

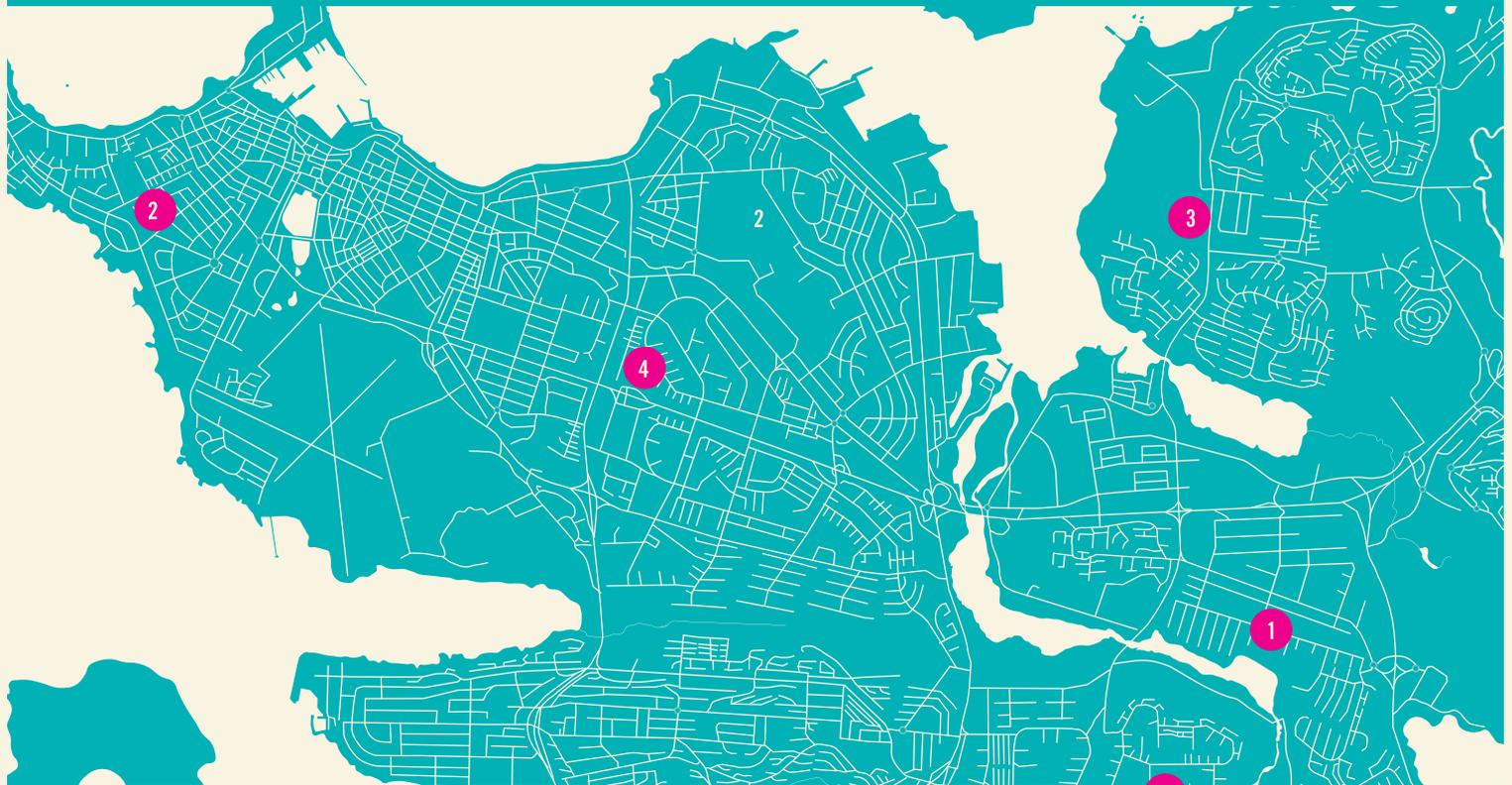


GUIDELINES FOR RECREATION CENTRES

- REYKJAVÍK DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH -

RECREATION CENTRES

SFS operates five recreation centres in Reykjavik



RECREATION CENTRES IN REYKJAVIK

- 1** **ÁRSEL**
Árbæ • Grafarholti
- 2** **TJÖRNINN**
Vesturbær • Miðborg • Hlíðar
- 3** **GUFUNESBÆR**
Grafarvogí

- 4** **KRINGLUMÝRI**
Háaleiti • Laugardal
- 5** **MIDBERG**
Breiðholti



GUIDELINES FOR RECREATION CENTRES

Guidelines for recreation centres from the Reykjavík Department of Education and Youth (SFS) is now being published for the first time. It is built on the *Guidelines from the Department of Sports and Recreational – ÍTR*, which was published in 2006¹. It was meant to be updated by the end of 2009, but has not yet been updated for reasons such as organizational changes in the recreation activity programs in Reykjavík.

