

**Jørn Holm-Hansen, Marte Feiring and
Larisa S. Malik**

The Foster Family Project in Murmansk

**A review of SOS Children's Villages Norway's
foster family project in Murmansk region**

The Foster Family Project In Murmansk

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foster family project on Murmansk region

NIBR Report 2005:4

Preface

This report evaluates the Foster Family Project established in 2000 by an agreement between the governor of Murmansk, Yurii A. Evdokimov, and secretary general of SOS Children's Villages Norway Svein Grønnern. The Foster Family Project (FFP) aims at helping regional and local authorities in Murmansk region introduce foster families according to the state of art internationally.

The evaluation was commissioned by SOS Children's Villages Norway.

Research has been carried about by a team consisting of researchers from two institutions with a long record of fruitful co-operation, the Pomor State University in Arkhangelsk and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) of Oslo.

The project team has been headed by Jørn Holm–Hansen, who edited the report and wrote out most of it. He is a political scientist with a specialisation in Russian and East European administrative and political reform. He is a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR). Larisa S. Malik is dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Work at the Pomor State University in Arkhangelsk, and took primarily part in the research on the foster families. Marte Feiring is a sociologist and researcher with the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research with a specialisation in research on welfare and social policies. Her main focus in the evaluation is on the FFP professional staff and their methods of work (chapter 4).

The team made two field visits to the Murmansk region in May-June and August 2004. NIBR wishes to thank all the people who shared their precious time with the team, and who made the visits to Olenogorsk, Kandalaksha, Luven'ga, Umba, Varzuga, Kola town and not least Murmansk city pleasant memories. Thanks to all foster families visited and to all who answered our questionnaire.

In particular we would like to thank Ludmila Polozova, Elena Pridatchenko, Berit Bakkane, Torbjørn Persen, Tat'ana Starodubova and Marina Buniak.

The report has been researched, written and edited within three man-months.

Oslo, April 2005

Arne Tesli

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Summary

Jørn Holm-Hansen, Marte Feiring and Larisa S. Malik

The Foster Family Project in Murmansk

A review of SOS Children's Villages Norway's Foster Family Project in Murmansk region

NIBR Report 2005:4

This report evaluates a Russian–Norwegian joint project aiming at making the foster family institution strike roots in the Murmansk region. The Foster Family Project (FFP) was formally initiated by an agreement between the governor of Murmansk and the secretary general of the SOS Children's Villages Norway in 2000. The FFP has been carried out jointly between the Educational Committee of the Murmansk region and the SOS Children's Villages Norway (Murmansk office).

The rough division of tasks between the two partners makes the Norwegian side chief responsible for bringing a foster family model in based on experiences from abroad. Experiences held by the international foster care organisation IFCO have been made use of. The Russian authorities' makes sure the model is made feasible legally and administratively. The idea has been to introduce a foster family model wholesale, and then check what made sense and what should be revised. This Evaluation report has been commissioned among others to assist in that work.

The FFP professional team consists of two psychologists and the project manager, holding a master's degree in special needs education. Their job is to follow up each family, which they do together with the relevant authorities at regional and local level.

Murmansk region is one among 72 federation subjects (of a total 89 in the Russian Federation) that have introduced the foster family institution. By the end of 2004 the FFP included altogether 89 foster children in 60 foster families. In the period 1999–2004 altogether 14.5

million Norwegian kroner (about 1.75 million euro) had been put into the project by SOS Children's Villages Norway.

The foster families – children and parents

Placing orphans and children deprived of parental care has economic, legal, psychological and social aspects. Much of the immediate attention in the organs of guardianship responsible for implementing and controlling placement naturally will have to be focused on legal and economic aspects.

It is, however, the emphasis on psychological and social aspects that make the FFP's involvement innovative. Its economic contribution to the foster family institution in Murmansk is instrumental to making innovation happen.

At an early stage the FFP decided it would concentrate on one methodology, and since August 2002 the project has applied PRIDE (Parent-Resources for Information- Development and Education). The international PRIDE framework as well as the international foster family organisations has enabled training and updating of the FFP's professional team.

The FFP and its place in the context

The legal framework for establishing foster families was in place before SOS Children's Villages came to Murmansk in 1998. The Family Code of 1996, with legal regulations based on it, paved the way for the establishment of foster families. The role of the FFP, therefore, has been to help regional and local authorities implement policies rather than "sell the idea".

Foster children constitute a *microscopic number as compared to the total picture of orphans and children left without parental care*. In 2003, for instance, there were 81 foster children in the Murmansk region (of which 69 in the FFP) out of a total of 4986 biological and social orphans. Moreover, *the foster family is only one among several family or family-like placement forms in Murmansk region*. In 2003 altogether 749 children were placed in family-like arrangements, of which 572 with guardians, 146 adopted and 31 in foster families. The foster family is rare among the family-like placement forms in Murmansk.

The evaluation shows that the foster family concept is quite wide and can be taken to mean several things. In Murmansk, like everywhere else, the idea of what a foster family is among others influenced by people's experience with and knowledge about other placement forms.

In Russia, adoption is made use of on a quite large scale, and it is characterised by secrecy. The child itself – and neighbours – are supposed to believe that the adopters are the biological parents. The wide-spread use of guardians, most often grandmother or other close relatives, is another Russian specificity.

In the Nordic countries foster parents tend to find themselves “on a scale” between the adopters and the guardians, with a penchant towards seeing themselves as “guardians”. For instance Sweden has a law that instructs guardianship organs primarily to find foster parents among the child’s relatives. On their side, however, Russian foster parents perceive themselves as being a kind of adopters.

Foster children are not taken from problematic families for temporary placement, but from orphanages for permanent placement. These are striking features of the foster families created through the FFP. The responses to the questionnaire handed out to all foster families show that quite a large number of foster parents hold the difference between adoption and the foster family institution to consist in the payments and the professional follow-up and control by the guardianship organs and the FFP.

A success?

The report shows that the FFP makes a change for the foster families mainly for three reasons. Firstly, the FFP contributes by *enabling the family financially* (salaries and allowances according to official standards set by regional authorities are paid by the FFP). Secondly, the foster family is *assisted professionally* by the FFP’s professional team, in particular in psychological matters. Here the FFP complements the work being done by the organs of guardianship. Thirdly, the FFP *links* each foster family *socially* to other foster families through the PRIDE courses and through the support to the establishment of the Union of Foster Families.

All in all the FFP has assisted local child care authorities in their endeavours to live by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. In this respect the project’s contribution has been strong at three points. Firstly, it has placed almost one hundred children in a carefully selected family. Secondly, it has pushed the idea of putting the child first in placement cases. Thirdly, the project has propagated the principle of letting the child know its biological parents and relatives.

The recommendations

Despite the achievements of the FFP the report points at some weaknesses that have to do with insufficient adaptation to Russian realities. Recommendations are provided. The recommendations naturally have to pinpoint aspects of the FFP that has not been fully successful. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that the Evaluation Team sees the recommendations as suggestions for how to improve a project that already performs quite well.

1. Legal provisions in place before FFP came to Murmansk and not least the efforts made by the Educational Committee at regional level make for the fact that the foster family project is operating in a welcoming context. In the future it is important that the FFP team (the FFP office as such) join efforts with their partners in the Educational Committee in to achieve a more analytical approach to local resistance to the FFP model. There might be fair reasons why some are sceptical to the project or the model. The FFP should endeavour to enter into dialogue with sceptics.
2. The FFP should keep up the good work in adapting its foster family model to Russian realities. This implies paying more attention to contextual, among them cultural, differences between the countries where the instruments and programmes (like PRIDE) were originally conceived and Russia. In the future the FFP should see the foster family in a broader perspective. PRIDE is useful, but should not stand in the way for the development of other foster family training programmes adapted to Russian realities.
3. The FFP should establish closer links to other foster family initiatives elsewhere in Russia, and not least to federal-wide activities. Cooperation with the federal ministry should be improved. Firstly, it is important that the existing plans of bringing the project to the Ministry of Education for an up-dated presentation are made true as soon as possible after the presentation of this Evaluation Report. Secondly, the FFP should make an overview of methods used in the Russian regions where foster families have been introduced.
4. The FFP should discuss with the guardianship organs whether more of the day-to-day services could be taken over by the local child inspectors, with whom foster parents already have close cooperation.
5. The FFP should give priority to establishing short and medium term foster families. This means that the work with the specialised foster homes should be given priority.

6. The FFP and the organs of guardianship develop guidelines for weeding out candidates for foster families that seek to solve psychological discomfort.
7. People working in child care institutions should not become foster parents of children from their own work-place.
8. The FFP consider in what ways the experiences from SOS Children's Villages could be drawn upon in the work with large foster families.

1 Introduction

1.1 Objectives and structure

Has SOS-barnebyer's Foster Family Project (FFP) contributed to making the foster family institution strike roots in Murmansk region? That is the main question addressed in this report.

Foci

The review assesses the immediate results of the FFP for the families and children involved. Has the FFP made any difference for them? The review likewise looks into how the FFP has made a difference for the overall *system* of child care in the Murmansk region. The FFP is meant not only to be helpful to the individual families taking part in the project, but also to the organs of guardianship responsible for implementing public policies. The review makes an in-depth analysis of the FFP's contributions to *embedding* the foster family institution. Achievements are identified, and so are the problems that might have been coped with in a better way. Recommendations are provided. By way of conclusion the report discusses whether the FFP could be emulated in other Russian regions.

Structure

In order to understand the position of the foster family institution in the Murmansk region it is necessary to know about the other placement forms and how they are being made use of. It is also important to know the legal basis of the foster family, and not least where in the public administrative system it belongs. Such insights are provided in chapter 2.

In chapter 3 the foster families are in focus. Who are they, what are their motivations? What problems do they have? How has the FFP affected these families? An underlying question through this chapter is

whether the foster families of the Murmansk region actually accept the foster family model promoted by the FFP.

Chapter 4 looks into the FFP staff, their type of competence and use of methods. Among others, the PRIDE training programme and child development plans are presented.

To what extent has the FFP struck roots? Chapter 5 provides an answer to that question.

Conclusions and recommendations are given in chapter 6.

Target groups

The report has been written with some special readers in mind. The many Norwegian individuals, firms and organisations that have supported the FFP and SOS-barnebyer deserve to know whether their efforts have been worthwhile. Another target group is the Russian Committee SOS Children's Villages (SOS Russia for short). SOS Russia took over the FFP from 1 January 2005, and the report aims at allowing them to know what framework and in what condition the project was in when they took over. The Terms-of Reference is rendered *in extenso* in Appendix 1.

1.2 Methods

The evaluation has been carried out in accordance with case study method. This method is particularly well-suited for studies of programmes and projects. Case studies take as a point of departure that a project should be seen as part of a larger context. The study object should not be isolated from its surroundings.

The evaluation has made use of a wide range of sources.

The team has perused laws and other legal documents, public programmes in the field of child care, as well as articles in newspapers and journals.

Conversations and in-depth interviews have been carried out with a wide range of interlocutors.

Seven in-depth interviews were made with foster parents in various parts of the Murmansk region. A questionnaire was sent to all foster parents taking part in FFP. Out of a total 58 foster families at the time 35 responded.

In accordance with the terms-of-reference the evaluation does not include research on the children's experiences, but informal talks did take place with foster children in their foster families.

People who have attended PRIDE courses have been spoken with.

Representatives of the guardianship organs at regional and local level have been interviewed, in several cases with follow-up interviews.

The same holds true for leading officers in SOS Children's Villages in Oslo as well as Moscow have been interviewed.

The Evaluation Team has had conversations with representatives of the regional mass media.

For a detailed overview of interviewees, see Appendix 3.

Two of the team members have stayed for two days in a foster family. One team member observed the founding meeting of the Union of Foster Families.

Field visits were made in June and August. Apart from Murmansk city the team has visited and made interviews in Kola town, Olenogorsk, Kandalaksha, Luven'ga and Varzuga.

The project team has been headed by Jørn Holm–Hansen, who edited and wrote out most of the report. He is a political scientist with a specialisation in Russian and East European administrative and political reform. Holm–Hansen makes use of Russian as a working language during field work. He is a researcher at the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR). Larisa S. Malik is dean of the Faculty of Psychology and Social Work at the Pomor State University in Arkhangelsk, who took part in the research on the foster families. Malik, with her background from another Russian federation subject (Arkhangelsk) brought in an intra-Russian comparative perspective. Marte Feiring is a sociologist and researcher with the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research with a specialisation in research on welfare and social policies. Her main focus in the evaluation is on the FFP professional staff and their methods of work (chapter 4).

1.3 Privacy protection

The members of the Evaluation Team have signed a declaration of non-disclosure of confidential information. They have followed the general guidelines in for research ethics and privacy protection in the

humanities, law and social sciences. This implies among others that all information about the families or their members involved in the FFP has been thoroughly anonymised. No information that might be led back to an involved family or family member has been or will be disclosed unless consent has been given from the family or the individual family member.

2 Description of the FFP and its institutional surroundings

This chapter presents the Foster Family Project (FFP) in brief terms and places it in its context. Being a Russian–Norwegian joint project the sources of insight and inspiration have been drawn from both sides. However, the realities into which the foster family idea has been promoted since the project started out in 2000 are entirely Russian. The issue of placing children who have been deprived of parental care, for biological or social reasons, must be seen in the light of these realities. The chapter provides figures that illustrate the scope of the problem. The different types of placement are presented as well as their relative frequency of application. All figures refer to the Murmansk region. Furthermore the chapter shows how the work with orphans is organised in Murmansk. The legal provisions are referred to. Emphasis is put on the foster family institution.

2.1 The Foster Family Project – history

Throughout the 1990s Russian authorities at federal, regional and local level have provided legislation and funds to support the development and functioning of alternatives to traditional orphanages. The foster family is one among several forms of placing children deprived of parental care that has been prioritised. The Foster Family Project (FFP) contributes to the development of the foster family in mainly three ways. Firstly, the project has paid salaries and allowances to the foster families (according to the official rates set by the regional authorities)¹. The SOS Children's Villages Norway has

¹ Financially the project endows the families with the foster child benefits and foster family salaries established by the oblast authorities. A gradual transition to full payment by the oblast authorities beginning 1 January 2004 was initiated by decree by the governor. According to the decree the oblast

committed itself to continue financing all the 100 children that will be included in the project until they are 18 years old, or are reunited with their biological families or leave the foster family institution for other alternatives. Secondly, the project provides professional assistance to foster families, mainly consisting in training courses and regular follow-up by project psychologists. Thirdly, the FFP aims at systematically promoting and propagating the idea of establishing foster families.

The FFP was conceived as a joint Russian-Norwegian undertaking in which Murmansk's regional authorities and the Norwegian branch of the international NGO SOS Children's Villages formed equal parts. The project – whose official name is “SOS-barnebyer Foster Family Project in Murmansk region” – operates according to the agreement signed on 29 May 2000 by the governor of Murmansk (governor Yurii A. Evdokimov) and SOS Children's Villages Norway (general secretary Svein Grønnern). Some minor amendments to the agreements were made in a protocol to the Contract on the Foster Families project on 29 May 2003.

The project idea developed in the late 1990's and came from two sources, one Russian and one Norwegian. At the Russian side the guardianship organs, responsible for placement of biological and social orphans, were in a phase of implementing the new policy lines stated in the Family Code of 1996. This Code and legislation related to it is based on the principle in the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, in which providing family or family-like upbringing is one core objective. At this time foster families in Russia were very rare. Figures for 2001 show that Russia had no more than 386 foster families and 2,300 foster children. At the time each foster family had almost six foster children on average, most of them on so-called family orphanages (described below). Officers in the guardianship organs all over Russia were looking for new approaches, methods and models.

On the Norwegian side at the end of the 1990's there was a wide-spread concern for the North West Russian neighbours. Mass media showed a Russia in deep misery. In particular did the conditions in the orphanages make an impression on newspaper readers and TV-viewers. Those with a real-life experience with Russia and its social conditions agreed that problems were serious, but clearly found the

(through the municipalities) will pay the special benefits given for foster children whereas the FFP pays the parental salaries.

mass media picture to be exaggerated. Nevertheless it did give rise to a formidable act of solidarity. Ordinary Norwegians donated large sums of money to humanitarian organisations. Among these was SOS Children's Villages Norway. The organisation commissioned a report from the Fridtjof Nansen Institute to get a picture of Murmansk region's child care system and its needs (Berteig et al 1998). The SOS Children's Villages and the guardianship organs at regional level, i.e. the Committee of Education, entered into dialogue and agreed to co-operate on the development of non-institutional placement forms, in particular foster families.

The opportunity offered by the SOS Children's Villages – Norway of establishing foster families according to “the state of the art” internationally was welcome in Murmansk. The first foster family in Murmansk (apart from the family orphanages with many foster children in one family) was established in August 2000 as a part of the FFP.

It should be noticed that it was the Russian side that took the initiative to concentrating on foster families. Nevertheless, the fact that the foster family institution base itself on an idea that non-professional people can take care of children seemed to provoke some scepticism in parts of the public administration working with children. Here, a scientific attitude seemed to prevail according to which the orphan child's various needs is best taken care of by specialists in the fields where the child has needs (more on this attitude in Holm–Hansen et al 2003b). And scepticism is very well summed up in the following comment given to the FFP in an initial stage by a high-ranking official. “You think far too well about Russian families!” However, despite occurrences of sceptical attitudes in the policy sector of education, official policies were clearly pro foster families.

Establishing foster families in Russia

How are foster families established in Russia? The issues pertaining to the rights of the foster child and the foster parents are under the administrative competence of the organs of guardianship. These issues are: the legal aspect concerning establishing foster families, property issues, contacting relatives and the deprivation of parental care in the first place. The foster family contract is signed by the foster family and the organ of guardianship. On the basis of this contract another contract is signed between the foster family and the FFP.

On the basis of the agreement, local agreements have been set up between municipal administration and SOS-barnebyer Norway. The number of municipalities with an FFP agreement has gradually grown.

Individual agreements between the FFP and foster parents are made referring to the local agreements.

The number of municipal agreements

There are 19 municipalities in the Murmansk region. The FFP has entered into co-operation (based on agreements) with altogether 11 municipalities. Due to military activities five of Murmansk region's municipalities are closed to foreigners and to projects like the FFP.

There are altogether 60 individual agreements.

Table 2.1 *Number of foster children/foster families June 2001 – June 2004*

• June 01	• 23/16
• December 01	• 34/22
• June 02	• 41/28
• December 02	• 42/29
• June 03	• 50/36
• December 03	• 72/48
• June 04	• 88/58
• December 04	• 89/60

Being the only project on foster families run by the SOS Children's Villages internationally the FFP is in a particular situation. Likewise, the project is special by the fact that the SOS Children's Villages office in Murmansk (of which the FFP is a part) has formed a part of SOS Children's Villages Norway and not the Russian branch.

The goal of 100 FFP foster children by the end of 2003

The goal of having 100 foster children in the FFP by the end of 2003 was not reached. In December 2003 there were altogether 72 foster children in 48 foster families. By June 2004 there were 88 children in 58 foster families. In December 2004 the corresponding figures were 89 and 60. Altogether 67 foster families have been taking part in the FFP with a total of 98 foster children. In other words there has been a steady growth in the number of foster children and parents although slower than planned for.

The main reason why the goal of one hundred FFP foster children was not reached is that the FFP wanted to establish foster families on the

bases of parents who had completed the PRIDE training (Quarterly Report October – December 2003). Local organs of guardianship share this concern for quality before quantity, and do not want to force the process of establishing foster families. Sustainability has come before the wish to fulfil the plan of one hundred foster children by December 2003.

As long as the number of foster children grew steadily throughout the period, it cannot be considered a problem that the initial goal was not reached on time. The Evaluation Team finds the focus on sustainability wise.

Related activities

SOS Children's Villages Norway's Murmansk office does not only establish foster families. Since 2001 the office has been working with Youth Homes. In 2002 it started projects on Family Group Conferences, all in close cooperation with the guardianship organs.

2.2 The foster family – one among several placement forms in Russia

According to Russian legislation and policy documents children who have been left without parental care should be placed in families or in family-like settings. Foster families is one among several alternatives, the others being adoption, guardianship, orphanages of a family type and patron families. Russia also opens up for other types of placement, like SOS Children's Villages, of which there are four. The traditional orphanages are only to be made use of if in case other placement forms have not been possible to arrange. Besides, orphanages are undergoing reforms to become more family-like and focused on the individual child.

It is worth noticing that the children chosen for placement in foster families usually come from orphanages. This means that their parents either are dead or have been deprived of parental rights.

