

**MUZIKA CHARITABLE TRUST**  
**FRODO – FOUNDATION FOR THE RELIEF OF DISABLED ORPHANS**

***Towards Centres of Excellence in Romanian Care Institutions***

**REPORT AND FINDINGS FROM A DIALOGUE SEMINAR**

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June – Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

***British Embassy, 24 Jules Michelet, 010463 Bucharest***

## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Muzika Charitable Trust and FRODO are extremely grateful to Robin Barnett and his team at the British Embassy for their generous support in hosting the Dialogue Seminar, and for the active interest which they took in its proceedings. Much of the success of the event is due to their help and encouragement.

The organisers would also like to thank all the participants, not just because many people made long journeys in order to be there but also for the frankness and candour with which they took part in discussions. A full list of participants can be found below.

The Seminar uncovered a rich vein of passion, insight and ideas for the transformation of Romanian care institutions through partnership between directors, staff, policymakers, NGOs and UK Charities. We hope that this report captures some of the knowledge, enthusiasm and creativity demonstrated during the Seminar, and that it provides an effective resource to stimulate further action.

### **Participants**

#### ***Organisation***

Light into Europe

FARA Romania

Fundatia de Sprijin Comunitar (FSC)

FONPC

Muzika

FRODO

Anglo-Romanian Educational Trust

CIAPD Tg. Ocna

DGASPC Residential Care for Adults Director

DGASPC Adults Director

CRRPD Tg Ocna

CRRPH Ungureni

CRRN Darmanesti (Vermesti)

CRRN Racaciuni

Residential family Models, Buzau

#### **Translators**

#### ***Representative***

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## **1. THE DIALOGUE SEMINAR**

Building on two decades of highly successful collaboration between UK Charities and Romanian NGOs and care institutions, a Dialogue Seminar convened by Muzika and FRODO brought together a diverse range of some 30 participants from statutory and voluntary bodies over a 24 hour period. The event took place against a background of continuing international concern about the standards of care in some institutions despite the demonstrable progress that has been made over the past two decades. It also reflects the need for UK Charities and Romanian NGOs to focus their limited resources where they can achieve the greatest and most sustainable impact.

The Dialogue Seminar aimed to explore ways in which collaborative action can support quality improvement and the introduction of effective governance in care institutions throughout Romania. The Seminar identified shared aspirations for the medium-term future, and agreed a clear set of principles to be taken forward by the institutions, supported by their partner UK Charities and Romanian NGOs. These principles are also designed to maximise the impact of support from Charities and NGOs in both countries.

### **The Programme**

#### ***Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June***

<b>16.00</b>	Refreshments
<b>16.30</b>	Welcome and Introductions
<b>17.00</b>	Setting the scene Discussion
<b>19.00</b>	Close

#### ***Friday 18<sup>th</sup> June***

<b>09.00</b>	Defining Centres of Excellence <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The role of management</li><li>▪ The role of staff</li><li>▪ The role of governance</li><li>▪ Resourcing learning and development for those in care</li></ul>
<b>12.30</b>	Lunch
<b>13.30</b>	Towards an action plan
<b>15.30</b>	Follow-up actions
<b>16.00</b>	Close

Discussions took place under Chatham House Rules. Participants were encouraged to be open and reflective, recognising that “the force of the better argument” is more important than seniority. No statement in this report should be attributed to an individual participant.

## **2. A VISION FOR 2020**

Participants were asked to imagine a realistic future ten years ahead in which significant but achievable progress had been made in the care of children and adults in long-term residential institutions. Such future-focused exercises enable participants from different backgrounds (in this case senior managers from Romanian institutions, public agencies, NGOs and UK Charities) to step back from day-to-day concerns and identify the extent to which their longer-term aspirations converge or diverge.

In practice the Dialogue Seminar generated a high level of agreement that change was necessary in terms of values and strategy, and that fundamental transformation was required in many areas of organisational practice.

