

Theory *meets* Practice

ThemPra Social Pedagogy C.I.C.

ANNUAL REPORT
ON THEMPRA'S
COMMUNITY INTEREST ACTIVITIES
2011/2012

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www.themptra.org.uk

ThemPra Social Pedagogy Community Interest Company



1. WHO WE ARE

ThemPra Social Pedagogy Community Interest Company is a social enterprise committed to supporting the development of social pedagogy in the UK. Our name stands for a strong connection between theory and practice, which is fundamental to social pedagogy. In our understanding, theory meets practice for one single purpose: we believe that children and young people deserve the best we can offer, and we are dedicated to improving their life experiences through holistic and child-centred services.

We established ThemPra following a pilot training in social pedagogy, which we designed and delivered for the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care (NCERCC) in 2007 and which clearly demonstrated the manifold immediate and long-term benefits that social pedagogy offers to children in and on the edge of care.

ThemPra contributes to the development of a UK construction of social pedagogy through the promotion and sustainable implementation of social pedagogy in organisations working with children & young people. We have been pioneering social pedagogy with statutory, voluntary and independent organisations across the UK since 2007 – through training courses and systemic implementation strategies – and also contribute more by writing publications, giving presentations and facilitating workshops and seminars. In 2009 we also started co-ordinating the Social Pedagogy Development Network (SPDN), which we set up in partnership with the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) and Jacaranda Recruitment.

We believe that social pedagogy offers a clear and coherent framework that enables practitioners at all levels and organisations from a wide range of disciplines to make best use of their professional, personal and practical expertise. We want to help achieve this in dialogue with social organisations, exploring ways for a sustainable implementation of social pedagogy. In our experience, social pedagogy offers a coherent framework that many practitioners can relate to both professionally and personally, and which builds on their own experience. But social pedagogy is not just for the practitioners working with children directly, it requires a whole systems approach. As a community interest company we endeavour to ensure that whatever we do will ultimately benefit children and young people.

Behind ThemPra are our three directors Sylvia Holthoff, Gabriel Eichsteller and Andy Carter, our two UK-based associates Robyn Kemp and Alexandra Priver, as well as our two Danish associates Charlotte Firing and Christina Bornemann. Back in 2007, Sylvia and Gabriel developed and facilitated the first social pedagogy seminars in the UK for the pilot project run by the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care and funded by the Social Education Trust (SET). As part of that project Robyn introduced us to residential child care in the UK. Through this we also met Mike Tidball, former trustee of the SET, who helped us set up ThemPra and acted as third director and company secretary until his retirement in July 2010.



Since then ThemPra has grown, and we've met many more people who have become friends and supporters. Alex Priver started work with us on the Essex project in early 2010 as co-facilitator. Andy Carter joined us in August 2010 with lots of excitement and creative ideas to take over Mike's role and expand it further. And Christina Bornemann and Charlotte Firing began their introduction to the world of ThemPra in February 2011 and have quickly become important contributors to our projects, especially the EU Leonardo Mobility.

In order to drive social pedagogy forward and to expand from these experiences we have set up a social enterprise which symbolizes the synergy of social pedagogy in theory and practice: ThemPra. ThemPra stands for *TheorymeetsPractice*, which reflects our style of working and way of thinking. We have set ourselves the ambitious overarching aim to support the development and implementation of social pedagogy in the UK in various ways, some of which are outlined below.

2. INTRODUCTION

Set up in September 2008, ThemPra Social Pedagogy has now been in existence for four years during which we have built an impressive track record of pioneering projects in England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland along with a range of other activities aimed at improving professionals' understanding of social pedagogy in theory and practice. This short report aims to provide a brief overview of what we have achieved in our third year and how our work has benefitted the community of professionals and children in care we have set out to serve.

Community Interest Statement

ThemPra Social Pedagogy Community Interest Company provides benefits to various groups within the general community. Through its emphasis on social pedagogy ThemPra promotes a positive approach to children and young people, particularly those looked after by local authorities.

