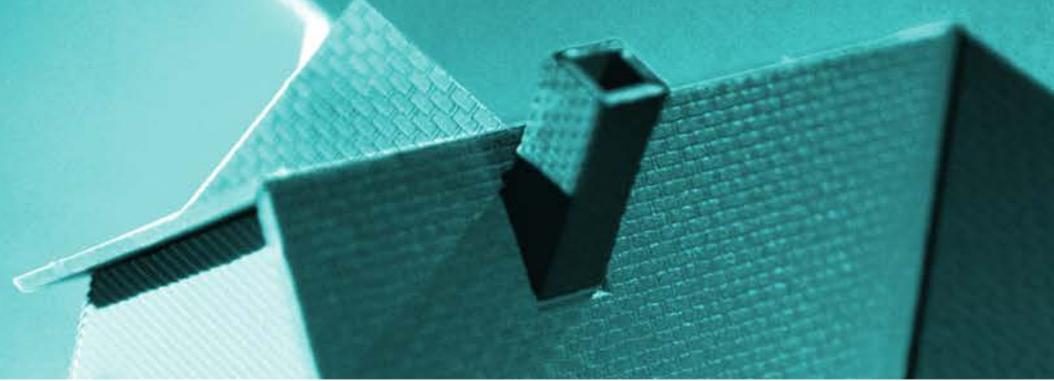


The City of Reykjavik's Prevention Policy 2014 – 2019

For children, adolescents
and their parents







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This new policy has been developed based on experience and results in preventive measures and takes into account social changes that have occurred in Icelandic society during recent years.

Surveys on the circumstances of children and adolescents in Reykjavik show that in general, they feel well, are active in organized leisure activities, and that rules regarding curfew are more adhered to than in previous years. Parents are more secure in their parenting roles and are more diligent monitoring their children. The importance of social capital has increased in the city's districts, and key figures in prevention and child rearing are in agreement regarding areas of priority and what actions need to be taken. Research has been used to evaluate effectiveness and to support the policy. Also clear in the survey is a significant reduction amongst adolescents in high-risk behaviours such as alcohol consumption, smoking and use of other drugs. Attitudes in society have changed and the power of cooperation between parents and other youth workers in Reykjavik has proved to be effective.

Despite the above success amongst 13-15 year olds, the same cannot be said about the 16 year old and older group. Of particular concern are those teens who are neither studying nor working, as this group shows increased high-risk behaviour, significantly higher than those enrolled in formal education. Furthermore, new studies confirm that violence is a serious problem among children and adolescents in the City of Reykjavik; therefore the City wants to combat and prevent violence.

The main objective of the revised prevention policy is aimed at maintaining the positive results achieved for children and adolescents, fostering protective measures from very early childhood, and promoting preventive measures for children 16 years of age and older.



Focus of the Policy

- **Violence Free Society**
Emphasis placed on combating all types of violence, physical and emotional, sexual, and bullying.
- **Active participation**
Emphasis will be placed on mobilizing all children and adolescents to actively participate in age appropriate measures to combat student dropout from schools and organized sports and leisure activities. Special emphasis will be placed on reaching those who are not in school or the labour market.
- **A drug free childhood**
Work towards combating all kinds of drug use.
- **Self-respect and respect for others**
Seek ways to increase self-esteem, self-confidence, a healthy respect for their own bodies, and respecting others, as ways of preventing various kinds of risk behaviours.

Aspects of this policy will be more closely examined later in this report, as well as defining of terms. All agencies of the city are responsible for the enforcement of this policy.

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The City of Reykjavik's Prevention Policy- Future Vision

The City of Reykjavik's prevention policy emphasizes a family friendly and health promoting society where all children have equal opportunities, embrace a healthy lifestyle, feel good, and have a strong self-identity. It is necessary to ensure a safe environment for children and adolescents and that they live in a secure and constructive environment.

