

FROM THE NATIONAL PARENTS' COUNCIL FOR DAY-CARE  
INSTITUTIONS – NPC/FUB 2012

For parents:  
Information brochure about local parents'  
councils for day-care institutions

# Parental involvement in day-care institutions

**Parents are an  
important  
resource for  
day-care centres**

## **Introduction:**

*"A community which appreciates its children must treat their parents well."*

What is a local parents' council? Why is it important to establish such a council in each municipality? How do you go about setting one up it?

The National Parents' Council for Day-Care Institutions (NPC, in Norwegian FUB, the Norwegian term will be used in this brochure) is an overriding national body. Our aim is to promote the establishment of local parents' councils in all the municipalities in Norway. It is useful, necessary and important that parents of children in day care get involved in the daily activities and development of the day-care centre. FUB believes that parents working together may provide important and decisive input to local politicians and the authorities relating to important issues in day care.

FUB, established on 1 august 2010, is appointed by the King in Council for periods of four years. The council consists of the chairperson and five members, and a deputy member who attends the meetings. The council can represent parents nationally by responding to public hearings and getting involved in other activities.

The primary objective of the council is to promote cooperation between day care and the home to ensure each child in day care has the best possible conditions. Good cooperation may level social differences and ease the transition from day care to school.

FUB also works for the best interests of the parents on matters pertaining to day care, and will strengthen parental involvement and influence in day care by providing information and guidance.

The local authority has full responsibility for day-care centres. This applies to funding, location, quality and content. It is therefore important that a clear parental voice can help influence where day-care centres are to be built, determine the quality of the programmes offered and set much funding is to be allocated to operating the day-care centre.

By having a good cooperative climate between parents and day-care staff, the quality of day care will be increased, and the most important thing society can give children today is quality day care.

**Good luck with your work!**

Oslo, 2012

*The National Parents' Council for Day Care (FUB)*  
c/o Lena Jensen  
Chairperson



Day-care institutions shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children's need for care and play, and promote learning and upbringing as a basis for an all-round development.

## What does the Day-Care Institution Act say?

### THE PURPOSE OF DAY CARE AS STATED IN THE DAY-CARE INSTITUTION ACT

Section 1, *Objects clause*: Purpose, first paragraph of the Day-Care Institution Act, states:

Day-care institutions shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children's need for care and play, and promote learning and upbringing as a basis for an all-round development. Day-care institutions shall be based on fundamental values in the Christian and humanist heritage and tradition, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in various religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights.

The first sentence of the legislation means that all activity relating to a child in day care must be carried out in cooperation and collaboration with the home.

How day-care institutions satisfy the legal requirements in the objects clause varies. Each day-care institution should have a strategy for how to establish and ensure good cooperation with the parents.

### THE CONTENT SECTION OF THE DAY-CARE INSTITUTION ACT

Section 2, *Content*, final paragraph of the Day-Care Institution Act, states:

On the basis of the general plan for day-care institutions, the coordinating committee for each day-care institution shall establish an annual plan for educational activities.

Thus the Act establishes that the parents, through their representatives in the coordinating committee, shall take part in determining the annual educational plan for the day-care centre.

### THE PROVISION IN THE DAY-CARE INSTITUTION ACT RELATING TO PARENTAL COOPERATION

Section 4, *Parents' council and coordinating committee*, of the Day-Care Institution Act, says:

In order to ensure collaboration with the children's homes, each day-care institution shall have a parents' council and a coordinating committee.

The parents' council shall comprise the parents/guardians of all the children and shall promote their common interests and help to ensure that the collaboration between the day-care institution and the parents as a group fosters a good environment in the day-care institution. If, pursuant to section 15, a maximum limit for parents' fees has been prescribed in the regulations, only the parents' council may consent to parents paying fees in excess of this amount.

The coordinating committee shall be an advisory, contact-promoting and coordinating body. The coordinating committee shall comprise parents/guardians and the staff of the day-care institution so that each group is equally represented. The owner of the day-care institution may participate if he/she so wishes, but may not have more representatives than either of the other groups.

The owner of the day-care institution shall ensure that matters of importance are submitted to the parents' council and the coordinating committee.

The Day-Care Institution Act stipulates that each day-care institution must have a parents' committee and a coordinating committee, but the Act has no provisions for establishing a parent's council working committee (Norwegian abbreviation FAU), as the Education Act stipulates for schools.

