

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE	
1. Title of the practice	
Integration pathways for Young People Leaving the Care System	
2. Organisation responsible for the practice	
Bucharest's 6th District General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection	
3. Contact person(s)	
Name /	Mihaela Dragoi
E-mail	office@dgaspc6.com
4. Summary of the practice	
<p>Bucharest's 6th District General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection offers integrated services for children without parental care. Young people in the child protection system continue to receive support after 18 years old via various projects. Young people enrolled in education programmes are supported until the age of 26 years old through partnerships with NGOs. These partnerships help to facilitate their access to a shelter, workplace and to get skills for an independent life. The Directorate, along with its partners which are funded by the Directorate itself, are financing programmes and annually supporting approximately 10 young people who have the legal age to leave the child protection system.</p> <p>For young people leaving residential care, Bucharest District 6 General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection identifies the necessary resources within the community in order to reach the objective of young people's integration. Housing services are provided through developed organisation programmes with the help and support of civil society. Formal education and healthcare are provided by dedicated institutions. Informal education is provided through internal programmes. These services are meant to increase the number of young people in employment and are largely provided by specialised institutions. Currently, Bucharest's 6th District General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection has 22 young people within the residential care system. Out of this 22, 8 have a disability.</p> <p>All programmes targeting young people leaving care fall into two main categories: housing (in assisted apartments, transition centres, temporary shelters, night shelters, etc.) and job creation. In order to help young people integrate into the labour market, programmes involve training young people and supporting them to access the labour market and find jobs. Counselling and socio-professional training programmes are the most widespread among all of the programmes mentioned (36 out of 82 identified programmes). These are carried out either in specific assistance and support centres, or through individual plans for the training of young people in residential care.</p> <p>Almost three quarters of the programmes are implemented at the county level, whilst national programmes focus primarily on employment through solidarity contracts (Law no. 116/2002). Most of the county programmes focus on counselling and training, whereas local programmes focus more on temporary shelters. The types of programmes show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation programmes - social apartments and temporary shelters - are mostly financed from their own income; • Counselling and training programmes are financed equally by the national and county budget and from own revenues; 	

- Funding of incentives for employers is covered by the unemployment insurance budget;
- Other programmes have different sources of funding;

Three programmes are specifically targeted to young people with disabilities and include a sheltered accommodation. They are funded by the local council through Bucharest's 6th District General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection.

5. National/regional/local context of the practice

Until 1990, the child protection policy in Romania was centralised and there was fragmentation between different ministries. Policies favoured the institutionalisation of children and the responsibility of the family and community. Following the ratification in 1990 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Romania committed to promoting the rights of the child. From 1990 until 1996, many legislative acts (on adoption, the declaration of abandonment of children, special protection of people with disabilities, etc.) were adopted to improve the child protection framework. However, the system remained fragmented and complex with new agencies being created.

In June 1997, the national government adopted the Emergency Ordinance no.26 / 1997 on child protection. A new system of protection was created based on the principle of decentralisation. Therefore, the Municipality of Bucharest created:

- Child Protection Commissions, designed as specialised bodies of the local public administration;
- Public Services specialised in child protection, whose mission is to ensure the protection of children, to assist in the implementation and exercise of their rights, and to provide support to the family for the prevention of situations that jeopardise the security and the development of the child.

On September 30th 1997, the Local Council of District 6 in Bucharest established the Public Service for Child Protection, as a local public institution with legal personality, in order to analyse the situation of vulnerable children, to prepare and propose measures for their protection and to ensure the appropriate application of these measures within the territorial jurisdiction.

Between 1998-2004, the child protection system in Romania went through a continuous process of reform that ended in 2005 with the redefinition of the entire social assistance system. For the City of Bucharest this entailed the creation of General Directorates of Social Assistance and Child Protection, which include all support services addressed to all social categories in need under the jurisdiction of a single institution.

The Child Protection Division's responsibilities focus on the implementation of the local child protection system strategy, in line with the applicable domestic and international law and pursues the objectives of the governmental strategy in the field.