There is overwhelming evidence that children and young people benefit in their personal and social development where professionals are trained social pedagogues (see research by Thomas Coram Research Unit, University of London – Petrie et. al, 2006). This is especially relevant for those children and young people who are disadvantaged as they can be helped to achieve better outcomes and improve their life experiences through a social pedagogic approach (cf. conference by the international child care organisation FICE International and National Children's Bureau, 18/01/2008).

The pilot training in social pedagogy, which we designed and delivered for the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care in 2007 (see National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care/Social Education Trust report: Introducing Social Pedagogy into Residential Child Care in England, 2008), clearly demonstrates the manifold immediate and long term benefits that Social Pedagogy offers to children in public care.

The issues were discussed in a workshop in Ghent, Belgium in October 2007 involving several local authorities and voluntary agencies in the UK with social pedagogues from a number of European countries. The impact of this work on practice and thinking in individual children's homes managed by these agencies is now being independently evaluated by Dave Crippens, Reader in Children's Social Care and Education at the University of Lincoln.

ThemPra will offer a variety of services, described below, which will complement the interest in social pedagogy of the Department of Children Schools and Families and also the academic work of the Thomas Coram Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London.

Our focus will be to provide a service to local authorities, voluntary and private agencies, based on the assessment of their needs, to improve the quality and focus of their work practice, within a businesslike framework agreed between ThemPra and its clients. This has already generated very positive support from a number of local authorities and other agencies in the UK, with whom we have already worked, and we have received a number of enquires expressing interest for the future.

While we ultimately aim to contribute to improving the lives of children and young people, we are aware that this requires raising the quality of the children's and young people's workforce. Therefore ThemPra will predominantly educate and train professionals in social pedagogy.

ThemPra Social Pedagogy Community Interest Company

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3. ACTIVITIES IN 2010/2011

From the outset, ThemPra defined its activities in four different strands and envisioned the benefit to the community as follows:

Activity	Benefit to the community
<p>Activity Strand I: Providing personal and professional development courses and consultancy to children's and young people's workforce</p>	<p>Thoroughly trained professionals who are capable of using core pedagogic principles in their practice, thereby improving children's and young people's overall well-being and personal and social development. It must also be noted that this serves to improve professionals' self-confidence, knowledge, abilities and skills.</p>
<p>Activity Strand II: Promoting social pedagogy through workshops, conferences, public speaking, publications, partnership working and networking with similar-minded or interested organisations</p>	<p>Professionals are offered opportunities to consider how they can adopt a social pedagogic approach.</p> <p>These activities are also suitable to drive the implementation of social pedagogy forward on a national level, raising awareness for the benefits of using social pedagogy and how this will reflect on the Government's strategy and outcomes for children and young people's in "Every Child Matters".</p>
<p>Activity Strand III: Conducting research in adaptability and advantages of working with a social pedagogic approach</p>	<p>Since social pedagogy is still a new approach in the UK, though not in other European countries where it has been established for many years, much will have to be done in order to convince the children's workforce and their managers of the benefits.</p> <p>By conducting academic research and ensuring scientific evaluation of ThemPra's work, we aim to provide evidence as well as find out what approach in adopting social pedagogy is most viable.</p> <p>This will help other professionals to consider different options as to how they can make best use of social pedagogy within their work context. Our work will also complement the work of other academics in the U.K.</p>
<p>Activity Strand IV: Developing accredited qualifications enabling practitioners to train in social pedagogic approaches to care and education</p>	<p>As most practitioners are qualified at NVQ level, we aim to provide opportunities for them to gain an accredited qualification in social pedagogic approaches for care and education.</p> <p>We hope this will have the double effect of qualifying the workforce better using present and familiar structures and will possibly encourage some practitioners to pursue an academic qualification during their career.</p> <p>The aim of up-skilling the children's and young people's workforce is very much in line with Government initiatives and the work of the Children's Workforce Development Council.</p>

Here is a list of the activities we have undertaken in each of these strands to benefit the community of children in public care and the professionals who look after them in

children's residential home, foster care settings or are otherwise connected to looked-after children:

3.1 ACTIVITY STRAND I:

Between October 2011 and September 2012 we were working together with a variety of organisations to support them in developing social pedagogy. In Scotland these included Aberlour Sycamore Services in Kirkcaldy and the Dundee Early Intervention Team, Kibble Care and Education Centre in Paisley, and Edinburgh City Council's Residential Services; in England we continued working with Staffordshire County Council's Residential Services and Walsall Council's Residential Services; and in Northern Ireland we collaborated with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. As part of these projects we developed social pedagogy in over 20 residential homes for children through direct work with teams, strategic support and intensive social pedagogy educational courses, which were attended by over 150 participants.