Nor does the Act stipulate that local committees for parents with children in day care shall be established in each municipality. However, the National Parents' Council for Day Care (FUB) has the ambition that local parents' councils should be established in all municipalities in Norway, and aims to be a main contributor to achieving this goal.



## What is a local parents' council?

### A LOCAL PARENTS' COUNCIL

Municipalities of a certain size and with many day-care institutions must determine how many representatives it is appropriate to have in a local parents' council. A council with many representatives may be difficult to manage. Guidelines should also be stipulated that the composition of a local Parents' Council for Day Care should reflect different types of day-care institutions in the municipality.

A local parents' council for day care may be nominated in different ways:

- by the parents
- by the local authority represented by, for example, the chief executive officer and/or mayor
- by a local "action group"

See also more about the composition of the council on page 14.

### WHO SITS ON THE LOCAL PARENTS' COUNCIL?

The members of the local council may be elected from among parents' representatives in the parents' council working committees (Norwegian abbreviation FAU) at the various day-care institutions or coordinating committee (Norwegian abbreviation SU).

Members of the local council should be elected by the day-care institution's parents' committee.

## Why is the local parent's council important?

### LOCAL PARENTS' COUNCILS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE:

- the parents represent the children in the day-care institutions, they give them a voice
- the parents are able to put relevant issues on the agenda, including topics that others might not necessarily see
- they comply with the stated purpose in section 1 of the Day-Care Institution Act
- they may help to secure a more equal quality in all day-care institutions in the municipality
- they may help level social differences
- good cooperation between parents and the day-care staff has an effect on the quality of the day-care programmes for the children, which in turn influences the development and learning of the children

### RAISING THE PARENTAL VOICE

The voices of parents, particularly of parents with children in day care, have often not been heard. With a local parents' council, parents with children in day care may be heard on the local-authority level, which in turn will strengthen the possibility of parents influencing the development of the day-care sector.

Parents are as different as society in general, with different views and needs. But what do parents have in common that makes a convincing argument for the local authority to establish a local FUB?

What all parents have in common in relation to the day-care centre their child is attending:

- Quality of the centre's programmes
- Safety at the centre
- Opening hours at the centre
- The day-care centre's programmes/themes

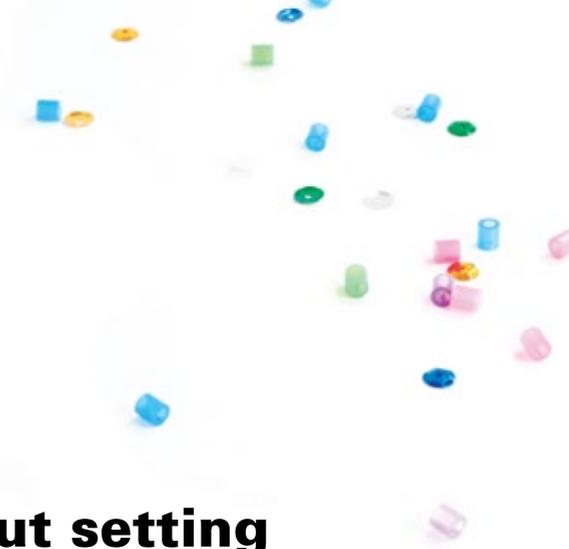
All local FUBs should have a common platform for their activities, and this platform should focus on what is in the child's best interests. The local FUB may then become a common forum and listening post for parents with children in day care, and serve as a body the parents together with the local-authority administration can use to find good solutions for the children in day care. This will also mean that the local FUB acts as the voice of the local parents who have children in day care.

The local-authority administration and local politicians will find many benefits to working with an organized group of parents.



#### PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT

The involvement of parents in issues relating to quality and programmes is increasing. After the provision stipulating the right to a place in day care was adopted in the Day-Care Institution Act, and Norway now has approximately full day-care coverage, it is no longer necessary for parents to expend as much time and energy on acquiring a place in day care for their children. Their focus is now more and more on the programmes the day-care centre offers and the quality of the centre. This is a good development as now the parents are more often focused on improving quality. It is important that parents are involved and interested in day care and that they care about the quality, and they should use their voice to convey this to the local authority and the elected politicians.



