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## **Family day care in Denmark**

Rostgaard, Tine

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# **Family day care in Denmark**

**Revised version**

**Tine Rostgaard**

**Department of Political Science**

**Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies  
(CCWS)**

**Aalborg University**

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## **Introduction**

In Denmark, child care can be provided in a number of ways, according to the age of the child, according to whether the parents would like child care provided in a centre-based or family setting, and whether it is organised in a private or public setting.

Child care for pre-school children aged 0-5 years is, as most other social services in Denmark, an important element in the welfare provisions. The majority of children are cared for outside home from an early age, and there is general consensus in Denmark that the provision of child care is an important social task, which the state and municipalities are and must be involved in. Child care is accordingly mainly publicly organized, subsidized and regulated. Also, most provision of child care is provided by a public provider, whether centre-based or provided in the home of a publically employed family day carer, although recent years have witnessed a slight increase in private provision of child care, some of it being for-profit.

Various provisions of public child care for the 0-3 year olds are available, such as is found in nurseries and age-integrated child care, both being centre-based. This provision is subsidized and regulated by the local municipality, who also allocate places to parents. The age-integrated centres also cater for this age group, as well as for the 3-school age children.

Family day care, provided in a private home, but regulated by the local municipality, is also available for the 0-2 year olds. It has been available since 1964 where it was made possible for municipalities to provide public subsidies family day care, but at that time considered a supplement only to the day care centre facilities. And as of 1966 family day carers have been part of the public provision of child care and have by far since then been publically employed.

Family day care is organized either by the municipality as part of the public day care system or by a privately operating provider. Also in the latter case, the municipality supports this provision of care by providing financial subsidies, from the principle that the money should follow the child, regardless of provision. The municipality cannot, however, and as is the case for public provision of child care, allocate places in such private provision.

Family day care, whether public or private, may also be used by older children, but this is very rare and is only if no other child care option is available. Less than 1 % of the 3-5 year olds are cared for in family day care. This age group is most often cared for in a centre-based kindergarten or they may be with younger children in the age-integrated day care centre.

Child care provisions are as mentioned mostly public, but in recent years outsourcing to for-profit providers of centre-based child care has been made possible, but is still rare.

This includes nurseries as well as kindergartens. A few number of centre-based child care institutions also operate as so-called pool arrangements, where a group of parents or even an employer may decide to set up a day care institution – or family day care arrangement – with the means of a public subsidy, although it is no longer possible to apply for this scheme.

Especially relatively unregulated private child minding with the use of a public subsidy has been on the increase for the smaller children. For this age group, parents may also opt to care for the children themselves, with the means of a cash-for-care benefit.

## **I. Data and facts about the structure of family day care in Denmark**

### **1. General aspects**

#### **1.1. Administrative jurisdiction of family day care**

##### **- Responsibility of supervision and control of family day care**

As of 2013, the Ministry of Welfare, Children and Integration is the central authority responsible for the administration and control of day care, whether in centre-based or family day care. Previously, this policy area belonged to the responsibility by the Ministry of Education in order to facilitate life-long learning, but a re-organisation of ministerial seats in 2013 resulted in this new division.

The Ministry holds the overall responsibility for administration of day care services for pre-school children and draws up important instructions, circulars and recommendations, but as the overall principle, the 99 municipalities are the main authority responsible for planning, organising, providing and supervising day care. The municipalities are obliged by the Social Service Act to provide what they consider to be the necessary number of day care places, but have also committed themselves to a day care guarantee, which gives every child a right to day care from six month of age. In 2003, 90 per cent of the municipalities provided a child care guarantee for all children from the age of 6 months. Today, all municipalities provide the day care guarantee from the age of ½ months.

Local implementation of policies is closely followed from central government, and the annual budget negotiations between the central government and municipalities outline some service goals, which the municipalities must meet. The appointed Social Welfare Committees in each municipality supervise local provision of social services and decide on the number and type of institutions and family day care arrangements to be

established, the parental fees, the ratio of trained to untrained staff, and the opening hours.

Application for a place in public (and in some private) day care, whether centre-based or family day care, normally takes place through the municipality who coordinates the public provisions and the waiting lists for day care. In case of private provision, other rules may apply. I.e. if parents wish to apply for a place in one of the few pool arrangements or private day care institutions or with a privately operating child minder which offer services, they must contact the institution/person directly, as the municipality is not in charge of coordination such provisions, nor is it required to give permit to such arrangements. Usually different criteria such as parental employment situation, age of child, health and family situation are otherwise applied in the allocation of public places.

#### - **Legal basis for the provision of public and private family day care**

The legal basis for the provision of family day care is the Act on Day Care (Dagtilbudsloven). This law sets the framework for the organization, financing and provision of family day care, and specifies that as part of the public provision of day care, family day care can be set up in the home of a private person or the home of the child (§ 21).

The municipality is obliged to make information available at the municipal web page about the local provision of child care, including any subsidies to private family day care. The municipality must also carry out an initial inspection of the premises used for the care of children according to § 21.

Previously the law only included *public* family day care, but it underwent revision in 2007, which opened up for the provision of *private* family day care as a new form of day care, financially supported and supervised by the local municipalities. The changes were made in order to harmonize the concepts of family day care and create a more uniform and transparent structure.

Private family day care is defined as day care set up on the initiative of a private person and provided in the home of this person or the home of the child, but based on an agreement for operation between the municipality and the private day carer. Private family day care must live up to the Act on Day Care's statutory objectives and requirements for the preparation of educational curriculum and child assessment. The agreement between a private day-care and the local council must ensure that parents have control over their work with children in day care.



In addition to what is considered public family day care (§ 21), private family day care thus consists of the following options, all law paragraphs referring to the Act on Day Care (Dagtilbudsloven<sup>1</sup>):

- *Free choice arrangement* (Fritvalgsordning; § 80) – subsidy to privately organized centre-based and home-based day care
- *Private child minder* (Privat børnepasning; §§78 and 79) – family day care
- *Private family day care* (Privat dagpleje; §21) – home-based child care
- *Pool care arrangement* (Puljeordning; §§101 and 102) – centre-based and home-based child care
- *Caring for own children* (Pasning af egne børn; § 86) – home-based child care

## **1.2. Numbers of childminders in public responsibility**

### **- No. of publically employed family day carers**

Table 1 provides an overview of the number of *publically* employed family day carers 2007-2012. Due to the new classification of the professions from 2010, the figures are not entirely comparable over the years, and in general the numbers may not be fully reliant due to lack of information given from the municipalities. However, the table shows that the number of public family day carers has decreased by 2.000 full-time equivalent persons from 2007-2012. This is in line with the declining number of children being cared for in family day care (see section on no. of children in child care).

All family day carers are working with children under the age of 3 years, as the family day care provision more or less only caters for this age group.