During the same period we also began work on the Head, Heart, Hands programme, which aims to demonstrate the potential of social pedagogy for foster care. Led by the Fostering Network and funded by a consortium including Comic Relief, KPMG Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the programme includes 6 demonstration sites across England and Scotland. ThemPra is pleased to be the delivery partner in 4 of the sites and working together with Jacaranda Development and Prof. Pat Petrie from the Institute of Education, University of London, to create unique learning situations for foster carers and social workers around social pedagogy. Work on the programme officially started in June 2012, with courses due to commence in early 2013.

Aberlour Sycamore Services:

Our work with Sycamore built on the developments initiated through the annual 9-day courses we have been facilitating since autumn 2008, and over the year we ran another 3 9-day social pedagogy courses for practitioners from Aberlour. Importantly, we also facilitated 2 3-day social pedagogical leadership courses for Sycamore Services and Aberlour in order to develop organizational commitment to social pedagogy and help leaders reflect on how they can further embed social pedagogy within their organisational culture. Aberlour were also keen to be involved in the Head, Heart, Hands programme and are now one of the sites supported by ThemPra.

Dundee Early Intervention Team:

This innovative project jointly run by Aberlour, Action for Children, Barnardo's and Children 1st aims to support families in problem situation using a social pedagogical framework. When the project was set up we were asked to work together with the new team and provide a 9-day course in social pedagogy. Since then the team has been closely connected to the Social Pedagogy Development Network and shared their creative ways of working with families in a social pedagogical way.

Kibble Care & Education:

Kibble has been interested in social pedagogy for some time, and, in an effort to improve the standard of qualifications for Scottish residential care workers, Kibble has teamed up with ThemPra and the University of the West of Scotland to develop a BA degree in social pedagogy. As part of this work, we started running a 6-day introductory module in social pedagogy for Kibble staff. Uniquely, we have begun to involve 4 professionals from Kibble in the facilitation, with the aim of enabling them to independently run the introductory module internally. This has been both a challenging and exciting process that is continuing in 2013.

Edinburgh Residential Services:

Following the participation of 7 practitioners from Edinburgh's children's homes in our CELCIS-funded social pedagogy courses, Edinburgh City Council asked us to facilitate an in-house 9-day course in social pedagogy. This enabled a further 16 practitioners to be trained and also helped create further momentum. In the meantime several practitioners have set up Edinburgh Momentum as a way to connect and harness all the social pedagogy activities in Edinburgh. Also, the Fostering Service successfully applied to be a demonstration site in the Head, Heart, Hands programme run by the Fostering Network in partnership with ourselves and Jacaranda. This means that we can continue our relationship with Edinburgh in the future.

Staffordshire:

Four years into our collaboration with Staffordshire's looked-after children's service, there were further significant developments around social pedagogy. Staffordshire decided to join our application for EU Leonardo Mobility funding to send 4 of its practitioners to Copenhagen in 2013. Its Fostering Service applied to be part of the Head, Heart, Hands programme in order to introduce social pedagogy into foster care, and as a delivery partner ThemPra thus also started work with Staffordshire's Fostering Service. Ongoing contact with the 3 in-house children's homes included facilitating team development seminars to support teams in further creating a social pedagogical culture, active involvement in the strategy group for the project, and supporting the service in setting up a practitioners' network.

Walsall:

Our work with Walsall was mainly focussed on supporting their ongoing social pedagogy journey at a time of organisational change. This included regular communication and external supervision of the social pedagogue working in one of Walsall's children's homes, a further reflection day with the teams from the homes, as well as the offer for Walsall to act as a sending organisation in our EU Leonardo Mobility project in 2013.

Belfast:

The social pedagogy journey at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust continued this year with two additional social pedagogy courses and further support for the children's homes through reflection days.