On September 12th, 2011, the City of Reykjavík merged the Departments of Kindergartens, Education, and the recreational part of the Department of Sports and Recreational, into the Department of Education and Youth (SFS). The role of SFS is to provide children and adolescents with the best opportunities for play, education, and recreational activities, in cooperation with families and local communities. The goal of the department is for the children and adolescents of the city to feel good, progress, and receive the type of upbringing and education beneficial for success in life and work.

The goal of publishing guidelines for recreational centres is to keep the overview of the centres' activities in one accessible place. The guidelines includes explanations of the goals of the operation, the threefold value, and the key competence factors of recreational activities, as well as the main operations of the recreational centres. The guidelines is the

pillar of the activities that the recreational centres offer and is therefore considered an important factor in the operations and planning of recreational activities for children and adolescents in Reykjavík, along with the operational plan. The guidelines also provides team members with insight into the diverse activities that the recreation centres offer.

The guidelines were put together by a group assembled for the project in February of 2013. The group was composed of Elín Þóra Böðvarsdóttir, Eygló Rúnarsdóttir, Hulda Valdís Valdimarsdóttir, Jóhannes Guðlaugsson, and Sigrún Sveinbjörnsdóttir. The group also worked with the directors of recreation centres, heads of the departments, managers and youth workers. The guidelines from 2006 by the Department of Sports and Recreational were used as a reference, as well as the Main Curriculum of Primary Schools from 2011. Changes in the work environment as well as development in the professional environment of recreational work were also observed.

The group suggests that the guidelines be reviewed every five years. The operations of recreation centres change along with society, and it is important that the guidelines give the most accurate picture of the basic elements of operations at any given time, and that it considers the latest currents and trends in the field of recreation and social affairs.

¹ Íþróttá- og tómstundaráð Reykjavíkur. (no date). *Starfsskrá skrifstofu tómstundamála – ÍTR*. Reykjavík, ÍTR



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SFS RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Children and adolescents are given the chance to participate in recreational activities² that have pedagogical and educational value, and that take their age and development into account. An emphasis is placed on active participation, experiential learning, democracy and human rights. Special attention is placed on activating individuals who require encouragement and support due to a disability or social circumstances. Activities offered by the recreation centres are preventative by nature in the sense that the attitudes and behavior of children and adolescents are guided towards a healthy lifestyle and active participation in society.

²The guidelines considers the concept of recreational activities comparable to the concept of recreational activities. Sometimes the concept "youth work" is used in the same context, for example regarding the Youth Act (No. 70/2007), which states that youth work is essentially an organized social and recreational activity, where children and adolescents work together on ideals, goals and interests that they consider important, in their free time.



ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Children and adolescents are encouraged to actively participate in the activities of the after-school programs and youth centres so that they learn to spend their free time productively and to be part of society.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- Experiential learning is a process in which the individual builds knowledge, gains skills, and changes his/her values based on direct experience of participation in projects³. We try to utilize the methodology of experiential learning in as a diverse of a way as possible in the recreational activities.

³Luckner, J. L. and Nadler, R. S. (1997). *Processing the experience. Strategies to Enhance and Generalize Learning* (2. ed.) Dubuque Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Books.



DEMOCRACY

- Democracy is a basic factor of the work, where an emphasis is placed on communication skills. Children and adolescents receive training in expressing their opinions, listening to others, and adopting the perspectives of others. Such practices strengthen children and adolescents' self-image, their critical thinking skills, and encourage open-mindedness.
- By using the ideology and methods of democracy, children and adolescents are trained in building influence in their own lives and work. The goal is to strengthen their activity, independence, and sense of responsibility as individuals, and to encourage them to have a formative impact on their immediate environment and society.

HUMAN RIGHTS

- All children have the right to participate and to express their opinions openly. It is ensured that they are not discriminated based on gender, disability, religion, or other factors. Operations are kept in accordance with Reykjavík's [Human Rights Policy](#). Operations are also based on child protection laws⁴ and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, and the goal is to promote children's awareness of their own rights and obligations.

PREVENTATIVE WORK

- It is important that recreational activities strengthen the health and wellness of children, foster protective factors, and minimize the impact of risk factors in the children and adolescents' environment. For further information, please see the [Reykjavík Prevention Policy](#) as well as chapter IX in laws regarding municipalities' social services⁵.

⁴ Barnavemndarlög nr. 80/2002.

⁵ Lög um félagsþjónustu sveitarfélaga nr. 40/1991.