Russia is not unfamiliar with placement forms other than orphanages (Holm-Hansen et al 2003b). Throughout the twentieth century, with Russia's dramatic history, a large number of children were left with guardians, most of the guardians being grandparents or other close relatives (Holm-Hansen et al 2003a).

Altogether 75–80 percent of all Russian children who are placed in families, are placed with relatives. This is due to the system of *guardianship*, which is by a large margin the most widely used form of placement of orphans in Russia. More children are placed in guardianship than in institutions. Taking all children without parental care together, 49 pct are placed in guardianship, according to statistics from the federal Ministry of Education.

Guardians

The overwhelming majority of all children placed in families or family-like setting are placed in the homes of guardians (in Russian: *'opiekun'* for guardians of children 0–14 years, and *'popechitel'* for children 14–18 years). In most of the cases the guardians are relatives of the child, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends or neighbours. That makes this placement form cause less stress for the child since s/he continues to live in well-known surroundings. Furthermore, since close relatives are often used as guardians, this placement form often allows for permanent contact with the larger family, which sometimes forms a framework for natural contact with biological parents². Such contacts are clearly difficult to maintain in adoptive and even foster families, in Russia since the adoption system allows for “secret adoption”. This policy of secrecy clearly influence on expectations among foster parents too, who would like not to expose their foster children to the biological parents.

Patron families

Patron families have been introduced in several regions. So far this is not the case in Murmansk, but the legal basis for the introduction of patron families is being developed. Patron families come very close to foster families since they are based upon an agreement and the patron parents are paid. Practices vary between regions, but in general patron families are closely followed up, usually by the policy sector of social protection. Often formally patrons are employees of an orphanage. For instance, in the town of Vladimir in Central Russia an orphanage director is guardian for 30 children, who live in various patron families. This way the competence of the professionals in the orphanage can be made use of to the benefit of the children as well as patron parents.

² In Sweden a civic initiative from below – the so-called Revolt of Grandmothers (Mormorsupproret) – led to a law amendment in 1999 instructing organs of guardianship to check whether the child could be placed with relatives before other foster families were considered.

Family orphanages

Russia has a tradition of family orphanage. It was established by a decree in the Council of Ministers in 1988. In Murmansk they have been dissolved and made into foster homes, but with many children and big flats, not unlike SOS Children's Villages, only placed in ordinary blocks of flats and individual houses. According to the regional Law on payment to foster parents and price reductions bestowed to foster families (24 December 1998, N 126-01-ZMO), previous family orphanages may be converted into foster families.

Adoption

Adoption is one of the traditional ways of placing orphans and other children without parental care in Russia. Most often adoption takes place for babies less than one year old. Reportedly, adoption still takes place secretly in most cases, and adopted children are not entitled to know the identity of their biological parents, and not even that they are adopted. This so-called "secret of adoption" has been put under debate by professionals and adopting parents alike.

SOS Children's Villages

One of Russia's four SOS Children's Villages is situated in Murmansk region, in the quiet town of Kandalaksha, 250 kilometres south of Murmansk city. It was officially opened in 2004. Per June 2004 the village was the home of 31 children.

Foster family

Unlike adoption, the emphasis on the foster family institution came as a novelty with the Family Code of 1996. By now, there are foster families in 72 of Russia's 89 federation subjects. Somewhere between 2.5 and 4.5 percent of all children without parental care live in foster families in Russia as a whole. Usually, foster families are established when the child's legal status makes adoption or guardianship difficult. In Russia, like in most other countries, the foster family is seen as a solution in cases of child neglect, crisis situation and the like in the biological family, and where short or medium-term placement term is suitable.

In some cases foster family is an alternative when it has been impossible to find adopters or guardians. The foster family replaces the orphanage or shelter and is established on the basis of an agreement between the foster parents and the organs of guardianship. The agreement is valid for a specified period of time (unlike adoption), and may differ. Training is compulsory. Up to eight foster

children may be placed in one family. The foster parents are employed, and receive salaries on a monthly basis. Financial support is rendered if needed to make the foster family's flat suitable for the child to live in. Legally the foster parents are on a par with guardians. Guardians, however, do not receive salaries and enjoy less price reductions (l'goty) on public services.

Although the foster family institution is clearly defined and discernible from adoption in Russian legislation, it seems that the two placement forms are perceived as being very close to each other. As it will be shown below, foster parents taking part in the FFP in the Murmansk region do not seem to be an exception in this regard. Most treat the foster child as a permanent member of the family. The short or medium term foster home seems not to be what foster parents in Murmansk have in sight. One may wonder whether the introduction of patron families in Murmansk region will make this the equivalent of short and medium term foster homes.

2.3 The situation in the Murmansk region: Orphanhood and placement in figures

Each year more than 900 children are left without parental care in Murmansk region. Most of these children (79 to 90 percent) end up in this category because their parents have been deprived of parental rights.

Table 2.2 *Number of children being left without parental care per year*

	2001	2002	2003	*2004
Number of children who have been registered as being without parental care according to year of registration	916	945	922	
Number of registered children whose parents have been deprived of parental care	723	850	815	
In percent	78.9	89,9	88,3	

(Source: Educational Committee, Murmansk region, thanks to: Elena Pridatchenko)

Table 2.3 *Number of orphans and children left without parental care in the region of Murmansk according to type of placement*

	2001	2002	2003	*2004
Orphanage	912	956	996	
Boarding school	925	617	541	
Primary vocational schools	765	909	958	
Guardianship	2210	2336	2390	
Orphanage of family type	-	-	1	
SOS Children Village	-	-	19	
Foster families (of which in the FFP)	49 (33)	58 (42)	81 (69)	
SUM	4861	4876	4986	

(Source: Educational Committee, Murmansk region, thanks to: Elena Pridatchenko)

In accordance to federal and regional legislation in Murmansk priority is given to family-like placement, i.e. adoption, guardianship, and foster families. The percentage of children placed for upbringing in families varies between 56 to 59 percent.

Table 2.4 *Number of children placed in different types of family-like arrangements according to year*

	2001	2002	2003	*2004
Adoption	139	130	146	
Guardianship	573	643	572	
Foster families	28	13	31	
SUM	740	786	749	

(Source: Educational Committee, Murmansk region, thanks to: Elena A. Pridatchenko)

** Figures not yet known at the time of publication*

2.4 Administrative and organisational set-up of the FFP

The FFP operates on the basis of the agreement between the governor of Murmansk and the general secretary of SOS Children's Villages

Norway. The parties have appointed a coordination board to co-ordinate the project. This makes the Foster Family Project a joint Russian – Norwegian undertaking between the Murmansk regional committee on education and the SOS Children's Villages Norway. The board (working group) of the FFP consists of three representatives of the Murmansk Regional Educational Committee and three representatives from the SOS Children's Villages - Norway.

Although the FFP is a joint undertaking, the parties have agreed to a rough division of main responsibilities. The SOS Children's Villages – Norway brings the foster family in a version as conceived internationally according to PRIDE and IFCO, the International Foster Care Organisation. Murmansk Regional Educational Committee is chief responsible for adapting it to Russian realities. On the basis of experiences from introducing the model, which is based on Scandinavian and Polish patterns, an adapted model will be developed. Adaptation will be made among others on the basis of this Evaluation Report.

The FFP is formally a part of a future educational programme run by the Murmansk Regional Educational Committee on behalf of the Governor. The FFP is a member of the International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO), which ensures access to ongoing foster family projects internationally.

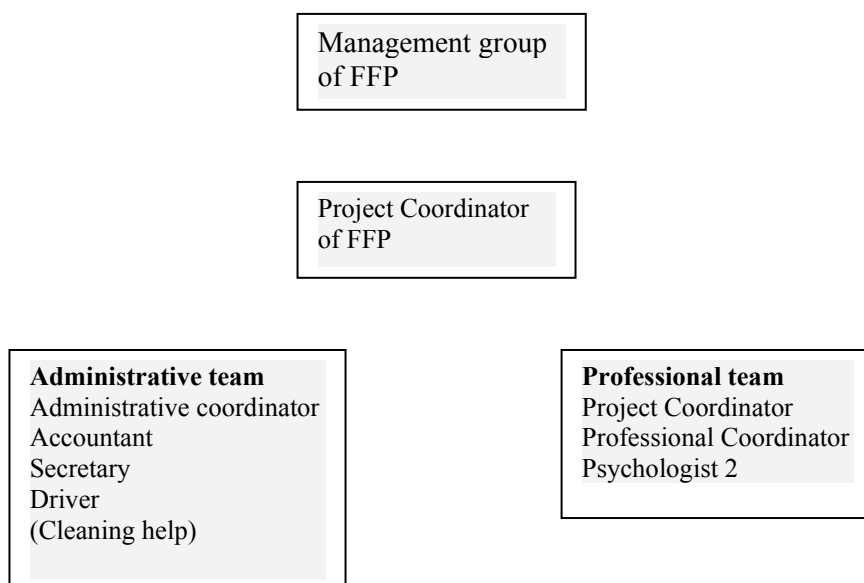
The staff is divided into two teams. The administrative team consists of the administrative co-ordinator, the chief accountant and the driver. The professional team consists of the project co-ordinator, the psychologists and the translators. (Some more details on the composition of the staff are to be found in chapter 4).

By the summer 2004 the staff consisted of:

- project manager
- administrative co-ordinator
- chief accountant
- chief psychologist/professional co-ordinator
- psychologist
- office manager
- driver/maintenance worker
- cleaning lady

Several specialists (medical doctors, dentists, lawyers and psychologists) are hired on a temporal basis. One PRIDE instructor has been brought in from abroad. Volunteers from Norway make a contribution occasionally.

Figure 2.1 *Model of the Foster Family Project, the professional team in 2000.*



2.5 The costs

SOS Children's Villages Norway has supported the project with altogether almost 14.5 Norwegian kroner (1.75 million euro):

1999: NOK 196.304,-
 2000: NOK 1.244.963,-
 2001: NOK 3.522.193,-
 2002: NOK 2.678.215,-
 2003: NOK 2.842.584,-
 2004: NOK 3.915.000,-

The large increase in 2005 is explained by the rise in the number of foster children in 2004.

2.6 FFP and training of foster parents

PRIDE (Parents Resources for Information Development Education) was chosen as a “package”. It emphasises the role of the surrounding social setting, like relatives, neighbours, friends, professionals. Furthermore, it insists on the importance of bringing biological parents in (Martinsen 2001). Both aspects are novelties in the Russian context. Another important aspect brought in by PRIDE is the emphasis put on the “matching” of foster child and foster parents. As one local child inspector put it: “PRIDE just made us move.”

PRIDE has been developed by the US-based Child Welfare League of America. It has later been chosen the main foster family-training programme used by Norwegian, as well as many other countries’, authorities.

The PRIDE training courses consist of five to seven weekend seminars in a period varying from six months to two years, including individual and groups work between the seminars.

Everyone attending the PRIDE courses is invited to come up with suggestions on amendments and adaptation. Persen: “Within a couple of years we most probably will have come up with a version of PRIDE adapted to Russian conditions.”

The FFP runs PRIDE training course for potential foster parents, people employed in the regional and municipal administration, orphanage workers and employees of the SOS Children’s Villages in Kandalaksha. Those completing the course gets a diploma stating that they are qualified PRIDE instructors (more on PRIDE is to found in chapter 4).

Methods used within ICDP (International Child Development Programme) were considered, but PRIDE was found to be more suitable. “All professionals with whom we have contacted or co-operated hold this model to be best” (Status report 1 October 2001). Key actors in Murmansk, like vice-governor Liudmila Chestova, was introduced to PRIDE during a visit to Norway at an early stage of the project (March 2001).

2.7 Administrative and organisational set-up of the child care system in Murmansk

The fact that Russia is a federation leaves it to each of the 89 federation subjects, of which Murmansk oblast (region) is one to arrange the administrative and organisational set-up of their own child care system. Frameworks are given through federal legislation. Murmansk region follows the general framework, unlike for instance Samara region on the Volga, where massive reforms have taken place, among others through closing the orphanages.

Issues pertaining to placement of children without parental care mainly fall under the educational sector in Russia, although in cases the orphans is very young or disabled the policy sectors of health care or social work are brought in.

This means that the policy field of placement of most orphans is taken care of by the Ministry of Education at federal level, and the Committees (or Ministries) of Education in the 89 Federation subjects.

It is the municipality (local self-government) that has the immediate responsibility face-to-face with the children and parents. Foster families are established only at municipal level.

The responsible bodies for revealing and placing abandoned children are called *organs of guardianship* (*organy opeki i popechitel'stvo*). The tasks are decentralised to the municipal level (see .g. Murmansk regional Law on the Protection of Children's Rights in Murmansk region (10 April 1997 N 59-01-ZMO, 8 November 2001 N 302-01-ZMO), chapter VI, st. 35: "The organs of local self-government are the organs of guardianship"). Exactly what organs under the local self-government are specified in article 1 of the Regional Law on the organisation and activities of the organs of guardianship in Murmansk region (4 June 1997 N 70-01-ZMO; 16 April 2002 N 335-01-ZMO). In general it is the educational sector – more precisely the municipal educational committees' departments of child rights' protection – responsible for the care of minor orphans.

The specialists working in these departments are *inspectors on children's rights*, and cover a wide range of issues related to children. In each municipality the child inspector is the main official responsible for placement of children. According to the Regional Law on the organisation and activities of the organs of guardianship in Murmansk region, there is to be one inspector per 5000 children. In

the town of Kandalaksha in the Murmansk region one officer in the organ of guardianship works full time on foster families.

Also the special pedagogue in the orphanages is an important actor in these matters. Each school and kindergarten has got one *public child right inspector* (*obshchestvennyi inspektor po okhrane prav rebënka*). The same holds true for institutions for children, in the “colonies” for juvenile delinquents and centres for intermediate isolation of children who have committed a crime. The public inspector’s authorization is restricted to reporting.

The public inspector is one of the regular teachers in the school or kindergarten, but receives some additional salary. His/her task is to reveal problems in the children’s growing up conditions. They play an important role in detecting child neglect, and twice a year they visit the foster families. One child inspector told that the public inspector has the advantage of knowing the children well, and cause less strain when interfering than does the child inspector.

However, in case the child has been defined by court as disabled or only partly able-bodied, the child is the responsibility of the health care bodies. Likewise, if the child is able-bodied, but in need of care because of health problems, the child is to be taken care of by the sector of social work.

When the organs of guardianship (under the Ministry of Education) are unable to place a child in a family or under family-like conditions, children will be settled in an institution. Traditionally these have been divided in two according to children’s age. Infants under four years old are placed in a baby’s home (*dom rebënka*). For those between five and 17 there are children’s homes (*detskii dom* or *internat*). Some of the schools are called corrective schools, and are intended for children with special needs. Street children are placed in temporary centres called police collection and distribution departments. These centres are under the Ministry of the Interior, and so are the committees for work with minors.

2.8 The legal basis of foster families

The foster family was introduced with the federal Family Code of 29 December 1995 (No. 223-FZ) confirmed in 1996, which states that the foster family institutions should be given special priority (chapter 21, articles 151-155). The Family Code is the basic law that regulates family and children issues, and conforms to the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child, which was ratified by Russia in 1990. More detailed regulations on foster families were given in the Legal Regulation (Polozhenie) on the Foster Family, confirmed by the Government 17 July 1996.

At regional level in Murmansk the regional Law on the Protection of Children's Rights in Murmansk region (10 April 1997, 8 November 2001) states the rights of the children, and divides task among public administrative bodies in securing these rights. A basic right (chapter III, st. 1) is: "The child has the right to grow up (pravo na zhizn' i vospitanie) in a family. Likewise (chapter III, article 4):

"A child living separately from the parents or one of them has the right to communicate with them (obshchenie s nimi) as well as with other relatives, to get information about them, if that does not go contrary to the child's interests or its normal development."

The activities of the organs of guardianship are regulated through the regional Law on the organisation and activities of the organs of guardianship in Murmansk region (4 June 1997 N 70-01-ZMO; 16 April 2002 N 335-01-ZMO).

As for the rights of foster families, the regional Law on payment to foster parents and price reductions bestowed to foster families (24 December 1998, N 126-01-ZMO) is important since the foster family stands out among the other types of family or family-like placements as the one with the best financial support.

In each municipality one general regulation (postanovlenie) is made, and in each case of establishment of foster family individual regulations are made.

The FFP bases itself upon the agreement between Murmansk oblast administration and SOS-barnebyer Norway. At local level the FFP bases its work upon an agreement between municipal administration and SOS-barnebyer Norway, which is in accordance with the regional level agreement.

2.9 Basis in other policy documents, plans and programmes

Finding alternatives to traditional orphanages in Murmansk has got strong backing in the governor's programme "Save the orphan!" ("Pomogi sirote!"). This programme was established in 2003.

The programme places the issue of orphanhood high on the agenda, and moreover is a follow-up of the President's programme from 1999, which among others aims at taking children out of orphanages and placing them in families and family-like settings, among them foster families. It opens up for local municipalities to create their own models of foster families, based on local experiences and resources.

The FFP is included in the governor's programme "Save the Orphan!". The vice-governor responsible for, among others, child placement considers the FFP one of the main measures within the governor's programme.

2.10 Summing up

In brief terms this chapter has shown what the Foster Family Project is and in what context it operates. Among the most salient features is the large number of children who are left without parental care each year. A large percentage of children are placed in family-like environments, i.e. in the homes of guardians/tutors, most often close relatives. This is perhaps somewhat surprising to outside observers, who might be under the impression that Russian orphans automatically are placed in orphanages.

The FFP is a Russian–Norwegian joint undertaking, and it fulfils two main functions. Partly, it is an instrument to help the relevant authorities (i.e. the organs of guardianship) to introduce and spread the foster family institution, which is official policy in Russia from federal, via regional to local level. Partly, the FFP has got the function of spreading one particular model of foster families. This is the PRIDE model, popular also in many other European countries.

This chapter has shown that the foster family institution is firmly entrenched in Russia, albeit not widespread. Legal provisions and organisational arrangements open up for the use of this placement form. Most important, of course, is the Family Code and the Legal Regulation on foster families, both from 1996. The foster family is

relatively new, and of several placement forms that had been added to the three traditional ones from the Soviet decades – guardianship, orphanages and adoption. In 1988 in the midst of the perestroika period so-called “orphanages of a family-type” were introduced and these were made foster families in 1996.

Still the foster family institution is not widely used as compared to other types of family-like placement. Adoption is much more widespread and well-known. In fact, the Evaluation Team has noticed that in Russian everyday speech even people working in the social and educational sectors talk about “foster families” as “adoption”. However, it is neither foster families nor adoption which is the most widely used form of placement. Neither is it children’s houses or orphanage, but guardianship, a family-like placement form that usually takes place in the home of relatives. Guardians take care of children without salaries and usually without training or assistance (apart from the recommendations given twice a year when a representative from the organ of guardianship visits or calls the guardian’s family).

The FFP focuses solely on the foster family institution, the least widespread and most recent form of placement. The project works closely with the relevant authorities, the “organs of guardianship” at regional and local level. In fact the project is supervised by a co-ordinating board, consisting of representatives of the regional organs of guardianship (the Committee of Education) and the SOS Children's Villages – Norway. The project operates in an accommodating legal environment, where laws, legal regulations and programmes both of the president and the governor all state that foster families are to be given priority.

The FFP staff is composed of altogether eight people, including administrative staff. The staff is divided in two teams, one professional and one administrative. The Russian experts in the professional team are all psychologists.

3 The foster parents and foster children

This chapter is among others based on conversations (in-depth interviews) with seven foster parents. Most of the conversations were made in the foster homes, some of them with the children running to and fro. The chapter also bases itself upon a questionnaire that was sent to all foster families in the FFP. Altogether 35 of 58 foster parents (single or couples) responded (see Appendix 2).

3.1 How have foster parents in the FFP been selected?

Recruitment of foster families either goes through the organ of guardianship or through the FFP, which in Murmansk region are the municipal departments of education. Some municipal departments are more actively involved in work with foster families than others that may give priority to other forms of placement. In general, where the municipal organs of guardianship are active, they are the ones that will be contacted by people who consider having foster children. In practice, the number of prospective foster parents is contingent upon the enthusiasm with which the local organ of guardianship and the child inspector personally attach to the foster family institution. In some municipalities the organs of guardianship has given it a high profile.

In some cases potential foster parents have come to the FFP on their own. In either way they are offered training based on PRIDE.

The formal selection of foster parents is done by the organs of guardianship, according to criteria set by the Family Code and the Legal Regulation on foster families. At this point, it is worth repeating that no less than eight people working in the departments of the protection of child rights or the oblast committee of education are

licensed PRIDE instructors, and even more are acquainted with the method.

