



## PODCAST WITH FOSTER CARE SOCIAL WORKERS

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### PART 2: Meeting as a form of participation

Lisselotte

If you look specifically to the participation part with young children, what challenges are there?

Katrijn

Young children are a real challenge for us. I am now mainly working with children from 6 to 12 years old. We feel that this is also a young age. Also, the age category of 6 to 12 is very diverse; a child of 6 is not at all like a child of 12.

We feel that the children who come to that meeting group mainly come to meet purely. We sometimes try to start conversations about the assistance or about how the child feels at home. There are certain things that we think are important in the story of a child, but often they do not actually want to go into it.

So it is often a bit of a search to really work with them in terms of content. We don't always have the right methodologies or the right tools for that. We are therefore looking for ways to use the time we have with the children together.

We also invite widely; everyone is welcome. As a result, the group is always different, which does not ensure that it becomes a safe group. A few children always come. But often there are also new children. This makes it difficult to talk about vulnerable issues.

That is why we mainly focus on the meeting. We ask ourselves to what extent should we put substantive issues on the table here?

Ilse

Actually, that meeting has the biggest theme and the biggest goal. We organize activities and play together. The next activity is the Halloween- activity. Then we go to a sports hall and play a trip around the world. That's where we play, so we don't talk about guidance efforts.

We notice that this is the way to let children speak. We suddenly see things arise. Then a child suddenly says: "*Do you also live with your grandmother?*" After which a whole conversation follows, and children of 3 or 4 are talking to each other about this. "*How do you feel about living with your grandmother?*" "*And how's that for you?*"

These are things that arise spontaneously during meetings and that we, as supervisors, respond to. But as a supervisor of the meeting group, you will start with substantive themes and do fun things

together. We go to the zoo, to a football stadium, do crafts together, bake cookies, go to the forest, etc.

Katrijn

We really let the experiences come from that group and the spontaneity of the children.

Ilse

Yes, and above all, letting them experience that they are not the only foster child, that is the greatest strength in that meeting. By seeing that there are still children who do not live with their own mom and dad, I am not alone here and that is sometimes enough to give a little trust and recognition to those children.

Nele

What motivated you as an organization to organize this meeting? Where does this come from?

Ilse

My opinion, participation is thinking and knowing along. You can only create this by organizing meetings, by bringing people together, like-minded people who get to know each other, who can grow - passing on signals to improve the aid.