THE ROLE OF THE SFS OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

The SFS office of policy and management shapes the policies and keeps an overview of recreational activities offered to children and adolescents in Reykjavík. The role of the office is to strengthen and develop the professional environment of recreational activities, specifically for children and adolescents. A part of that is participation in various interdisciplinary collaboration projects. The office acts as a consultant to the Department of Education and Youth.

Recreation centres belong to the specialized office, which is also a consultant to them and other centres that provide similar services

on behalf of the City of Reykjavík. The office is tasked with of the implementation and execution of internal and external evaluation of the operations of the recreation centres.

Kindergartens, primary schools, and school bands also belong to the SFS specialized office which facilitates cooperation within the Department of Education and Youth. The office also handles human resources, financial services, statistics and research services, as well as the office of the director of the department, all of which provide support for the recreation centres.



THE VALUE OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Free time in modern society is a good setting for pedagogical activities that place emphasis on development and skills in a variety of subjects and experiential learning. The recreational activities help strengthen self-image, compassion, social skills, activity and participation.

The UN Convention on the Rights of a Child was incorporated into Icelandic law on February 20th, 2013⁶. It includes, among other things, a child's right to recreational and creative activities.

With important preventive work, the recreation centre creates a positive choice for spending free time in a safe environment with professionals, doing meaningful activities. They offer a good opportunity for recreational education where youth workers educate children and adolescents on the rewards of recreational activities and how they can impact quality of life and wellness⁷.

Art. 31. of the Convention of the Rights of a Child:

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and recreational, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and recreational activity.

⁶ Umboðsmaður barna. (1992). *Samningur Sameinuðu þjóðanna um réttindi barnsins*. Sótt 15. september 2013 af http://www.barn.is/barn/adalsida/barnasattmalinn/barnasattmalinn_i_heild/

⁷ Sigurveig Mjöll Tómasdóttir. (2012). *Hvernig getur þátttaka í skipulögðu tómstundastarfi eft sjálfstraust og seiglu unglinga?* Reykjavík, Háskólaprent.

ORGANIZED RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES HAVE A THREEFOLD PEDAGOGICAL VALUE

- **Preventive value** – Participation in organized recreational activities in a safe environment with professionals has a high preventative value. Studies have found a decrease in smoking and in alcohol and drug use among teenagers at primary school age in the recent years. Organized recreational activities are considered to have had a positive effect in this area. They are also considered to have a positive effect on academic performance⁸⁻⁹. By offering children and adolescents positive options for how to spend their free time with the assistance of strong role models, the likelihood of them choosing a healthy lifestyle increases, and they are more likely to avoid risk behavior.
- **Educational value** – Children and adolescents spend their free time working on diverse and creative projects, where an emphasis is placed on activity, initiative and creativity. Participation in such projects provides young people with experience and knowledge which they can use and apply in society. This is not a formal education, but rather experiential learning and non-formal education. By non-formal education, we mean education that is not organized by specific institutions and ends with a test. However, non-formal education works toward pre-established goals and instructors provide the support needed to reach those goals within a set time frame. Recreational activities also offer a so-called informal education, which is learning that takes place in daily life connected to work, family, or free time. This learning is not organized in terms of specific goals, study period or support, and is usually subconscious¹⁰.

⁸ Hrefna Pálsdóttir, Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir o.p. (2012). Ungt fólk 2012 – *Menntun, menning, íþróttir, tómsundur, hágr og líðan nemenda í 8., 9. og 10. bekk grunnskóla*. Reykjavík, Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið.

⁹ Hrefna Pálsdóttir, Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir o.p. (2013). Ungt fólk 2013 – *Menntun, menning, íþróttir, tómsundur, hágr og líðan nemenda í 5., 6. og 7. bekk*. Reykjavík, Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið.

¹⁰ Colley, H., Hodkinson, P. og Malcolm, J. (2002). *Non-formal learning: Mapping the conceptual terrain. A consultation report*. Leeds: University of Leeds Lifelong Learning Institute. Sótt 5. apríl 2009 af http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/colley_informal_learning.htm



- **Recreational value** – To have fun, laugh, and spend time in a good group without a visible goal is an important part of life, and it is necessary to create the time and accessibility for such entertainment for children, adolescents and young people. Children and teenagers have a need to belong to a group, to communicate with others, and to enjoy spending time together with their peers. In addition, studies have found that it's important for children and teenagers to be able to look at adults, including their parents, as role models and to form connections with them.

The preventive, educational, and recreation values often overlap with the activities of the recreational centres. Creativity, social activity, and free play have a recreational value, as well as both preventative and educational values. When children at an after-school program watch a fun movie, a platform is created for discussions about the topics of the film, which provides an opportunity to discuss society's values and norms, and for everyone to express their personal opinion. The film can also be used to train articulation, to explain the movie or specific parts of it. Dance parties are a form of entertainment at youth centres, and at the same time a safe environment where teenagers can practice their social skills and learn the "popular moves" from their peers without intoxicating substances, under the supervision of professionals. When the planning and execution of the dance parties is also in the hands of the teenagers themselves, they gain experience in project management and in handling responsibility, performing, and in seeing their ideas become reality.

