

The combination of parenthood and work is challenging.

Sometimes parents feel stuck and don't know how to move forward.

The goal of PACE is to support parents in their search for childcare and employment.



This report is based on a focus group with nine parents that took place on June 26th 2018 in Brighton. This focus group was part of a study visit in the context of the INTERREG 2-Seas PACE project on access to childcare and employment. Thanks to the staff members who organised the focus group practically and who invited the parents. Many thanks to the parents who participated: your input is of great value to us!

The focus group

Why?

because the experiences of parents are crucial to know what works and what doesn't work in this project



What?

We asked parents about their PACE trajectory, about how PACE impacts their life, and about success factors and obstacles for them.

The parents

Nine parents, all of them mothers

2 to 4 children

Most parents are currently volunteering or following courses/training

Apart from one parent, all parents are fluent in English; Three parents are immigrants.

How did PACE start for you?

Parents were already visiting the Children's Centres or doing volunteer work in one of the Centres

Through health visitors or early years learners

Through flyers/leaflets



The impact of PACE



Parents feel supported in combining parenthood and work or education

- Structured approach, working towards goals
- Concrete information on finances (benefit calculation)

"I follow language courses and have a nursery place, which gave me the opportunity to study."



Parents value the trustful relationships with the VSDCs

- Ability to discuss personal, family and health problems
- Trust: "If you ask for help, you don't get a visit by social services."
- "PACE is like a therapy session"



Parents have more self-esteem and self-confidence

"PACE gave me more confidence and made me realise that I am not as stupid as I thought I was"



Meeting other parents, being more sociable.

"Not being isolated in your own bubble"

"I feel that I am more than just a mom. We are actually people" (a mother)

Success factors & barriers



A **trusting environment** is crucial for parents. Talking about problems is always a threshold. At the same time, if you cannot discuss your problems, you cannot work towards employment. VSDCs look a lot broader than just work.

"They understand and see that sometimes life gets in the way."

The VSDCs **encourage** parents to always go one step further. At the same time, you have to put as much effort in as a parent.

"You have to work hard because they work hard."

The VSDCs give **direction and support**. They give parents ideas and opportunities.

- Volunteering, career counseling, training for job interviews, ...

"My VSDC is really good. I don't know what I would have done without her."



Childcare remains a major obstacle on the route to employment

- Childcare remains too expensive, lack of affordable childcare
- Lack of flexible childcare and childcare offered during school holidays

Lack of **work** adapted to being a parent. Very little employee-drive flexibility.

- Lack of term-time jobs
- Lack of local jobs (travelling time job - childcare - school should be limited)
- Lack of jobs matching school and childcare hours

Being a parent on your own.

- Being dependent of others or completely alone: both things are bad
- Lack of time for yourself
- "Children are always an obstacle because they are our top priority"

What would be a good PACE result?

Part time work with employee-drive flexibility in order to combine work and parenthood

A stable income/secure contract

Good budgeting skills, learning to use the system in a smart way

More flexibility in the sessions offered in childcare

A PACE parent "community"

Possibility for follow-up after PACE



Reflection questions

- How can we create more opportunities for (PACE) parents to meet each other, exchange experience and support each other, after the end of PACE?
- How can we take good care of the VSDC team? They have to invest a lot of effort in PACE and are crucial to the success of the project.
- How can we raise employers' awareness of childcare issues for parents?
- How can we ensure that parents have room to discuss personal problems and can build a trusting relationship with the VSDCs, and at the same time make progress towards employment with enough parents?
- How can we encourage child care settings to offer sessions more flexibly so to make it possible for parents to combine childcare and employment?