**Table 1. Persons employed in public family day care, full-time equivalents, 2007-2012.**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Management	1.299	1.323	563	284	255	243
Pedagogue, care assistant and others	0	0	0	741	698	681
Pedagogical assistant, family day carer and others	19.009	18.611	18.971	17.146	16.123	14.452
<i>Total</i>	<i>20.308</i>	<i>19.934</i>	<i>19.534</i>	<i>18.171</i>	<i>17.076</i>	<i>15.376</i>

Source: Danmarks Statistik, Statistikbanken. Note: figures not comparable before and after 2010.

<sup>1</sup> LBK nr 668 af 17/06/2011

Table 2 provides an overview of the number and percentage of staff working in family day care, compared to staff working in other child care provisions. Again, data before and after 2010 may not be directly comparable. As of 2012, staff in family day care made up 24 % of total staff in child care, with a slight decrease since 2010 of 2.754 full-time equivalent persons, or 2 percentage points. This only covers public and private family day care, i.e. family day carers with an employment contract with the local municipality, but not privately operating child minders, supported under the Free choice scheme.

**Table 2. Persons employed in childcare, full-time equivalents, 2007-2012.**

	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Family day care	19.009	29	18.611	27	18.971	27	17.887	26	16.821	26	15.133	24
Nurseries	4.930	8	3.977	6	4.085	6	3.765	6	3.461	5	3.251	5
Kindergarten	16.171	25	15.698	23	14.790	21	13.206	20	11.935	18	11.053	17
Age integrated	24.599	38	29.780	44	31.774	46	32.790	48	33.287	51	34.402	54
<i>Total</i>	<i>64.709</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>68.066</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>69.620</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>67.648</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>65.504</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>63.839</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Danmarks Statistik, Statistikbanken. Note: figures not comparable before and after 2010.

#### - Recruitment and retainment of publically employed family day carers

While the use of family day care has been on the decrease, it still offers municipalities a flexible and less costly way for providing child care. A number of municipalities would in fact like to expand the provision of family day care – at least this was the case in 2007 when a study was carried out by the interest group and member authority of Danish municipalities, KL (Local Government Denmark (LGDK), and the trade union representing the family day carers, FOA. While 16% of municipalities in 2007 estimated an extension in number of family day care places, 37% estimated a fall (KL and FOA, 2010).

One of the reasons for the estimated decline in provision of public family day care was due to the problems of finding family day carers to employ. A study in 2006 showed that 7 in 10 municipalities had problems recruiting family day carers (KL and FOA, 2010) and among the municipalities that wished to reduce the family day care provision, 57 % of municipalities mentioned problems of recruitment. Other reasons included an expected a decline in the number of newborn children (53%), while 40% mentioned that parents prefer the centre-based child care. In 7 % of municipalities, the reason for the intension to cut in the provision of day care was due to a political desire to favour

the centres. Municipalities that sought to expand the provision of family day care mainly did so for reasons of an increasing number of children being born (KL and FOA, 2010).

It nevertheless remains, that recruitment of public family day carers constitutes a problem for many municipalities. Various methods are used in recruitment, such as the use of public advertising in order to attract new day carers. For instance, Rødovre Municipality has introduced a 'Day care day' where picture and film documentation is produced for later use in advertisements.

Retention of staff is also a problem for municipalities. Overall, all municipalities mention in a more recent 2008 survey that the biggest challenge in public family day care concerns recruitment and retainment of staff (KL and FOA, 2010).

59 municipalities out of 89 municipalities mention that the biggest challenge concerns the budget, as well as the costs and structure of the family care provision. This includes the need for continued development of the child care provision, such as strengthening cooperation between day carers in so-called 'playgroup teams', raising the level of competence among day carers in order to enhance co-responsibility, and cooperation with health authorities such as home care nurses (KL and FOA, 2010).

In regards to e.g. retainment, higher salaries and bonuses are used as a means, and offer of massage and wellness too (KL and FOA, 2010).

### **1.3. Numbers of childminders in non-public responsibility**

There is no data on the number of privately operating and self-employed family day carers. However, as mentioned earlier, the private provision of family day carer is on the increase, especially what concerns the privately operating child minders, where now more than 5.000 children are cared for. It seems there are fewer problems in recruiting to this scheme.

The municipality cannot allocate places to the child minders, nor can parents act as child minders, caring for their own children under this arrangement, but other family members such as grandparents may. Some municipalities, such as Copenhagen, suggests that parents set up an agreement with a private child minder until the preferred place in centre-based or public family day care is available.

Also, families may receive a cash-for-care allowance in order to care for their children themselves. This is also regarded as a private child care arrangement, under the *caring for own child scheme*.

### **1.4. Numbers of children in care under 3 years and under 6 years**

## - **Overview of child care schemes**

Public child care for the 0-3 year olds consist of family day care (dagpleje) offered within a home-like setting, as well as centre-based child care offered in nurseries (vuggestuer) or in age-integrated institutions (aldersintegrerede institutioner), where the latter also caters for the 3-school age children. From the age of 3 until school age at approximately 5-6 years, kindergarten services (børnehaver) are available. At this age, children may also be cared for by a family day carer, but it is rare.

Public centre-based child care schemes thus consist of full-time and part-time nurseries, kindergartens and age-integrated institutions. Most children attend child care full-time. Opening hours are normally between 50-54 hours a week, e.g. from 7:00-17:00. In addition, in most municipalities there are so-called forest kindergartens (skovbørnehaver), leaving the city by bus every morning for a greener location, and some municipalities offer around-the-clock child care for parents with shift work. The staff in centre-based care will either have a pedagogue formal education of 3.5 years, an assistant pedagogue formal education training of 1.5 year or be without training.

Public family day care is offered in a home setting, mostly organised in the home of the family day carer. Here, children from 26 weeks up to 6 years are cared for, but by far most of the children are under 3 years. Most provision of family day care is operated as municipal schemes, where the family day carer is employed by the local municipality. These family day carers have received some training.

## - **No. of children in public child care**

As of 2011, a total of 316.000 children aged 0-5 years were cared for in public day care provisions (see following section on children in various other private provisions). This represents, 19 % of children in Denmark aged 0-1 year who are thus cared for outside the home, as is also 91 % of the children aged 1-2 years and 97 % of the children aged 3-5 years, either in family day care or centre-based child care provisions.

The development over time is that more and more children are cared for in centre-based child care. Despite the increasing number of children in centre-based care, there are fewer institutions. Municipalities have integrated a number of institutions and have also closed down a number of centres.

In particular, more children today are cared for in age-integrated institutions, as these are considered to provide a flexible arrangement for both parent and municipalities. Table 3 shows the proportion of children cared for in various forms of child care and the changes from 2004.

As can be seen in the table, the proportion of children aged 0–2 years cared for in age-integrated has changed from 25 % in 2004 to 45 % in 2011. At the same time, the proportion of children cared for in nurseries has gone down (from 10% to 6 %) and for those children cared for in family day care also (from 65% to 49%). A small number of children aged 0–2 years, around 3 %, attend kindergartens, either because they start the transit to this child care provision before the age of 3 or because there are no other child care facilities available. They are not accounted for in the table.