The most important aspect is the ideologies and goals that lie behind the activities and how they are executed, as opposed to purely focusing on the activities themselves.

KEY COMPETENCES IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Recreational activities provide an endless amount of opportunities to work on factors that empower and strengthen individuals as social beings and active members of society. The recreation centres place an emphasis on improving children's self-image, compassion, social skills, activity, and participation. In modern society these factors weigh more and more, and individuals who have a good grasp on them tend to be well prepared for their adult years. Free time is an important part of the lives of children and teenagers, and through the topics that they choose to focus on in their free time, they are provided with an opportunity to mirror their opinions and attitudes in a group of peers on their own terms, as participation is optional. The activities that take place in the setting of free time, and the work done within the school system, support each other in increasing children's skills. With active participation in their free time, a training opportunity is created for children and adolescents in a different context and environment. Recreational activities provide a chance to support the basic elements of education which are, according to the Main Curriculum of Primary Schools¹¹, reading, sustainability, health and wellness, democracy and human rights, equality and creativity. The basic elements of education are meant to strengthen the development of individuals, support increased equality and democracy, and to ensure that society has educated and healthy people for active participation. For some children, free time activities are more convenient for increased development and skills than the settings of primary schools, and the recreational activities offer those individuals a better chance of a fulfilling life. Recreational activities look for ways to evaluate the contributions and skills of individuals in formal and informal ways, depending on the situation. The following is based on the factors most emphasized by primary school laws¹².

SELF-IMAGE

It is important for an individual to have a healthy self-image and faith in his/her own abilities. It is essential that recreational activities support a positive development of the self-image among children and teenagers, and assist individuals in gaining the ability to:

- Understand their own feelings, their strengths and weaknesses, and have faith in their own abilities.
- Address various situations of daily life.
- Take responsibility for their own lives, for example by making a choice of a healthy lifestyle.
- Shape their own image and opinions in an independent and responsible way.

¹¹ Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneytið. (2013). *Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla – almennur hluti 2011* – greinasvið 2013. Reykjavík, Mennta- og menningarmálaráðuneyti.

COMPASSION

Compassion includes on the one hand responsibilities, connection and empathy, and on the other hand willingness, motivation and interest in understanding others and showing them compassion. Mutual respect and compassion are an important foundation for the shaping of society, successful communication, and a sense of justice. The main purpose of nurturing compassion in children and teenagers in recreational activities, is so that they:

- Have compassion for themselves, others, and the environment.
- Take a moral stand on conflicting issues and understand the difference between right and wrong.
- Show tolerance and respect for other people.
- Learn to give and enjoy compassion.
- Learn to appreciate and cultivate friendships.

¹² Lög um grunnskóla nr. 91/2008.



SOCIAL SKILLS

The aim of good social skills is to be able to have positive and successful communication with others. A healthy self-image is the basis of social skills. Individuals with good social skills are more likely to initiate communication, maintain it, and adjust to changing circumstances. Mature social skills are a foundation for the happiness and life satisfaction of every individual. The main goal of training social skills in recreational activities, is for the children to:

- Encourage empathy.
- Live in harmony with others in society.
- Have respect for other people's opinions and values, and to be able to have rich and rewarding communication with others regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, physical or mental abilities.
- Develop a perspective that enables individuals able to understand and respect the rules of society.

ACTIVITY AND PARTICIPATION

Activity and participation include the ability to sense and understand what it means to live in a society with others. Activity and participation refer to people's attitudes and ability to be active participants in a democratic society, and act in accordance with their rights and obligations regarding children. With recreational activities individuals can learn how to:

- Develop civil consciousness and the skills needed to be a responsible participant in society, and to shape and improve the environment with democratic methods and discussions.
 - Develop global awareness and an understanding of basic human rights.
 - Be critical and take a responsible stand towards various societal issues.
 - Show initiative and be creative in thought and behavior.
- Know the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, and other such rights and obligations of children.

RECREATION CENTRES

SFS operates five recreation centres in Reykjavík: Tjörnin in Miðborg, Hlíðir and Vesturbær, Kringlumýri in Háaleiti and Laugardal, Miðberg in Breiðholt, Gufunesbær in Grafarvogur, Ársel in Árbær and Grafarholt.

The activity of recreation centres is subject to spare time. It is the time when obligations concerning school, work, or the home come to an end. All operations within the recreation centres are based on the guiding principles of strengthening the self-image, compassion, social skills, activity and participation. The operations of the recreation centres aim to strengthen the social wealth of the local communities by encouraging health and social participation by the public.