Foster parents must be fully able-bodied and cannot suffer from diseases that make it difficult to fulfil the role of parent. People, who previously have lost the right to be a guardian or an adopter, will not be approved as foster parents. People willing to become foster parents apply to the local organs of guardianship. Among others, police files and housing conditions are checked. The candidate foster parents must present several documents, like an attestation from their workplace including information about the salary, a wedding attestation, and a document to verify the legal right of habitation or ownership to the flat. All adult family members must give their consent to take a foster child. Also a certificate of health must be presented.

The FFP contributes to the process of selection among others by offering initial courses in which candidates for being foster parents get to know about accumulated experience in the challenges and rewards of taking a child into the family. Almost all parents have gone through the initial course (based on PRIDE), and in a few cases the course made candidates think it over once more, and wait. This way the initial course fulfils a very important function in the selection process.

3.2 Who are the foster parents?

In-depth interviews and conversation with the foster parents give an impression of people with an unusually large reserve of surplus parental strength and care. Interlocutors in the organs of guardianship at several occasions emphasised this as being the main characteristic of foster parents.

The background statistics (updated as of mid-2004) may add to the picture. Firstly, statistics show that the foster parents taking part in the FFP tend to be older than biological parents usually are. The clearly largest age group is between 40 and 50 years old. The average age is 42 years. Secondly the statistics show that the foster parents tend to have a background in pedagogy and medicine, professions that deal with children, among them orphans. From the interviews and the questionnaire it became clear that quite a large number actually are working in institutions for children deprived of parental care. A third feature of the foster parents is that they tend to have a higher education than the average.

There is no statistics as to the income of the foster parents, but there are no foster families in the FFP that could be classified as being rich, according to interlocutors in the FFP and the organs of guardianship.

Table 3.1 *Foster parents' age*

Up till 30 years	30 to 40 years	40 to 50 years	Over 50 years	Total number
5	28	48	4	85

Table 3.2 *Foster parents' profession*

Small business	House wife	Pedagogue	Medical profession	Engineer/ technician	Military	Worker
3	16	21	8	6	8	23
Total: 85						

Table 3.3 *Foster parents' educational background*

General-middle	Middle-specialised	Middle-technical	Higher	Total number
15	17	31	22	85

(Source: statistics provided by the FFP data base)

3.3 Payments

As mentioned above, the FFP pays salaries to the foster parents and allowances to the foster child according to regional rates.

Salaries. The total sum received for a foster child (salaries and allowances) per month amounts to 4140 RUR for a child under three years old, a disabled child or a child with behavioural problems. For a child three to 18 years old without disabilities the salary is and 2760 RUR. Income tax is 13 percent, and it is covered by the FFP.

Allowances. The allowances are 3687 for a child from zero to seven years old and 5081 RUR from seven to 18 years (all figures are as of summer 2004). In comparison, a guardian will not get any salaries, and will get 200 RUR less per month. The 200 RUR are municipal taxes that the governor has decided to pay over the regional budget as a *geste* towards the foster parents (from 1 July 2004).

The salaries received by the foster parents combined with the allowances are considered a non-negligible sum for ordinary people in Murmansk. Wages depend on seniority, educational background, number of hours worked per hour, but an average salary of a Murmansk teacher giving 20 lessons a week is 4800 RUR.

Foster parents have to report on the use of the money received each month. Parents must report to FFP on the use of money. They must make a report and include vouchers. This is to make sure money is spent on the child, and first of all to keep track with what is the child's property (furniture, computer etc). According to the law, there are clearly defined "quotas" for how much should be used for various purposes. These quotas, of course, cannot be taken into consideration mechanically on a monthly basis, but in the run of one year. This is how the FFP applies the rules.

The report including vouchers is sent to the educational department at local level for control. Then the FFP receives the reports for approval. So far, there have been no occurrences of cheating, but there have been some cases of poor reporting. The Evaluation Team was offered insight in the files of these reports in an education department at local level and was assured that control was taken very seriously.

Payments are made directly from the FFP to the bank account of the foster parents (*sberegatel'naia knizhka*, or savings' bankbook). When the bank account was opened, FFP had to agree on a long list of activities that was to be within the sphere of operation of the project. Only humanitarian purposes were allowed, like payments to families. There is a strict control of the use of the bank account. Commercial purposes are banned.

Payments to families are made on beforehand, and on request, like for instance before holidays, payments can be made for more than one months. This is due to the fact that money can be cashed only in the region of residence (when the savings' bankbook is used).

In addition each child receives 5000 RUR as a lump sum upon establishment in a foster family. The department of education have to give its approval. Approval is not given if the department finds that there is no need. The lump sum is to cover the cost of individual belongings. These are the property of the child.

Being the employer of the foster families the SOS Children's Villages Norway pays the following taxes on behalf of the families: income tax; contributions to the pension fund; to the federal medical insurance

fund; to the local medical insurance fund; and to the social insurance fund.

3.4 Foster parents' motivations

According to the FFP psychologist people who have grown up in boarding schools are over-represented among the foster parents in Murmansk oblast. They were not orphans, but had to leave the village to receive education at a young age. Now they want to help children, who otherwise would have had to live under institutionalised care, grow up in family-like surroundings. This is a major motivation for all categories of foster parents. They refer to love, the wish to provide a family-like upbringing, to take orphans out of institutions.

The in-depth interviews and the questionnaire also show that a mere wish to be a parent is prevalent. Some have not had the opportunity of being a parent before. Others would like to be a parent again after the biological children have grown up. One foster mother would like to be the mother of a girl after having had only sons. Without noticeable irony another foster mother referring to the foster daughter told that "at last we have one intelligent person in this family".

Those respondents who have no biological children have a great wish to have their "own" child, to realise their potential as a parent. Five lonely mothers had been thinking about adoption for many years, but due to Russian laws they couldn't do it. One woman, who grew up in an orphanage herself, told: "A wish to take a child to family was a result of my own orphanage experience".

Those who have biological children tell they are motivated by factors like:

- Love
- Wish to have one particular child
- Wish to repeat the experience of being a mother

One respondent told: "My own children have already grown up and I have a lot of strength".

Another mother with grown-up children told: "My husband died early and I stayed alone with my biological children, but when the children grew up, they left me. It was very dull because my house was empty. Then I heard about the FP and decided to adopt children" (here it is worth noticing the use of the word "adopt", *evaluator's note*).

Yet another foster mother told she adopted a child because “it was dull for her youngest son when his elder sisters and brothers moved out of the house.”

One foster mother told poetically, in a Russian manner: “My soul trembled when I saw the child, and I listened to my heart.”

Respondents aged 40 + answered that it is late to adopt child, but they have enough time and strength to bring up a foster child.

Three respondents put forward motivations of a more general character, like:

- “Each and every child must grow up in a family”
- “It is necessary to solve the problem of orphanage in Russia”.

Often foster parents are accused of having primarily financial motivations. In fact, the sums they receive in the form of salaries and allowances are quite substantial, in particular for people living in small and remote places where both incomes and prices are low.

The project manager put it like this:

We have to be realistic. This money is important. Besides they are quite substantial, but the selection procedures make sure that financial calculations are not the main incentive.

A kind of adoption? Practically all the respondents (apart from two) had considered the possibility of adoption earlier, before they got to know about the FFP. Altogether three foster families/parents actually had adopted a child/children. As shown by the answers given from foster parents about their motivation the foster family was a solution when adoption was barred from them, for instance because they were lone mothers. One respondent told she could not afford adoption so she chose the foster family solution.

This raises the question of how adoption is distinguished from foster family arrangements in the eyes of foster families themselves. As noted in the in-depth interviews, many foster parents tend to see these two forms of placing orphans as very much the same. Whereas adoption is characterised by being a permanent solution, the foster family as conceived internationally is primarily a temporary placement form. It is, therefore, interesting to notice the answers given by parents in the FFP when asked how long they think the children are going to stay in the family. No less than 31 persons answered:

“Forever”, “We want to bring up grandchildren”, “As long as children would like”. There were four answers like “Not for a long period, soon they will grow up”, “Till they become independent”. In other words, foster family arrangements are seen as a permanent solution. This confirms very well with the findings from the in-depth interviews.

So, what then is the difference between adoption and foster family arrangements in the eyes of foster parents? The two distinguishing features mentioned by most respondents to the questionnaire are:

- The contacts between the foster child and its biological parents
- The follow-up and control from the FFP and organs of guardianship

Less prevalent among the answers were the financial aspects (adopters do not receive salaries). One respondent put it like this: “The difference between becoming a foster family and adopting a child is that foster families receive financial, psychological and pedagogical help. Adopters solve their problems themselves.” Neither were legal aspects prevalent (one respondent answered that the foster child knows it is possible to go back to the orphanage). Some pointed at the fact that after the child’s 18th birthday he/she no longer formally is a part of the foster family.

In 2003 the FFP and the guardianship organ began developing *specialised foster homes*. This type of foster home is quite different from the “adoption-like” foster homes described above. They take children from families in trouble and the goal is to enable the original family to take back its child. This step made by the FFP should be considered significant. The social protection authorities also have established ways to offer temporary shelter in social work centres and centres for the family and child. This means that the FFP’s contacts with the policy sector of social protection will have to intensify.

3.5 Foster parents’ problems

Reportedly, when asked about how they intend to deal with their foster child, prospective and new foster parents reply: “Just like my own”. This is a commendable intention, but in practice there are particular challenges connected to taking in a foster child.

Basic problems faced by the foster family

The questionnaire reserved one block of questions to the *problems* encountered in foster families. *Psychological problems* dominated. No less than 22 respondents mentioned this as a major problem. Among those who consider their psychological problems to be very difficult, two families have foster children in the teens, whereas 20 families have foster children in the age between three and 12 years. Foster parents tend to explain these problems by referring to foster children's bad experiences and lack of family-life training in the orphanages. Only one respondent pointed at psychological problems with individuals outside the foster family. Psychological problems in this case were "with teachers at school and with other people".

At this point one could ask whether one of the reasons psychological problems are so widespread are found in foster parents' motivations. Many foster parents report that they would like a foster child because they wish to experience being a parent, their own children would like to have other children in the household and the like. These motivations may be seen as psychological in the sense that they are based on a wish to improve the foster family's own psychological well-being. It may well be that this is not a good point of departure, and that in some cases psychological problems in foster families are mere continuations of prior psychological discomfort.

Housing problems were mentioned by six respondents (which referred both to small flats, usually two rooms, and to foster child's future problems finding a flat after leaving home). Housing problems are experienced by quite a large number of people in Russia, not only foster families. Here, it should be bore in mind that *before* a foster family is established, housing conditions is one important criterion behind the selection of the foster family. Therefore, complaints about living in cramped quarters could be prevented from the outset by making sure there would be space in the flat for a new member of the family.

Only three respondents mentioned *financial problems*. Two of these three respondents were lone foster mothers. The third case was one family that have five biological and two foster children. In general, foster parents consider the financial situation to be quite positive.

Four respondents had *no problems* they found worth mentioning.

How to cope with the main problem, which is that of psychological discomfort? Three foster parents mentioned psychological assistance as the best way of solving the problems, but only two respondents

consider this to be the *best* way of solving the problems. Others mentioned solutions based on self-help, like “using the family’s own potential” (13 respondents), “receiving help from relatives and friends” (five respondents persons), “receiving help from organs of guardianship” (one respondent), “turning to advice from other foster parents (three respondents), “solving problems with God’s help” (three respondents).

3.6 Foster parents’ attitude to biological parents

The single most problematic aspect of the foster family institution, as seen by the foster parents, is the fact that the foster children as a rule shall keep in touch with their biological parents. The psychological trauma caused by getting to know that one has some other, biological parents somewhere without having known it as a small child is considered not worth risking. Interlocutors from the foster families and the organs of guardianship tell that this is the element of the foster family institution which is most novel to them.

However, the biological principle is affirmed in Russian legislation, both at federal, and in the case of Murmansk also in oblast level legislation. Article 28 in the federal Legal Regulation on foster families clearly states that the foster child:

has the right to personal contact with biological parents, relatives, if that does not harm the child’s interests, its normal development, upbringing.

Likewise, the Murmansk regional law on children’s rights of 24 December 1998, chapter III, article 12.4 states:

A child living separately from his parents, or one of them, has the right to contact with them as well as other relatives, to get information about them, as long as that does not contrary to the interests and normal development of the child.

Why is this core feature of the foster family institution so difficult to accept? There are two main reasons, the first being that the foster family institution is often mixed up with adoption. A problem of expectations arises here since adoption in Russia is secret if adopters wish so. Since foster parents and others in Russia tend to treat the two institutions of foster family and adoption as basically one and the

same form of placement, many foster parents do not accept easily that they are not entitled to be the foster child's one and only parent. As noted above, a major motivational factor in fact is the wish to be a parent. In that light it is understandable that foster parents are reluctant to "share" the child with the biological parents.

The second reason why contacts between foster children and biological parents is so difficult to accept, is that biological parents are seen as unfit for contacts with children. After all – and this is worth noticing – children who become foster children are almost always taken from orphanages, which means that their parents have been deprived of parental rights or have deprived themselves of the right on their own initiative. Foster parents think that as long as the biological parents have been deprived of parental rights, there is no reason to let them socialise with their children.

The negative attitude to biological parents can be illustrated by a newspaper excerpt describing relations between children in a vocational special school "of the closed type" (*SPU – spetsial'noe professional'noe uchilishche*) in Monchegorsk for children who have committed crimes. Parents have the right to see their children whenever they want, and a room in the school is reserved for parents from other towns in need of staying over. The director of the school tells:

But very rarely someone comes to visit their child. And sometimes it is even a good thing that children do not see their relatives. There was such a case here. A mother came to see her son. We let her take her son for a leave. The first thing the parent did was – like a swine – to go to the nearest dive. Then, without informing us, she took her son home. And there the boy having ended up in the same conditions as before, immediately made a new crime.³

Due to the fact that most Russian parents who have been deprived of their parental rights live in far deeper misery than their homologues do in the countries from where PRIDE originates, foster parents have been reluctant to bring biological families in. It would simply be traumatic and even dangerous to let a child live with their biological parents over a week-end. In short, many foster parents think that the biological parents live lives that children should not be acquainted with. It should be noted here that analogue problems also occur in

³ See: Vechernyi Murmansk, 1 June 2004. "Drugoe detstvo"

other countries making use of the foster family institution, among them the Nordic countries.

Also the child inspectors and others working for the organs of guardianship see these problems. In cases of conflict over visiting arrangements with biological parents it is the organ of guardianship that makes the final decision.

One very pro-foster family specialist in one organ of guardianship told: "If biological parents drink like animals, there is no reason to let their children see them." However, the local specialists interviewed for this report agree with the principle of letting the child know about its biological parents, not least due to what could happen if it by chance gets to know about it as a youngster. In the town of Kandalaksha the organ of guardianship has established links with biological parents in four cases.

However, adaptation to Russian realities must be made. As one leading official in the organs of guardianship put it: "This question cannot be solved by the use of coercion."

Likewise, in a Russian manual of work with the foster family institution the point is made clearly:

The social policies in the field of defending children's rights in our country are also oriented towards keeping the child in its biological family. However, attempts at introducing the experiences from Western countries in the work with analogous families on Russian soil show that our country has got certain specificities. The forms of misfortune of our crisis-ridden families are in general deeper, and the family is slower at picking up more positive models of behaviour. Therefore, a more flexible legal base is needed to specify inter-relations between foster families and families of the biological parents (Dement'eva & Oliferenko 2000:15).

Parents spoken with in-depth told the evaluation team about their worries about what could happen when the child visits its biological parents. Mothers and fathers deprived of parental rights in Russia are materially worse off and receive less help in coping with psychological and/or alcohol or drug problems than their homologues in the Nordic countries. Therefore, they live under conditions that may scare or at least deeply disappoint their children on visit, foster parents claim. Furthermore, foster parents expressed a strong fear of "loosing" their foster child to the biological parents. In the questionnaire, two

foster families told that they were afraid that the foster child made leave them for the biological parents.

All respondents know about the biological parents of their foster child. At the same time many among the foster families complain that they know too little about the child's life before it came to the foster family. In Kandalaksha, however, the organs of guardianship have initiated activities aiming at finding out more about the foster children's past.

Despite the fears foster parents tell about regarding contacts between foster children and biological parents, no less than 27 respondents consider contacts with relatives to be necessary. Altogether eight respondents are categorically against such contacts. Different reasons for this reluctance are brought forth. It may be that their child is too young and psychologically vulnerable. In some cases respondents tell that biological parents are unwilling to get to know their children.

It might be worth noticing among the eight respondents being against contacts with biological parents no less than six do not have biological children themselves. The Evaluation Team has got the impression that the tendency to perceive the foster family as the permanent home for the child until it has come of age (at 18 years old) is particularly strong among foster parents without biological children.

Although all respondents know about the biological parents of their foster child, very few enter into contact with them. In fact, only nine respondents told they did, and some of them reportedly gained negative experience from it:

- "The biological mother turns the child against his foster parents"
- "I don't want to share my foster child with his biological mother".

However, among the foster parents there were also some quite constructive approaches to finding a balance between harmful contacts and no contact at all. Among the remedies applied were: showing photos, telling stories about the original family's life, arranging for contacts with other relatives, brothers, sisters and grandparents in particular.

Finally, although the child's interest is the most important, the biological parents also may have a legitimate say in these issues. The Evaluation Team came across one case where the biological mother

was afraid her child would be taken from the orphanage to a foster family. As the biological mother saw it, the child was better off in the orphanage because that placement form made it easier to uphold contacts. This assumption was based on the general picture of foster families as a kind of adoption, and the fact that the foster family institution has not been successful in establishing itself as a separate alternative.

The FFP clearly has promoted the core idea of foster families that foster children and biological parents should be allowed to keep in touch. Interlocutors, among others in the organs of guardianship, point at the need for professional competence in actually establishing and upholding contacts between foster children and their biological parents. The FFP, mainly providing psychological support has not been able to satisfy the need for this competence. Social workers would probably be most suited for this task in co-operation the psychologists of the FFP and the pedagogues of the organs of guardianship.

3.7 How has the FFP affected the foster parents, foster children, biological children in the foster family?

The FFP has affected the foster families in three main ways. The project has *enabled* the foster families, it has *assisted* them, and last but not least *linked* them up to each other. First, the FFP has financed the families (foster family salaries and allowances for the child according to regional rates). The FFP has offered to pay salaries and child allowances for to up to 100 families. This has enabled people with a wish to take care of a parent-less child to actually do it. The sum received is considered to be sufficient, and even quite substantial, so foster parents do not loose out economically.

Secondly the FFP provides professional assistance from PRIDE instructors and psychologists. The transition into becoming a foster family is not easy. It makes relations between family members change. The foster child often brings with it certain problems, and the family has to expose itself to permanent insight from the officials in the organs of guardianship. The psychological assistance is useful for the foster child itself and its foster siblings when they experience problems in adapting to the new situation. The members of the foster families indirectly benefit from the FFP's co-operation with officials

in the organs of guardianship. The FFP has enabled municipal and oblast specialists in the field of placement of children to get to know more about the foster family institution. Furthermore, the PRIDE courses and psycho-social assistance offered by the FFP has given useful input to the competence of the guardianship specialists. In particular, the guardianship specialists mention that FFP has been to great help in thinking over how to deal with families in a respectful way, trying to fetch out their resources.

Thirdly and less easy to measure, the FFP provides the framework for human links between foster families. The PRIDE seminars and informal networks between foster families evolving from them have made foster families feel safer when confronted with the huge tasks they have taken on. This way the FFP has inspired “help for self-help” practices. Likewise, the FFP was instrumental in establishing the Union of Foster Parents in Murmansk region.

3.8 The foster children

The children who are chosen to be placed in a foster family are taken from orphanages of various kinds, in some cases from shelters. Russia has established a data base in which all orphans are registered. In Murmansk region it seems that most of the information about children made use of in the establishment of foster families stems from personal contacts between child inspectors in the organs of guardianship and heads of orphanages.

The issues pertaining to the rights of the foster child and the foster parents are under the organs of guardianship. The foster child keeps its own property and is not included in the foster family as to hereditary matters. Likewise, it is the responsibility of the organs of guardianship to make sure contacts with biological parents are enabled and to check whether such contacts are not harmful to the child.

The organ of guardianship permits applicant foster parents to go to an orphanage to meet with children there. Parents are not supposed to “pick and choose” among the children.