For the age group 3–5 years old, a similar development is evident with the proportion of children in age-integrated child care increasing from 39% to 56 % and a fall in attendance of kindergarten from 61% to 44 % (Table 3). A very small proportion of this age group, 0.3 %, attends family day care, mainly because there are no other child care facilities available. They are not accounted for in the table.

**Table 3. Take-up of child care, children aged 0-2 years and 3-5 years, 2004 and 2011.**

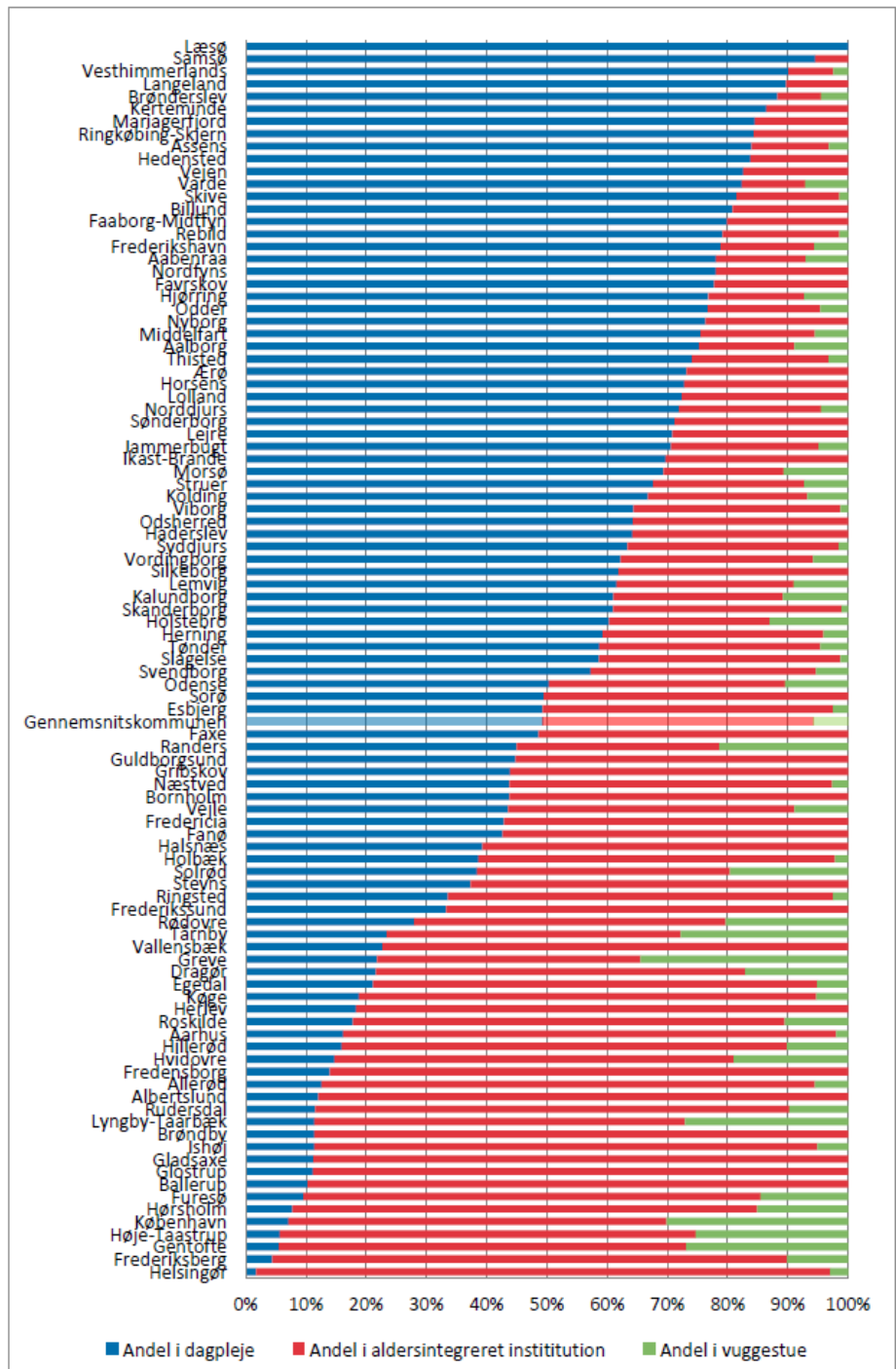
	0-2 years		3-5 years	
	2004	2011	2004	2011
Age-integrated	25	45	39	56
Nursery	10	6	-	-
Kindergarten	-	-	61	44
Family day care	65	49	-	-

Source: KORA, 2013. Note: the share of 0-2 years olds attending kindergarten not included. Approx. 3 % of 0-2 year olds attend kindergarten. The share of 3-6 year olds attending family day care and nursery not included. Approx. 0.3 % of children 3-5 attend either nursery or family day care.

Focusing on the 0–2 year olds, which is thus the age group overall making use of family day care, there is considerable variation in the municipal use of the various child care arrangements. This is illustrated in Figure 1 with the blue columns representing proportion of children in the age group 0-2 years in family day care, the red columns age-integrated and the green columns nurseries.

Some municipalities have a mix of child care arrangements in place for the 0–2 year olds, while others primarily make use of one form of child care. The figure also shows that all municipalities offer family day care, although with great variety. In some municipalities, more than 90 % of children in this age group are cared for in family day care. Some municipalities do not offer nursery care at all (40 municipalities) and instead offer family day care only. Nearly all municipalities offer age-integrated care, but varying from 5-95 % of children in this age group.