The purpose of the Child Protection Department's activity is to focus on specialised intervention and development of appropriate services to assist and protect vulnerable children and their families through all forms and means as per the law.

After the adoption of the Law 272/2004, Romania adopted a series of measures meant to promote the rights of the child and the closure of the old-type placement centres. As a result of these measures, the Directorate decided to close the 2 residential care homes which it had into its control. In 2005 there were 200 children living in these placement centres.

During 2005-2009 the Directorate started creating its first 5 family-type social shelters, which were nationally financed. Later, more apartments and houses were built in partnership with NGOs and financially supported by 6th District's budget.

The project 'Steps towards Independence' holds several houses, which were built in partnership with an NGO, and have a monthly cost of €500 per beneficiary.

We are currently evaluating a project proposal regarding the closure of an old type placement centre and the establishment of family-type small houses and apartments instead. The objectives of the project are:

- Purchase of 5 apartments and their renovation to provide alternative care for children separated from their families;
- Training 21 professionals to provide care services for children temporarily or permanently separated from their families;
- Closure of an old-type institution called 'The Orchid Placement Centre', by transferring 37 children to the family-type care;
- Accommodation and care services in family-type apartments, for maximum 30 children.

At the national level, the majority of the programmes for young people leaving care are created under two laws:

- Law no. 34/1998 regarding the granting of subsidies to Romanian legal associations and foundations. The law establishes and administers social assistance units, stimulates the functioning of community services provided in partnership between NGOs and local councils, ensuring the provision of social and healthcare, and legal assistance to families with many children, and other disadvantaged categories of people.
- Law no. 47/2006 on the national social assistance system regulates the functioning of the social assistance compartments to be created at the level of the counties and local councils that ensure the implementation of the social assistance policies in the field of social protection of children, families, adults, older people, and any person in need of support.

6. Staff involved

Different professionals are involved: supervisors (24/7 support with daily duties and homework), psychologists, social workers, and case managers.

7. Target group

Young people over 18 years of age who benefit from protection measures in residential care.

8. Aims of the practice

Supporting social and labour integration of young people leaving the care system.

9. Issues for social services

Service Integration/ Cooperation across services	x	Service Planning		Contracting	
Technology		Skills development (of the workforce)		Quality of services	
Others: _____					

ANALYSIS OF THE PRACTICE					
10. Status					
Pilot project (ongoing)		Project (ongoing)	X	Implemented practice (restricted areas)	
Pilot project (terminated)		Project (terminated)		Widely spread practice/rolled out	
11. Scope of the practice					
<p><i>Describe the setting of the practice, considering the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Micro level practice:</i> practice that involves individuals at local level • <i>Meso level practice:</i> practice that involves organisations or communities • <i>Macro level practice:</i> practice that involves large population groups 					
Micro level practice: practice that involves individuals at local level					
12. Leadership and management of the practice					
<p><i>Description of the leadership of the practice, considering the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaborative management:</i> shared between large partnerships, often of central, regional and local representation • <i>Organisational management:</i> by one organisation • <i>Professional management:</i> managed by a single person • <i>Shared management:</i> shared with no defined leadership 					
<p>Bucharest's 6th District General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection elaborates its own strategy for social assistance, which includes the plan for social assistance and implementation programmes, based on an assessment of the needs of the citizens from the administrative territorial unit. The General Directorate's main role is to identify and solve the community's social problems in the following fields: child protection, single persons, older people, people with disabilities and any person in need. Our District manages and provides support through funding given to NGOs, for the purpose of integrating young people into society.</p>					
13. Engaging stakeholders in the practice					
<p><i>Description of the engagement of stakeholders, considering the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individual practice:</i> individuals have sought practice change • <i>Network approach:</i> one or more organisations develop a network • <i>Collaborative approach:</i> large collaboration with relevant stakeholders 					
Collaborative approach: large collaboration with relevant stakeholders					
14. Involvement of service users and their families					
<p><i>Description of the involvement of service users, considering the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Team involvement:</i> service users and carers were part of the practice team • <i>Consultative:</i> a consultative body of users was set up for an on-going dialogue and feedback • <i>Involvement in care:</i> person-centred approaches to care/support 					
<p>Young people leaving the care system are permanently consulted about what type of support they need for integrating into the society and achieving an independent living. They are consulted about the ideas they have regarding their career.</p>					

Most of the care leavers do not want to continue their studies, and they think that they could have a better life outside of Romania.