Participants drew a vision of the future in which the individual was at the centre of the care process, demonstrating respect and involving them (and their families) in the decisions that affect them. Future centres (no longer known as “institutions”) will provide a physical environment that is both normal and stimulating, and a learning environment that enables each individual to develop to his or her full potential. Centres are also an integral part of their wider communities, proactively building relationships and shared understanding with local people.

Extensive investment in the centres by 2020 will have transformed their physical appearance, creating spaces in which residents can interact with each other and with nature. Of at least equal importance, investment in people will mean that each centre enjoys effective leadership, driven not by targets or compliance with central regulations but by openness to innovation and willingness to empower both staff and residents. Staff will benefit from a clear competency framework which enables them to grow their skills and qualifications in a structured way. Equally staff at all levels will be respected, not least for their tacit knowledge and experience of how to deliver real care. Staff involvement on a regular basis in continuous improvement, risk management and shared learning will be a major driver for quality in each centre.

Staff will also have access to a diverse portfolio of resources and opportunities to stimulate learning and development amongst residents. Learning and development will be a part of the everyday routine of centres, whether explicitly or simply by being embedded in normal activities. Arts-based therapies will play a particularly important role, and by 2020 three decades of exposure to methods and techniques used by foreign volunteers will have stimulated a strong cadre of home-grown practitioners and approaches. Even the most junior frontline member of staff will be familiar with arts-based approaches and will use them to some extent in their daily contact with residents.

Some of the factors which could facilitate the realisation of this vision were seen to be beyond the direct control of participants at the Dialogue Seminar. Increased financial support was inevitably cited as an important factor. However the centralisation of power and control away from the institutions themselves will have been reversed to enable management and staff to deliver more personalised care to residents. For example by 2020, and preferably very much sooner each child should have his or her own personal clothes rather than sharing identical, centrally sourced garments with everyone else.

Even despite the constraints on finance and autonomy that exist in 2010, there is much that senior managers can do now to move towards this vision. Changing work practices, engaging staff and lobbying for reform can make a real difference now, and success will breed success. Seminar participants were agreed that they cannot wait for somebody else to make the first move.

### **3. CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE: A WORKING DEFINITION**

Seminar participants spent the morning of the second day exploring four of the most important dimensions of a Centre of Excellence:

- a) how senior managers define their roles and how they behave as leaders;
- b) the role and position of staff in the centres;
- c) the governance processes that drive quality, safety and cost effectiveness;
- d) learning and development opportunities for residents.

#### **A. Senior management and leadership**

Directors of care institutions in Romania argue that to some extent their hands are tied: they enjoy relatively little autonomy in many key areas such as finance or human resources. The centralisation of control in favour of regional administrations was a response to international pressure to enhance standards of regulation relating to the quality of care, and it is undoubtedly the case that this has weakened the ability of Directors to transform their own institutions.

On the other hand, it is the experience of both UK Charities and Romanian NGOs that the quality of leadership in an institution makes an enormous difference to the quality of care; this explains much of the variation in care standards between institutions. The personal vision of Directors, their management competence, their willingness to become advocates of change within the political and administrative system, and their ability to inspire and motivate staff deeply influences the quality of life of those in their care.

The Centre of Excellence initiative recognises the need for policy advocacy targeted at regional and national administrations, and will argue that competent centres should enjoy greater autonomy as well as better resources. However it is also focused on the areas of discretionary behaviour currently enjoyed by Directors. Targets for improvement include:

- ***Providing Directors with opportunities for learning and personal development.*** There is a training deficit amongst those responsible for leading institutions; this should be remedied by structured opportunities to improve qualifications relating to governance, finance, human resources, and the developmental and clinical needs of their residents.
- ***Benchmarking good practice and sharing innovation.*** It is clear that even Directors within the same region enjoy few opportunities to network or to learn from each other. Learning and innovation networks are of proven effectiveness in raising quality standards by enabling participants to share problems with each other, gain peer support in tackling difficult problems, benchmark existing practices and peer-review each others' initiatives. Such networks need expert facilitation and time to build trust, but are a low cost and effective tool for transformation at both institutional and system levels.
- ***Communication and participation.*** Good management practice involves *consulting* with those likely to be affected by decisions, *communicating* the reasons for decisions clearly and effectively, and enabling as many staff as possible to *participate* in the shaping and the implementation of decisions. This will help to ensure that decisions are based on the knowledge and experience of everyone in the organisation, and that staff are fully engaged in making them happen. Moreover information and consultation with employees is now enshrined within EU law.
- ***Empowering and engaging staff.*** In many of Europe's most effective institutions frontline staff routinely contribute to quality improvement and risk management; this leads to widespread benefits for institutions, residents and staff alike. Part of the role of leaders is to create opportunities for other people at all levels of the organisation to make a greater contribution through opportunities for learning, reflection and creativity. Above all this means that senior managers must show the same respect for their staff that they would like to be shown by their own bosses.

Participants in the Dialogue Seminar recognised these as the types of changes that need to take place, but also made clear that "overcoming the old ways" will require a significant culture change. A key role for the Centre of Excellence initiative will be to support Directors with the skills, confidence and techniques required to help them transform their institutions into centres that are fit for the future.

## **B. The role of staff: building an empowered and engaged workforce**

Seminar participants recognised that staff in Romanian institutions have a much greater role to play in improving the quality of care. However certain conditions need to be met to enable this to happen fully.

### ***Recruitment***

Staff should be appointed on their abilities, qualifications and enthusiasm. They should not be appointed by 'influence' or 'who they know'. Sometimes new staff do not know what the job entails, and prior work experience placements would help determine whether they have the aptitude. All new employees should go through a period of induction and probation. Management should monitor them as they integrate in to the team.

Basic HR training for senior managers within the institutions would help to raise the quality of recruitment and selection procedures.

### ***Training***

Participants from all sectors strongly endorsed the need for training, both in-house and external. A good manager (and a good employee) should understand the need for relevant training and continuous learning. While managers are responsible for identifying the needs of their employees, staff should always be seeking to extend their skills into new areas. NGOs can be a valuable source of advice on training, helping centres to identify good providers. Although funding and budget cuts are always in the background, investment in training can be repaid through more efficient and effective working providing that the recipient is allowed to use their new skills to the full in their work. Staff with skills should also be given the opportunity to "cascade" them to those without through informal learning. The issue of whether competence development should be linked to career progression also requires further investigation.

### ***Personal development***

Staff should have the opportunity for coaching and mentoring. They should have the opportunity to share their personal hopes, dreams and aspirations for the centre they work in. They should be given the chance to set goals and targets and for self-betterment. Staff should be encouraged to be able to grow as leaders and obtain further qualifications if desired.

## ***Team-building***

Staff and management should create regular opportunities to come together both out of the centre and in the workplace. Team meetings are effective in ensuring that the needs of individual residents are reviewed systematically, and that staff are informed and involved in decision-making. Crucially regular team meetings build co-operative working relationships and provide space both to celebrate successes and identify opportunities for improvement. For a centre to be productive, it is vital that staff work as a team and not just as individuals.

It is important that everyone in the team knows what they are doing and the role they play. The right people must be identified for each job. Multi-tasking and the blurring of role distinctions should be encouraged to promote greater flexibility and shared understanding. Role definitions and task allocation can be discussed and decided during team meetings; they can also be linked to peer assessment.

In particular the core team involved in the care of each resident (see D below) should:

- use a communication book for daily handover between staff;
- have weekly team meetings for review of client's progress;
- invite specialists to the resident's regular reviews as appropriate.

## ***Respecting and appreciating staff***

Not all managers make time for their staff. It is important for staff to be happy and feel valued in their jobs. Managers should interact with staff, consider their well-being, take notice of them and have a genuine interest not just in their professional lives but in their personal circumstances. This helps a good manager to understand staff needs and in turn leads to greater job satisfaction and better delivery. Yet while managers should motivate staff they should not contribute to burn-out.