Much emphasis is put on offering a diverse and interesting variety of activities under the guidance of professionals. The recreation centres supervise the operational aspect of the youth centres and after-school programs in their local communities. This includes personnel, operations, finance, housing, equipment, assistance with internal evaluations within the after-school and youth centres, etc.

It is important for the recreation centres to hire capable, responsible, and interested employees, and that they have an education in pedagogical fields at a university level, as well as diverse backgrounds and experiences. The recreation centres work closely with human resources at SFS regarding personnel matters. The City of Reykjavík has an active staff policy as well as a human rights policy, and employees must work in accordance with the rights and obligations of the collective agreement between the City of Reykjavík and the public workers union (Sameyki). Additionally, the recreational centres work in accordance with the [ethics of Félagsfagfólks í frítímaþjónustu](#) and [the ethics of Reykjavík City employees](#).

The operations of the recreation centres are constantly changing in nature along with the development and focus of society, but have rooted ideologies that professionally frame the operations.

RECREATION CENTRES – MAIN ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS:

Local cooperation
and social wealth

Youth councils

OFFICE

Information and
promotional work

The role of expertise

Facilities

- Management
- Operation and accounting
- Personnel
- Continuous learning
- Operational plan
- Financial plan
- Implementation plan
- Policy formulation
- Vision
- Interdisciplinary work
- Marketing and promotional work
- Quality control

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

- Free play and choices
- Group work
- Events
- Education/workshops

YOUTH CENTERS

- Open activities
- Group work
- Events
- Education/workshops

PARTNERS AT CITY/ NATIONAL LEVEL

- Department of education and youth
- Other leisure centers
- Other city departments
- Hitt Húsið (Reykjavík youth center)
- Vinnuskóli Reykjavíkur (Reykjavík work school)
- Rehabilitation and diagnostic centers
- Samfés (Youth Work Iceland)

LOCAL COOPERATION

- Parents
- Primary schools
- Kindergartens
- Service centers
- Sports associations
- Church
- Resident/local organizations
- Local police
- Health clinics
- Parent associations
- Other associations



THE RECREATIONAL CENTRES' MAIN PROJECTS

YOUTH COUNCILS

- Each neighborhood has an active youth council. Representatives in the youth councils are between the ages of 13-18 years and are nominated by the student councils of primary schools with the youth division, and junior college in each neighborhood. Two representatives from each youth council form together the Reykjavík youth council.
- The goal of the youth councils is twofold:
- To give young people who do not yet have the right to vote a chance to express themselves to the appropriate parties regarding issues that are important to them.
- That participants receive training and education in democratic practices.

FACILITIES

- Whenever possible, the place and facilities for local recreational and social activities are rented out to or provided for the neighborhood residents, for example for meetings or other social events.
- The purpose of renting or borrowing facilities is to provide individuals who do not have such facilities available the chance to continue their work, and in this way support diverse local and social activities.
- Recreation centres try to build and maintain, in cooperation with others, diverse facilities for outdoor and sports activities in the city's local communities.



LOCAL COOPERATION AND SOCIAL WEALTH

- Recreation centres both initiate and participate in various neighborhood cooperations. This entails work that increases the social wealth and participation in local organizations to promote progress within local communities, and for neighborhood festivals.
- Recreation centres have for a long time initiated various local operations with the goal of increasing social wealth, strengthening the unity of the community and increasing residents' awareness of their immediate environment.
- Recreation centres strive to meet the needs of young people over the age of 16 in various ways consistent with the main emphases of the Reykjavik Prevention Policy and young people's demands.

INFORMATION AND PROMOTIONAL WORK

- Recreation centres have a good overview of organized recreational activities offered to children and teenagers in any local community. The goal is to spread this information to the local residents in cooperation with youth workers at local service centres. The goal is that all recipients of the services, parents, and other cooperating partners, have good access to information about local recreational activities, the nature of the operations, goals, and specific projects.

RECREATION CENTRES' ROLE OF EXPERTISE

- Recreation centres have developed as specialist centres in various fields. For example, Kringlumýri is an expert centre for recreational activities for disabled children and teenagers, Gufunesbær is an expert centre for outdoor activities, and Tjörnin is the expert centre for children and teenagers' democracy. Expert centres provide other recreation centres, as well as outside parties when appropriate, counselling and support with various affairs.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR 6-9 YEARS OLD

All children in grades 1-4 have the option of attending after-school programs at the end of a school day and during school holidays. The after-school programs are either located within the school premises or in a separate location. They are closed during the schools' winter vacations, on staff days, and during the recreational programs summer vacation.