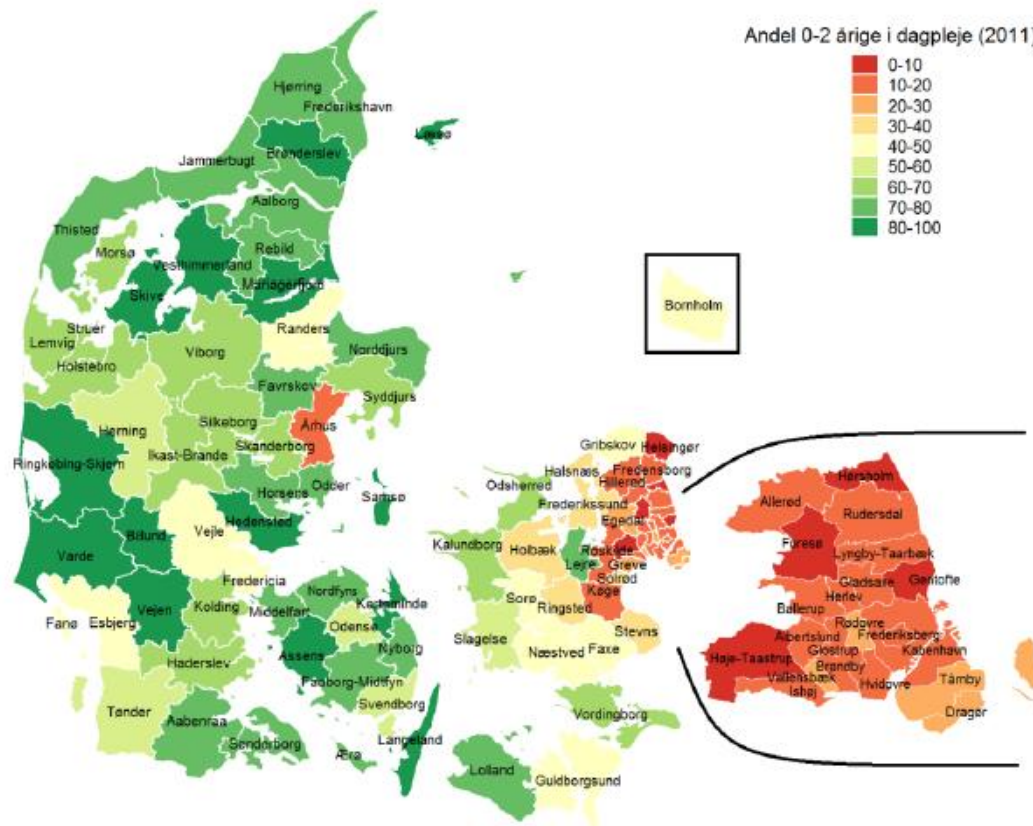
**Figure 1: Proportion of children in child care aged 0-2 years in various child care arrangements and across the 98 municipalities, 2011.**



Source: KORA, 2012. Blue=% of children in family day care, red= proportion of children in age integrated child care, green=proportion of children in nursery

Figure 2 illustrates how much family day care make up of total provision across the 98 municipalities, measured as proportion of children aged 0–2 years attending family day care. Rural municipalities provide for considerably more children in family day care than is the case in urban municipalities (70% to 29%). Urban municipalities then are more likely to care for this group in centre-based child care than rural municipalities (62% to 27%) (KORA, 2013).

**Figure 2: Proportion of children aged 0-2 years in family day care, all municipalities, 2011.**



Source: KORA, 2012.

- **No. of children in private provision of child care**

Since 2003, the municipalities have been obliged to subsidize any child care provision established under the *Free choice scheme*. Parents may for instance choose to make use of the subsidy to enter into an agreement with a *private child minder*. The child minder may care for the child/children in her own home or the home of the child. As of 2010, 5.277 children were cared for by a private child minder, and 42 out of 82 municipalities inform that there are private child carers operating in the municipality (EVA, 2011). This is thus the most extensive provision of privately operating child care.

*Private family day carers (Privat dagpleje, §21)* may operate under agreement with the municipality and as part of public provision of child care. The municipality must approve the family day carer. Only few parents make use of such arrangement and as of 2010, 195 children were cared for under this arrangement (EVA, 2012).

In addition, approx. 381 children were cared for in family day care under the *Pool care arrangements (Puljeordning; §§101 and 102)*, of which 273 children were in so-called 'big family day care groups' (stordagpleje) with more than 5 children in each group (it is no longer possible to set up new Pool care arrangements).

Finally, *caring for own children (Pasning af egne børn; § 86)* with the means of a cash-for-care allowance was made possible in 2002. In 2007, 695 children were cared for under this scheme, rising to 811 in 2011 (Bureau 2000, 2008b and 2012). In other words, the use of the scheme is very low.

### **1.5. Large family day care places**

In Denmark, the municipalities do not as such operate with large family day care places (apart from the rarely and decreasingly used pool schemes, see above), although most family day carers will be associated with a so-called 'play group' consisting of a number of local family day carers. The family day carers meet up regularly in this play group and the children and parents may in this way become acquainted with other family day carers operating in the municipality.

The set-up of the play groups is to accommodate substitute child care during illness as well as accommodating continuous learning and development among the family day carers (see also later section on replacement caring).

## **2. Childminders as employees within an employment relationship**

### **2.1. Conditions and requirements for working as a childminder within an employment relationship**

#### **- Group size**

Usually, private and public family day carers as well as child minders care for 3–4 children in the age 0–3 years, but it is possible to care for up to 5 children. If there are a minimum of two family day carers present in the home, up to 10 children can be cared for.



If the private or public family day carer has children of her own, they may be included in the group of children, and the family day carer can receive payment for the care of her child.

The following provides an overview of the number of children in the various child care provisions. As is evident the different public day care schemes cater for different groups of children, and with different standards:

- *Nurseries* are for children from 26 weeks–3 years, with on average 3.3 children per adult. Children are divided into groups of 10-12 children.
- *Kindergartens* cater for children from 3-school-age at the age of 5-6. Children are divided into groups, with on average 6.4 children per adult and up to 22 children in the group.
- In the *age-integrated institutions*, children are typically from 26 weeks to 6 years, often organised into age-differentiated groups. Children are divided into groups. Group sizes depend on the age of children. On average, there are 3-4 children per adult, with a group of up to 5 children in the group.
- And as mentioned, in private and public *family day care*, the day carer may receive up to 5 children. Most family day carers receive 3-4 children. If there is more than 1 day carer, there may be up to 10 children.

### **- Physical premises and facilities**

Public and private family day care takes place in the home of the family day carer. Privately operating child minders may also operate in the home of the child. In both cases, there are no formal requirements as to the home setting, but it must be suitable for caring for children and will be inspected prior to operation (see also section on inspection)

A survey conducted among 39 municipalities thus shows that 25 % of these do not have any formal guidelines as to the how the home and outdoor area should be assessed (DCUM, 2008).

## **2.2. Structure of employment**

### **- Work hours**

Public and private family day carers in Denmark have a longer working week than colleagues working in centre-based child care. Normal working hours for family day carers are 48 hours weekly, or 32 hours if she works part-time. Opening hours are

typically 6:30-16:30, but can extend to 18:00 without overtime pay, if so agreed. She must organise breaks herself. Working conditions must be in accordance with the Law on Working Environment (KL og Foa, 2011).

Privately operating child minders have no regulation on opening hours and may offer night and day care, as agreed with parents.

#### - **Employer**

All publically employed family day carers are employed with the local municipality, with the accompanying right to annual leave for vacation, full payment during maternity leave, sickness payment and pension contributions. As for privately provided child care arrangements the contractual agreements may differ:

*Private family day carers (Privat dagpleje, §21)* may operate under agreement with the municipality and is considered as part of public provision of child care. As with public family day care, the municipality must approve the family day carer before she starts to offer services.

As for the *private child minder*, the municipality is not in charge of places, nor of approval of the child minder. It is the parents and the private child minder that enter into an agreement which both parties can terminate within 14 days.

In the *Pool care arrangements*, a pool of money is provided by the municipality. It is then up to the initiating party how to organize the care and parents then enter into an agreement with the initiating party. The initiating party may be a group of parents or parents together with an employer.