Although the economic climate within the residential care sector has remained very bleak, there has been continued substantial interest in social pedagogy. This is particularly reflected in attendance at the Social Pedagogy Development Network (see below), which has continued to increase membership to well over 600. Furthermore, there are ever more case studies about how social pedagogy can make a positive difference for children and young people as well as the professionals working with them.

3.2 ACTIVITY STRAND II:

Social Pedagogy Development Network

Between October 2011 and September 2012 we again co-ordinated two meetings of the Social Pedagogy Development Network, which were hosted by Kibble Care & Education (7th October, 2011) and by the Institute of Technology in Sligo (25th May, 2012). Both were very well-attended and ensured ongoing dialogue and learning around social pedagogy amongst professionals from a wide range of backgrounds. Further details about each event of the SPDN can be found at www.themptra.org.uk/SPDNmeetings.htm, and we have also included a detailed description of how the SPDN reflects ThemPra's efforts in serving the community.

In order to provide a forum for professionals who are passionate about social pedagogy and want to explore it further, we decided to set up the Social Pedagogy Development Network (SPDN) in late 2009. Co-ordinated and facilitated by us at ThemPra, it is organised in partnership with the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU) and Jacaranda Recruitment. It is always hosted by a different organisation keen to share their experiences around social pedagogy. Over the course of six events the SPDN has become a grassroots movement for people and organisations that are interested in social pedagogy and want to nurture it at a local and national level. The network is underpinned by social pedagogic principles of engaging in open dialogue, valuing people and their experiences, and connecting with others in a democratic way. Social pedagogy is thus brought to life in people's unique ways, and through the exchange and relationships with others we can ensure that it grows on ideas and traditions from within the UK, whilst also being inspired by ideas and traditions from other countries. For this reason the SPDN offers an 'oasis' that encourages a rich and colourful diversity of social pedagogy 'flowers' to blossom together. This means we provide the conditions for participants to engage with each other around the themes or issues that people feel most passionate about, thus enabling shared ownership for the SPDN.

Most importantly, the network is based on the idea of parallel action (Burns, 2007) which suggests that change occurs where people can pursue what matters to them. By forming self-organised 'clusters' they can initiate multiple, creative and parallel action streams which reinforce each other, thus leading to change. Parallel action streams could be regional networks of organisations interested or engaged in social pedagogy, higher education institutions wanting to explore how to incorporate social pedagogy into qualifications, people with an interest in restorative justice or therapeutic child care getting together to think how these relate to social pedagogy, different providers forming alliances to promote social pedagogy at a political level, or interested organisations exploring opportunities for (inter-)national exchanges – the SPDN provides the forum for such groups to emerge. In a nutshell, the SPDN is about bringing together small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens in order to make a difference.

To keep the development of social pedagogy diverse and colourful, we want to enable as many organisations as possible to be part of this dialogue. Therefore places are free of charge, with different organisations agreeing to host one of the biannual meetings. So far, the SPDN has met six times with a total of over 600 participants from more than 200 different organisations. Interestingly, there has been a fantastic mix of participants' backgrounds, ranging from frontline practitioners, senior managers and policy-makers to students and academics – some with an emerging curiosity about social pedagogy, others with a well-rounded understanding. All of them have been keen to bring their passion and expertise to the table and thus engage in the dialogue from a social work, youth work, residential child care, foster care, outdoor education, teaching, early years, children's advocacy, family support, community work, health care and psycho-therapeutic perspective. Through the enthusiastic interest within Camphill Communities we've also had participants working with adults with disabilities bring their tradition and philosophy to social pedagogy, thereby demonstrating the relevance of social pedagogy for adult services. In a social pedagogic spirit further perspectives are very much welcomed at the SPDN.