The role of the after-school programs is to offer a variety of recreational activities when the traditional school day is over, for children in grades 1-4. The goal of the after-school programs is for each individual to enjoy themselves and to develop in an environment of warmth, security and respect. The ideology of the recreational programs applies in the same way to the after-school programs. The goal of the after-school programs is to offer meaningful free time where children have the chance to try out a variety of activities. An emphasis is placed on developing social skills and communication

through work and play along with self-respect, respect for others and for the environment. The after-school programs work towards strengthening children's confidence, independence, and social skills. The centres utilize democratic methods of working and strengthen children's abilities to formalize independent opinions, and to influence their environment and circumstances. Cooperation with parents, primary school staff, and others who take part in caring for and educating the children during the day, is an important factor in the operation.

The goal is to provide all children with the service regardless of their skills, development, or disabilities. The goal is for all children to have the choice to participate in the activities, and that their strengths are utilized. The safety of children is ensured, and daily operations follow safety procedures.



CORE COMPONENTS OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The following components of the operations of the after-school programs are meant to strengthen children's self-image, social skills, compassion, activity and participation.

FREE PLAY AND CHOICE

The goal of free play and choice is for children to have the chance to tend to their interests and hobbies, and in this way learn how to spend their free time in a meaningful way that they can themselves influence and shape. It is important that the children themselves always have a say about the activities they are offered.

- An emphasis is placed on free play and the pedagogical value of it.
- The children are consulted regarding activities and choice, for example by children's meetings and children's councils.
- In free play and choice, the emphasis is placed on children learning how to make decisions and that they have a platform to develop and strengthen their social skills through free play.

GROUP WORK

During group work, children work on common subjects where an emphasis is placed on cooperation, discussion, and solidarity. The group work is supervised by professionals who instruct individuals in the group on how to reach a common goal, which can be of an individual, communication, or project-related kind¹³.

- One type of group work is for specific groups of children who need special support, and another type is based on specific interests, ages, or themes.
- Group work provides the opportunity of personal approach and participants get to know each other better among themselves. Group work offers the chance for open questions and discussions around values and attitudes, and also gives the opportunity to train communication skills and show compassion.
- Democracy is an important foundation in group work. Purposeful efforts are made on getting everyone to participate and giving everyone the chance to influence the work and topic of the group.

¹³ Sigrún Sveinbjörnsdóttir og Hulda Valdís Valdimarsdóttir (ed.). (2006). *Hópastarfshandbók*. Reykjavík, ÍTR. Óútgefið efni.

EVENTS

Events offered by after-school programs can be very diverse. In many instances, the events have been thought of, planned and executed by the children themselves in cooperation with youth workers. Events can be anything from exhibitions, cultural events, parents' days, dances, competitions, trips, theme days, or visits. They can either be individual to an after-school program, or in cooperation with other programs.

- The preparation of events gives children the opportunity to express their own ideas and participate in the planning and execution of their ideas in consultation with the staff, which can be a very educating process.
- In the planning and execution of events there is a chance to get to know other children, widen the horizon, and try out new activities, which is an important factor in the development of social skills.
- During events such as field trips, there is often a chance for the children to be introduced to a variety of recreational activities, and the outdoors tend to be a big factor on such trips. Field trips challenge social skills as they entail a lot of time spent in groups, and they offer a good opportunity to train cooperation and communication within a group.
- Events provide a good opportunity to get to know others and to create solidarity.

EDUCATION/WORKSHOPS

The goal of education and workshops at the after-school programs is to increase knowledge and open-mindedness towards the relevant topics. Education can be an important prevention that encourages children to choose healthy ways to spend their free time. Through the workshops, children get the chance to familiarize themselves with new and exciting topics.

- The workshops introduce the children to new topics that give them the chance to experience, learn, and enjoy.
- During field trips children learn about their environment, the city, various institutions, companies, and organizations.
- We try to accommodate a wide variety of interests and the various ideas that the children come up with.
- Discussions and education regarding various issues that are of importance to the children depending on their age and development.
- The ideology behind experiential learning is used in a purposeful way in education and workshops at the after-school programs. Children are encouraged to take on new challenges and to learn from the topics that they deal with.

YOUTH CENTRES FOR 10-16 YEARS OLD

Youth centres in Reykjavík are for children and teenagers aged 10-16. Youth centres are either located within school premises or in a separate location.

The role of youth centres is twofold. One objective is to offer children and teenagers at the ages of 10-16 recreational activities that have preventative, pedagogical, and educational value, and takes their age and development into account. Another objective is to provide facilities for recreation and for spending time with peers in a safe environment. An emphasis is placed on getting the children and teenagers to actively participate in activities, especially the ones that require special encouragement and support due to a disability or social circumstances. Group work and open activities are the cornerstone for this.

The service time of the youth centres is divided into two parts. On one hand, there is the presence of a youth worker during children and teenagers' school hours. On the other hand, there are the general opening hours at the youth centres which are divided into day and evening hours.