### **2.3. Financial Conditions**

#### - **Financing of child care**

Municipalities hold the main role in the financing of child care and receive reimbursement through various national state subsidies, block grants and equalization grants. The remainder of the public costs is financed over local income taxes. The equalisation grant evens out local differences in demography, labour market participation and in number of low income groups. Local expenditure for child care made up 4.42 billion Euro (33.5 billion DKK)<sup>2</sup> in 2011, or the equivalent of 14.5 % of municipal budgets (KORA, 2012).

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<sup>2</sup> All currencies are converted via <http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/> 04.10.2013

Parents contribute with user fees, in general up to 30 % of total net costs in public day care. Parental fees are determined based on household net income. If this is below a certain threshold, the fee is waived entirely. If there is more than one child in the household attending day care, a sibling's rebate is offered. With the rebate, the parents pay the full user fee for the most costly place and get a 50% rebate on the remaining places. In *public* day care, the actual parental fees are set on a local basis and vary between municipalities. On average, parents in 2012 paid a monthly average per child of:

- 308 Euro (2.300 DKK) for family day care,
- between 415 Euro (3.103 DKK) (including meals) and 367 Euro (2.741 DKK) (not including meals) for a nursery place
- and between 272 Euro (2.036 DKK) (including meals) and 207 Euro (1.549 DKK) (not including meals) for a kindergarten place (Bureau 2000, 2012).

The increase in costs for public day care has been substantial since then though. The period 2001-2012 has seen an increase of 21.1 % in the cost for family day care, 30.7 % for a nursery place and 11.8 % for kindergartens (Bureau 2000, 2012).

In 2004, a family with an average production worker income and two children aged 2 and 4 years old, would in Copenhagen pay 9% of their annual household income after taxes if they used full-time day care for both children (Rostgaard, 2004).

With a monthly average of 1.907 DKK per child for a public family day care place in the cheapest municipality, Tønder, and a monthly average of 3.185 DKK in the most expensive, the capital of Copenhagen, both in 2012, there is substantial variation in parental fees between the municipalities (Bureau 2000, 2012).

*Private* day care institutions and family day carers are not encompassed in the rules on parental payment and may set the fees themselves:

As for the *privately operating child minder*, she is supported under the Free choice scheme. The municipal subsidy makes up a maximum of 75 % of the actual documented costs. As of 2008, one in three municipalities subsidized such arrangement of care for the 0–2 year olds only. There is no regulation on the minimum and maximum municipal subsidy to such arrangements, nor to the parental payments. Parents must however pay at least 25 % of documented running costs and the municipality is obliged to make sure that parents contribute with the required share of cost (Bureau 2000, 2008a). As of 2013, the public subsidy is on a monthly average 6.195 DKK per child for children aged 0-2 years and 3.498 DKK for children aged 3-5 years (Bureau 2000, 2012).

*Pool care arrangements* receive public subsidies (up to 100 % of the subsidy otherwise given to other child care arrangements). The Pool care arrangement does not need to uphold labour market agreements on salary and employment conditions, as otherwise applied in other child care institutions and family day care, but can negotiate their own

conditions. Parental payment must not exceed that of a public child care provision. It has not proven profitable for major for-profit companies to set up child care under this arrangement (Bureau 2000, 2008b).

Finally, as for *caring for own children* with the means of a cash-for-care allowance, the subsidy must not exceed 85 % of the subsidy to an equivalent public child care place. Across the country, parents receive a monthly allowance of 6.120 DKK for the care of children aged 0-2 years and 3.330 DKK for the care of children aged 3-5 years.

#### **- Wages and parental payment**

The financial arrangement between municipality, parents and family day carer thus differs according to whether it is a public or private arrangement, and this also reflects the wages for the family day carers.

In *public* family day care, family day carers are paid a monthly salary by the municipality according to the labour market agreements laid down between the trade union FOA and KL. Public family day carers are paid a basic wage plus supplements, as outlined in these formal labour market agreements, as well as pension contributions of 12-14% of the pension related salary.

The basic wage for someone caring for 4 children is 2.600 Euro for family day carers with basic training only, and more if she has taken further training, such as assistant pedagogue training.

*Privately* operating family day carers and child minders are not covered by the labour market agreement unless they become a member of the trade union. Therefore, in most cases wages must be negotiated with the parents directly.

Public as well as private family day carers and child minders can withdraw expenses related to caring such as wear and tear of clothes and furniture from their taxed income, amounting to a 46 % tax deduction of their taxed income.

Calculations show that a child minder operating under the Free choice arrangement can earn more than public family day carer, provided that she takes in 5 children, but she is responsible herself for expenditure for toys, outings etc. (Bureau 2000, 2008b).

In public and private family day care, the cost of the food provided for children is included in the parental payment. This may not be the case in private child minding.

### **3. Qualifications**

#### **- Qualifications for public family day carers**

When hiring, it seems most municipalities do not formally make demands in regards to the educational qualifications of the public family day carers. Most qualifications originate from personal experience as a carer but municipalities tend to prefer candidates between 20–55 years of age. They are usually hired on a trial period of 13 weeks (FOA, 2003).

Two non-representative survey studies conducted in 1999 and 2001 on behalf of the trade union organizing family day carers, FOA, shed some light on their level of qualifications. Generally, public family day carers seem to have short educational spells behind them and especially among the older family day carers, it is more common only to have completed primary and secondary school education only (FOA, 2003).

Once employed, the study shows that the family day carers make use of various training options available for them, such as shorter introductory and basic courses, various labour market related courses (AMU), thematic course and the pedagogical basic training of 1½ year. Each is described in the following:

*Introductory course:* These courses are mainly offered before the family day carer takes up work as a carer. Around one in four have participated in such course (FOA, 2003).

*Basic training:* The basic training for a publically employed family day carer consists of 14 days training. The content of the training focuses on basic knowledge of working with children and includes topics like pedagogics, psychology, child friendly environment, and safety (FOA, 2003).

There are indications that the basic course is in some municipalities only offered some time after family day carer has been in operation. The older the family day carer, the more likely it is that she has received training. Among family day carers under 40 years, approx. 80 % have participated in the basic training, and among the 40+, it is 93 % (FOA, 2003).

*Labour market related courses (AMU):* Various public and private courses are offered as part of the labour market related courses AMU, such as a 2-day course for family day carers offered by the Center for Development of Public Sector Competences (Center for Offentlig Kompetenceudvikling), focusing on:

1. Formal regulation in relation to rules on confidentiality and obligation to report to social authorities in case the child seem neglected etc..
2. Relations and communication, including inter-cultural relations and inter-organisational communication and communication with parents.
3. Reflection and feed-back to colleagues, and changing habits (<http://www.cok.dk/daglejeruddannelse>).

It is mainly family day carers between 35–55 years that take part in such courses as it is often provided once the family day carer has been operating for a while (FOA, 2003).

