results are very bad. The director says he has spoken to the teacher. But there is no improvement.
“Children are future adults - so they say. They are only in the process of becoming, they actually do not yet entirely exist, they do not yet belong... What does this mean? We children: are we not yet alive, do we not feel, do we not suffer - just like adults? And childhood: is it not a part of real life - of everyone? Why do they wish to make us wait - and for what?”

Janusz Korczak
"Please turn it down - Daddy is trying to do your homework."
Participation and integrity

Participation:

- Equality
- Children as active agents
- Children and “ownership”
- Equal access to social services

Integrity

- The protection of the child’s physical, psychological, sexual and moral integrity
International tools on childfriendly health care

Guidelines on childfriendly health care by the Council of Europe (2011):

- Participation
- Dignity
- Information
- Best interest of the child

General Comment nr. 15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013)
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Children and the broader society they live in

- Moral panics
- Poverty
- Labelling
- Time and space
Beyond moral panics about health and ‘youth’

Jeugd voelt zich dik, alleen en schoolmoe

Door: Remy Amkreutz – 02/05/12, 06u02 – Bron: De Morgen

Meer dan een op de drie Vlaamse pubers vindt zichzelf dik en ongezond. Ze eten ook minder fruit en drinken wekelijks meer bier dan hun buitenlandse leeftijdgenoten. Dat blijkt uit een studie van de Wereldgezondheidsorganisatie (WGO) die De Morgen al kon inkijken.
(Child) poverty

Some statistics:

- Nearly 13% of the new born children in Flanders is born in a family living in poverty
- 30% of the single parent families living in Flanders is postponing their visit to a medical doctor because of financial reasons
- 25% of all minors in Flanders is living in bad housing conditions

The “educationalisation” of (child) poverty: the bad parent versus the innocent child
Cause: Tony practices the piano 20 minutes every day.

Effect: He is a big nerd.
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“Most of my friends say: ‘mental health care is for the weak’”
(Helena, 15)

“We’re only a bit different than the others. Sometimes a rather small thing becomes very big, but this doesn’t make us abnormal. We are normal children too. And you know, we are cool too.”
(Jonathan, 14)
What kind of problems do young people experience?

- Waiting lists
- Complex procedures
- Lack of continuity in care
- Bullying
- Conflicts among their parents make their situation more difficult
What is important for them?

- Normalize mental health care
- From ‘deficiencies’ towards ‘talents’
- Easy accessible, anonymous and ‘cosy’ (e.g. TEJO)
- Strong collaboration between the school and social welfare organisations
Sexual health

- Helping children and young people to develop a language for their body and for their sexual and relational life (“sexual citizenship”)

- The need to develop a more positive approach towards children’s sexual development (e.g. In Belgium all sexual activities of children under 16 are mainly seen from a criminal law perspective)
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What do you think is important in health care? (UNICEF study)

- Not suffering from pain (60.1%)
- Being able to understand the medical staff (49.1%)
- Having my parents with me (48.6%)
- People are listening at me (47.3%)
- Having the possibility to ask questions (44.6%)
- Knowing the names of the medical staff (19.6%)
What according to children is very important

Information:
- About medication and the medical treatment
- About their perspectives for the future
- About the staff that is taking care about them

Privacy (e.g. number of people in the room)

“That the people who take care of me, know my name”

Visiting hours in hospitals

A kind of confidential counsellor
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Hoe lang leven de kinderen van de nulmeting al in een onzeker woensituatie (geen eigen woonst, contract of domicilie)?

- 1-3 jaar: 26%
- 4-5 jaar: 5%
- 6 maanden tot 1 jaar: 24%
- 2 maanden tot 6 maanden: 21%
- minder dan 2 maanden: 17%
- meer dan onbekend 5 jaar: 4%
- meer dan onbekend: 2%

n=1.067
More information

For policy makers, representatives of civil society and the scientific world

- [www.kinderrechtencommissariaat.be](http://www.kinderrechtencommissariaat.be) (www.kinderrechtencommissariaat.be/en/about-us = English)

For youngsters under 18


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