Each SPDN meeting aims to provide a flavour of social pedagogy to those who are relatively new to the subject whilst also offering opportunities to further develop the wider discourse around social pedagogy, for instance by exploring particular themes throughout the different meetings. Usually initiated by a short presentation from a leading academic and then further discussed by all participants, themes have so far included:

- ▲ the diversity of social pedagogy internationally (by Prof. Juha Hämäläinen, University of Eastern Finland);
- ▲ discovering traditions in the UK which are of a social pedagogical nature (by Prof. Pat Petrie, Institute of Education);
- ▲ the relationship between theory and practice in social pedagogy (by Jan Storø, University College Oslo and Akershus);

- ▲ exploring how social pedagogy could help rediscover the importance of ethics as first practice (by Mark Smith, University of Edinburgh);
- ▲ the relevance of non-violent communication in a learning perspective (by Bodil Weirsøe, University College Sjælland);
- ▲ resisting risk-averse practice and helping children develop risk competence (by Ian Milligan, Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care);
- ▲ rediscovering group work as a social pedagogical tradition (by David Crimmens, University of Lincoln);
- ▲ inclusion in a social pedagogic perspective (by Lotte Harbo, VIA University College Århus);
- ▲ the emphasis on creativity within social pedagogy and its potential for the creative arts (by Prof. Pat Petrie, IoE);
- ▲ and how to use puppets in dialogue with children and young people (by Elisabeth Grønning, University College Oslo and Akershus).

What distinguishes the SPDN meetings from a conference though is the strong emphasis on dialogue and providing an open forum for participants to relate their own thoughts and perspectives to these themes. By jointly engaging in a meaning-making process we can arrive at a better understanding of what the key principles are in social pedagogy, how social pedagogy can be conceptualised in different practice settings and what it can contribute to improving these. This process is further made meaningful through several organisations sharing examples from developing social pedagogy within their organisational culture in different ways and their experiences, challenges and learning.

As social pedagogy is about engaging with 'head, heart and hands', SPDN meetings also have an active aspect to them. Besides the enjoyment and energy built up through these social pedagogical activities, they help provide participants with a practical understanding of what social pedagogy is about as they help build positive relationships between participants by engaging in a shared activity – or what social pedagogues call 'the Common Third'. For instance, the process participants went through when given a challenge – to build in small groups with very few materials a protective device for a raw egg about to be dropped from a balcony – led to fascinating reflections about how relationships had quickly developed amongst people who had never met but had to solve an intriguing challenge together; how different roles were developed, allocated or claimed within each group and what contributions these roles could make within a group; how important it was to groups whether the egg would break and how they valued the process compared to the outcome; and how participants drew on their creativity to find unique solutions for protecting the egg, realising that their creativity was perhaps the most important resource.

Whilst the SPDN offers unique opportunities for participants' own professional development, its main concern is to help participants connect to like-minded professionals both regionally and nationally in order to influence wider change for

children and young people. The idea is very simply to 'be the change you wish to see in the world' as Gandhi stated. This spirit seems to strongly resonate with participants who bring to the SPDN a palpable passion and determination to use social pedagogy as a catalyst for improving conditions for children and young people. For them, social pedagogy encapsulates why they decided to work with children and young people in the first place and connects to their professional and personal philosophies, which is why it brings out a level of passion which has much impressed international guests who have joined some of the SPDN meetings in the past. Considering the collective determination, the future seems a little brighter and we hope that more participants from a wider range of professions are eager to join us at one of our next meetings to help us develop more compelling visions of how to improve services for children and young people through social pedagogy.

Publications

As an important aspect of reaching a wide audience and contributing to the discourse around social pedagogy, we have continued to write both academic and practice-based publications. This has proven a central way to share developments, address gaps in the literature available and generally increase professionals' understanding of social pedagogy in theory and practice. It has additionally helped establish ThemPra's profile both within academic and practice circles.

- ▲ Having spent some time in the summer of 2011 on guest-editing a *Children Australia* special issue on social pedagogy, the journal issue was published in December 2011. We have succeeded in making all articles, which include papers by ThemPra's people as well as esteemed academics such as Claire Cameron (Anglia Ruskin University), Ian Milligan (University of Strathclyde), Filip Coussée (University of Ghent), Howard Williamson (University of Glamorgan) and Lotte Harbo (VIA University College Århus), available free of charge at www.thempra.org.uk/childreinaustralia.htm. This has meant that our hard work in putting together this special issue can benefit practitioners, students and academics worldwide.
- ▲ Another key publication aimed to generate a better understanding of how social pedagogy can make a difference was a report by Sylvia Holthoff and Gabriel Eichsteller titled 'The Art of Being a Social Pedagogue'. It described how our work with Essex County Council on the 3-year implementation of social pedagogy across its 12 children's homes had impacted on practice and culture in the homes. The full report is available at www.thempra.org.uk/essex.htm and was also promoted in several ways.
- ▲ Perhaps the most significant achievement with regards to publications has been the launch of a new open-access online journal titled *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*. The idea of setting up an academic journal that would connect social pedagogy theory and practice had been with us for a while, and in the summer of 2012 we decided to team up with the Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy at the Institute of Education to realise our vision. The summer was