## How to go about setting up a council?

#### SHOULD THE INITIATIVE COME FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR THE PARENTS?

What is most important, perhaps, is not who initiates a local parents' council but the fact that the council is established. It is very important that the local parents' council is anchored in the local authority's administrative and political leadership. If the local authority takes the initiative to form a local parents' council, such an anchor is already well in place. If the parents initiate a local council, it may be reasonable to request a meeting with the local authority as soon as possible to establish contact and develop cooperation. It is very important for the development of the parents' council that the local authority welcomes the parents' initiative and gives the parents' council the necessary legitimation from the very first day.

Constructive and good cooperation between the parents' council and the local authority is important. Not only should the parents' council make their voice heard in connection with contested issues, but processes must be ensured where the parents and the local authority together may be proactive, and where the parents experience real cooperation. Parents should, for example, be involved in determining day-care programmes, and should look more deeply into the educational and social activities at the day-care centre. Together the cooperation partners may define a good mandate for a local FUB that will help parents to get involved. The cooperation must involve balanced input, where both parties bring issues to the negotiation table. If cooperation between the parties is to be successful, the local authority administration must open for and invite cooperation. A good start for future cooperation may be to clarify what each party's expectations are and what is meant by mutual respect.



The local authority has an important function as the facilitator who gets parents involved in the local FUB. The ideal goal is to establish good cooperation between the three parties, parents – local authority – local politicians, where each party has a genuine chance to be heard and may provide input.

It is best if the cooperation can be established in “times of peace” with a common arena for meetings, where the frequency of meetings is set, an annual plan for the meetings is drawn up and where there is a good flow of information. The local authority’s information procedures should be clarified so that important information from the administration to the parents via the parents’ council and/or the parents’ coordinating committee reaches its destination. The administration may, for example, prepare a public information letter about the local parents’ council to be sent to all new parents with children in day care to ensure that all parents receive the same information.

It is important to have a robust organization to ensure that the success of the council and the cooperation will not depend on the special qualities of some individuals. The municipal administration could also have a role in assisting the “operation” of the local parents’ council to ensure continuity, but without getting involved in the local parents’ council’s internal activities.

It is also important that meeting points are established between the local parents’ council and politicians so that the council actually reaches the political level.

#### **HOW DO YOU PROCEED AS A PARENT?**

Parents who wish to take the initiative to establish a local parents’ council could proceed as follows:

- Contact the chief executive officer and/or the person responsible for day care in the local authority and request a meeting to discuss the plan for a local parents’ council.
- Send an invitation to all representatives of parents’ coordinating committees in the municipal and private day-care institutions and invite them to an information meeting to plan a local parents’ council.
- Use one of the local authority’s properties for the meeting, for example in City Hall or another public building such as a school or day-care institution, and invite the local authority’s head of day-care institutions, the chief executive officer and/or mayor.
- Use the information meeting to enlist as many members as possible for the new local parents’ council, and determine the date and place for the first meeting of the new council.



## What can be achieved?

Parents want high quality day care for their children. Through their involvement parents can help to raise the quality by asking questions and making demands and proposals when it comes to the programmes in and operation of the day-care centre.

### RAISE DAY-CARE ISSUES TOGETHER

When parents and staff raise a day-care issue together, it will gain importance and status, for example with the political authorities.

In a local parents' council it will be easier to make the voice of parents with children in day care heard on the local-authority level, for example about budgets, annual plans, staffing or the use of temps. This may in turn strengthen the influence parents have on development in the day-care sector.

### PARLIAMENTARY REPORT RELATING TO THE FUTURE OF THE DAY-CARE CENTRE

In the preparatory work for the report to Parliament (NOU 2012:1: Til barnas beste [In the best interests of the children]) in 2013 about the day care of the future it is said:

**The local parents' council is assumed to be in a position to contribute in a positive manner to the parents' influence on local development of day care, for example as a hearing body concerning the design of local day-care policy.**

This is an important statement indicating how much stronger the parental voice will be in the local community, and how parents together may influence and cooperate to organize day care in each municipality in the child's best interests.

### THE PARENTS' COUNCIL MAY BE A SUPPORTING PLAYER AND ELEVATE CASES TO THE HIGHEST LEVEL

The National Parents' Council for Day Care (FUB) is established on the national level.

In FUB, local and municipal councils have a common national forum to address in cases that concern the relationship between the home and day-care institutions. FUB may serve as a supporting player and bring cases to the Directorate of Education.