Potential foster parents get to know about the foster family institution, among others through information campaigns run by the FFP and from people who have attended PRIDE seminars. Quite a large number of foster parents in the FFP work in institutions for child care, like orphanages and children’s houses, and take children from their own work place.

People who consider becoming foster parents contact the child inspector where they live or they go to the FFP. The organs of guardianship make an assessment of the foster parents to see if they are suitable for taking care of a foster child. Several interlocutors from these organs told the Evaluation Team that they watched out especially for people who saw the foster family status as just another extra income.

Matching

The matching of child with foster parent is one of the issues that have been in focus in the co-operation between the FFP and organs of guardianship. Over-worked with a large number of problems to solve, the foster family issue only being one among them, the organs of guardianship would like to see the matching process as quick and efficient as possible. Therefore, there has been a wish that the FFP come up with a “package” on how to organise matching.

The FFP, on its hand, has argued that one should not be too impatient at this very important juncture in the process of establishing viable foster families. One of the core messages of the FFP is that the process of bringing the right parents to the right child should be taken very seriously. As the FFP project manager puts it: “According to PRIDE, the point of departure is the child for whom we try to find a suitable foster family, not the other way round.” Everything that smacks of “pick-and-choose” should be banned. This is the more important as most foster parents – according to what they report themselves – seem to be motivated by a dual wish of helping a child out of the orphanage *and* their own psycho-social needs.

At this point the FFP psychologists have offered their assistance, and the actual matching of potential foster child to potential foster parents seems to be very much the task of the FFP psychologists. The organs of guardianship hold the competence in matters pertaining to material and legal conditions.

In cases where foster parents work in institutions of child care matching tends to take place by the employee taking one child of her liking into her family.

Fluctuation

Altogether nine foster children have left the FFP. Three of them left because they reached the age of 18. Three children have moved back to their relatives. Two foster children aged 15 and 17 ½ have moved back to the institution they came from on their own request. One child

has been included in the Governor's foster family programme on the request of the foster parents.

Child's well-being in the foster family

As far as the Evaluation Team was able to observe, foster children felt at home in the new settings. The foster children spoken with during the in-depth interviews with foster parents all called the foster parents "mother" and "father" ("mama" and "papa" in Russian). When asked what the difference consist in, one foster child (16 ½ years old) told the Evaluation Team:

You mean what's the difference between a children's home (detskii dom/orphanage) and a home? Well, here I have someone to turn to when I need help.

After having told that the foster home "of, course is better" the foster child was asked by the Evaluation Team what she found to be the best aspects of living in a foster family. She told:

I do not know. Perhaps it is the silence. In the orphanage there is no quiet place at all

In some cases foster children did not like the fact that they do not carry the same family name as the rest of the foster family and try to conceal this at school. This point might be worth following up. Problems of identity may be caused by the fact that among neighbours and schoolmates' parents the foster family still is an unknown placement form between guardianship (typically with relatives, like grandmother) and (secret) adoption.

After 18th birthday

Interestingly, some foster parents told in in-depth interviews and questionnaires that the main difference between adoption and foster families is that adopters are parents also after the 18th birthday of the child. Among foster parents the Evaluation Team talked with, there seemed to be a general willingness to follow up their foster children also after their 18th birthday in case the young person would like to keep in touch. The FFP have no responsibilities or influence when the child has reached 18 years. In one case, however, the project got permission from SOS Children's Villages Norway to finance one foster child until he is 23 years old, and the authorities approved this solution. In this case the prolongation was made in order to make sure the foster child would finish its education. Foster children are eligible to the same support as orphans at 18, i.e. they get a flat. This provision is made in an amendment of 25 June 2004 to the Murmansk regional

Law on provision of housing for orphans and children without parental care

3.9 The FFP's professional support to foster families (quality, type and frequency)

It is worth mentioning that the foster families receives qualified support not only from the FFP team, but also from the organs of guardianship and other parts of the ordinary, everyday Russian administrative apparatus at local and regional level.

The FFP's niche is developed around the PRIDE concept, and this competence is shared with the organs of guardianship. It seems that among foster parents the particular (professional) support given to families in the FFP is taken as a basic feature of foster family institution to distinguish it from the adoptive families.

Type

The professional help by the FFP's professional team (presented in chapter 3 and 4) is rendered at all critical junctures in the process of establishing and "operating" a foster family. First, in conversation and at initial training courses for potential foster parents, the FFP professional team contributes by presenting a realistic picture of the challenges ahead. Secondly, the team assists in the selection of foster parents. Thirdly, the team prepares the child who is going to become a foster child. The team follows and leads the child through the preliminary contact with the family with which it is matched. Fourthly, the team develops an individual plan for the child. Fifthly, the team prepares a support group for the foster child. Sixthly, the team prepares individual supervisors.

Follow-up of foster families also takes place adapted to the situation in each family as to age of foster child, relations to other family member, specific problems. The team has been instrumental in fostering a team feeling among the foster parents. The members of the professional team are psychologists. The project manager holds a master's degree in Special Needs Education. This means the type of assistance provided is mostly directed towards each of the members of the foster families and the family's inner functioning. Other types of assistance are less prevalent although specialists are hired on part time basis.

The FFP is neither very well equipped as to competence in dealing with the children's legal and social rights nor in dealing with biological parents and relatives. Several interlocutors told that these specialists should be found among professional social workers or social pedagogues. The first contingent of social workers graduated from Murmansk Technical University in the summer 2004. Since the task of working with biological parents involves new types of knowledge and a need of access to files in other regions of Russia this type of assistance is perhaps more appropriate for an organ of public administration than for the FFP.

Quality

The relationship between the foster families and the professional team of the FFP is one of the foci in the questionnaire. The general picture is that the psychological team is highly appreciated by the "users". Only two respondents did not like the psychologists' help. The overall satisfaction expressed in the questionnaire conforms well to observations made by the Evaluation Team accompanying the FFP psychologists to foster families. Psychologists knew each case in-depth, and were able to communicate easily with all members of the foster family. Members of the foster families spoke easily about positive achievements as well as problems in their families. The Evaluation Team noticed a similar professional approach combined with openness and mutual confidence between officials in the organs of guardianship and the foster families.

However, the very close follow-up by the FFP may have unintended consequences. Foster families may become too dependent upon the psychologists.

The Evaluation Team has looked closely into the Russian-language documentation of the work made by the FFP professional team, among others their quarterly reports very well-organised and informative. The Evaluation Team would suggest that parts of these be included in the project manager's Annual Reports to give a better impression of the scope of work being done. These reports bear witness of a heavy work-load on the part of the FFP psychologists. Other reports from them also give the impression of high-quality work. In one case in 2004 one foster child once was beaten by his foster parents. On the initiative of the local guardianship organ action was taken immediately. The report made by the FFP team on this incidence is based on full openness about problems.

It should be mentioned that the psychologists carried out in-house surveys among the foster parents in 2001 and 2003.

Frequency

As indicated by the survey/questionnaire, foster parents find the frequency of visits to be sufficient. This should be seen in the light of the fact that the psychologists are considered very accessible. If they are needed in a family, they will come. Psychologists' contacts with foster families have got two functions, assistance and control.

Contacts with the organs of guardianship seem to be as frequent as those with the FFP team.

3.10 Summing up

Who are the foster parents? Foster parents tend to be older than the average parent, and they are likely to be employed in the child care or educational sector. Foster parents are not rich, in some cases far from being rich. The main motivation reported in interviews and questionnaires for taking a foster child into the household is to express love, or more concretely take a child out of institutionalised care. The wish to be a parent is also important. For some the foster family institution is an opportunity of becoming a parent. For others it is an opportunity to become a parent again when biological children have grown up.

How is the foster family institution conceived among foster parents? The foster family internationally is first of all a temporary placement form where children stay for short and some-times very long terms. For permanent placement adoption is used. It is a striking feature in the FFP that foster parents see the foster family institution as a placement form that ideally only ends when the child is 18 years old, and if possible is prolonged even longer.

The FFP's work with the foster families can be divided into several stages. First is the "screening" phase, in which suitable foster parents are identified among the candidates. The PRIDE introductory seminars are useful in this respect by bringing to the fore the complexity of the foster family institution. The next stage is "matching" in which the appropriate foster family is found for each child. The matching gives priority to the child's individual needs before those of the prospective foster parents. In some cases this has come as a surprise to foster parent candidates. The FFP project manager holds the careful matching process to be a distinguishing feature of the "model" he would like to see implanted.

When the foster family is established and has joined the FFP (which is the case of the large majority in the Murmansk region), it is followed up in three main ways. 1) The foster family is *enabled financially* by the project (salaries and allowances according to official standards set by regional authorities are paid by the FFP). 2) The foster family is *assisted professionally* by the FFP's professional team, in particular in psychological matters. Here the FFP complements the work being done by the organs of guardianship. 3) The FFP *links* each foster family *socially* to other foster families through the PRIDE courses and through the support to the establishment of the Union of Foster Families.

The foster families are satisfied with the assistance they get from the FFP team as well as from the organs of guardianship. This conforms to the impressions of the Evaluation Team.

The financial support – given according to regional rates – is regarded as sizeable. The professional support offered by the FFP psychologists is considered helpful. The accumulated knowledge gathered in the PRIDE model has been useful not least because many foster parents tended to ignore the scope of problems that might occur in a foster family after a while. The FFP has been very stable. Only two children – adolescents – have moved back to an institution. One child was transferred to the Governor's programme. There is reason to ascribe the stability to the focus on sustainability in the matching stage of establishing the families. Child development plans were introduced only in April 2004, and were received with some scepticism. The plans, however, are based on experiences from another Russian region and are to-the-point and manageable.

4 The FFP Staff and its methods

This chapter presents the composition and competences of the Foster Family Project (FFP) staff. It also outlines the professional methods and tools applied by the FFP staff.

The following questions are asked: What was the composition of the FFP staff? What kind of training and competence building did they receive during the Project? What types of methods and tools did they use?

The main analytical assumption underlying the Project is that knowledge, as a cultural construction, is shaped by the social and economic structures of a society. Our aim is to avoid ethnocentricity while studying the staff and methods of the FFP.

4.1 Composition of the FFP staff

The FFP had an administrative and professional Staff of four in 2000, seven in 2001 and nine in 2004.

The *Project Manager* is a Norwegian citizen with a Master of Special Needs education from the University of Oslo. He specialises in working with mentally disabled children. Prior to his arrival in Murmansk in 1999 he worked in Romania for four years, where he established a rehabilitation centre for disabled children. He has also been employed by SOS Children's Villages, is trained in Project management and is a qualified 4th degree PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education) instructor.

The *Administrative Coordinator* is a Russian citizen who has worked with the FFP since its beginning in 2000. She is a graduate in foreign languages from the Pedagogical University of Murmansk. Earlier she worked in a shipping company where she rapidly advanced from

secretary to manager. Following this, she was employed by the Norwegian Red Cross, from where she was headhunted to the SOS Villages. She says:

The Project Manager and the Administrative Coordinator set the criteria for the selection of candidates to the Professional Team with the foster children and parents. It is essential that new co-workers are able to distance themselves from some of the deep-rooted attitudes towards the placement and education of orphans that have dominated the educational system of the Soviet period.

The *Professional Coordinator* of the FFP is a Russian psychologist educated at the Donetsk State University and the St Petersburg State University's faculty of practical psychology and management. She has worked with the FFP since its establishment and has a professional background including work in a local centre for social services, an emergency hot line and a crisis centre. She is an instructor of both Gestalt psychology and the PRIDE system.

The second psychologist is also a Russian citizen and has a similar background. She has been educated at the Gorki State University and the St Petersburg State University. Before joining the FFP team, she worked as a school psychologist and in a local centre for social service. She has also worked in a crisis centre and an emergency hot line. She is an instructor of Gestalt psychology as well as PRIDE. From 2004 she has been the *Professional Coordinator* of the Youth Home.

The FFP Staff has gained the confidence of both foster families and the Russian authorities, who appreciate their assistance and quick-response capability. The FFP psychologists provide valuable help for the overworked child inspectors working with the families. It is also important to note that the psychologists have worked in the Project since it began. Achievement in this field seems to be highly dependent on personal trust between the Project, the foster families and the regional and municipal authorities. Continuity is essential, particularly during SOS Russia's takeover of the FFP.

The professional team, herein called the FFP team, consists of experts in special pedagogy and psychology with Gestalt therapeutic training. However, its composition has some limitations regarding multi-professional cooperation. The Annual Report of 2002 states: "Our Project demands multi-professional cooperation at all levels in order to meet the needs of the child." The FFP Team has secured multi-

disciplinary co-operation with the organs of guardianship (mainly pedagogues) and the Regional Medical, Psychological and Pedagogical Commission.

4.2 Building the competence of the FFP Team

This section gives an overview of how competence has been raised throughout the Project. Most of the competence-building takes place as daily in-house training. This applies for administrative, therapeutic as well as pedagogical knowledge. In this section we focus on organised training, which takes two forms: (i) professional courses, international or national conferences and seminars, and (ii) study trips and network building. In addition, training in practical work is an important element of the Project.

This is how one of the Team members describes it:

I have enhanced my competence in the field through working with chief officials and the organs of guardianship, who are excellent administrators. I have learned about European standards of administration and children's rights – mostly through communication with the two psychologists.

2000

During the first year the FFP arranged two professional courses, participated at one international conference, made two study trips and established cooperation with a Norwegian professional association and a University College.

Courses and seminars:

Firstly, a course was arranged for the members of FFP and RMPPC (Regional Medical, Pedagogical and Psychological Committees). It dealt with Russian legislation on:

- Foster families
- The rights of children
- Russian family law.

This course was held together with the Murmansk region's Educational Committee, Health Committee and Social Committee,

Norwegian People's Aid and SOS Children's Village Norway
Department Murmansk.

Secondly, an international seminar was held, which focused on finding alternative placements for children with special needs. The aim of the seminar was to transfer knowledge about foster families.

Study trips and network building:

Two study trips were arranged; one to Russia and one to Norway. Links were made to the Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers, the Finnmark Department and Finnmark University College.

The main activities in the field of competence building were practical, administrative and legal work, in addition to transferring knowledge about foster families and building a network between Russia and Norway.

2001

In the second year we arranged three professional courses, one seminar, three conferences and one study trip to Norway.

Courses and seminars:

The two courses "Children with interaction problems" and "Basic training for foster parents" both had Norwegian lecturers. Their main target group was the foster families. A course "Programme for Foster Parents" was run by the Murmansk County, the Educational Committee and the Pedagogical Institute in Murmansk. This was a 72-hour training course for foster parent candidates. It was later evaluated by the FFP and the regional authorities. A seminar "Future of children with special needs in the areas north of the polar circle" was held to discuss and coordinate countywide activities on child protection. Participants included municipal officers, NGOs and a representative of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This seminar was arranged together with the Norwegian People's Aid and Russian County authorities.

The FFP participated in three conferences: (i) The Psychological Coordinator attended the fourth Gestalt conference arranged at the White Nights Schools, St Petersburg. (ii) The International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) held a seminar in Copenhagen. (iii) An IFCO Conference was arranged in the Netherlands.

Study trips and network building:

The study trip to Oslo was facilitated by the Regional Educational Committee and the Vice Governor of Murmansk. The network was extended by the addition of three new partners: PRIDE Europe (the Netherlands), PRIDE Norway and the Norwegian Foster Care Organization.

The main activities in the field of competence building included courses on children with special needs and training programs for foster parents. The FFP Team also participated in professional conferences on Gestalt therapy and foster care.

2002

In the third year we held three professional courses/seminars, participated in an international conference and arranged a training study-trip.

Courses and seminars:

(i) A PRIDE course (stage one) was organized by SOS Children's Villages together with the Murmansk Administration Educational Committee, Murmansk Technical University, Murmansk Pedagogical University, Russian Orthodox Church, the Northern Fleet, the Murmansk Police and the Murmansk Social Committee.

(ii) Six seminars in supervision training for the psychologists were held in Murmansk.

(iii) In addition, a seminar was held on "Working with children with behaviour problems."

(iv) The International Foster Care Organization (IFCO) held a conference in Tampere, Finland.

Study trips and network building:

A study trip was made to youth homes in Vladimir and Moscow. The Russian contacts were the Centre for Early Intervention in St. Petersburg, SOS Children's Village's in St. Petersburg, Hope Charity Fund in Vladimir and Moscow, and the Department of Healthcare in Samara. New Norwegian contacts were The University of Tromsø, the University of Oslo, the Norwegian Foster Care Organization in Oslo, Tromsø and Finnmark County administration, and the Department of Child Care.

The main professional activities this year were PRIDE training and supervision training schemes for the two psychologists, in addition to study trips to Russia and participation at an international conference.

2003

In the fourth year we arranged seven professional courses, four international events and three study trips.

Courses and seminars:

- (i) PRIDE course (stage two), and continuation of the foster family training course.
- (ii) Newly introduced courses in Individual Plan, Individual Supervisors and Support Groups were held.
- (iii) A course on children's rights was arranged by the Academy of Pedagogical Science in Moscow.
- (iv) A course on the behaviour of aggressive children was held by the Norwegian Peoples Act and Save the Children in Tromsø, Norway
- (v) The psychologists attended courses in Gestalt therapy organized by Moscow Gestalt Institute. One of them also attended a language course in Norway arranged by *Folkeuniversitetet* (The People's University).
- (vi-ix) Finally two national seminars - one entitled "Post-institution adaptation and integration" and another entitled "Abandoned children" - were arranged by the Ministry of Education in Moscow. Three Family Group Conferencing (FGC) seminars were held - in Northern Ireland, England, and Norway. Another international Conference was arranged in Argentina by the International Foster Care Organization (IFCO).

Study trips and network building

Three study trips were made; one to Nasz Dom society in Poland (PRIDE experience), a second to the County Child Care Department in Tromsø, Norway and a third to SOS Children's Village in Pushkin in St Petersburg. The network was extended with the addition of three new partners; the Nasz Dom society in Poland, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Northern Fleet in Severomorsk. International contact was made with CEO Eigen Kracht-Centrale in the Netherlands (Family Group Conferencing).

The main professional activities this year have been PRIDE training and the running of PRIDE groups. Sixty individuals, 25 PRIDE instructors and six groups were trained. In addition, tools such as Individual Plan, Support groups, Child Supervisors and Family Group Conferences were introduced.

2004

FGC's level of activities was high in 2004; six seminars were held on FGC, and the FFP team participated in six seminars on other topics and one IFCO conference.

FGC seminars:

(i) A seminar on FGC was held in Murmansk together with the Department of Social Work at the Technological University, the Murmansk Administration of Education Committee (regional level), the Committee on Youth Affairs in Murmansk (local level), the Murmansk Police, and the Department for Youth Crime. (ii) A seminar on FGC was held in Moscow, arranged by the Centre of Restorative Justice in Moscow. (iii) A seminar on FGC was held in Helsinki, Finland. (iv) A seminar on FGC was held in Murmansk, incorporating a three-day training course for managers in organising and coordinating family conferences. (v) FGC Europe held a seminar in Brussels where the FFP presented the FGC-model in Russia. (vi) A seminar on FGC was held in Moscow on "restorative justice conferencing", arranged by Centre of Restorative Justice in Moscow.

Additional seminars:

(i) Foster Family seminar in Kandalaksha (mainly for the families).

(ii) Seminar on sexual abuse and exploitation, arranged by Save the Children, Norway.

(iii) Seminar on foster family care: "Changes in the legislation concerning foster care and the future development of the FFP in the country," held together with the Murmansk County Administration's Educational Committee.

(iv) Training courses for the Staff of the Youth Home Project.

(v) Foster Care seminar in Tromsø, arranged by the Regional office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs for Northern Norway. The theme was how to follow up foster families.

(vi) National Conference on "Integration of children with special needs", arranged by the Murmansk Administration of Education Committee (regional level).

(vii) An international conference, IFCO, was held in Prague, with a workshop presenting the PRIDE system in Russia.

The main professional activity has been the FGC, in addition to work in families and the opening of the Youth Home. The Centre of Restorative Justice in Moscow was linked to the network of the FFP.

Summing up

As the overview above shows, the competence building of the Staff took place in several stages. In the first year (2000), legal and local Russian aspects were in focus, courses were arranged together with the regional authorities and trips were made to Norway and Russia. In the second year (2001), the municipal authorities and NGOs were included in the courses, which focused on childcare and children with special needs. Contact with IFCO led to a broader international network. The third year (2002) saw the FFP Staff increase individual competences by undertaking formal courses at the University and in PRIDE. These three years may be classified as a *stage of establishing and developing* the Project.