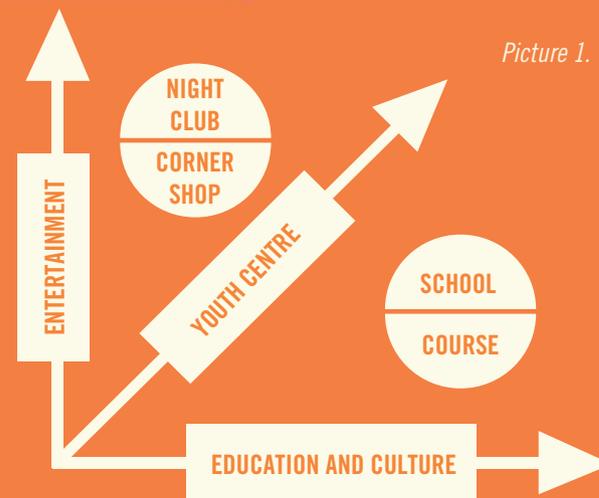
Special youth centres for 10-16 year old with disabilities are operated in four places in the city. They offer recreational services at the end of the school day and during school holidays. The operations of the special youth centres are as deeply integrated as possible with the work of other youth centres.



Picture 1

JACOBSEN'S DEFINITION OF A YOUTH CENTRE

Henning Jacobsen states that a youth centre is an institution that most people have heard of, but which few people know much about. He suggests that part of the reason is that a certain group of adults never participated in such activities as teenagers, but he also suggests that some adults think that youth centres are a place for teenagers where grown-ups should not go too near or interfere with. Jacobsen defines and locates youth centres right in between a place where teenagers can gather, have social interaction and recreation, and a place where the main emphasis is on preventative value, creativity, and learning of various kinds. Jacobsen states that the role of those who work at youth centres is to ensure a professional operation with the pedagogical value of free time as the goal¹⁴.



Picture 1.

¹⁴ Hulda Valdis Valdimardóttir. (2010). "Þetta er svo miklu dýpra en bara að sitja með þeim og hanga" – Starfsfólk í félagsmiðstöðvum ÍTR. Reykjavík, Háskólaprent.

Picture 1. Jacobsen's definition of a youth centre

WORK COMPONENTS OF YOUTH CENTRES

The following components of the operation of youth centres are meant to strengthen children and teenagers' self-image, social skills, compassion, activity and participation.

OPEN ACTIVITIES

The main goal of open activities is to create a platform for children and teenagers to meet in a neutral and safe place where they can come on their own terms and be active in appropriate ways under the supervision of adults. Open activities allow them to tend to their own interests and hobbies, and in this way receive training in how to spend their free time in a meaningful way and how they can influence and shape it.

- Part of the opening hours are defined as open activities where young people can spend time together and participate in a variety of recreational activities, such as table tennis, indoor hockey, billiard, card games, video games, listening to and playing music. Sometimes they are divided by age, depending on the size and requirement of the group each time.
- An emphasis is placed on encouraging children and teenagers to participate and to provide them with a platform for enjoyable time spent together with peers, under the supervision of a youth worker.
- Children and teenagers are consulted regarding choices of subjects for open activities, for example with meetings, idea boxes, through social media, and through intermediate teenage councils.
- Open activities are a perfect platform for children and teenagers to form connections with each other, and for youth workers to chat and connect with them.

GROUP WORK

During group work, young people work on common subjects where the emphasis is placed on cooperation, discussion, and solidarity. The group work is supervised by professionals who instruct individuals in the group on how to reach a common goal, which can be of an individual, communication, or project-related kind¹⁵.

- In most cases, group work at the youth centres is open to everyone, and participation is voluntary. Groups can work together for a long or short amount of time, depending on children and teenagers' interests, goals, and topics each time. In specific group work, individuals are particularly chosen for the group, often in consultation with professionals due to social inactivity or risk behavior.
- Group work provides an opportunity for personal approach and the experience of belonging to a group. By taking part in group work, children and teenagers commit to participating in the work that the group takes on.
- Group work offers both formal and informal education regarding topics such as a healthy lifestyle, bullying, sex, human rights, democracy, the harmful effects of drugs, and how to use the internet in a safe way. An opportunity is provided to train social skills, strengthen the self-image, show compassion, and develop group awareness. Group work entails open questions, active listening, and discussions about values and attitudes.
- It is important that the work be done in a democratic manner, that everyone is purposefully encouraged to participate, and that everyone has the opportunity to exert influence.
- Group work requires more cooperation with parents than open activities. It is important that parents are well informed about the group work and that they are active cooperators.

¹⁵ Sigrún Sveinbjörnsdóttir og Hulda Valdis Valdimarsdóttir (ed.). (2006). *Hópastarshandbók*. Reykjavík, ÍTR. Óútgefið efni.