*Pedagogical Basic Education (PGU)*: This is a 1.5-year educational module, aimed at persons who wish to qualify for work within pedagogics. The module gives access to further studies for the pedagogical degree. Only 2 % of participants in the 2001 survey had undertaken such an education (FOA, 2003).

In addition, municipalities may offer thematic courses. In Copenhagen, all public family day carers receive training in caring for premature born children and in nutrition and nourishment. In the municipality of Rødovre, all family day carers undergo a 4-week training program every year. 80 % of the family day carers in this municipalities have undertaken an IT course, which has resulted in an improvement in the written material that is produced for the parents. It is also mandatory to participate in a weeklong training program on pedagogical activities (FOA, 2003).

A survey conducted by DCUM in 2007 showed that among 39 municipalities, 31 offered short courses for the public family day carers, 4 organized thematic courses, and 4 offered further training (DCUM, 2007).

Public family day carers themselves have in a previous survey expressed a general need for a formal educational degree for family day carers. They have also more specifically expressed the need for training, that would enable them to reflect and re-consider their pedagogical practice, children's needs and developmental phases and also express the need for more thematic courses on conditions for refugees, language, psychology and children with special needs (FOA, 2003).

#### - **Qualifications and private day carers**

There is no requirement as to the formal education and on-going training of private family day carers or child minders.

### **3.1. Status of implementation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) in the qualification of childminders**

The European Qualification Framework is not considered in the training of the family day carers (More information on the application of the framework in formal education can be found here <http://www.eva.dk/udgivelser/2011/referencing-the-danish-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-to-the-european-qualifications-framework>)

## **4. Local/regional infrastructure**

### **4.1. Tasks of counseling and attendance for childminders/professional counselors**

#### **- Co-operation in play groups**

Most public family day care units are organized locally with a team leader, a deputy leader and a number of family day carers.

The individual public family day carers are typically organized in the aforementioned play groups which meet regularly, for instance at common playgroups. The purpose of the playgroups is mainly to ensure that children and the family day carers can take part in a larger group and thus develop new relations and new skills (DCUM, 2007). Family day carers also take part in staff meetings with other family day carers and the family day care pedagogue typically 1–5 times yearly (DCUM, 2007).

Some municipalities find it problematic that private family day carers are not obliged to participate in playgroups (Bureau 2000, 2013).

Also, the privately operating child minders are not required to be part of a playgroup.

#### **- Supervision**

A public family day carer pedagogue is assigned to the group of public and private family day carers and takes part in all pedagogical activities, inspects the work with the children and often holds administrative responsibility for the work of the group also.

This person would normally have a pedagogue training background and could also provide supervision in centre based child care.

#### **- Inspection**

The pedagogue usually pays a visit to the home of the family day carer once a month. The visits typically last between 1–2 hours but are often conducted without any systematic approach. Often the visit will focus on the children's development, cooperation with colleagues and parents, and the physical environment. In the majority of municipalities, the family day care pedagogue visits 6-10 times a year (DCUM, 2007).

Public family day carers with shorter educational background express a higher opinion of the relevance of the visit conducted by the municipality. In the FOA survey conducted among family day carers, they found the inspection useful as it provides them with new tools and approaches in their work (FOA, 2002).

As for child minders supported under the Free choice scheme, also here the municipality is obliged to regulate the provision of care, for instance see to that the physical environment is in accordance to the law. The municipalities are not required to give permit to such arrangements but if they do, the municipality is thus obliged to carry out inspection of the premises and rules similar to other child care provision must be obeyed (e.g. on parental co-decision, smoking in the home etc.).

However, inspection visits are more irregular. Most of the children under the Free choice arrangement are in care provisions which are regulated twice annually. In comparison, in public family day care regulation takes place in 81 % of municipalities with 1–2 months interval. Regulation with private child minders tends mainly to concern physical conditions and is less focused on the pedagogical content of the care (EVA, 2011).

Smoking is one of the items of inspection and there are formal rules applying in both private and public child care provision. In 93 % of the 39 municipalities participating in the DCUM survey, smoking does not take place where there are children, in 5 % it does not take place at all, and in 2% there are no rules regarding smoking (DCUM, 2007). Since then, a new law on smoking has been implemented so that smoking is no longer permitted in public family day care, whereas the ban on smoking does not encompass private child minding. Here, it is up to the parents to negotiate such conditions.

#### - **Parental influence**

In both public and private family day care, parents must be ensured means of influence on the daily work with the child. This is not the case in private child minding.

#### - **Pedagogical tools**

Public and private family day carers must – just like staff in centre-based facilities – conduct an assessment of each child in regards to his/her leaning potential and development, for the so-called learning plans (Læreplaner). Learning plans must set up goals for learning, social competences, linguistic development, body and physical movements, nature and cultural forms of expression. There are no such requirements for child minders.

#### - **Replacement**



As for replacement during illness, one of the big challenges for the family day care system is when a day carer falls ill.

Traditionally, other day carers in the play group would take over the children in case of illness, acting as *guest day carers*. A focus group interview among 5 municipalities in 2009 revealed that in the traditional guest day carer arrangements, the group of children is split among 3-4 colleagues in case the day carer is ill. The group of guest day carers normally consists of 10-17 day carers, each having 3-4 children and being organized into 3-6 play groups (KL and FOA, 2010). Nine out of ten municipalities (88%) in the survey study among 83 municipalities by FOA and KL in 2009 made use of this system, where the day carers take over each others' children in case of illness etc. (KL and FOA, 2010).

The children may be familiar with the guest day carer and her children as they often participate in playgroup activities together. The survey among municipalities find that it may however strain the individual day carer if another day carer is long term ill and they have to step in on a more permanent basis, increasing the number of children she is caring for. In general, it is easier to accommodate guest day caring if the day carers only have 3 children enrolled instead of 4-5 children (KL and FOA, 2010).

Other municipalities operate with a *permanent guest day carer*, who does not have any children enrolled of her own, but only takes in children whose regular day carer is not available, typically because she is on vacation or taking up training. Most municipalities use this arrangement for such absenteeism and not for cases of acute illness. In case there is no need for permanent guest day carer's assistance, she helps as an extra resource in the playgroups or on outings. In one municipality interviewed, 2 guest day carers were available for each their group of 10-11 day carers. The assessment of the family day care pedagogues is that this is generally a well-functioning arrangement, but parents put pressure for also using the guest day carer during illness, and she may not be available for this. 32 % of 83 surveyed municipalities in 2008 made use of such system (KL and FOA, 2010).

Several municipalities operate with *open places* instead of guest day carers, i.e. instead of 4-5 children, family day carers only carer for 3 and so have room for additional children. These places are available for children, whose normal day carer is ill or away for other reasons, and are normally available for children within the same playgroup. The assessment is that this is easier to regulate and also means that the children are cared for within their specific play group, so that they are familiar with the day carer. It also provides the possibility to place siblings with the same day carer. 29 % of 83 surveyed municipalities made use of this system in 2008 (KL and FOA, 2010).