During the next two years (2003 and 2004), the FFP introduced new approaches such as FGC and a set of new administrative tools. The FFP Staff participated in individual and collective competence building, as well as in several conferences and seminars outside the Nordic Region. During this period we meet with the Russian Committee of SOS Children's Villages to discuss their takeover of the FFP. We may refer to this as a *stage of consolidating and handing over* of the Project.

In this Project the composition of the FFP Staff and the building of competences and networks are interwoven. Moreover, the competence building of the FFP Staff has combined with that of the SOS Children's Villages' Projects, such as the Youth Home, FGC and PRIDE. Project-specific competences are presented in the annual reports of the FFP Project. Finally, as part of the ideology of the Project, the FFP Staff is expected to participate in, and be responsible for, many of the courses, conferences and meetings.

In addition, the FFP Team has increased its competence through active participation in national and international courses, conferences and seminars. The FFP Team has managed to build its knowledge through a broad network of administrative, civil and professional agents both within and outside of Russia.

4.3 Making use of administrative and professional programmes

This section outlines the different socio-technologies and administrative programmes that have been selected and applied by the FFP. It looks at how specific programmes and tools were chosen and how they were adapted to suit Russian conditions. The term “socio-technologies” refers to programmes of management and coordination combined with professional methods and practices. They are usually internationally and commercially recognised.

In Europe, it is possible to identify three parallel trends of development within child care. The first relates to a growing focus on internal or individual factors. This leads to an increasing emphasis on *psychological perspectives* and psychological reasoning about problems. In contrast, the second trend gives greater emphasis to the relationship between human agents and the environment. This approach allows for an implementation of *ecological perspectives* - a mode of reasoning usually linked to the psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), born in Russia and raised in the USA. The cultural-historical theory of activity initiated by Russian psychologists in the 1920s and 30s may also be associated with this mode of reasoning. Thirdly, we have the development of *empowerment perspectives* - views on power, and control, with emphasis on participation and independence. Although the situation may be quite different in North West Russia, we will use these three perspectives as our foundation and discuss whether they are found in the FFP.

4.3.1 Two training programmes: ICDP and PRIDE

As agreed by the SOS Children's Village, Norway and the Murmansk regional authorities, the main objective of the Project is to “... provide support to children in foster families using the existing PRIDE – Foster Family Training Programme and other useful programmes.” (Quarterly Report January–March 2001.)

In 2001, the FFP management group decided to select and apply a single methodology. This methodology “should be based on international and Russian experience” (Quarterly Report January–March 2001). Below, the two international programmes are presented and compared.

During the first half of 2001, two different international programmes were evaluated by the FFP:

- ICDP (International Child Development Programmes)
- PRIDE (Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education)

At the time, the local authorities of Murmansk (town level) were running their own courses to train foster families. A 72-hour course held at the Pedagogical University of Murmansk was attended by 76 foster family candidates and professionals.

ICDP

The ICDP was initiated by a Norwegian psychologist. It has been registered as a private foundation with its head office in Oslo since 1992. It defines itself as a charity organisation with objectives similar to other humanitarian organisations. The ICDP is described as “a simple and culturally adaptable system, based on recent research in child care.” The aim of the ICDP is to develop competence and confidence in local communities and their child care systems. It tries to identify and reactivate local cultural practices in order to stimulate long lasting change. It offers three levels of training based on practical experience; individual-based training, training of others, and legally registered trainers and programmes. The ICDP has been applied in the Arkhangelsk region, where a course was run by Norwegian ICDP experts - professors Henning Rye and Karsten Hundeide.

Russian experts joined the ICDP network in Arkhangelsk and St. Petersburg in 2001. They were charged with future follow up of ICDP. (FFP Quarterly Report January-March 2004).

PRIDE

PRIDE was jointly initiated by the authorities in Illinois, USA and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). And various private and public bodies participated in developing the programme. In contrast to ICDP, which has always focused on the international arena, PRIDE originated as a tool for use within US child welfare. Today PRIDE is a standardised and structured programme, where the primary task is to develop competence in recruitment, preparation and selection of foster parents. Foster parents are offered in-service training programmes. PRIDE has been introduced in the Nordic countries via the Netherlands. PRIDE is by far the most widely used foster family training programme in Europe, but to our knowledge it has not yet been applied in Russia.

Countries using the PRIDE system include Norway, Finland, Sweden, Poland, the Netherlands and USA. In Norway the regional authorities have been using PRIDE since 1996, and have adopted a flexible

programme. Each country operates slightly differently, using alternative videos for training and utilising dissimilar theories. In contrast to Norway's use of PRIDE, which is more flexible, the Finnish authorities base their practice more closely on the original American model (Dietrichs 2003).

The two programmes share some basic *similarities*. Both ICDP and PRIDE base themselves on the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child. Both programmes use models based on professional interests and applied internationally.

The two programmes also *differ* in some important aspects. First, whilst ICDP was originally aimed at international work, the PRIDE programme seems to have a less clearly defined international reach. It is thus possible that the PRIDE programme is less sensitive to cultural differences and contexts than ICDP. Secondly, PRIDE seems to be more specifically tailored for foster care. Although ICDP started out as a programme for younger children and infants, it now has a much broader aim.

In the beginning the FFP considered making use of ICDP, but PRIDE was found to be more suitable. The FFP has drawn on Polish experiences, believing the Polish and Russian cultural conditions to be similar. PRIDE is portrayed as a multi-professional and cross-administrative system, which is why it has been so successful (see Quarterly Report January – March). According to the Project manager: “The possibility for adapting these courses to local conditions and traditions is one of the many reasons for electing them” (Quarterly Report January – March 2001). Furthermore: “All professionals with whom we have contacted or cooperated consider this model to be the best.” (Status Report 1, October 2001). It has been an intention from the start to adapt PRIDE to Russian conditions:

We are sure that the introduction of the PRIDE programme in Murmansk will be a success. We will learn from the process and end up with a PRIDE model that will function well in Murmansk County. Our experience in creating a Murmansk model will be very helpful for future introductions of PRIDE in other regions of Russia. (Report on PRIDE Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education, undated).

The major reason for choosing PRIDE was the fact that it had already been introduced in a host of European countries, and was rapidly gaining international recognition. Training courses were ready to be

implemented. Essentially, PRIDE offered something useful, and reliable, to draw on.

A national licence is required to implement PRIDE in a country. The licence for Russia is held by SOS Children's Villages Norway. The fact that the PRIDE programme is based on a licence could make it vulnerable. However, SOS Children's Villages Norway is aware of this and would like to hand the licence over to the regional authorities in Murmansk, who are already acquainted with the programme. Alternatively, it could be handed over to a central body with the ability to implement PRIDE across the entire federation.

4.3.2 A closer look at PRIDE

PRIDE provides a “standardised, consistent and structured framework for the competence-based recruitment, preparation, and selection of foster parents and adoptive parents. It also provides foster parents with in-service training and ongoing professional development. It is an approach that covers mainly psychological and ecological aspects of child care. It has been characterized as a method that encourages parents to reflect on their own role, thus challenging the power of the professionals – a mode of reasoning known as empowerment.” (Horverak et al, 2002).

The PRIDE programme highlights five areas of competence:

- protecting and raising children;
- meeting children's developmental needs, and addressing developmental obstructions;
- supporting relationships between children and their families;
- connecting children with safe, nurturing relationships intended to last a lifetime; and
- working as a member of a professional team.

The PRIDE “procedure” is divided into three tasks: (i) the process of foster parent recruitment and selection, (ii) the training of foster parents (i.e. initial training and in-service training) and (iii) the training and licensing of instructors.

The first task is the *recruitment and selection* of foster families. In Murmansk region the formal approval of a candidate foster family is made by the organ of guardianship and the FFP team (see more on this in chapter 4). The FFP Team contributes to the process of selection by

offering initial PRIDE seminars that teach prospective foster parents about the challenges and rewards of taking a child into the family. Most parents complete the seminars, but in a few cases candidates need more time to reflect and therefore decide to wait. Often, when asked about how they intend to deal with their foster child, they answer: "Just like my own". This is a commendable intention, but in practice there are particular challenges associated with taking in a foster child. The main problem at this stage is that many children are diagnosed with an illness, and it is the medical diagnosis that poses the greatest challenge.

The second task is the *training and following up* of the child; how the child will fit into ordinary family life and what will happen when he or she leaves the family (at the age of 18-20). Problems may arise for many reasons: if foster parents expect something different of the new child; if there is competition within the family; if there are difficulties with the foster child's adjustment to family norms or behavioural patterns (rules and routines); or due to the foster child's relations to the biological family, or relations between foster child, foster family and local community network. In order to meet such challenges, the therapeutic work within the family is described in three phases (according to PRIDE): the period of angels, the period of crises, and the period of a normal family.

The third task is *education, training and licensing* of PRIDE instructors, who later may be responsible for the first two tasks. These courses are for parents, persons in the neighbourhood (step 2) and professionals. Within the PRIDE system the psychologists have three major tasks: (i) recruiting families, (ii) training families, experts, and a wider network of the families, and providing family therapy. There are several "arenas" for these activities: (i) campaigns in the media, (ii) various courses for family recruitment, family training, instructors' training, and students in the University, (iii) therapeutic work with foster children and families.

The main challenges working with foster families are linked to these three processes: the establishment of a foster family, the consolidation of a foster family, and the foster child leaving the family.

PRIDE training courses consist of five to seven weekend seminars over a period varying from six months to two years, and include individual and group work between the seminars. All persons attending the PRIDE courses are invited to suggest amendments and adaptation. The Project manager says: "Within a few years we will probably have a version of PRIDE adapted to Russian conditions."

The FFP encourages all PRIDE course participants to suggest how we can further adapt the programme to conditions in the Murmansk region.

The FFP runs PRIDE training courses for potential foster parents, regional and municipal administrative staff, orphanage workers and employees of the SOS Children's Villages in Kandalaksha. Those completing courses receive a diploma stating that they are qualified PRIDE instructors. At the end of 2003 a total of 25 PRIDE instructors were qualified and trained to work with foster families in the region. Six PRIDE groups were established and 60 persons, including administrative and professional personnel and parents, had attended a PRIDE course. Eight people working in the Department of the Protection of Child Rights and the Oblast Committee of Education are licensed PRIDE instructors.

4.3.3 Russian attitudes to PRIDE

The view of the regional authorities

Regional authorities have approved PRIDE as the basic model for the FFP. Officers in the organs of guardianship at local and regional levels have acquainted themselves with the PRIDE model through attending seminars. They showed particular interest in the model's emphasis on the surrounding social setting - on relatives, neighbours, friends and professionals. The role of the biological parents was also a common point of discussion. PRIDE stresses the importance of careful matching of child and parent in the process of establishing foster families. The emphasis on social settings and biological parents is relatively new in the Russian context.

The regional educational authorities believe PRIDE is well suited for raising prospective foster parents' awareness of the enormous task involved in becoming a foster parent. One leading officer said she was glad to see that the introductory PRIDE seminars made people have second thoughts about becoming foster parents. This way PRIDE functions as a selection mechanism. However, at the time of the Evaluation Team's visits to Murmansk, the regional authorities did not think enough experience had been gathered to permit the introduction of PRIDE on a federal level.

The view of the local authorities

Representatives of the local organs of guardianship are outspoken about the merits and drawbacks of PRIDE. They consider it to be a useful facilitator for the open exchange of views and experiences.

Furthermore, they commend the fact that it involves a wide range of people with the foster families. However, not all are convinced about the principles of contact between foster children and biological parents. One officer in a local educational department said that although she was not happy with everything in the PRIDE ideology, she was glad it had been introduced. As she puts it: "PRIDE just made us move."

Some of the representatives do not find all the material provided by the PRIDE seminars to be useful. The homogenous, mainstream North American families portrayed in the videotapes tend to alienate people. One representative, with a higher university degree in Russian philology, has complained that Russian translations of the PRIDE material are poor.

In general, the local organs of guardianship point to the need for adapting the model to Russian conditions. One representative of the local authorities said:

We need extended courses. We would like to educate families in adoption and placements. We plan to develop courses in adoption for foster families as well as guardians. We will adapt PRIDE to our own conditions. We will utilise some elements and not others. We will do this in co-operation with the orphanages. We consider PRIDE, to a certain extent, is made for American and European conditions. Russia has its own specificities, including physiological and psychological aspects.... The Russian language is 'deeper than English', and we will translate PRIDE from the original handbook. We hope other countries will take Russian examples as we will look at other countries.

4.3.4 Family group conferences

As an additional technology, the Family Group Conference (FGC) has been introduced to the FFP. It is a restorative approach to problem solving that helps families in crisis and abandoned children to make their own decisions. The method was developed in New Zealand and is based on the original Aboriginal culture and their traditional ways of solving family conflicts. It is an approach that includes environmental factors as well as empowerment aspects. The FGC has been introduced on all continents and has been applied in child welfare services in Norway throughout the 1990s.

FGC involves a three-step process of preparation and information provision, private family time, and monitoring and review. First, the experts present their evaluations and conclusions and make a provisional plan for the child. Second, the experts leave the room and the family discusses the proposals. Third, the experts and the family establish a working plan. FGC depends less on scientific theory and more on basic cultural characteristics (see [http:// www.eigenkracht.nl](http://www.eigenkracht.nl)).

The FGC model has developed differently in different countries; in New Zealand it is considered a 'right', in the U.K. it is described as 'good practice' and in the US it is often described as a tool or a technique. FGC is defined as a process, not a tool, to be used on families, communities and partnerships etc. (Mirsky 2003).

In Russia they more commonly refer to a related model of 'restorative justice conferencing', which has been used in the Moscow region since the late 1990s.

The FGC system has been evaluated by the regional educational committee, universities in Murmansk, children's organisations, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Northern Fleet in Severomorsk.

Russian partners believe that FGC could restore the belief of the family. In many cases could solve the family problems themselves. If not, the authorities must be involved. In this way the 'family' makes the decision and these decisions are more acceptable than decisions enforced by the authorities. (First quarterly report 2003)

Russian authorities doubt that families are able or willing to come to terms with family issues such as care of children that are left alone. However, they admit that FGC is a very interesting approach to such a challenge. (First quarterly report 2003)

The psychologists believe that FGC is a technology that can be applied, in addition to PRIDE, Gestalt psychological methods, and other methods, in the Project. They state that it is not enough to simply obtain a licence in order to practice. They believe it is necessary to supplement the new methods introduced through the FFP, PRIDE and FGC with traditional psychological insight, including psychometric tests.

As far as we know, there are two shortcomings with this method: one critical issue is how to transfer it to different nations and cultures, the

other is how to use it when families and networks lack individuals with resources (Saasen, 2002).

The FFP has tried to combine the FGC and restorative justice conferencing models. This has been done in many other counties, including Ireland (Mirsky 2003). The FFP sees restorative justice and family rights as two important branches of family conferencing and restorative practices.

4.4 Psychological tests

In addition to the new approaches of PRIDE and FGC - which may be defined as being *ecological* and *empowerment-related* in their mode of reasoning - the psychologists apply a set of *psychometric* tools.

These methods are used to access the personality factors, coordination, mental processes and intelligence of foster parents and foster children. There are three main tests for foster parents (i-iii) and five for children (iii-vii):

(i) The Cattell's 16PF (Personality Factors) test, where 16 different scales measure anxiety, liveliness, dominance, sensitivity, perfectionism, openness to change, group-orientation, self-control, assertiveness, independence etc.

(ii) The Hand Test (from the age of 12) for predicting emotions such as aggression.

(iii) The Colour Card Test to test personality.

(vi) The Drawing Tests for evaluation of self-identity, mechanisms of protection and level of reality. This is also used for testing persons with personality disorders.

(v) The Lowenfeld Mosaic test, which emphasises the development of new forms of communication in troubled children using non-verbal communication, and methods and tools for using "Play" as a therapeutic and analytical tool.

(iv) The Fairy Tale method, which is the use and interpretation of fairy tales as a psychological tool

(vii) Wechsler's Tests, Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales (WAIS), and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) for children with minimal brain dysfunctions. Other intelligence tests may also be applied.

The majority of these tools are used in many different countries today. However, it has not been the aim of the Project to evaluate the clinical effectiveness of these tests.

4.5 Tools for planning and support

In the annual report of 2003 the FFP emphasised the following tools, established in Norway:

1. the Individual Plan
2. the Support Group for the foster child
3. the Supervisors
4. the Case Record

The Individual Plan, Support Group and Supervisors tools are used in Norwegian child care. The idea to use them in the FFP originated in Norway. The Project, however, has seen a need to adapt these tools to the Russian context. The task of adapting them has been assigned to the FFP psychologists. In this section the Individual Plan is presented and assessed. In the subsequent section other administrative and therapeutic tools are addressed.

The *Individual Plan* was introduced in April 2004. By the summer of 2004, 90 percent of the foster children and their families had received an Individual Plan. The Plan has been adapted by the FFP Team on the basis of similar ones used in the Vladimir region of central Russia.

The Plan consists of six sections: somatic problems; emotional and psychological problems; social problems; family-related problems; spare time activities; and habits of independent life. Each section includes five to seven goals, followed by brief suggestions on how to achieve them. Each section covers one page, making its application relatively simple. The second half of each page consists of a form to be filled out by the foster parent. This form consists of five items:

Figure 4.1 *Scheme used in Individual Development Plans*

Problem	Measures	Progress	Period of implementation	Objective reached
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To get an impression of the individual development plan we can take a closer look at the goals stated. In the section on family-related problems the goals are:

- Help the child cope with its past, to be reconciled with the losses in its life and to solve internal conflicts related to feelings of guilt connected with its family.
- Explain to the child its relationship to its biological family, and provide assistance in maintaining contacts with the family.
- Ensure that the child receives the allowances and other support it is entitled to.
- Monitor the child's living conditions.
- Provide psychological follow-up to the biological family (where possible).

Several suggestions are made on how to achieve the goals; among the more concrete are:

Without forcing the child to be more open than it wants to be, the foster parents should listen to what the child says about its biological family and explain that it is not the child's fault that problems occurred. Try to establish trusting relations with the biological family, and involve the guardianship organs in this. Moreover, the foster parents are recommended to establish a detailed history of the biological parents and to keep a so-called Life Book, to help the child to connect and maintain a sense of continuity.

The Individual Plan requires that foster parents keep a record of any problems they encounter during the foster child's adaptation to the new family. It also requires that foster parents write down what measures they intend to take in order to deal with the problem. Finally the Plan asks foster parents to record, in writing, when they consider a problem to have been solved. In this simple way, the Development Plans introduced by the FFP help foster parents work methodically. Furthermore, the Individual Development Plans structure the cooperation and communication between foster parents, the FFP Team and the community.

A support group for each child is another important tool. In Norway, such groups traditionally consist of all the persons - private, public and professional - involved in the care of the individual child. The

Support Group is implemented fairly openly and only one of the parents has to be represented in the Group. Though there was some resistance to this in the beginning, the networks around the children changed and about 50 percent of the children now have a local Support Group. The FFP aims to apply FGC methodology in these groups where necessary. However, new methods must be applied with caution, as we do not want families to experience a level of attention that makes it difficult to achieve a normal family life.

The Supervisor is defined as an *ombudsman* for the foster child, and the child's advocate in negotiations with foster parents, the school, and the child care system. The Supervisor is an independent person, not a representative of the FFP, the foster family or childcare system. The Northern regional office of the Norwegian Directorate for Children Youth and Family Affairs supports the process of educating Individual Supervisors.

We would like to emphasise the importance of evaluating the existing institution of '*public child right inspector*' (*obshchestvennyi inspektor po okhrane prav rebënka*) described in chapter 2.7 of the Evaluation Report. The Evaluation Team recommends that a thorough study be made to evaluate the need for introducing a new institution. The possibilities of working with the public child right inspectors should also be investigated.

Finally comes *the Case Record*, a written record of each child, kept from the point when the first foster family was recruited. The Case Record comprises several parts. The first part is a portrait of the child (resource and special needs), and its parents/ the foster family (resources). The Therapeutic Team gather in-depth information about the potential parents in three separate interviews: the introductory interview with the parents is held at the FFP's office; a second interview takes place in the family home and includes an inspection of the home; a final interview at the family home includes an inspection of the neighbourhood.

The second part of the Case Record consists of psychological test results. The third part of the Record includes observations of the child and the foster family. It contains a record of questions and answers, the child's Individual Plan, including information on the child's Supervisor, Support Group, and any concluding remarks or evaluations.