# The composition of the local parents' council

## THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS

The members of the municipal parent's council may be elected from among the parents' representatives in the various day-care parents' committees or parents' coordinating committees. The number of members must be assessed from one municipality to the next. In small municipalities the parents' councils may choose to join with day-care institutions or schools across municipal borders if the number of parents in the planned council would otherwise be too low.

## THE COUNCIL'S ORGANIZATION

The formal composition of the local parents' council could be as follows:

- Chairperson
- Deputy chairperson
- Members of the board
- Secretary
- Deputy member
- Treasurer

## ARENAS FOR LOCAL PARENTS' COUNCILS

Arenas the local parents' councils may communicate and be visible in:

- The local authority's website
- Facebook
- NGOs, for example for minority-language parents or parents with children who need assistance
- Regular meetings and meeting places every six months with the local authority administration and politicians

## THE TASKS OF THE PARENTS' COUNCIL

There are many themes and cases the local parents' council can discuss and consider, such as how to ensure that parents are informed about relevant cases. What are the most important cases the parents' councils should work with? How can a balanced discussion on the quality of and programmes in day care be achieved? What is quality in day care?

## WHICH CASES SHOULD THE COUNCIL DEAL WITH?

It will be important that the local parents' councils focus on major cases that affect the whole municipality and that are relevant for day care in the municipality, regardless the owner. These may include decisive factors such as:

- The size of the groups of children
- How many adults in day care per child
- How many educators in day care
- Staff competence/expertise

Financial resources facilitate for good quality, but the mentioned factors frame the quality of the activities in day care. Factors relating to building design also impact quality.

A good tip is to choose cases according to an annual cycle, for example budget, annual plan, revision of annual plan, admission, competence and start-up, which are all fixtures in the annual day-care cycle.

The local parents' council may request that they are given cases of importance and which are of overriding interest from each day-care centre's working committee and parents' coordinating committee.

The parents' council may also use the plans for the meetings and agendas of the Early Development and Education Committee, City Executive Board and/or the City Council as their point of departure, and put relevant cases on the agenda for their own meetings.



### **HOW THEY DO IT AT THE MUNICIPALITY OF KRISTIANSAND**

Kristiansand local authority has established a local parents' council for the day-care centres in the municipality. This committee is called BAFU in Norwegian. BAFU is included in decision-making processes in the municipality, and case processing has the following order:

1. Coordinating committee in the day-care centres
2. BAFU
3. The Director of the Early Development and Education Division
4. The Board of Early Development and Education Division

The level where cases are decided depends on the content of each case. Cases of an administrative nature are decided by the Director of Early Development and Education. Major cases will be decided on the political level by the Board of Early Development and Education or possibly the City Council.

The model used in Kristiansand may form the basis for or suggest how case processing between a local parents' council and the local-authority administration may be carried out.

### **HOW OFTEN SHOULD MEETINGS BE HELD?**

It is of course up to each parents' council to decide how frequently it wants or needs to hold council meetings. Meetings may preferably be held before or after City Council meetings so cases can be processed while they are still fresh. In many municipalities this means that the committee will have to have a meeting once a month, which may be too often. A more realistic and feasible plan is to have meetings two to four times a year.

### **ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

It is reasonable for a parents' council to formalize the work by drawing up articles of association for its operations, without turning it into a bureaucracy. The council's articles of association may for example include descriptions of the following:

- Purpose
- Members
- Council's meetings
- Minutes and information on how the minutes are to be kept
- Annual meeting
- Nomination committee
- Budget and accounts
- Auditor
- Working groups (for example ad-hoc groups)
- Amendments to the articles of association
- Dissolution

## What should the parents' council be called?

A local parents' council should include parents from municipal and privately owned day-care centres and should be an independent body. The council must represent all the parents who have children in day care in a municipality, and the name should not point to political attitudes or ownership conditions. The council should be as objective as possible. The National Parents' Council for Day Care therefore proposes that the parents' councils in Norway should call themselves the Parents' Council followed the name of the municipality, for example the Parents' Council Oslo. In this way the local parents' councils will be extensions of the National Parents' Council for Day-Care Institutions.



## Conclusion

The parents' council for day-care institutions believes that it is useful to stand together as parents and speak with one voice to be heard by the decision-making authorities, local authorities and experts, from the day-care level to college level.

Parents are the most important persons in a child's life and an important cooperation partner for the day-care institution, and parents need to be involved and become a natural part of the daily activities in day-care institutions.

**Get involved!**

**FUB (National Parents' Council for Day Care)**

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