Guiding Principles

- Parents are key agents in prevention and a positive relationship between children and parents is an important, safeguarding factor.
- A strong and positive self-image, good social skills, and a healthy lifestyle are the basis for dealing with life and existence.
- Local cooperation and the strengthening of social capital is a preventive factor for children and adolescents and supports parents in their parenting roles.
- Active participation in school and leisure activities strengthens self-image and increases the social skills of children and adolescents.



The General Goals of the Prevention Policy

1. Children and adolescents have good physical and mental health and their best interests take priority.
2. Children's rights are respected, and they should enjoy democracy, equal rights and equal opportunity to participate in society.
3. Children and adolescents can spend enriching and positive time with their families.
4. Children and adolescents have the support needed to enable them to make informed decisions and adopt a healthy lifestyle.
5. Children and adolescents live in a safe society where social capital is cherished.
6. Local, parental cooperation is powerful and parents are secure in their roles of bringing up their children.



Goals of Specific Prevention Measures

Specific prevention targets those which general prevention does not reach or that need special attention due to high risk factors. Dysphoria, mental illness, and discrimination because of disabilities, sexual orientation, origin or social situation are risk factors for children and adolescents, and need special consideration. High-risk behaviour is behaviour that is harmful to individuals, such as drug use, crime, eating disorders, spending too much time on computers, porn, and all types of violence (including physical, mental, sexual and bullying).

- 1.** Screen for risk factors among children and adolescents. Ensure that the appropriate education and training is offered, that support and assistance is available, and intervention is applied when needed.
- 2.** Parents of children and adolescents who need support or are at risk are offered services and information. Offering appropriate resources to families in need should take priority.
- 3.** Interdisciplinary cooperation (both within and outside of the city) should be available for children and adolescents who require specific services.





Age Based Focus

Those working in the area of prevention should tailor their actions to suit the target group and implement programs that provide the appropriate support needed for each age group. They also need to identify how to reinforce protective factors that are relevant to each age group. Risk factors appear in different ways in each age group, from infancy to adulthood. A comprehensive, holistic perspective of the needs and circumstances of the various age groups and the available resources in the local community must be ready to go when problems arise.

In recent years interaction between parents, teachers and youth workers has increased. Parents are also more involved in the associations that their children participate in, and their organised recreational activities. The foundation for good cooperation and learning positive life skills begins in playschool and primary school, where the entire school community and parents work together to create a good learning and nurturing environment. Participation of children and teens in wholesome leisure activities strengthens their self-image, promotes social development and increases their contribution to the city's sports, cultural and arts entities. Participation is therefore important. The overall aim is that children and teens should be more competent in facing the challenges of daily life as active participants, adopt a positive life style and have respect for themselves and others.



0-5 years of age

It is important to give the youngest children a solid foundation for a healthy life style and to prevent them from ending up in situations that work against normal development. Emphasis is placed on their safety, primary needs, and on the importance of good relationships with their family and friends. Caring, encouragement and discipline characterize a parent's watchfulness for the welfare of their children. The foundation to a child's self-identity is laid. Social and communication skills are strengthened during play. The main risk factors for young children are related to problems with forming their self-identity and communicating with their parents. Children who receive care and affection develop a positive self-image compared to those who suffer disapproval, negative criticism or indifference. It is important to respond immediately when signs of a negative self-identity appear and to assist the parents in their parenting role.

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6-9 years of age

At 6 years of age primary school begins and a new period begins. The child faces new situations and increased independence. Good communication and trust between the home and the school from the very beginning is crucial. The child should feel secure and supported both at home and in school. Children who feel well during their early school years in general do better in the course of their studies.

Many children in this age group attend after-school programmes and begin participating in other organised leisure activities. Good balance between the time children spend in school and in leisure activities is important. There should not be too much pressure on the child and this time should not interfere with time spent with parents.

Good communication and trust between the home and the school from the very beginning is crucial.