thus busy with preparations, creating an open access online platform, setting up an editorial board, and, of course, peer reviewing and editing papers. The inaugural issue of *IJSP* was published in October 2012 and is available for free at www.InternationalJournalOfSocialPedagogy.com. We envisage that this endeavour will continue to keep us busy and make an important contribution to the field of social pedagogy in the UK as well as beyond.

Conferences and seminars

As part of our work around promoting a wider understanding of social pedagogy, ThemPra personnel presented at several conferences in 2011/2012. Robyn Kemp and Alexandra Priver ran a workshop at the Social Work Action Network (SWAN) Conference in Liverpool in April 2012. The workshop was titled 'Exploring the potential of social pedagogy in social care settings' and attracted a broad audience of social workers eager to learn about social pedagogy.

In May 2012, Sylvia Holthoff and Gabriel Eichsteller were keynote speakers at the Project Adventure Conference held in Prague by the Vacation School Lipnice. Our presentation on developing risk competence in working with children was translated into Czech for the audience, which consisted of outdoor education workers, youth workers and teachers from across the Czech Republic. This was a great honour for us and illustrated the international interest our work is beginning to attract.

The annual SIRCC Conference in June 2012 provided another opportunity to talk about social pedagogy. Together with Jeremy Millar from the Robert-Gordon-University in Aberdeen, Gabriel spoke about the importance of a critical-political perspective in social pedagogy and how social pedagogy could help Scottish social work express an ethical and political perspective.

Website

A further useful tool to increase the understanding of social pedagogy is our website, www.themptra.org.uk. Rather than just featuring details on our services, it contains an impressive amount of resources about the history of social pedagogy, key theoretical concepts, insights into social pedagogical practice, case studies, information about the SPDN, further learning options and much more. The website now also includes an overview of social pedagogy in the UK, specifying a number of different organisations actively involved in social pedagogy. We hope that this will become a useful tool in connecting people and organisations at a local level as well as beyond. Over the last year we have continued to expand and update the website and have connected it more to related websites and forums, such as www.Social-PedagogyUK.com, www.cyc-net.org, the www.ChildrenWebmag.com, www.GoodEnoughCaring.com and others. As a result our number of visitors has increased to an average of 9,100 unique visits monthly, with a total of around 180,000 page views over the entire year. This demonstrates that the website has become a well-recognised and frequented online resource providing relevant background details rather than be a self-marketing tool. It has prompted several

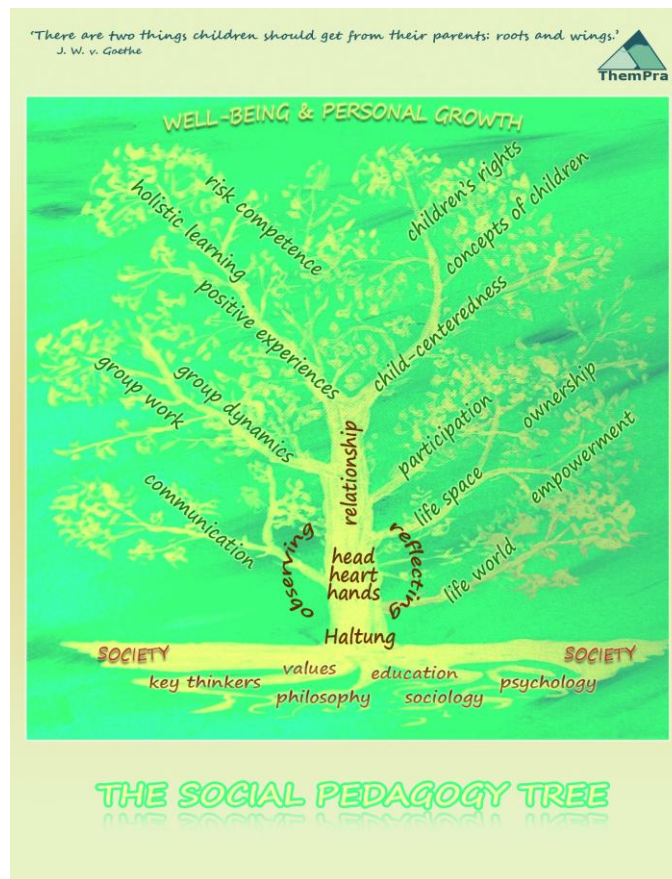
inquiries from students eager to learn where to find further resources, which we've happily answered.