4.6 Professional and administrative methods revisited

The psychological services are well developed in our town, with each school and kindergarten allotted a psychologist. We also employ social pedagogues, paediatricians and youth psychologists in orphanages to provide medical, psychological and pedagogical support of foster children and children under guardianship. The psychological services can also be used to support foster families. (Municipal officer in Murmansk town)

The main therapeutic methods and tools applied by the FFP Team are psychometrical testing and Gestalt-therapeutic and empowerment-orientated methods (PRIDE and FGC). We characterise the methods of the FFP Team as an eclectic mixture of Russian and other international systems and programmes. This eclectic use of theories and tools is in line with practices found in Norwegian childcare services in the capital of Oslo (Feiring 2003).

The PRIDE system has been useful in initiating, facilitating and structuring the work with the foster families and their networks. It has been useful in focusing attention on the individual child, and in diverting focus from economic and legal aspects to social and psychological ones. The FFP Staff sees it as a practical and useful tool. However, it needs further adaptation to Russian conditions. The PRIDE course material should be re-written to reflect this, preferably in idiomatic Russian without Anglicism.

Since PRIDE was implemented in Murmansk a lot of experience has been gathered. Experiences from other regions and federal policies and plans should be considered to help promote PRIDE's adaptation and development. Despite all the local merits of the FFP, the FFP management group has suffered from a striking lack of collaboration with other foster family training initiatives in Russia. For instance, the FFP has not been aware of activities carried out by the State Research Institute on families and up bringing, which has published a handbook for foster parents (see Dement'eva and Oliferenko 2000). The handbook is based on similar ideas to those promoted by the FFP.

The FFP believe that FGC is a helpful addition to PRIDE, Gestalt psychological methods, and other methods applied in the Project. This technology is, however, still in an early phase of implementation.

Another set of tools is being applied by the Project. For each of the foster children in the FFP, a case record is compiled with a presentation of the child and the family, and a follow up of the results. While 90 percent of the children have an Individual Plan and 50 percent have a Support Group only a few (2-4) have an Individual Supervisor. The FFP Team is eager to introduce international techniques and to apply administrative tools inspired by recent Norwegian initiatives - such as Individual Plans, Support Groups and Individual Supervisors. The Evaluation Team calls for a more thorough investigation of the institutional landscape the new methods must penetrate, to avoid duplication of existing measures.

4.7 Summary

The Evaluation Team considers the competence of the FFP Staff to be high. However, its composition could be more diverse. The FFP Staff's competence building initiatives are extensive - from theoretical courses, international seminars and conferences to practical study trips, meetings, and social networking.

The professional methods and tools applied by the FFP Team are psychometrical, Gestalt-therapeutic and empowerment-orientated. We characterise the approach of the FFP Team as an eclectic mixture of Russian, Norwegian and other international systems. The Evaluation Team will advise the FFP not to introduce too much structure in the family work, considering that the aim is to support normal family life. This point should be borne in mind when such tools as Individual Plans are made use of.

5 The FFP's embeddedness in and impact on the overall system of child care

Has the FFP helped the foster family institution strike roots in the Murmansk region? In order to answer this crucial question, it is necessary to take a look at the FFP's own embeddedness in the Murmansk context. Does the project operate in mesh with the political and administrative structures? To what extent does it take the economic and financial realities of the Murmansk region into consideration? In what ways does the FFP deal with cultural and attitudinal factors? Among such factors are the habits of bringing up children, ideas about right and wrong, and views upon orphanhood and parental responsibilities.

5.1 Two perspectives on the FFP

The FFP can be seen in two main perspectives. On one hand, it is possible to look upon the FFP as an instrument primarily to help regional and local authorities implement already adopted policies. At this point it is worth repeating the fact that the foster family institution did not come to Murmansk through the FFP. As shown in chapter 2 the foster family was introduced well before SOS Children's Villages Norway came to Murmansk. The foster family institution is introduced in Russia as a part of the policies to enable a family-type or family-like childhood for children who have been left without care from their biological parents. It forms part of the Russian compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, the project is a joint Russian–Norwegian one, and the relevant authorities form an integral part of it.

On the other hand, it is also fully possible to see the FFP primarily as a spear head for certain particular models of foster families. The FFP

brings with it approaches, instruments, and solutions *on the contents* of the foster family drawn from another context than the one offered in Murmansk. The agreement under which the project operates states (in paragraph) that it is “targeted at the exchange of the experiences from similar projects in Norway.” The project insists that the same training programme for foster families and involved actors that has been introduced in most of Norway – i.e. PRIDE – should also be applied in Murmansk. Later on it is going to be adapted systematically to the Russian context of Murmansk region.

In practice, the FFP is best understood by using a combination of the two perspectives. They are not mutually excluding. The interviews and conversations with the main actors clearly show that the regional and local authorities see the FFP in the first-mentioned perspective, focusing on the Russian setting, whereas the Norwegian side tends towards the second perspective focusing on the ideals drawn from foster family experience in other settings than the Russian one. This is in accordance with the division of tasks between the Norwegian and Russian representatives in the working group, where the Norwegians were to introduce and the Russians to adapt the foster family model.

Irrespective of one’s preferences as to whether the FFP is mainly an auxiliary tool to implement established policies or whether the project is primarily an instrument of introducing one specific model, the introduction of the foster family institution may be perceived as a case of “policy transfer”. A policy tool, institution, policy – in our case that of foster families – has been tried out in one country and the question now is whether one can learn from it/introduce it more or less wholesale.

5.2 The FFP’s embeddedness with local and regional authorities

The FFP is embedded with the relevant authorities from the outset through the fact that it is a joint Russian–Norwegian project, in which the regional Committee of Education forms part of the board on equal footing with the SOS Children's Villages – Norway. In fact, it was the regional authorities that asked SOS Children's Villages Norway for a project on foster families in the first place. Furthermore, as described in chapter 2, foster family legislation was already in place when the project was established.

At municipal level FFP's day-to-day partner is the municipal educational committees' department of child rights' protection. The FFP also works closely with the regional level Medical-Psychological-Educational Commission that has a professional say in issues pertaining to placement of children.

Therefore, first of all, the question of embeddedness must be answered through a scrutiny of the FFP's success in entering into interaction with the organisations and authorities working in the field of child care and education.

Local and regional level: Do the child care authorities in Murmansk feel an ownership to the model?

This question on regional authorities' commitment to the foster family institution may be answered by referring to the eight years old Law on the Protection of Children's Rights in Murmansk region (10 April 1997, 8 November 2001). This law clearly supports the establishment of family-like forms of placement, among them foster families. Promoting the foster family model is included in the regional plan for children. In other words, the authorities "owned the model" long before SOS Children's Villages came to Murmansk. The arrival of SOS Children's Villages Norway to Murmansk merely enabled the authorities to draw additional funds and competence to implement already established policies.

As one child inspector in a small town on the peninsula told:

The FFP project made it possible for us to put into life what was stated in the federal Family Code of 1996, that the foster family institution should be introduced.

Likewise one high-ranking official in the regional committee of education told:

The FFP has rendered us huge, huge help by placing its staff at the disposal. This has contributed significantly to the fact that the foster families are stable. A very good thing that the FFP do is to make potential and willing foster families aware of the difficulties. Our own staff in the municipalities is overworked. It is impossible for them to do the support work with foster families. We need permanent help on the professional side.

FFP is characterised by its continuity of people involved since the initiation of the project in 1999. For instance, vice-director of the regional Committee of Education, Ludmila Polozova, and project

manager Torbjørn Persen have been major actors ever since. Also the administrative co-ordinator has been working in the project since its beginning. Project director Berit Bakkane of SOS Children's Villages Norway has followed and taken part in the projects since the first contacts were made in 1998. As early as 2001 the regional educational committee pointed out one of its officers to have as her main task to follow up the FFP. The continuity of individuals involved strengthens commitment and Embeddedness.

The regional educational authorities' view on the composition of the staff in the FFP shall be taken into consideration. Employing staff in the FFP must be discussed and approved in a process involving the regional educational committee. For instance, altogether eight out of the 19 candidates for a position in the FFP in 2000 were hand-picked by the committee (Quarterly Report 24/1-13/2 2000).

If the question of ownership is somewhat narrowed to mean ownership of the particular model promoted by the FFP, the answer may be a different one. At least, the Norwegian project manager has reported that the relevant authorities at local level tend to be "focused on the needs of the families who would like to give care to children, and not on the rights of the child cared for in the family" (Annual Report 2002).

Furthermore, a point that is made from the Norwegian project manager at repeated occasions is that the municipalities cannot be stopped if they want to run "foster family light projects", i.e. establishing foster families without proper "matching" of child to parent (e.g. see Annual Report).

In 2004 the regional authorities committed themselves to start taking over the paying out of the maintenance/benefits. This was a significant step.

The Regional Law on the organisation and activities of the organs of guardianship in Murmansk region (4 June 1997 N 70-01-ZMO; 16 April 2002 N 335-01-ZMO) forms the basis for the governor's decree no. 285-PP of 20 October 2003 "On establishment of the Order of Compensation to Municipal Budgets' Expenses for Financing Social Guarantees for Children under Trusteeship or Guardianship and Foster Care for 2004". This decree states that from 2004 the maintenance costs (not the parents' salaries) are going to be paid over Russian municipal budgets with compensation from regional level. The FFP considers this a huge step and a clear sign of acknowledgement from the side of the governor. From 1 July 2004 the governor has paid 200

rubles per foster child, i.e. all 96 both those within and those outside the FFP.

5.3 Contribution to the overall capacity of the officials in the organs of guardianship

Professional competence of municipal and county administrative partners and possibilities for staff development.

The FFP has enabled municipal and oblast specialists in the field of placement of children to get to know more about the foster family institution. The fact that FFP has offered to pay salaries and benefits for up to 100 children in foster families has made for a substantial number of foster family cases which makes it a placement form that the overworked organs of guardianship take very seriously. Furthermore, the PRIDE courses and psycho-social assistance offered by the FFP has given useful input to the competence of the guardianship specialists. The fact that the project manager comes from the educational sector himself has been positively received since most child inspectors are pedagogues.

In particular, the guardianship specialists mention that FFP has been to great help in thinking over how to deal with families in a respectful way, trying to fetch out their resources. The pivotal role of the biological families within the PRIDE way of thinking has been discussed a lot. Due to the fact that most Russian parents who have been deprived of their parental rights live in far deeper misery than they would have done in the countries from where PRIDE originates, both professionals and (even more so) foster parents have been reluctant to bring biological families in. It would simply be traumatic and even dangerous to let a child, for instance, live with their biological parents over a week-end.

As a principle, however, many of the specialists interviewed for this report agreed that the child could be better of knowing about its biological parents, not least due to what could happen if it by chance gets to know about it as a youngster. Adaptation of the “biological principle” to Russian conditions, are being discussed. Visiting arrangements in which grandparents or aunts and uncles take part is but one model. As one officer in the guardianship put it: “This question cannot be solved by the use of coercion.”

The responsible officials in the regional Committee of Education have taken part in PRIDE courses. The PRIDE training courses (analysed in

chapter 4) has helped integrate the different actors in and around the FFP. The training courses clearly have made people not only come together, but also to bring to the fore difficult, and even controversial, issues. Quite a large number of officials have attended the PRIDE courses. The crucial actors in working with children in need of parental care are the child inspectors at municipal level. The training courses clearly have offered the opportunity of clarifying for relevant actors (parents and officials alike) what the PRIDE model is about. Child inspectors have taken part in the courses, and in many cases have internalised the PRIDE way of thinking. This is important since the child inspectors are the ones who implement policies at local level. They have the immediate contact with both actual and potential foster children and foster families. There are 25 approved PRIDE instructors in Murmansk oblast, among them eight specialists in the organ of guardianship.

As the Norwegian project manager told:

What the people in the Murmansk oblast committee say now, differ significantly from what they used to say three years ago, when we were told that we believe too much in Russian families. This also holds true for the attitude to biological parents.

One local child inspector in one of the regions towns told:

We like PRIDE very much. Everything is included in the programme, hygiene, education. PRIDE makes us be open, admit that there are problems and talk about them to find solutions. PRIDE makes people dare to ask questions.

5.4 The FFP's embeddedness beyond the Murmansk region

North–West Russia

The FFP's influence is clearly limited to the Murmansk region. However, the FFP has made attempts at propagating the foster family institution and the PRIDE model in other federation subjects of North West Russia. Contacts have been made with the federation subjects of Arkhangelsk, Karelia and Vologda. Meetings have taken place. More activities are planned for 2005, but are dependent upon financing. Between Karelia and the Troms county child protection department a

joint project has been going on for a couple of years. This project consists of five foster families in Petrozavodsk, but is not a part of the FFP.

Other regions of Russia

The FFP psychologists have attended training courses and seminars in other regions of Russia, among others the city of Vladimir. The Murmansk regional committee of education have studied the experiences from the Samara region, where most of the orphanages were closed. A specificity of Samara is that the overwhelming majority of foster families live in rural areas. When the FFP was established the educational committee had close contacts with the vice-governor in charge of placement of orphans in Samara. The committee has invited specialists from Novgorod for seminars in Murmansk.

Federal level

In 2000 at the outset of the project the project manager and the vice-head of educational committee went to the Ministry of Education in Moscow where they presented the project. There the project manager got the impression that the “Western way of doing it was unknown, that the idea of a foster family was ‘one mother and a lot of children’”.

Since then information about the foster families in Murmansk are handed over to the Ministry of Education on a regular basis. Within the framework of the federal programme on orphans the Murmansk educational committee sends quarterly reports to a special unit in the Ministry. These reports include information on the financing of foster families by the Norwegian partner. The federal programme on children without parental care is based on information about the number of children in foster families in each of the federation’s 89 subjects. These reports are short and mostly focusing on numbers, including the number of children in the FFP. The Ministry does not contact the regional educational committee particularly to get to know more about the FFP, which the committee’s vice-head explains by referring to the fact that “foster children constitute only one among several forms of placement, and that the ministry has to cover all of them.”

Besides, of course FFP is not the only foster family activity going on in Russia. Several other actors are involved. There are foster families in 72 of Russia’s 89 federation subjects. Most importantly, there is a state programme for foster families under the Ministry of Education.

The Evaluation team did not carry out interviews in the Ministry. However, the SOS Russia director let the team know that he was met by questions in the Ministry about what the FFP actually was. Despite regular reporting, the FFP might not have been able to get through sufficiently with its information.

The project manager informs that: “The integration of FFP and PRIDE in the existing Russian system was to be done by the Russian representatives of the working group. The working group agreed upon approaching the federal Ministry of Education after the evaluation report was finished and new plans for the further development were done.”

The Evaluation Team asks whether it might have been a better idea to start intense linking up with the federal level at the outset of the programme. The fact that the FFP is based on an agreement between a Norwegian NGO and the regional executive authorities, with a regional committee being part of the project’s co-ordinating body, would have made this possible. Not only the Ministry, but the FFP itself would have gained from better links. Among others this would have made the FFP more informed about what is going on in the field of establishing foster families elsewhere in Russia.

It should be noticed that better links are about to be created. In 2004 the Murmansk regional Educational Committee decided to issue a leaflet about the FFP and distribute it to the Ministry of Education and to other regions of Russia. Moreover, in 2004 an agreement was made between the Ministry of Education and SOS Children's Villages Norway (Murmansk office) to take part in the Russian Educational Forum. Representatives from nearly all the regions of Russia, former Soviet republics and other countries take part in the Forum.

5.4.1 National partner: the Russian Committee SOS Children’s Villages

In SOS Children's Villages – Russia the attitude to the foster family institution is positive. As the director (until January 2005) put it:

Russian Committee SOS Children’s Villages knows everything about the children’s villages and the youth homes, but foster families are less well-known. For us this is interesting since it is our first project in this field. For me 100 children in foster homes can be compared to one SOS children’s village, only less expensive perhaps.

There are no costs related to keeping the housing stock or to overhead in foster homes.

SOS Children's Villages – Russia has got to know the FFP in-depth through the process of preparing for the take-over. The organisation's pedagogical co-ordinator, who is a social psychologist, has followed the FFP for more than three years and knows all the foster families through participation at a PRIDE seminar. On a professional level she finds the foster family institution to be good because it offers surroundings in which children are exposed to and learn how to live a “normal life”.

It seems that SOS Children's Villages – Russia perceives the foster family institution not as a rival, but as an alternative way to achieve the same as one achieves through SOS Children's Villages. In some instances the foster family is better suited than the Children's Villages. For instance, when it comes to disabled children, the large number of children per mother in the village does not make it a suitable placement form for this category of children. Furthermore, SOS Children's Villages – Russia clearly sees that the two forms of placement can draw on each other. For instance, the foster family is good at creating “normal life”, which the villages can learn from.

The FFP and the Russian Committee SOS Children's Villages have operated along identical policy lines as to the question of letting the foster children know about their biological parents. Both have made a point of letting the children know about their biological parents. This is a controversial issue in Russia, not least among foster parents and relevant authorities.

After having been acquainted with the FFP, SOS Russia clearly finds the foster family institution to be a relevant field of work for the organization. As showed elsewhere in this Evaluation Report, there are objections to the ways the FFP has been run so far, but these do not have to do with a rejection of the foster family institution as such.

5.5 Embeddedness among the public at large

Orphans and children who have been abandoned by their parents is a favourite theme for Russian journalists covering social issues. Often the tone is quite moralistic and sentimental. The FFP have made use of the canals offered by social journalism. An informational campaign was made between November 2002 and February 2003 through mass media. The Evaluation Team has perused several newspaper articles

from these campaigns and found them very informative and to the point.

Advertisements have also been made use of. Newspapers and local TV cover foster family issues, showing that this institution is an alternative. This is very useful for the FFP since it makes the foster family institution familiar to a larger audience. The effects of this will be possible to trace only in a longer perspective.

The FFP staff considers person-to-person information to be the most efficient way of recruiting foster parents, though. It seems that the foster families themselves play a more important role than advertisements in promoting this new form of child placement. People who contact FFP very often do that after having talked with friends and acquaintances who are foster parents within the programme. People who have gone through PRIDE training function as “informators” among colleagues, neighbours and friends.

5.6 International partners

The FFP’s main foreign link, of course, goes to SOS Children's Villages – Norway and to SOS Children's Villages International, for which the foster family institution is a novelty. The organisation has almost exclusively worked with the SOS Children's Village model, which is one among several placement forms aiming at giving children a family-like upbringing. The FFP cooperates closely with SOS Children's Villages International’s regional office in Tallinn, Estonia.

As chapter 4 accounts for, the FFP is actively involved in international networks and the staff, and in some cases, officers in guardianship travel abroad for training and exchange of experiences. The Netherlands-based international organisation for foster care – IFCO – is the main link here.

Universities in Sweden and colleges in Norway (Alta, Stavanger) are among the institutions being in contact with the FFP.

The Norwegian Union of Foster Families is an important contact that is very useful in the exchange of real-life experience between Russian and Norwegian foster families. Troms County Administration is another authority with which the FFP cooperates.

The FFP has established contact with organisation for nurses and social workers in Finnmark county, Norway, for cooperation and

support. The project manager has a background from similar work in Romania and the FFP keeps contacts with the organisation called “For every child a family” (Romania).

5.7 Embeddedness in the voluntary sector

In the summer of 2004 a Union of Foster Families (Soiuz priëmnykh semei) for Murmansk oblast was established by parents taking part in the FFP. It is going to register as a non-state organisation, or as it is named in Russian - a societal (obshchestvennyi) organisation. This is an important step towards making the foster family institution establish roots. A member of the Evaluation Team was present at the constituting meeting in Olenogorsk 29 May 2004. A representative from the oblast Committee of Education also was present to observe the meeting and give some practical advice. The two sides - “state” and “society” - clearly were on the same wavelength.

It remains to see what the Union of Foster Parents amounts to. It was clearly established as a part of the FFP plans, and less so as a spontaneous initiative by the parents themselves. Being run by the very capable foster parents the Union may nevertheless become a genuine mouthpiece of the foster families.

5.8 Embeddedness in the educational institutions

The FFP has made connection to educational institutions. There are several relevant institutions in Murmansk, like the Pedagogical University, The Technical University (Faculty of Social Work) and the Murmansk Humanities Institute. The Moscow State Social University has a branch in Murmansk.

The FFP has chosen mainly to work with the Faculty of Social Work at the Technical University. The Faculty of Social Work at the Murmansk State Technical University has existed for five years, and the first class graduated in the summer 2004. SOS Children's Villages Norway and the Faculty of Social Work have arranged two seminars together, one of them on foster families (in December 2002). There have been talks about introducing PRIDE on the curriculum of the students of social work, but not much has been realised so far.

5.9 Embeddedness with the city authorities of Murmansk

The Evaluation Team was specifically asked to evaluate why the cooperation with Murmansk city municipality is not as fruitful as it could be. What have been the blockers, obstacles and what could be done to overcome the obstacles?