A recent addition to this is the setting up a physical premise of a *guest house*, where the children are placed if the day carer is ill. Here a number of guest day carers, typically 3, will be available. The playgroup activities typically take place in the same premises, so that the children are familiar with the place and the guest day carers. The assessment is

that this works well, provides a good stability as all three guest day carers are rarely absent on the same time and that most parents are satisfied with this arrangement as both children and parents are acquainted with the place. Some parents find, however, that there are too many children. It is generally easier to recruit family day carers to the guest houses, especially older day carers who may not want to work 48 hours a week with 4 children. The drawback is that the municipality now also must run this as a centre-based institutions, and consider cleaning, meals, playground and outdoor areas, as well as organizing staff meetings, schedules, etc. 35 % of surveyed municipalities made use of this system in 2008 (KL and FOA, 2010)

Among the municipalities that have investigated parents' satisfaction with the guest houses, 80 % say that this seems to be a good arrangement, while 16 % find it to be a non-satisfactory arrangement, mainly because of parents' negative reactions.

Child minders may hire a substitute to step in in case of illness. This substitute must be approved by the municipality. But the municipality cannot regulate how often a substitute is used. Some child minders enter into agreement with other child minders to look after each other's children in case of illness. The maximum of 5 children per child minder must however not be exceeded.

## **II. Overview of studies on family child day care in Denmark**

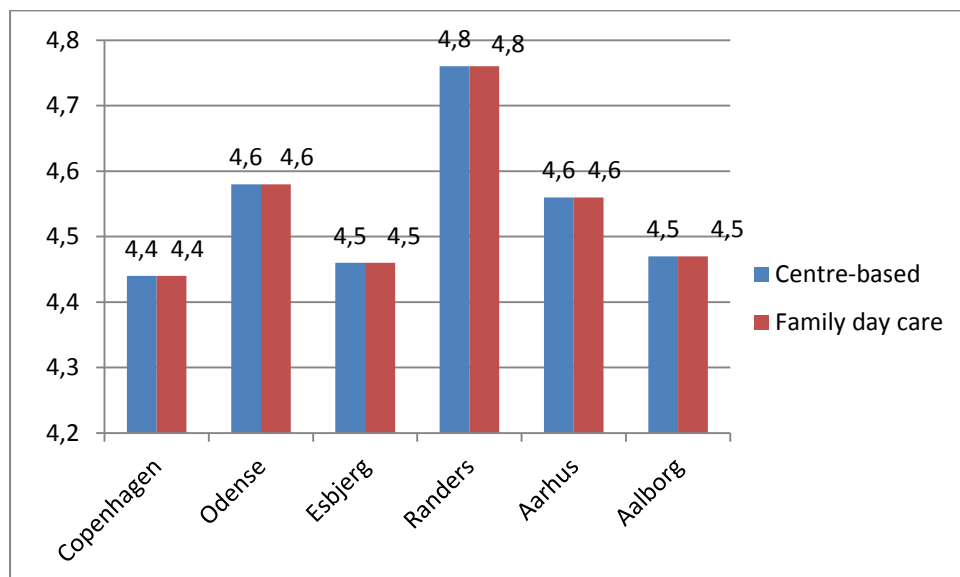
### **5. Quality and user satisfaction**

The family day care offers a different care setting than centre-based care as it takes place in a homely environment and with a smaller group of children. This is often highlighted as the defining characteristics of the difference between these two forms of child care. However, other aspects are important also, at least according to the family day carers themselves. A non-representative survey from 2002 among family day carers, unionist, administrative staff and politicians, all attending a conference organized by the trade union representing family day carers, sums up their opinions about the qualities of the family day care as the following and in this order: Starting from the top prioritized qualities were: homely environment, consideration of the individual child, sufficient time, closeness and intimacy, continuity in staff, feeling safe, cooperation with parents, calm environment, own planning of work, learning environment (FOA, 2003).

Parents are generally satisfied with family day care and on level with centre-based child care. A survey in 2002 conducted by the organization of municipalities, KL, shows that

overall satisfaction with family day care is generally high and on par with centre based in the 6 larger cities of Denmark (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Parental overall satisfaction with child care, centre-based and family day care, 2002.**

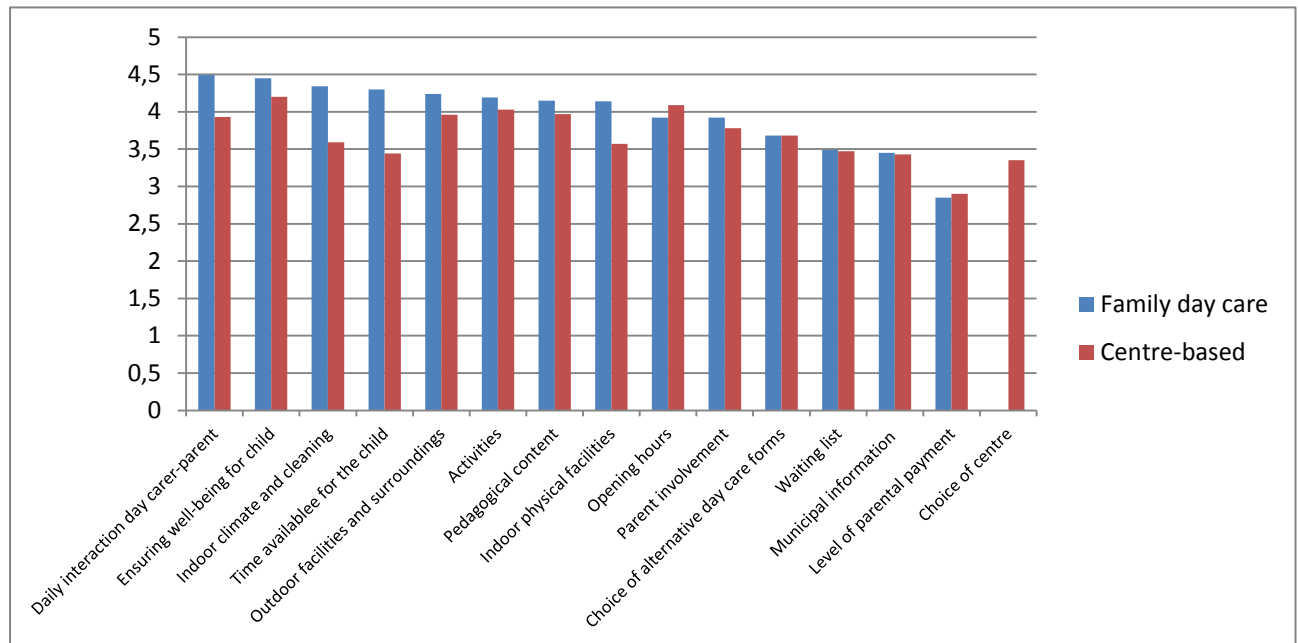


Data: KL-Kompasset 2002. Postal survey (n=1.983). Based on Lieckert scale measure of 5 (1=very unsatisfied, 2= not satisfied, 3=neither or, 4=satisfied, 5=very satisfied. Source: 6-kommunerapport Brugertilfredshedsundersøgelse af dagpasning, folkeskole og hjemmehjælp. Københavns Kommune, 2004.