10-12 years of age

At this age the child assumes more responsibility and enjoys more independence. The child begins to doubt and question much that it considered true and valid in younger years. Their body image changes, and other parties, grown-ups, and peers, mould the child. The child acquires new role models. Studies change; there are new challenges and increased demands. Free and leisure time also changes as now most children go home at the end of the school day.

Many children are themselves responsible for meeting at organised leisure activities after school, while others are home alone. The value of spending time with peers during free-time, supervised by grown-ups, has increased. The focus of caregivers and those who work in prevention is now on the various aspects affecting behaviour and the well-being of children, as well as relationships with parents and peers, attitudes toward learning and school and what they do in their free time. If a child exhibits signs of risk behaviour it is urgent to act immediately, and not to postpone actions until later in adolescence.

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13-15 years of age

Adolescence has its own challenges. The teenager struggles with question such as “who am I”, “what do I want to be”, and “who are my role models”? The effects of the peer group are great, and teens try on various roles. Parents who have a strong bond with their teens can have a real impact. During these years it is important that parents keep an eye on their teens, are on the lookout for signs of trouble, and know who their teens are spending time with, and also where and when. The same applies to Internet usage. Balance should always be the rule. Teens want their parents to show that they care, and to set boundaries without being tyrannical and judgemental.

The more time parents spend with their teenagers, the more unlikely they are to end up using drugs or other substances. Preventative measures are aimed at strengthening the social position of adolescents, and creating opportunities for them to enjoy their childhood in a safe environment. With guidance from grown-ups teens learn to accept responsibility and to implement their ideas within the peer group. It is important that homes, schools, community centres, sports clubs, youth groups and other institutions in the community work together if positive results are to be achieved.

Preventative measures are aimed at strengthening the social position of adolescents, and creating opportunities for them to enjoy their childhood in a safe environment.



16 years of age and older

Upon completion of primary education many changes occur in the lives of adolescents. The majority begin secondary education, while others take a break from learning or drop out of school completely. A part of their safety net disappears and relationships with their peers changes. Leisure time also undergoes changes, which adolescents must deal with on their own. It is important that adolescents have education opportunities and that they prepare themselves for adulthood. For many it is a time of creativity, initiative and new experiences.

Good parent/child relationships, a dependable peer group, a safe social environment and active participation in organised leisure activities are all very important, positive influential factors. Adolescents who live in such conditions generally adopt a healthy lifestyle and attitude and prosper. The role of parents centres on maintaining trust, monitoring education, work and leisure time, and being available when needed.

During these years, many interrelated risk factors can appear in a short amount of time. For instance, dropping out of school, unemployment, rootlessness due to changes in peer groups, weaker relationships with parents and families, weaker self-image, drug use, and illness are all risk factors. It is not sufficient to deal with the problems in a singular way; rather it is important that young adults face their problems in a holistic manner. To achieve results in prevention and intervention an integrated approach is necessary. Family, peers, NGOs, schools and community must all be involved in the process. Adolescents involved in situations characterised by chronic social isolation and the lack of a role in society need a great deal of social and individual support.

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Follow-up and Implementation

All city departments are responsible for the introducing and implementation of the prevention policy and that an action plan is carried out in all appropriate areas. The Department of Welfare is responsible for comprehensive prevention actions in the City of Reykjavik and should ensure that this is carried out in accordance with the approved prevention policy.

A consulting team on prevention is appointed across the city departments that have to do with preventive measures. The team should have an overview of preventive measures, and request information about progress and implementation of the policy in the various city districts. The consulting team is responsible for specific tasks related to the entire city, and are, for example in charge of disbursing funds for prevention projects, practicing oversight with research regarding the situation and well-being of children and adolescents, promoting curfew rules, etc.