Social Media

Over the last year we have introduced more social media communication in order to share, raise awareness and educate. Our Twitter account (@SocialPedagogy) has attracted around 100 followers and links into our website, thus providing the latest news and updates instantly. Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ThemPraSocialPedagogy) has been another way of communicating with previous course participants and the wider world. We have also been active in posting in the Social Pedagogy group on Facebook, which has become an excellent way of connecting practitioners and members of the SPDN.

Social Pedagogy tree postcards

As a more creative form of raising interest for social pedagogy and people's understanding of what it constitutes, we have continued to distribute around 500 postcards with a model we have developed to illustrate what social pedagogy is about. SIRCC offered to print these in A5 format to distribute within the sector. As the actual understanding of the roots, concepts and elements of social pedagogy is still somewhat vague amongst many professionals, these postcards with the so-called Social Pedagogy Tree (see below) helped to capture people's interest and were very positively received. Several inquiries reached us asking for further copies of the social pedagogy postcards, which we provided for free.



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3.3 ACTIVITY STRAND III:

At ThemPra, we have been keen to contribute to the emerging research perspectives around social pedagogy in the UK and to provide more evidence about how social pedagogy can be put into practice. Thanks to European Union funding, we have been able to make some headway with our ambitions. In early 2011 we applied for EU Leonardo Mobility funding in order to undertake an innovative project that explored the meaning-making process of practitioners from the UK. As part of the project, two groups of residential care and fostering social workers undertook a 2-week mobility to Copenhagen in March and November 2012 and experienced social pedagogic practice first-hand during two placements: one in a children's home and another one in a day-care facility. The project, which we ran in partnership with Danish-based Common View and our two UK sending organisations Care Visions Group Ltd. and Lancashire County Council, began in June 2011 and will conclude in March 2013. Whilst the mobility itself is fully funded, ThemPra have decided to invest heavily in the preparation and the dissemination process as we believe that these first-hand experiences of working alongside social pedagogues in Denmark will not only provide unique learning opportunities for participants but also offer significant reflections on how we can improve care practice in the UK. For this purpose we have undertaken a range of dissemination activities, including a live interview with Radio Edutalk¹, posting participant reports at www.thempra.org.uk/mobility and presenting the project at an SPDN event in front of over 100 participants, including the Scottish Government ministers. We also had dissemination meetings with sector leaders, such as CELCIS and Children in Scotland to inform them of our key findings. Thanks to a further successful bid, we will be able to continue this important project in 2013 with even more sending organisations: Staffordshire County Council, Walsall Council, and Aberlour Sycamore Services have all been keen to send participants.

In early 2012 we also facilitated an EU Youth in Action funded feasibility visit – a weekend at Braziers Park in Oxfordshire to bring together a group of young people from Lancashire, Aberlour Sycamore Services and Behandlingshjemmet Bøgholt near Århus, Denmark. The idea was borne out of our recognition that, whilst there are increasingly more adult perspectives on the benefits of social pedagogy for looked-after children, there haven't been sufficient attempts to gain insights into what children in care might think of social pedagogy. By introducing 2 young people looked after in a Danish, an English and a Scottish organisations respectively to each other, we were able to explore in a little more detail what it is like to live in care in different countries and what young people from different cultural backgrounds have in common. We also gathered ideas for facilitating an international youth exchange and wanted to ensure that the young people could shape the project from the very

¹ The interview with Gabriel Eichsteller and two mobility participants is available online at: <http://edutalk.cc/radioedutalk-18-4-12-social-pedagogy-scottish> (last access 12/06/13)

beginning. Unfortunately, so far we have not had an opportunity to progress with a bid for further funding.