Trust and mutual support between staff and management take time to build but can become a valuable asset to any organisation. Staff at all levels should feel appreciated and rewarded. This should not be done financially: engaging staff in decisions, communicating freely and respecting their opinions makes staff feel valued and respected. Managers should also adopt family friendly policies enabling staff to strike a balance between home and work.

It is helpful if staff have a space to themselves – a staffroom where they can take agreed breaks during their shifts. 'Staff perks' such as transport to and from work, or use of facilities and resources at the centre when they are not in use by residents, can also help to engage staff. Well-being support such as massage sessions for staff can be valuable in helping to cope with job stress. An 'employee of the month' scheme could be put in place in which staff vote (fairly!) on who should be selected.

## ***Management structure***

Good leaders delegate decision-making to the lowest credible level, giving them the opportunity to concentrate on strategic issues while empowering those elsewhere in the organisation. Decisions should be made on the basis of rational and transparent arguments and not influenced by hidden agendas. To prevent misunderstanding staff need to know why they are doing something and who has told them to do it. Managerial responsibilities, including the delegation of powers when managers are absent, should be clear to all staff. This chain should be respected but should be seen to be fair. The Director of the centre should be open to suggestions from all staff about how management and decision-making should work.

## **C. Governance and Quality Improvement**

As a concept, governance is relatively new to the Romanian care sector but there was agreement amongst Seminar participants that its principles are fundamental to transformation and quality improvement. Two areas emerged from the discussions: accountability and policies related to quality. In both areas there was a high degree of consensus on the priorities for action.

### ***Accountability***

Identified priorities include measures to ensure:

- the safety of residents;
- financial transparency;
- compliance with the legal framework;
- a robust reporting structure;
- shared learning from reported incidents and abuse.

### ***Quality***

Participants identified three key issues on the road to quality improvement:

- the importance of complying with established guidelines;
- the need to share models of excellence;
- benchmarking between state and private provision as a means of narrowing the gap.

The ensuing discussion focused on strategies to overcome barriers to effective governance and quality improvement, but also highlighted the Directors' experience of loss of control over practices within their own centres. The need for 'permission' and the scope for initiative while "working within the legal framework" featured strongly in the discussions.

A framework comprising eight key dimensions emerged from the group discussions. Although not all aspects were agreed unanimously, there was a willingness to explore each in more detail.

- 1 The empowerment of centre Directors is an important precondition for local innovation and improvement, and an effective business and clinical case needs to be made to regional policymakers.
- 2 Standards of competence and qualification for centre Directors should be agreed, including a clear statement of their rights and responsibilities, as a means of enhancing and recognising their professional status.
- 3 A Board of Governors including active non-executive roles plus “critical friends” from the local community should be considered as a means of strengthening the governance of each centre. Links should also be made with the Consultative Councils in each district, for which legislation is already in place.
- 4 NGOs and Directors or managers from other centres should be invited to peer-review organisational practices in a non-threatening manner.
- 5 Good practice standards of governance based on international practice should be defined and implemented with support from NGOs and UK Charities. Key dimensions will include accountability and transparency, risk management, resident safety, incident reporting and follow-up, and quality improvement.
- 6 Protocols for inter-institutional working should be agreed as a means of sharing expertise, experience and resources, and to provide Directors and change leaders with peer support.
- 7 A pilot Centre or Centres of Excellence should be established in partnership with regional policymakers, supported by Romanian NGOs and UK Charities.
- 8 An inter-sectoral group involving Central Government, the Regions, NGOs and Centres of Excellence should be created to establish standards for the contracting of services, as well as the wider reform of the social system to enable greater equality of provision.

#### D. Learning and development for residents

The three strands discussed above are necessary but by no means sufficient conditions for the delivery of high quality care to residents. Meeting the wider learning and developmental needs of residents and helping to ensure that each individual reaches his or her full potential must be defined as a core objective.