Those who choose to continue their studies are supported at formal level by the Directorate's specialists, as well as by other specialists.

15. Costs and resources needed for implementation

Description of how the practice is financed, considering the following criteria:

- *Within existing resources:* staff time and other resources are provided 'in-house'
- *Staffing costs:* costs for staff investment
- *Joint/Pooled budgets:* two or more agencies pool budgets to fund services
- *Funded project:* external investment

The local council of District 6 is responsible for the entire budget. The staff and other resources are provided in house, meaning that the Directorate covers 86% of the costs for food, clothing, stationery, etc...

16. Evaluation approaches

Description of the evaluation method of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- *Multi-method:* use of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach
- *Single method:* qualitative or quantitative approach
- *Audit:* looks at data sources such as existing medical records, and/or other routinely collected service data.
- *Informal:* refers to in-house service evaluation using locally designed tools and/or collecting opportunistic feedback
- *No evaluation*
- *An evaluation is planned*

All children within the child protection system are provided with social assistance services and monitored. They are regularly evaluated and when they leave the care system, social workers take measures, including those for re-integration into the family.

Methodologies used in the services include:

- psychological counselling- cooperative learning and discovery
- support advice on identifying alternatives and appropriate solutions
- providing hosting for autonomy and security
- providing food and meeting basic needs
- providing assistance for the social- professional integration of young people
- pursuing the development of independent life skills
- psychological - social assistance in order to increase the quality of life integration into family and community.

The Directorate developed and implemented, in parallel with the services provided by NGO partners, 7 European funded projects, which focused on the development of competences and the professional training of children leaving the care system. These projects were addressed to young people from the Bucharest-Ilfov region with a total of 128 young beneficiaries.

17. Measurable effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

Service users	Over the past 3 years, 30 young people have been trained for an independent life. After leaving the care system, at the age of 18, they have the same social rights as any other adult in need.
---------------	---

	<p>Some brief data we gathered about young people who left the care system starting with the year 2016, shows the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total of young people who left the care system: 30 <p><i>Out of them:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University graduates: 4 Employed: 17 Young people who afford a house (rent): 18.
Formal care givers	
Informal carers	
Organisations	
Other	
<p>18. Anticipated or 'aspirational' effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...</p> <p><i>This category can include outcomes which are not documented, quantified or properly evaluated. They can include such elements as improved knowledge, quality, workforce, etc.</i></p>	
Service users	
Formal care givers	
Informal carers	
Organisations	
Other	
<p>19. How the practice has changed the way the service is provided (lessons learned)</p> <p>Thanks to the adoption of the 2004's legislative package, there has been a decrease in the number of children who are integrated into the child protection system (in 2004 there were over 200 children in all Bucharest's 6th District placement centres, in 2019 there are about 70 children and young people who benefit from family-type placements (small houses, apartments).</p>	
<p>20. Sustainability of the practice</p> <p><i>Description of whether the practice is sustainable, considering the following criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Potential for sustainability:</i> practice was newly started or is on-going/not yet mainstreamed. How could the practice be sustained (in terms of resources)? <i>Organic sustainability:</i> service users have been empowered to take the practice forward <i>Established:</i> the project has been operational for several years 	
<p>Established: the project has been operational for several years.</p>	
<p>21. Transferability of the practice</p> <p><i>Description of whether the practice has been transferred, considering the following criteria:</i></p>	

- *Transferred*: transfer to other regions, countries, service user groups, etc.
- *Potential for transferability*: there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed

The practice can be replicated as a method according to the laws of each country.