As for specific aspects of the child care, parents are generally also satisfied both in centre-based and family day care. Parents are the least satisfied with level of parental payment, presumably because they find child care too expensive (Figure 4).

For family day care, the highest satisfaction scores are given to aspects such as daily interaction between the child carer, ensuring wellbeing for the child, indoor climate and cleaning, and time available for the child. It is also in these aspects the discrepancy with satisfaction in centre-based care is the largest. Parents using centre-based child care also seem less satisfied with indoor climate here. Most often parents using family day care are expressing a higher level of satisfaction than parents using centre-based care, although some of the differences are most likely not statistically significant. Only for opening hours are parents using family day care less satisfied.

**Figure 4: Parental satisfaction with aspects of centre-based and family day care, 2002.**



Data: KL-Kompasset 2002. Postal survey (n=1.983). Based on Lieckert scale measure of 5 (1=very unsatisfied, 2= not satisfied, 3=neither or, 4=satisfied, 5=very satisfied. Source: 6-kommunerapport Brugertilfredshedsundersøgelse af dagpasning, folkeskole og hjemmehjælp. Københavns Kommune, 2004.

## 6. Conclusion

There is in Denmark a long tradition for public involvement in financing, organization and provision of child care, and also in the child care provided in a home like setting, which family day care can provide. Since the mid-1960s, family day care has been considered part of the public provision of child care. As part of this, public family day care receives public subsidies, is regulated like other child care arrangements, and family day carers are employed by the municipality, with all the entitlements that follow, such as annual leave for vacation, full payment during maternity leave and sickness payment. Although there are no requirements as to the background educational qualifications of the public family day carers, training is offered before starting up as a family day carer and continuously thereafter.

Family day care is mainly used for the age group 0-2 years and is an important component in the overall provision of child care and therefore also in the fulfilment of the child care guarantee, which is in place from the child is 6 months old. Today, 19 % of children in Denmark aged 0-1 year are cared for outside the home, as is also 91 % of the children aged 1-2 years and 97 % of the children aged 3-5 years, either in family day care or centre-based child care provisions. This is one of the highest take-ups of child care in the world.

Family day care is today available for the 0-2 years olds in all 98 municipalities in Denmark but with considerable variation across the country. Where some municipalities offer mainly family day care for this age group, others mainly offer centre-based, age-integrated child care. In recent years, the development has seen an expansion of age-integrated care for the 0-2 year olds on the expense of family day care and nursery care. Although family day care still constitutes an important form of care for the younger children aged 0-2 years, nearly one in two children in this age group are now cared for in age-integrated child care. In 2004, it was only one in four. Likewise, every second child in this age group is now in family day care, where in 2004 it was two out of three children.

For those families that make use of family day care, this care arrangement seems to offer certain advantages. The homely environment is often highlighted as one of the advantages of this care solution, in combination with smaller groups of children. Family day carers themselves also highlight aspects such as having more time with the individual child and that they can offer a calm and intimate environment for the child, and they acknowledge that they can plan their own work.

Parents seem overall equally happy about using family day care as they are using centre-based care. In general, they seem slightly more satisfied with a number of specific aspects related to communication and relationships, such as the daily interaction between parents and the family day carer, the time that is available for the child and also aspects related to the physical framing of care, such as the indoor physical facilities, climate and cleaning. Only in regards to parental payment is there a slight difference in favour of the centre-based child care.

Family day carers on the other hand have very long working hours and being the only carer, the arrangement is vulnerable if the family day carer turns ill. Municipalities have for a number of years worked with different solutions for substitute care, including placing the children with other family day carers who belong to the same playgroup. A recent development, which seems to suit both parents and municipalities, is the guest houses, where a group of 3 family day carers are employed to look after the children in case of illness. It also seems easier to recruit staff to these facilities. Some parents however complain that there are too many children in such guest houses, working against the idea of the family day care, which is care for a smaller group of children.

Recruitment of family day carers remains a problem in many municipalities and is one of the reasons for the transit to age-integrated child care. There does on the other hand not seem to be similar problems of recruitment of privately operating child minders. There has been a considerable increase over the last couple of years in number of children who are cared for in such arrangement, with over 5.000 children in such child care arrangement now. It is part of an overall policy shift to more privately organized child care which was set in motion under the former Liberal-Conservative government and which opened up for private, for-profit provision of both centre-based and family

day care. Part of this was the establishment of a Free choice scheme under which parents can now receive a subsidy for the payment of private child minders.

The provision of private child minding offers a flexible solution to municipalities, as they are only involved in providing a permit for operating and for regular inspections; including checking that the number of children does not exceed the permitted five and that the premise is safe for children. All other arrangements are to be negotiated between parents and the child minder, such as parental payment, opening hours, activities, and the concrete number and age of children to be cared for. The municipality is thus not involved in offering training to child minders nor involving them in playgroups, which are otherwise common for publically operating family day carers.

There are therefore many immediate advantages for the municipalities in this form of child care provision, but the quality of care may also suffer. For once, child minders are not obliged to conduct an assessment of the child's developmental and learning potential. Unless they organize it themselves, they do not participate in training activities. Also, there is no continued learning from regularly meeting with colleagues and they must themselves organize substitute care during illness. Studies also show that where the inspection visits in public family day care also tends to focus on the content of caring, including the pedagogical approach, this is less the case for inspection of child minders, which tend to focus mainly on physical conditions. For the individual child minder, setting up business as a self-employee offers advantages in freedom to organize work and working time, but does not provide the same labour market rights as publically employed family day carers have.

The private child minders are part of a new development. The recent decade has seen a new approach to child care, opening up for non-public provisions and encouraging the establishment of new approach to child care with the involvement of new actors. This includes the pool care system, which enables parents as well as employers to set up their own child care arrangement with the help from public subsidies. These arrangements are under the same rules as other public child care. There are, however, only few of these. Also, the possibility for privately organized family day care is a way to open up for private providers. So far, only the private child minding seems, however, to have caught on. There are no studies of whether the increase in use of child minding is based on parents' preference for such arrangement or whether it reflects a lack of alternative child care provision, but there are indications that municipalities refer to the use of child minding until a place in public child care is available.

Overall, family day care offers a high quality alternative to centre-based child care, as long as there is continued public involvement in financing, regulation and ensuring the quality of care. This is regardless of whether it is public or private family day care, where the latter must apply to most of the rules applying to public family day care in general. Whereas private family day care has not gained ground, public family day care remains an important child care arrangement for many young children and it is

important to ensure its continued quality of family day care. However, concern must be raised over the relatively unregulated child minding which seems in the increase. It is important to ensure that expansion in provision of child care is not taking place at the expense of quality in care.

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