

# Staircase to Staircase

A radical, interdisciplinary, and relational welfare  
initiative for vulnerable families in Aarhus – Denmark



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# Colophon

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## In collaboration with:

SUS - Socialt Udviklingscenter

The municipality of Aarhus

Aarhus University

The A.P. Møllerske støttetfond



## Introducing Staircase to Staircase

The Staircase to Staircase project in Gellerup, Aarhus, addresses complex social issues by supporting vulnerable families. It focuses on helping reducing school absenteeism among children, unemployed parents find stable jobs, encouraging young people to pursue education, and improving the community's overall well-being. The project's holistic approach has, within the project period, provided tailored support to 62 families, involving professionals from various fields, and civil society representatives. The method fosters trust, cooperation, and sustainable change by building strong relationships with families. Due to the results, the project is now a permanent method in Gellerup and has been expanded to two other challenging areas in Aarhus.

## Our Approach

The project has developed an innovative and holistic employment initiative for families. The initiative focuses on providing unemployed parents with a stable connection to the labor market, getting more young people into education and part-time jobs, ensuring regular school attendance for children, and improving the overall well-being and future opportunities of families.

The method involves employees building trusting relationships with families, encouraging them to open up, share their hopes and desires for the future, and address fundamental challenges.

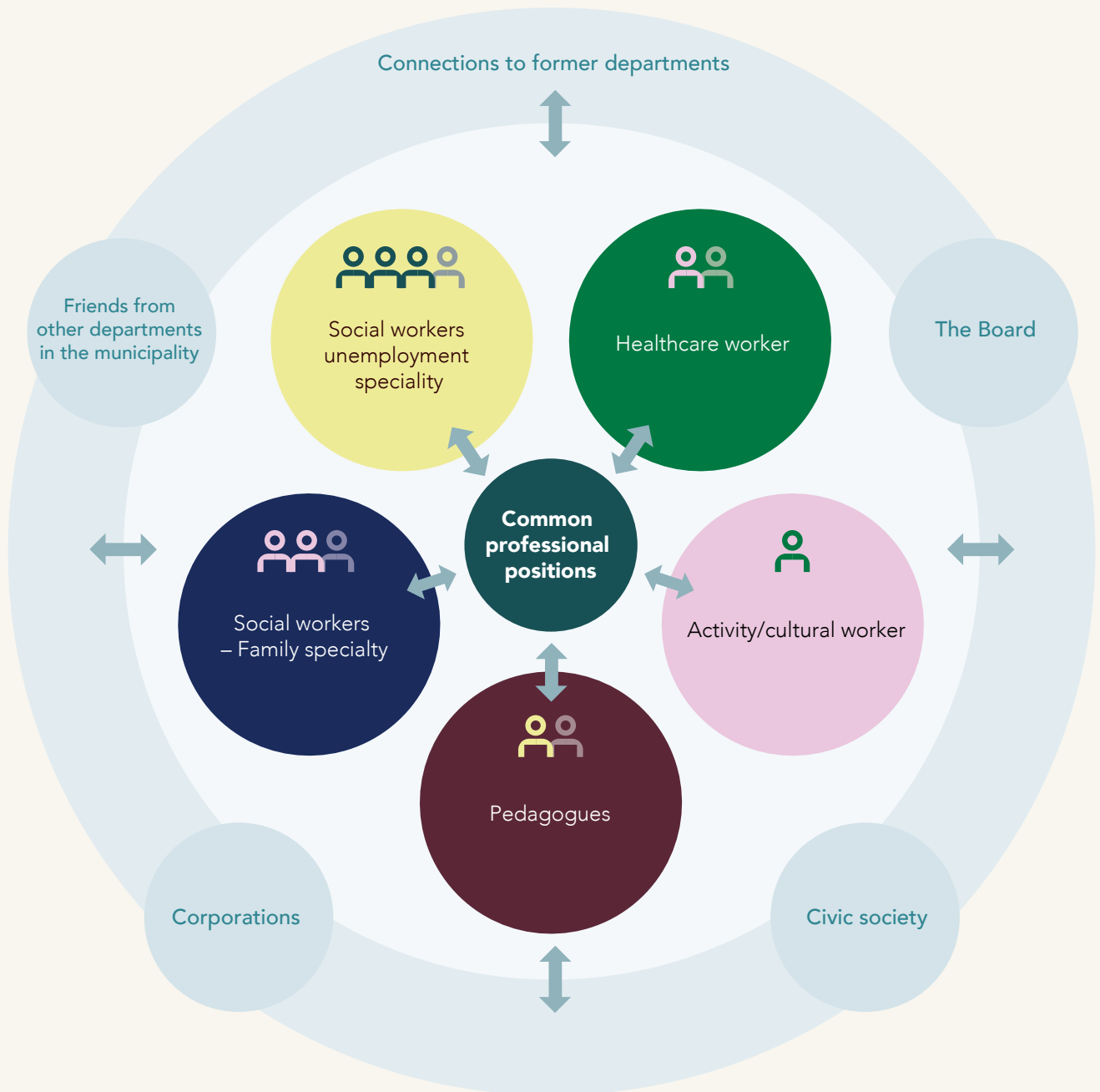
Through a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to the entire family, social and family problems that often hinder successful employment initiatives can be addressed.

This transformation requires a significant collective effort from employees and leaders across departments in Aarhus Municipality. Ten full-time employees from five different departments work together in a local office in Gellerup, led by a full-time team leader. The team has authority in all administrative areas and can assist the family with almost everything they need.

To ensure sustainable changes, employees cooperate with various civic organizations in the area.