There is a need for a holistic approach to ensuring the physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of the person in care that is both individualised and appropriate to the context. This holistic approach needs to be led by a key worker who represents the interests of the resident, acts as his or her advocate, listens to their wishes, and provides empathy and support. In order to achieve this holistic approach there is a need to build a positive profile of the resident, based on their abilities and strengths.

In order to deliver the maximum possible learning and development opportunities for adults and children in care, the residential centre should offer:

- a personalised environment;
- whole centre activities and celebrations;
- alternative ways of communication, e.g. sign language, images;
- male and female role models;
- frequent visitor access;
- work with the individual's personal interests;
- ways of being involved in the decision making process;
- visits, work, partnerships in the community;
- learning opportunities in the community and outside, e.g. trips to widen horizons;
- opportunities to acquire life skills and independent living skills;
- free time activities;
- opportunities to spend time with the family, and other contact with the family;
- 1:1 specific work;
- small group work;
- opportunities to have jobs and responsibilities in the centre;
- education, the possibility to go to school, and links between school and the centre;
- appropriate use of media, e.g. TV, as a learning opportunity.

Team-based care should include the participation of a:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• key-worker;</li><li>• care worker;</li><li>• psychologist;</li><li>• social worker;</li><li>• combined-arts worker;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• occupational therapist;</li><li>• teacher;</li><li>• GP;</li></ul> <p>plus other specialists able to advise and support.</p>
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#### **4. THE WAY AHEAD**

By lunchtime on day two, Seminar participants had explored in depth the characteristics of a Centre of Excellence and had begun to identify operational objectives able to make change happen. The remainder of the Seminar focused on action planning, specifically measures that Directors, policymakers, NGOs and UK Charities could undertake in partnership to make the Centre of Excellence concept a reality.

Discussions were wide ranging and generated a rich body of ideas. These can be clustered within three interdependent Workpackages, the contents of which require further discussion and refinement:

##### **Workpackage 1: Locating Centres of Excellence**

- 1.1 A small number of pilot institutions wishing to become Centres of Excellence will be identified and agreed by partners.
- 1.2 Discussions with the regional administrations associated with these Centres will explore the potential for greater autonomy. NGOs and UK Charities will support Directors in these discussions.
- 1.3 A partnership agreement will be prepared for each Centre, their Regions, and the NGOs and Charities which support them. Agreements will outline expectations and commitments for each partner, together with key milestones and deliverables.
- 1.4 An audit and action plan will be prepared for each prospective Centre and agreed with partners.

##### **Workpackage 2: Resourcing Centres of Excellence**

- 2.1 A comprehensive list of partner resources will be prepared. This will build on an exercise begun at the Seminar which identified a number of existing resources of which better use can be made, for example:
  - Muzika: trainers and practitioners in the field of arts and music, supported by a resource kit for frontline staff.
  - FSC: training equipment and venue in Bacau, training teams (Impart & management training) and written materials.
  - FRODO: specialists in the medical field.
- 2.2 Additional resources required to support institutions in their journey towards Centres of Excellence will be actively sourced. These include resources relating to HR, governance, staff engagement and management/leadership development.

### **Workpackage 3: Funding the Journey**

- 3.1 Muzika and FRODO will develop and lead a fundraising campaign to support the implementation of the Centre of Excellence initiative.
- 3.2 FSC will explore the potential to use EU Structural Funds to develop and expand the above programme of activities. Substantial EU funding would also support the case for centres to be granted greater freedom of action by regional administrations.

### **Steering the initiative**

The plan of action described in these Workpackages needs to be elaborated and refined by a representative group of those who will be involved in its implementation. A Steering Group will therefore be created, comprising a cross-section of those who participated in the Dialogue Seminar. Further details will be announced shortly.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Feedback from the Seminar participants suggests that the event succeeded in establishing a vision for the future, and in identifying the outlines of a feasible strategy for its realisation. However the scale of the changes needed also became apparent.

Transformation will only succeed through partnership. Our shared task now is to build on the momentum generated by the Seminar, and on the openness and goodwill which it generated, to make sure that this partnership becomes an effective force for sustainable change.