In addition, the ongoing research and evaluation of ThemPra's projects as well as the dissemination of interim results have helped and will continue to help achieve the intended benefits to the community, which are to demonstrate the importance of social pedagogy in developing high-quality practice that is grounded in relevant interdisciplinary theory, humanistic values and children's rights. Most notably, our Essex report² and Vrouwenfelder et al's³ report on our training course with an inter-professional group on Orkney provided further evidence of the relevance of social pedagogy.

3.4 ACTIVITY STRAND IV:

Whilst social pedagogy is a full-time 3½ year BA degree in most European countries, many professional groups in the UK that we've been working with are significantly less highly qualified than their continental counterparts. Therefore, ThemPra has been keen on being involved in attempts to develop closer links with UK universities running a social pedagogy degree and to create a clearer structure of what a social pedagogy course should entail. For this purpose we have been part of the CUSP Development Group, which discusses ways of quality assuring social pedagogy qualifications in the UK. Gabriel and Sylvia have also been asked to teach on the BA course in social pedagogy jointly run by the University of Aberdeen and Camphill School Aberdeen. And Robyn has accepted a part-time lecturing position at Anglia-Ruskin-University with a view to introduce social work students to social pedagogy.

As we remain committed to providing vocationally based learning opportunities through our social pedagogy courses, we have continued our partnership with Kibble and the University of the West of Scotland. So far, this has led to an accredited module based on our 6-day social pedagogy course. Whilst this has only been delivered to Kibble staff, the accreditation option is open to other course participants of ThemPra and enables them to gain 20 credits at SQCF level 7 (first year of a BA degree).

² Eichsteller, G. & Holthoff, S. (2012). *The Art of Being a Social Pedagogue: Practice Examples from Children's Homes in Essex*. Allithwaite: ThemPra Social Pedagogy. Available online: <http://www.socialpedagogy.co.uk/downloads/Essex%20Report%202012.pdf>

³ Vrouwenfelder, E., Milligan, I. & Merrell, M. (2012). *Social Pedagogy and Interprofessional Practice - Evaluation of Orkney Islands Training Programme*. Glasgow: CELCIS. Available online: <http://www.celcis.org/media/resources/publications/Social-Pedaqogy-Report-web.pdf>

4. CONCLUSIONS

ThemPra's fourth business year has brought about significant developments. Alongside a slight reduction in delivering training courses – mainly due to the cessation of our 3-year project with Essex County Council – we have increased our portfolio of projects, with important additions such as the Head, Heart, Hands programme in foster care, the EU Leonardo Mobility project and the *International Journal of Social Pedagogy* promising to keep us busy for the foreseeable future. In this respect, ThemPra has continued to play an influential role in developing social pedagogy and has established itself as a leading organisation providing high-quality services.

It has been very important to us to continue to build strong relationships with key organisations in the UK and to develop positive partnerships, most notably with Prof. Pat Petrie from the Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy at the Institute of Education and with Jacaranda Development. We have been very pleased to be able to continue working with nearly all organisations that we've been engaged with previously, which demonstrates both the satisfaction with what we can contribute to other organisations' development and that these are more than sterile business relationships. Importantly, these relationships have developed in ways that demonstrate organisations' emerging resourcefulness around social pedagogy. This has enabled us to continue to see very positive outcomes of the social pedagogy processes we have helped initiate and develop over the last four years. The energy and enthusiasm that many of the people we've worked with have brought to these processes has been frequently palpable and reaffirmed us in our belief that social pedagogy has an important contribution to make in creating the best possible conditions for children in care to grow.

Overall, our fourth year has been more challenging than it may sound, but we have visibly grown through these challenges and taken much learning from them. As before, we have been very fortunate to be on this journey together with a great many friends – professionals who share our vision of social pedagogy and are dedicated to developing better conditions for children and young people. We are confident that the years ahead will be just as exciting and enable us to make further contributions.

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