

Family day care in Denmark ^[1]

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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

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