Interdisciplinary cooperation between the involved institutions and NGOs in each district is important to achieve policy objectives. Directors of city service centres are responsible for cooperation with other key individuals involved in prevention within their district. They should ensure there is a working group, with representatives from relevant institutions and NGOs, basing their work on the city's prevention policy and carrying out a comprehensive action plan for the district. The action plan should be submitted to the central interdisciplinary team before 15 February of each year.



Programmes in the Field of Prevention and Child Raising

In all work with children and adolescents, whether by public authorities or NGOs benefiting from city funding, the emphasis should be placed on equal opportunities, healthy lifestyles and prevention.

Social skills, positive communication, education about health, welfare and risk factors should be promoted. All those who work with children and adolescents should follow the city's prevention plan.

All gatherings and entertainment events that are specifically for children and adolescents shall be drug and substance free. They shall be appropriate for children and adolescents, and the organisers and those responsible for the event should have knowledge and experience working with this group. Finally, the location shall be suitable for children and adolescents.



Key Figures in Prevention

Key players working in prevention should be role models for children and adolescents and should work cooperatively within the guidelines of the policy to promote social capital and public health.

The target group of the City of Reykjavik's Prevention Plan are children, adolescents and parents. Key figures in prevention, in addition to parents, are city and state agencies, NGOs, and others involved in areas of children and adolescents such as:

- day parents/child care providers
- community centres
- parent organisations at all school levels
- secondary schools
- leisure centres
- after-school centres
- NGOs
- primary schools
- health clinics
- department of sports and leisure
- sports clubs
- churches/religious organisations
- playschools
- police
- youth centres
- summer work school programmes
- local city service centres



Definition of Terms in the Policy

Children

According to the law, individuals are children until 18 years of age. In general discussions the whole target group is children and adolescents. Due to different interest factors, and the nature of developmental stages, in specific discussions the term child is used for individuals from birth to 12 years of age, adolescents from 13 to 15 years of age and youths for 16 years of age and older.

Prevention

Prevention is measures designed to forestall risk behaviour and poor health. Health promotion focuses on strengthening the health and welfare of the individual. Knowledge of health promoting factors, and ways of avoiding risk behaviour play an important role.

General preventive measures

General prevention focuses on promoting health and factors that improve health and enhance well-being as well as preventing all types of risk behaviour. General prevention is aimed at children, adolescents and their families in areas of public services and the infrastructure of the City of Reykjavik.

Specific preventive measure

Specific preventive measure is directed at individuals and groups who are at risk or need special support.



Positive lifestyle / safeguarding factors

A positive lifestyle is when individuals have adopted the behaviours and values in life, which foster safeguarding factors, and risk behaviours are avoided. A positive lifestyle includes physical fitness, promoting mental health, a healthy self-image, positive body image, social skills and social responsibility.

Risk behaviour/ risk factors

Risk behaviour is behaviour that harms the individual, such as consumption of drugs, crime, eating disorders, computer abuse, porn and all kinds of violence (physical, emotional, sexual, and bullying). Dysphoria, psychosis, domestic violence, discrimination because of disabilities, sexual orientation, and origin, as well as difficult social situations is also risk factors in the lives of children and adolescents that must be addressed.



Evaluating results

The effectiveness of this prevention policy will be evaluated regularly by approved research to which the City of Reykjavik has access. This includes surveys by the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), surveys by The University of Akureyri, and surveys concerning the city's services, carried out on children, parents and other service users. Statistics from city agencies will also be used.

Prevention groups in the city's districts, and agencies should take into account the results of the surveys when developing strategies and evaluating programmes. A consultative prevention team will, by proxy from the Department of Welfare, compile research and evaluate overall results.





The following individuals wrote this prevention policy:

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The City of Reykjavik Prevention Policy for 2014-2019 was compiled with consideration to current laws, regulation and international conventions regarding the welfare and interests of children, as well as The City of Reykjavik's Human Rights Policy, and the curriculum for play, primary and secondary schools.



City of Reykjavík
Department of Welfare