EVENTS

Events offered by youth centres can be very diverse. In most instances, the events have been thought of, planned, and executed by the children and teenagers themselves in cooperation with the staff. Events can be anything from exhibitions, dances, competitions, trips, theme nights, or visits. They can either be exclusive to a youth centre, or in cooperation with other centres.

- A specific group or individuals throw an event, for example for other children and teenagers.
- The preparation of events gives children and teenagers the opportunity to express their own ideas and participate in the planning and execution of those ideas in consultation with the staff, which can be a very educating process.
- In events such as short or longer trips, there is often a chance for the children and teenagers to familiarize themselves with a variety of recreational activities which they can spend their time on outside of the youth centre, and the outdoors tend to be a big factor in such trips. Field trips challenge social skills, as they entail a lot of time spent in groups, and they offer a good opportunity to work on communication, confidentiality and trust within the group.
- Events provide a good opportunity to form personal connections and create solidarity within a group. In many cases, children and teenagers experience new and exciting subjects that broaden their horizon.

EDUCATION/WORKSHOPS

The goal of education and workshops is to foster open-mindedness, expand knowledge of current events, and to support creative subjects. Education is an important part of the preventative work of youth centres and supports children and adolescents in choosing a positive lifestyle. Examples of topics of education are bullying, prejudice, sex education, team building, and self-empowerment. The subjects of the workshops are diverse, such as theater, candy-making, outdoor cooking, fabric printing, and cooking.

- Formal education where children and teenagers are invited to attend educational talks in either open activities, group work, or when a youth worker comes into the school with a predetermined topic.
- Informal education where staff members take the opportunities presented in the workplace to discuss and share opinions about issues relevant to the children and teenagers. The staff directs discussions, encourages critical thinking, and supports individuals in forming their own opinions.
- In the workshops, the children and teenagers are introduced to new subjects that give them an opportunity to experience, learn, and enjoy.
- We try to accommodate the diversity of interests and ideas that come up within the group. There is a chance to introduce a variety of productive recreational activities to participants, and to spark their interest in such participation.
- The ideology behind experiential learning is used in a purposeful way in education and workshops. Children and teenagers are encouraged to take on new challenges, reflect on their experiences, and learn from the topics that they deal with each time.
- Children and teenagers are encouraged to take on new challenges, reflect on their experiences, and learn from the topics that they deal with each time.

PROMOTIONAL WORK AND COLLABORATION

INFORMATION

It is important that all information about the operation is provided in a suitable and professional manner, such as at consultations, parent presentations, presentations for kindergarten and primary school teachers, to primary school parent associations, and also to the children and teenagers themselves. Newsletters, websites, social media pages, emails, booklets, and other promotional material are examples of methods the staff uses for the purpose of promotion.

The managers of the after-school programs and youth centres can email parents through the Mentor system. Directors use the system first and foremost to deliver information to parents regarding recreational activities organized by the Department of Education and Youth and/or events the local centre organizes or participates in, cf. rules regarding advertisements for school and youth work.

COOPERATION WITH PARENTS

Good cooperation with parents is important when working with children and teenagers attending the after-school programs and youth centres. An emphasis is placed on a quality response when parents contact or come to the programs, and that the staff is ready to assist and provide information about the program. The aim is for to parents have readily available access to information about the recreational activities and that they can speak to the staff about the wellbeing, feelings and the status of their child. The contact can be either formal or informal.

Parents can find all basic information about the after-school programs and youth centres on their websites. Additionally, parents can often find information, staff members, and other parents through the centres' Facebook pages. Supervisors/managers choose the manner in which they consider best on a case-by-case basis to communicate with parents, whether it concerns matters of an individual or a group. Parents are invited to events at the centres, such as youth centre day, parental coffee gatherings, and talent shows. An emphasis is also placed on good cooperation with the schools' parent associations.

COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

The main partners of the recreation centres, youth centres, and after-school programs, in addition to parents, are kindergartens, primary schools, local non-governmental organizations, service centres, health clinics, police, and other parties in the field. Cooperation between other after-school and youth programs has also considerably strengthened the operation. The cooperation between all of these parties lays a strong foundation for good pedagogical conditions and social wealth in each neighborhood and is an important part of the preventative work that the aforementioned parties do.

Good cooperation with others offering recreational activities creates an opportunity at the after-school programs and youth centres to introduce the children to a variety of spare time options. A number of experimental projects have already been offered at the programs in collaboration with certified professionals, such as music and dance lessons. The aim is to increase the coherence between school and youth work that children and teenagers participate in during the day, in a way that creates equal balance between both their needs in school work and in recreational activities.



City of Reykjavik
Department of Education and Youth