Murmansk city has by far the largest concentration of inhabitants in the region, and about 800 children under guardianship. Altogether 390 of all revealed cases of children without parents or parental care of a total about 1000 in the region are from Murmansk city. All this taken into consideration, one might expect Murmansk city to have the lion's share of the foster families as well. That is not the case. Only five foster families have been established by the Murmansk organs of guardianship so far, all of them part of the FFP. It should be noticed here that there are several children from Murmansk city who have been placed in foster homes elsewhere.

The city authorities and the SOS Children's Villages Norway signed an agreement in 2003. Until then, the FFP had an impression (openly expressed in its quarterly and annual reports) that the Murmansk city administration's educational committee was reluctant to establish foster families. In early 2003 a round table discussion on the results of the FFP was held. During the discussion journalists asked the Murmansk city educational committee why it did not take part in the FFP. The answer was that they "did not like imported ideas" and that they would like to establish their own foster family project (see Quarterly Report January–March 2003). Earlier the head of the city educational committee expressed fear that there would be no guarantees that the foster parents had the required competence to take care of children.

The fact that issues pertaining to guardianship are decentralised naturally opens up for local variations. The Murmansk city committee for education is less enthusiastic about fast introduction of foster families than for instance its homologue in Kandalaksha. The argument put forward for the Evaluation Team in an interview with the Murmansk vice-mayor responsible for children affairs is that there are risks of making mistakes: "One should not try and speed up this process. We do not have the right to make mistakes when it comes to children." One must make sure the foster parents are suited for the task. One should not underestimate the competence of the professionals in the field of child care.

The city committee of education gets a lot of inquiries from people who want to become foster parents, but the committee clearly has got the impression that in many cases the main motivation is “financial”. In Murmansk city a foster parent/family will receive 6 800 RUR per foster child, which is a substantial sum for most households. Another argument, which is in accordance with attitudes (not only) in Russia, is that placement of children is more likely to be a success if it takes place in the countryside. Murmansk has sent off foster children to the oblast provinces.

Murmansk city’s educational committee were not the only ones to refer to the blessing of growing up in the countryside. So did the oblast committee representatives referring to Samara oblast, where foster families tended to live in the countryside. According to the interlocutors, life is more stable in the countryside, in particular among people on a farm. Then again one might object that a life in the countryside rarely is the choice made by other Russians. And, if the child would like to go to (a good) school it will have to move to a city or to a boarding school.

The two interlocutors from the municipal committee told that so far they had no bad experiences with the foster families that have been established. These families make use of both the committee and the FFP when they are in need of advice and assistance. The two representatives found PRIDE to be useful, one of them in fact is a licensed PRIDE instructor.

There might, however, be reason to modify the impression that Murmansk city’s educational committee is unenthusiastic about the institution of foster families. It is true that Murmansk has been more reluctant to embrace the idea of fast introduction of foster families, and Murmansk has been slower than, e.g. Kandalaksha in signing an agreement. Nevertheless, foster families have been established in the countryside with foster children from Murmansk city, foster families have been established in Murmansk city itself, and one of the officers in the educational committee is a PRIDE instructor.

In sum there are several factors which may explain why Murmansk city seems to favour a somewhat slower introduction of the foster family institution. Firstly, the decentralisation of the policy field of placement of orphans and children without parental care structurally opens up for local variation. Secondly, local variation can be a result of personal factors, and the head of Murmansk city’s educational committee is known to be less than enthusiastic about imported foster family models.

Thirdly, there is a wide-spread belief in the policy sector of placement of orphans and children without parental care that (foster) children are better off in allegedly stable environments in rural areas and smaller settlements, not in relatively big cities like Murmansk. Fourthly, it should also be borne in mind that the former mayor died and his successor has been seriously ill. In other words, there has not been an operative mayor for a long time to possibly overrule the administrative structures.

Fifthly, a struggle between levels of governance may have played a role. In Russia, like elsewhere, regional and strong local authorities at times compete for power. Being a project between a foreign NGO and the regional level committee of education may have influenced negatively on the Murmansk city authorities' enthusiasm.

Sixthly, SOS Children's Villages Norway does not seem to have had a *general strategy* for coping with less than enthusiastic counterparts. True, meetings with the Murmansk city administration were very well prepared and letters were sent repeatedly until an answer was achieved. Co-operation with local mass media and setting up round-tables with involved municipal administration representatives contributed to the signing of agreement between the city authorities and SOS Children's Villages Norway in 2003.

The achievements seem to be thanks to the efforts made by the officers involved in the FFP from the regional Committee of Education. However, the FFP did not make an analysis of possibly well-founded reasons for the head of the committee to be reluctant, nor an analysis of the possibility that the issue was "political" in the sense that different views were competing, e.g. between the profession of child carers and supporters of non-institutional care. The annual and quarterly reports do not analyse the situation. In general the analytical capacities of the FFP could have been stronger. Being very strong professionally in the fields of psychology and management and endowed with a large portion of enthusiasm, the permanently employed staff is less capable as "political doers" and analysts.

How the FFP has coped with resistance. During the initial period reactions among regional and local officials were mixed. The FFP was met by everything between enthusiasm and scepticism. It is the impression of the Evaluation Team that the FFP was only partially capable of communicating efficiently at this stage. Communication was reserved for the positively inclined representatives of the local and regional authorities. Those with a sceptical approach were not focused on. The idea was to let them wait and see what the FFP could

achieve in the municipalities where it was accepted. The FFP focused on the positively inclined actors as a conscious strategy. Therefore, not much effort was made on the part of the FFP to get in touch with sceptics. A result of this was that very little was done to analyse the reasons *why* some actors were reluctant. This opened up for a tendency towards treating officials in the relevant authorities at regional and municipal level as either “with the foster family institution” or “against it”.

Despite impressive success in developing personal trust with foster parents and many representatives of local organs of guardianship, the FFP has suffered from lack of analytical capacity. The relations between the FFP and Murmansk city authorities offer a case in point.

5.10 Further prospects

When SOS Children’s Villages Russia takes over the project, it may well be that analysis, and thereby communication, will improve. The Russian organisation reports that they have established very good relations with Murmansk city’s educational committee during the establishment of the Children’s Village in Kandalaksha. As an indicator, it could be mentioned that there are a lot of children from Murmansk city in the SOS Village in Kandalaksha.

5.11 Summing up

Did the strategy of introducing the foster family institution in a version based on the Scandinavian and Polish models work? Has the FFP achieved embeddedness for its version of the foster family institution before it, according to the plans, is going to be adapted to Russian realities? There is no doubt that the foster family institution now, after almost five years and 14.5 million Norwegian kroner, is well known-by local and regional officers in the organs of guardianship. Besides, crucial elements that have been controversial or at least difficult are now widely accepted. Inclusion of the foster families’ wider social surroundings, contacts with biological parents, primary focus on the child are among these aspects.

All in all, the foster family institution has struck roots in the Murmansk region although still not applied widely. The FFP has good relations to most municipalities and to the press. It is well linked up with the international community of foster family experts and

enthusiasts. It has less frequent and deep contacts with other actors in the Russian domestic field, although improvements seem to be on the way. In the future the FFP should apply a more open and including attitude to other initiatives in the field of foster families, also those not based on PRIDE, than what has hitherto been the case of the SOS Children's Villages Norway (Murmansk office). In February 2005 the Barents Region Public Competence Centre on Family-Based Care (financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and SOS Children's Villages Norway) was established. This centre may be of use for the FFP in the time to come.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

This report has given an assessment of the Foster Family Project (FFP) since its formal establishment in 2000. The FFP's overall aim has been to institute foster families as a viable placement form in the Murmansk region, which is an objective shared by the Russian child care authorities.

By the end of 2004 the FFP included altogether 89 foster children in 60 foster families. To what extent are these families stable and healthy for the child? The FFP has worked closely together with the organs of guardianship at local and regional level as well as with other relevant actors in the foster families' everyday life. To what extent has the foster family institution as such struck roots in the Murmansk region? Russia is a federation of 89 federation subjects. Murmansk region is one among 72 federation subjects that have introduced the foster family institution. Are experiences from the FFP applicable to other Russian regions? This chapter will answer these broad questions and follow up with a set of recommendations. Whereas the overall assessment of the FFP may be positive the recommendation will focus on aspects of the activities that could be improved.

6.1 Conclusions

The foster families – children and parents

Placing orphans and children deprived of parental care have economic, legal, psychological and social aspects. Much of the immediate attention in the organs of guardianship responsible for implementing and controlling placement naturally will have to be focused on legal and economic aspects. Likewise, the FFP's economic contribution to the foster family institution in Murmansk is significant. Without it, the number of foster families would have been lower.

It is, however, the emphasis on psychological and social aspects that make the FFP's involvement innovative. This is made clear all the way from the matching stage, where prospective foster children are matched with parents, and all the way through the professional follow-up made by the FFP's professional team.

At an early stage the FFP decided it would concentrate on one methodology, and since August 2002 the project has applied PRIDE (Parent-Resources for Information- Development and Education) for its training seminars. These seminars involve not only prospective and foster parents and people who already are foster parents, but people in the foster families' surroundings as well. Another programme was considered, but the fact that PRIDE was being made use of in several other European countries made it preferable. The international PRIDE framework as well as the international foster family organisations has enabled training and updating of the FFP's professional team.

One basic principle of the FFP is that the child's interest is put first. The individual child's psychological well-being in the foster family is given priority over the prospective foster parents' wish to have a child of their liking. Furthermore, the FFP emphasises the child's right to know – or at least know *about* – its biological parents. This issue has proved to be particularly controversial.

The establishment of foster families is made in contracts between the foster parents and the organs of guardianship. The organs of guardianship must approve the housing conditions in the family, and check criminal files. Foster families who would like to join the FFP enter into a contract with the project. The foster children tend to be placed in families with relatively mature parents with a relatively high education, usually from pedagogy and fields related to health and social work.

Although the establishment of foster families is the responsibility of the guardianship organs the FFP has contributed significantly to the *careful matching* of foster children to foster parents. Although the financial factor may play a role here, there is reason to believe that careful matching is a major factor behind the fact that foster families have been remarkably stable. Also the help rendered by the FFP team to the foster families in coping with problems that usually occur after some months, moreover preparing foster parents that such problem will occur, has made foster families more steady or stable than they would have been otherwise. In fact, only two children – both of them in their teens – have moved back to an institution.

The FFP professional team consisting of two Russian psychologists and the Norwegian project manager, holding a master's degree in special needs education, follows up each family. Contacts are made quite frequently, and foster parents report that they feel free to contact the FFP. Similar relations exist between the families and the organs of guardianship. The FFP's contribution is mostly on the psychological side, but as Russian psychologists and gestalt therapists the environment is highly integrated in their practices. PRIDE-groups are established with representatives from the church, the kindergarten/nursery school and the school.

Moreover, PRIDE has the ambition of empowering foster parents. The work done by the FFP psychologists has its strength in the communication with the foster families. It is the impression of the Evaluation Team that the FFP team is less formalistic and pay less attention to writing files than other specialists working in the same field in Murmansk region. The introduction of Individual Plans for the foster children's development was made in 2004. In addition to helping foster parents work systematically with these plans may help systematise the FFP's work as well in the sense that the plans will serve as documentation helping newly employed staff or reviewers gaining insight. The Evaluation Team holds the individual plan to be well suited for its primary purpose. The plan is realistic and manageable, and it helps the foster parents structure their effort.

In addition to helping foster families become psychologically stable the FFP has brought in a somewhat new approach regarding the foster families' relations to its "social surroundings". Any foster family is placed in the midst of a social environment. Of great importance here is, of course the administrative apparatus responsible for placement of children. Therefore, the officers in the organs of guardianship have taken actively part in seminars. Also educators working in orphanages and other relevant institutions have taken part. Teachers in the schools attended by foster children and in some cases even neighbours from the foster families' village have taken part. All this has created a common frame of reference and personal contacts that are considered very valuable by those involved. The foster families are well linked to the most relevant parts of its social surroundings, much thanks to the FFP. In addition the foster families are very well connected in between themselves. Special attention should be called to the role played by the personal factor here. The project manager has been able to bring forth an exceptionally good atmosphere among participants, and in general he stands high in their favour. In many respects the foster families in the FFP constitute one "foster family community". People know each other, and can turn to each other when needed. This

is particularly the case in the town of Kandalaksha where the number of foster families is large enough for smooth and regular interaction. The establishment of a Union of Foster Families in Murmansk in the summer of 2004 may also prove to contribute to cohesion among foster families.

One feature of the foster family is that it exists formally only until the foster child's 18th birthday. The terms-of-reference for the evaluation excluded systematic interview with foster children for reasons of the children's comfort. The few spoken with by the Evaluation Team, had plans for the future, like other young people not yet having left their homes. They will benefit from the special arrangements offered to orphans by Russian authorities thanks to their legal status. In addition there was an overwhelming willingness on the part of the foster parents to stay in contact with their foster children after they have left the home.

To sum up, the FFP foster family followed up firstly by being *enabled financially* by the project (salaries and allowances according to official standards set by regional authorities are paid by the FFP). Secondly, the foster family is *assisted professionally* by the FFP's professional team, in particular in psychological matters. Here the FFP complements the work being done by the organs of guardianship. Thirdly, the FFP *links* each foster family *socially* to other foster families through the PRIDE courses and through the support to the establishment of the Union of Foster Families.

In other words, among the four aspects of establishing foster families (i.e. economic, legal, psychological and social aspects) the FFP has contributed significantly on three of them. The legal aspect has been left to the Russian regional and federal political processes, which is as it should be. The FFP may, however, influence indirectly. Well-functioning foster families could be taken by legislators as an impetus to pay even more attention to this placement form.

The FFP and its place in the context

The FFP came about as the result of a dialogue between the Educational Committee of Murmansk region, which is the regional level guardianship organ and SOS Children's Villages Norway in 1998. The two sides agreed to cooperate on competence building and alternative child care models. At that time the Norwegian organisation had collected a considerable amount of money through campaigns focused on North-West Russia.

From the outset the FFP has been a Russian–Norwegian joint project. The Committee of Education at regional level is part of the project, and co-operation has been tight with the organs of guardianship at municipal level, i.e. the child inspectors in the departments of education.

The legal framework for establishing foster families was in place before SOS Children's Villages came to Murmansk in 1998. The Family Code of 1996 with legal regulations based on it at federal as well as regional level paved the way for the establishment of foster families. The role of the FFP, therefore, has been to help regional and local authorities implement policies rather than “sell the idea”.

By the summer of 2004, the foster family team consisted of the following employees: project manager, administrative coordinator, two psychologists, chief accountant, secretary, driver/maintenance worker and cleaning helper. The project manager and the psychologists constitute the professional team, the remaining staff make up the administrative team. Professionally the FFP and the officers in the organs of guardianship complement each other. The FFP provide psychological knowledge, the officers in the organs are mostly pedagogues combined with administrative specialisation (like the Norwegian FFP project manager).

The guardianship organs have been very welcoming. Only in one case, the guardianship organ has been somewhat reluctant to involve itself in the project. The overall picture is that the organs at regional and local level have made a lot of effort to follow up and make use of the FFP for the benefit of the children they have the administrative responsibility for. At regional level in Murmansk and at local level in Kandalaksha respectively one officer is working full-time with the foster family institution. It should be borne in mind that the staff in the guardianship organs is over-worked and that foster children constitute a microscopic number as compared to the total picture of orphans and children left without parental care. In 2003, for instance, there were 81 foster children in the Murmansk region (of which 69 in the FFP) out of a total of 4986 biological and social orphans. Likewise, the foster family is only one among several family or family-like placement forms in Murmansk region. In 2003 altogether 749 children were placed in family-like arrangements, of which 572 with guardians, 146 adopted and 31 in foster families.

The foster family concept has been quite efficiently promoted by the FFP in close cooperation with guardianship organs. Advertisement campaigns combined with systematic press and local radio and TV

coverage has made the foster family institution more well-known. It is, however, when prospective foster parents talk with already established foster parents that the effect is strongest. The fact that there are 25 PRIDE instructors (foster parents and officers in the guardianship organs) also helps spread the message. There is, reportedly no lack of willing parents. Among others the financial remuneration is tempting, but economic fortune hunters are weeded out efficiently by the organs of guardianship, much helped by the introductory PRIDE seminars that may scare off people not taking the parental tasks seriously.

The number of foster families and foster children in the FFP has grown steadily since 2000. The initial goal of having 100 foster children by the end of 2003 was not reached. In December 2003 there were 72 foster children. As long as the number has been growing, and families seem to be stable, this non-fulfilment of the plan should not be considered a problem.

As the evaluation has shown, the foster family concept is quite wide and can be taken to mean several things. Here, it should be noticed that the idea of what a foster family is in Murmansk, like everywhere else, is influenced among others by the other placement forms made use of. In Russia, adoption is made use of on a quite large scale, and it is characterised by secrecy. The children themselves – and neighbours – are supposed to believe that the adopters are the biological parents. The wide-spread use of guardians, most often grandmother or other close relatives, is another Russian specificity.

Whereas foster parents in the Nordic countries tend to find themselves “on a scale” between the adopters and the guardians, with a penchant towards the guardians (for instance Sweden has a law that instructs guardianship organs primarily to find foster parents among the child’s relatives), the Russian foster parents perceive themselves as being a kind of adopters. Foster children are taken from orphanages with an implicit premise that the child will stay in the family permanently. Lone mothers/fathers, who “would like a child without a husband/wife” are not allowed to adopt, but may become a foster mother/father. In the FFP there are several lone parents. Children are not taken from problematic families for temporary placement, but from orphanages for permanent placement. These are striking features of the foster families created through the FFP. The responses to the questionnaire handed out to all foster families show that quite a large number of foster parents hold the difference between adoption and the foster family institution to consist in the payments and the

professional follow-up and control by the guardianship organs and the FFP.

A model to follow?

All in all the FFP has been a contribution to the Russian authorities' endeavours to live by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. In this respect the project's contribution has been strong at three points. Firstly, it has placed the almost one hundred children in a carefully selected family. Secondly, it has pushed the idea of putting the child first in placement cases. Thirdly, the project has propagated the principle of letting the child know its biological parents and relatives.

In other words, the Evaluation Team concludes that results have been in accordance with the objectives stated at the outset of the project. This, however, is not to say that the project could be emulated in other regions of Russia. To repeat what the FFP has done in Murmansk in another region of Russia requires someone to finance it. Financial inputs from SOS Children's Villages Norway have been substantial, from 1,25 million NOK in 2000 to almost five million NOK in 2004, in all 14,5 million Norwegian kroner.

To be emulated on a broad scale the FFP would have to be modified. More of the job would have to be done by Russian humanitarian organisations and relevant authorities at local level. To keep a large and expensive apparatus like the one the FFP has had in Murmansk is only justifiable as a first step as a pilot project like the FFP. Many of the experiences gained by the FFP are valuable for others working in the same field. In order to make them transferable, the FFP should not portray PRIDE as the one and only training programme possible.

All in all, the Evaluation Team found a project that had been successful. The FFP has been able to help the regional and local authorities make the foster family institution strike roots. The project contributed financially, which is important because the foster family is clearly the most expensive placement among the family-like placement forms. The project also contributed significantly to bringing to the fore central principles from the UN Declaration of the Child's Rights, which also forms the basis for Russian legislation on families and children.

As the report has pointed at, some weaknesses have been identified. Despite the fact that the regional committee of education has made huge efforts in making the model feasible in Murmansk, the Norwegian side of the FFP has not been sufficiently aware of Russian

realities. Neither are links to work being done on foster families elsewhere in Russia good enough. These types of problems luckily may be easier to solve by the organisation now taking over since it is Russian.

The recommendations below aim at pointing at ways to make the foster families part of the Russian system of family care, which will make it more likely its experiences will be accepted as being relevant in other Russian regions and at federal level.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations naturally have to pinpoint aspects of the FFP that has not been fully successful. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that the Evaluation Team sees the recommendations as suggestions for how to make a generally successful project overcome its weaknesses.

The FFP and the sceptics

The FFP has not been operating in a hostile context. On the contrary, legislation has been in place and the president and governor run programmes that underpin the foster family institution. The guardianship organs have been welcoming. And not least: The major authority in placement matters is a partner in the project.

At times the Evaluation Team got the impression that the local Norwegian representative (project manager) failed to see these basic facts. This is surprising since the project manager himself – together with the Educational Committee at regional level – has been instrumental in creating genuine interest in the ideas promoted by the FFP. Genuine trust has been created. Local guardianship organs now clearly take the project seriously and find it helpful. The officers with the guardianship organs spend much time and efforts on the project. They see it as helpful to implementing the sanctioned policies. For instance, the Russian legislation on foster families states, among others, that foster families have to be trained, and get a certificate.

In short: The foster family is politically sanctioned in Russia, and the FFP should take it from there. The FFP should take advantage of the fact that Russia has got a well-organised and strong administrative apparatus manned by highly competent people.

The Evaluation Team has observed a tendency on the part of the FFP to avoid communication with actors that are held to hold a negative attitude to the project or the foster family institution in general.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: In the future it is important that the FFP team (the FFP office as such) joins efforts with their partners in the Educational Committee to achieve a more analytical approach to local resistance to the FFP model. There might be fair reasons why some are sceptical to the project or the model. The FFP should endeavour to enter into dialogue with sceptics. Legal provisions in place before FFP came to Murmansk and not least the efforts made by the Educational Committee at regional level make for the fact that the foster family project is operating in a welcoming context.

“Translation” to the Russian context

The Evaluation Team finds the decision to make use of one specific foster family training programme as being practical. PRIDE has the merit of being manageable and besides used by many other countries and regions in the world. Undoubtedly, PRIDE has been useful in bringing to the fore central aspects of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child. Debates at FFP’s training seminars testify to that. But finding PRIDE useful does not mean that PRIDE is the only model that could be applied. At times the Evaluation Team got the impression that FFP was primarily a promoter of the PRIDE model and secondarily of the foster family institution while it should have been the other way round.

In the FFP the professional teams and their activities are defined as a combination of Russian tradition and foreign (including Norwegian) modes of caring for abandoned children. However, in importing models from abroad, like PRIDE, Family Group Conferences and Individual Planning, the Evaluation Team got the impression that both the choice and implementation of these programmes could have been made with more openness to traditional Russian mode of thinking, the Russian language, Russian administrative as well as family-based values and norms. One example of this is the use of North American videos in PRIDE training and that the translation of the materials applied in this programmes seems to have been done mechanically.

On the other hand, the fact that participants at PRIDE courses are encouraged to come up with suggestions for amendments is a good practice. The same holds true for the plans of developing an adapted

version of PRIDE. It is also highly interesting that the Orthodox Church in Murmansk (the Archbishop) has received the project positively. In the village of Varzuga the Church (cleric and lay) were deeply involved in the foster family work. The Church is otherwise known to be sceptical direct import of models from “the West”. This shows that the FFP has been able to communicate the core ideas of the foster family institution, which hardly can be seen as exclusively Western.

- The evaluation team recommends: The FFP should keep up the good work in adapting its foster family model to Russian realities. This implies paying more attention to contextual, among them cultural, differences between the countries where the instruments and programmes (like PRIDE) were originally conceived and Russia. In the future the FFP should see the foster family in a broader perspective. PRIDE is useful, but should not stand in the way for the development of other foster family training programmes adapted to Russian realities.

Links to the rest of Russia

Partly related to the recommendation above, the Evaluation Team made the observation that the FFP was poorly harmonised with and even informed about similar initiatives elsewhere in Russia. After all, not only the Murmansk region but no less than 72 of Russia’s federation subjects have introduced foster families. The FFP’s ambition seemed to be more that of introducing PRIDE to the other federation subjects of North West Russia than to link up with ongoing foster family initiatives elsewhere in Russia. The Evaluation Team also noticed that the Ministry of Education at federal level could have been better informed about the FFP activities.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: The FFP should establish closer links to other foster family initiatives elsewhere in Russia, and not least to federal-wide activities. Cooperation with the federal ministry should be improved. Firstly, it is important that the existing plans of bringing the project to the Ministry of Education for an up-dated presentation are made true as soon as possible after the presentation of this Evaluation Report. Secondly, the FFP should make an overview of methods used in the Russian regions where foster families have been introduced.

Closer professional cooperation with the organs of guardianship

The psychological servicing should be made in closer co-operation with the organs of guardianship. As of today the two project psychologists cover a huge territory. In the long run this is not sustainable neither from the point of view of working conditions nor economy.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: Although it is well-known that the organs of guardianship are overworked, the FFP should discuss with these organs whether more of the day-to-day services could be taken over by the local child inspectors, with whom foster parents already have close cooperation.

Clarify relationship to adoption

The Evaluation Team noticed that foster parents tended to see the foster families as a kind of adoption, only paid, more thoroughly supervised and with a cooling-off period. Has the foster family institution been received as “adoption light”? Legally the foster family differs from the adoptive family, not least because the legal status of the child differs. In the foster family the child is legally an orphan, whereas the adopted child is legally the child of the adopters. Nevertheless, the fact that foster children are taken from orphanages and not from problematic families makes it look more like adoption. This is the more so as the perspectives in the eyes of the foster parents and most others are that the placement is for as long as the child is a child (i.e. until the child’s 18th birthday). After all, the alternative is the orphanage since parents are dead or have been deprived of the parental rights.

Adoption has since long been an established placement form in Russia. The question then is: What new does the FFP bring with it that traditional adoption could not have achieved? Furthermore, when patron families are introduced to Murmansk region, as it has been in e.g. Arkhangelsk region, foster families may end up in a squeeze.

What links to, and knowledge about, does the FFP have about the work being done by the social protection authorities in providing temporary shelter and other placement for children? After all, the foster family model as conceived internationally finds itself somewhere between the adoptive family and the shelter.

The fact that the FFP and the guardianship organ in 2003 started to work with specialised foster homes is a positive development. These types of foster families do not take children from orphanages for permanent stay. On the contrary they take children from families in trouble and the goal is to enable the original family to take back its child. Parents in specialised foster homes need special training.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: The FFP should give priority to establishing short and medium term foster families. This means that the work with the specialised foster homes should be given priority.

Reducing the number of foster families with psychological problems

Although the FFP has made a lot of efforts in the matching process, and successfully at that, quite a lot of foster parents state that their family's major problem is psychological. At this point the Evaluation Team asks whether one of the reasons psychological problems are so widespread are found in the foster parents' motivations. Many foster parents report that they would like a foster child because they wish to experience being a parent, their own children would like to have other children in the household and the like. These motivations may be seen as psychological in the sense that they are based on a wish to improve the foster family's own psychological well-being. It may well be that this is not a good point of departure, and that in some cases psychological problems in foster families are mere continuations of foster parents' prior psychological discomfort. Motivation based on a wish to improve one's own psychological well-being (or that of the family) should be treated with some special attention. It may well be that a foster child is no solution to psychological discomfort. Under any circumstance the orphan deserves to be protected from being used as the "ingredient" that will bring happiness and psychological ease to a household.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: The FFP and the organs of guardianship develop guidelines for weeding out candidates for foster families that seek to solve psychological discomfort.

Employees in institutions of child care

In cases where foster parents work in institutions of child care matching tends to take place by the employee taking one child of her liking into her family. This is bad matching, and smack of pick-and-

choose. Consequences should be evaluated. For children not being “adopted” by the employee this practice may prove to be harmful.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: People working in child care institutions are generally well-qualified for the task of being foster parents, and have proved to be so in the FFP. Nonetheless, in the future the FFP and guardianship organs should make sure they are not matched with children from their own work-place.

Methodological transfer value for the SOS Children's Villages

The Russian “family orphanages”, in which a family is extended with foster children after having been given a big flat, is in many ways quite similar to the SOS Children's Villages model. Up to eight children have used to live in this placement form that was partly abolished with the introduction of foster families. Foster families today still are very similar to the family orphanages, among them some in the FFP. They function well. This model is family-like. It differs from the SOS Children's Villages in the fact that families live in ordinary neighbourhoods.

- The Evaluation Team recommends: The FFP consider in what ways the experiences from SOS Children's Villages could be drawn upon in the work with large foster families.

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In addition:

Annual Reports of the Foster Family Project of 2001, 2002 and 2003

Quarterly Reports of the Foster Family Project of 2001 to the summer of 2004

Appendix 1

Terms-of-reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF SOS-BARNEBYER NORWAY'S FOSTER FAMILY PROJECT IN MURMANSK COUNTY, RUSSIA.

Background:

In 1998, SOS-barnebyer Norway commissioned the Fritjov Nansens Institute to conduct a research study in Murmansk to find out about the situation and needs for children in institutions in Murmansk Oblast. The study "Public Child Care on the Kola Peninsula – A Study of the System for Public Care of Orphans and Neglected Children on the Kola Peninsula" was carried out by three Norwegians and one Russian consultants.

The study gave clear indications that there was a great need of new ways of caring for orphan and abandoned children and SOS-barnebyer started a dialogue with the Regional Administration of Murmansk Oblast and the Murmansk Oblast Education Committee on possible cooperation on competence building and alternative child care models.

An agreement was signed between SOS-barnebyer and Murmansk Regional Administration 24th of May, 2000 on implementation of a Foster Family Project (FFP). The main aim of the FFP has been and still is competence building and implementation. In order to be able to build competence, SOS-barnebyer decided to sponsor the cost of up to 100 children in Foster Families both because the Authorities in Murmansk at that time was not able to finance these homes and in order to build competence, practical work with foster families was needed. The main training model for foster families and staff in municipalities, the county and institutions has since August 2002 been

PRIDE (Parent-Resources for Information- Development and Education).

Budget and total cost of the project:

SOS-barnebyer have supported the project with a total amount of NOK 10.484.259 since 1999 (the planning phase)

1999: NOK 196.304,-
2000: NOK 1.244.963,-
2001: NOK 3.522.193,-
2002: NOK 2.678.215,-
2003: NOK 2.842.584,-
Total: NOK 10.484.259,-

There has been no financial support from the Russian Authorities so far.

Objectives of the review:

The overall objective of the review is to find out whether the Foster Family Project has had a positive effect on local capacities and attitudes regarding placement of orphans in foster families.

The first part of the review will consist of an assessment of the immediate results of the FFP for the families and children involved. Has the FFP made any difference? Based on the findings from the first part, the review will proceed with an assessment of the extent to which the project is embedded in and has given input to the overall system of child-care in the Murmansk region. In a third part of the review an analysis is made of what made the project succeed and what could have been done in a better way. Finally the review will assess the potential for applying similar projects in other regions of Russia.

Many Norwegian private sponsors are supporting the FFP and SOS-barnebyer have put in a lot of financial and human resources. This is one reason why SOS-barnebyer wants to find out whether and how the investments have made any difference, and what could be improved. Another user of the review will be Russian Committee SOS Children's Villages that is going to take over the FFP from 2005. The review will allow them to know what framework and in what condition the project is in when they are taking over.

It must also be appraised to what extent the UN Convention on the Rights of Children is followed in the FFP and the foster families.

Issues to be covered:**Descriptive part:**

- Administrative and organisational set-up of the child care system in Murmansk
- Administrative and organisational set-up of the FFP project
- Why was the specific methodology chosen and how was it developed? Comparison to alternative approaches in Russia and in the Nordic countries.
- Quality and frequency of foster parent's professional and administrative reporting to the FFP office.
- Administrative and organisational set-up of the FFP project
- Description of foster parents; age, education, background, living conditions, income if this is recorded in the files and can be set up by the project administration itself etc.
- How are social guarantees for foster parents within the project?
- How are social, property, heritage and civil rights of the children protected within FFP
- What is the program or plan of work with children living within FFP?
- What is the future of children leaving FFP at the age of 18? Is there any definite plan of further work/guidance for the children?
- How is the Program of work with Foster parents and Program of Foster Parents Preparation for work with the children.

Professional competence, skills, knowledge, motivation of Regional Administration, Municipal level and institutions, Foster Families and Pride-instructors must be assessed.

Foster families:

A standard questionnaire with concrete questions to the foster parents will be made. In addition there will be some more in-depth interviews with a random selection of seven foster parents. Some of the questions to be covered should be as follows:

- How has the FFP affected the foster parents, foster children, biological children in the foster families (in any way)?
- How do the foster children in the foster families see their future, what vision do the foster parents have concerning their children's future.
- Professional support to foster families (quality, type and frequency)

- Quality of child development planning and plans.
- Fluctuation of foster parents.
- Contacts, involvement and cooperation between FFP, foster family and biological parents (or family)
- Process of foster parent selection and training (initial training and in-service training)
- Foster parents working like a supportive team and networking among the families.

Children:

- Child admission process; what children got placement, criteria for admission/departure and cooperation with local authorities in this respect, including administrative handling.
- Fluctuation/flow of children: return of children to institutions, transfer to other foster families, adoption or placement outside FFP.

Staff in the FFP:

- Professional competence of FFP office staff and possibilities for staff development and supervision.
- What kind of training and competence building have the staff received after employment with the SOS FFP.

External partners, stakeholders:

- Cooperation with partners (oblast, municipalities etc) during the set-up phase and the implementation process. Feedback from stakeholders, public: how was the project received and how is it perceived now?
- Impact on the project on the society/community – level of publicity and its effect on the public.
- Do the child care authorities in Murmansk feel an ownership to the model?
- Influence on the FFP on the international and national partners
- Professional competence of municipal and county administrative partners and possibilities for staff development.

Analysis

Evaluation of why the cooperation with Murmansk city municipality is not as fruitful as it could be – what are the blockers, obstacles and what could be done to overcome the obstacles?

The possibilities for the project to become sustainable in terms of policy, development and involvement of the Russian Authorities and SOS Russia.

Has the initial goal of having 100 children in the FFP by the end of 2003 been reached. If not, what are the reasons.

Methodology:

The study will make use of several methods, perusal of documents, in-depth interviews and a questionnaire to all foster parents taking part in FFP. A desk study will be made of relevant documents in Oslo and Murmansk. In-depth interviews will be made with a selection of foster parents, public servants in the relevant administrative agencies in Murmansk, other co-operating partner having taken part in the project.

The study will be based on desk studies of relevant documents, interviews and discussions with staff in SOS-barnebyer Norway and SOS-barnebyer Norway dept. Murmansk, central people in the Murmansk Regional Administration, staff in the municipalities involved in the project, foster families, children and other cooperating partners that have been involved in the project.

Therefore, most of the research work has to be done in Murmansk.

Recommendations:

Based on the above findings, the evaluation team should present recommendations to SOS-barnebyer Norway regarding the future “life” of the project and whether the model is applicable to other oblasts in North West Russia.

The review team:

The review team must consist of experts with relevant experience and knowledge of the childcare sector, implementation of expatriate project in a foreign country as well as knowledge about North West Russia. One of the review team’s members must be a Russian citizen.

Work Programme:

The review team shall

- undertake relevant studies and interviews in Norway
- undertake field studies in Murmansk Oblast with interviews according to what is mentioned above.
- Prepare a draft report for consideration by SOS-barnebyer Norway and SOS-barnebyer Norway dept. Murmansk in order to check the facts.

- Write final report after receiving comments

Time Frame:

The evaluation report has to be completed by the end of November 2004.

Oslo, 14. May, 2004

SOS-barnebyer
Berit Bakkane
Director of Project Department

Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Dear foster parent,

Questionnaire to all foster parents

As you probably know, the Russian–Norwegian Foster Family Project is being evaluated by a team of researchers from Arkhangelsk and Oslo. Members of the evaluation team have already talked to some of you, which was a pleasure for us. In order to get in-put from all you, the evaluation team has prepared a small questionnaire. We hope you find the time to fill it in. Remember, there is no “correct” answers here. Just tell what you think!

As soon as you have filled in the questionnaire, please send it to member of the evaluation team, Larisa S. , before 15 October (address below).

Yours sincerely,

Jørn Holm–Hansen
Head of the evaluation team

Questionnaire:

Please fill in this questionnaire. If you need more space for writing just use the back of the sheet.

Part A

1. How many foster children do you have?

2. What age are they?

3. How long have they lived in your family?

4. Do you have biological children?

5. What age are they?

6. Do you live in town or in the countryside?

Part B

7. What is your main motivation for taking the responsibility for a foster child/foster children?

8. What factor was most important when you decided to become a foster parent?

9. Before choosing to become a foster parent, did you ever consider adoption? Why/why not?

10. What do you consider the biggest difference between becoming a foster family and adopting a child?

11. How long do you think your foster child will stay in your home?

12. Do you know the identity of your foster child's/children's parents?

13. Does/do your foster child/children have contacts with its/their biological parents?

14. What do you think about such contacts, in general and in your own foster child's case?

Part C

15. All parents, and foster parents are no exception, do experience problems every now and then. Among the following three types of problems, which one has affected you the most, and the least? (Financial problems, problems related to living conditions, psychological problems)

16. How did you cope with the problems?

Part D

17. During the last six months, how often have you been in contact with the *FFP psychologists*

... by letter?

... on the phone?

... through visits?

18. During the last six months, how often have you been in contact with the *organ of guardianship*

... by letter?

... on the phone?

... through visits?

19. What do you find most useful of the following type/form of contact: visits, tests, telephones, conversations, other measures?

-
-

Please mail the questionnaire to Larisa S. , Faculty of Psychology and Social Work, Russia, 163061 g. Arkhangelsk, ul. Vyucheiskaia d. 31 (before 15 October)

Appendix 3

List of interviewees

Interviewee (s) and occupation	Institution	Date and place
Torbjørn Persen, Project manager of the FFP	SOS Children's Villages Norway	Murmansk, on several occasions May– June and August
Tat'iana Starodubova psychologist	FFP	Murmansk, on several occasions May– June and August
Seven foster parents, participants at meeting in the Union of Foster families		Olenogorsk, 29 May
Lidia Gudina, vice-mayor and Svetlana Rudneva, chief specialist	City administration and the city educational committee	Murmansk, 31 May
Galina A. Uvarova, child inspector in Kandalaksha	Town educational department	Kandalaksha, 1 and 2 June
Foster family I	–	Kandalaksha, 1 June
Foster family II	–	Luven'ga, 1 June
Foster family III	–	Kandalaksha, 2 June

Interviewee (s) and occupation	Institution	Date and place
Tat'iana Filatova, office manager	FFP	Murmansk, 3 June
Foster family IV	–	Murmansk, 3 June
Foster family V	–	Kola town, 3 June
Ludmila Polozova and Elena Pridatchenko	Committee of Education, Murmansk region	Murmansk 4, June and 2 August
Ol'ga Buch, head of International department	Technical University of Murmansk	Murmansk, 7 June
Anna Ulanova, administrative co-ordinator	FFP	Murmansk, 7 June and 8 August
Tat'iana Lamova, child inspector	Kola town department of education	Kola town, 8 June
Yurii V. Chudovski, national director	Russian Committee SOS Children's Villages	Oslo, 21 June
Elena Orlova, pedagogical co-ordinator	Russian Committee SOS Children's Villages	Moscow, 28 June
Marina Buniak, chief psychologist/professional co-ordinator	FFP	Murmansk/Varzuga, on several occasions in August
Aleksandr Kolobov, journalist	Public regional radio	Murmansk, 2 August
Full-time foster family specialist	Local level educational department, Kandalaksha	Kandalaksha, 3 August

Interviewee (s) and occupation	Institution	Date and place
Foster family VI	–	Varzuga, 4 August
Foster family VII	–	Varzuga, 4 August
Group of eight people	Former PRIDE course participants	Varzuga, 4 August
Father Mitrofan, priest	Orthodox Church	Varzuga, 4 August
Valerii Filipchenko, vice-mayor	Municipal administration	Umba, 5 August
Tamara Venorovna Petukhova, vice-head of administration Svetlana Nikoleevna Rudneva, head specialist	Murmansk city administration and city's educational committee	Murmansk, 6 August 2004
Natalia Chesnakova	State radio and TV, Murmansk	Murmansk, 6 August

The list includes both formal interviews and evaluation-related conversation where the professional purpose of the conversation was made clear by the members of the Evaluation Team. The foster families are not indicated by their names for reasons of privacy protection.

Title: **The Foster Family Project in Murmansk**
A review of SOS Children's Villages Norway's
foster family project in Murmansk region

Authors: Jørn Holm-Hansen, Marte Feiring
and Larisa S. Malik

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Project in Murmansk region, Russia».

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Head of project: Jørn Holm-Hansen

Abstract: The Foster Family Project (FFP) is a joint Russian–
Norwegian project aiming at making the foster
family institution strike roots in the Murmansk
region. The FFP has been carried out jointly
between the Educational Committee of the
Murmansk region and the SOS Children's Villages
Norway (Murmansk office) since 2000. By the end
of 2004 the FFP included altogether 89 foster
children in 60 foster families. The review finds that
it is the emphasis on psychological and social
aspects that make the FFP's involvement
innovative, but its economic contribution to the
foster family institution in Murmansk is
instrumental to making innovation happen.

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