# The Interdisciplinary Team



# Introducing the Model

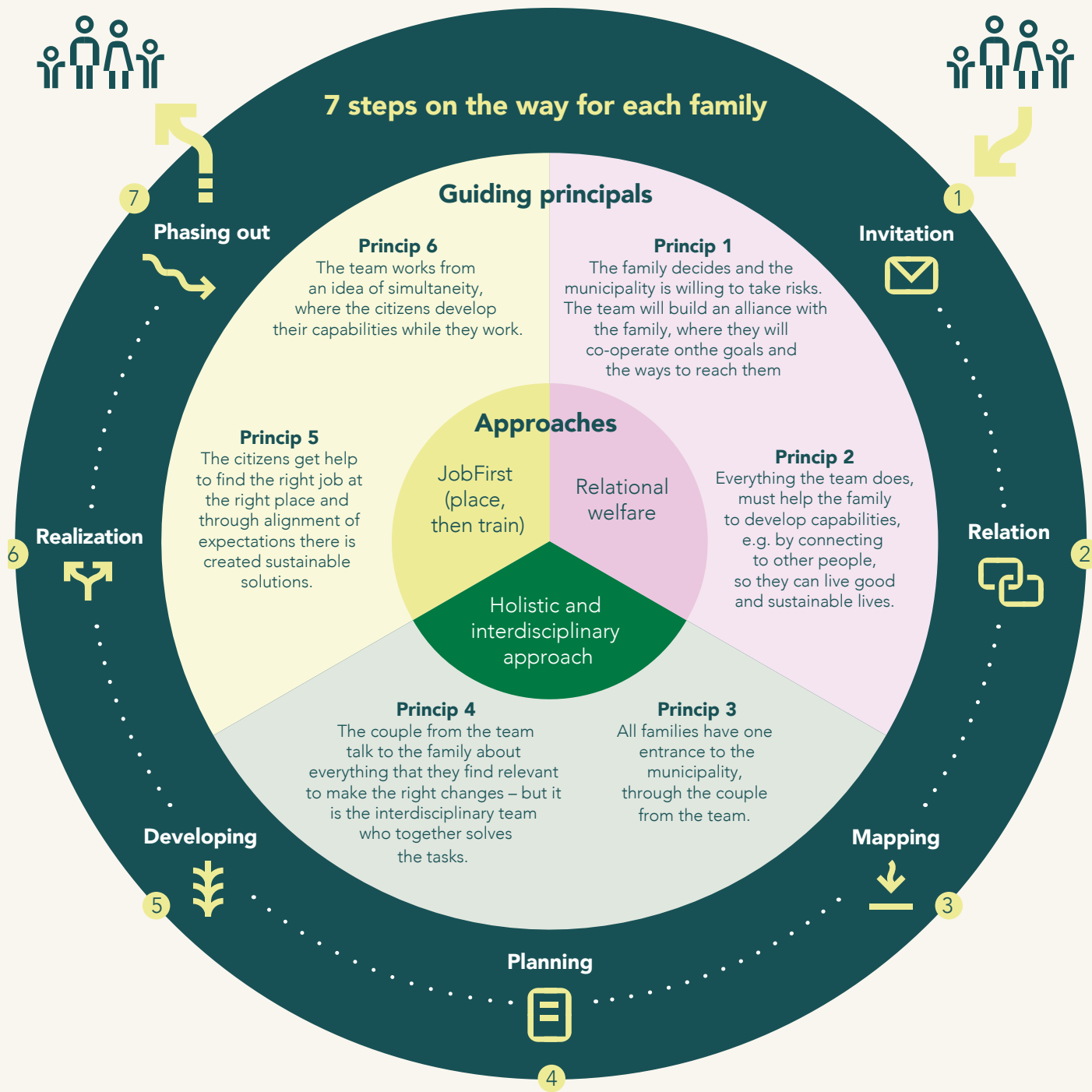
The model is built on three interdependent approaches.

Firstly, relational welfare emphasizes prioritizing citizens over the system. Instead of providing pre-made solutions, we collaborate with citizens to co-create solutions that best meet their needs.

Secondly, the holistic and interdisciplinary approach ensures that team members operate both as generalists and specialists. This dual role allows for a comprehensive and cohesive effort, enabling a more integrated and effective response to various challenges.

Lastly, the job-first and network-based employment approach is grounded in the principle of simultaneity. Initially, we secure part-time jobs for individuals while simultaneously addressing other challenges they may face. This dual focus helps families stabilize their employment situation while receiving support for other issues.

To ensure we maintain the right pace and direction, we have developed a structured process consisting of seven steps that guide our efforts throughout the implementation of the model.



## The Interdisciplinary Model

Each family is assigned two contact persons within the team who are responsible for addressing any tasks the family needs help with. While these contact persons may not solve every task themselves, they can always seek assistance from other team members. This means that everyone in the team functions as both a generalist and a specialist.

To ensure clarity, specialist knowledge is categorized into levels, so team members know when to handle a task independently and when to seek help.







## Results

Since the project was implemented, it has consistently delivered excellent results, providing valuable support to vulnerable families. As a result of its success, Aarhus has extended the initiative to other disadvantaged areas, promoting social inclusion across these communities.

## Employment



The parents have increased their participation in the labor market.

- 52% of the parents are currently in education or employment, of which 2 out of 3 are in part time jobs/flex jobs.
- 21% of the parents have, after many years in the social assistance system, been clarified for early retirement pension.
- The parents had, on average, been unemployed for 9 years before the project started.

## Health & Well-being



- The parents experience a significant change in terms of managing health, well-being, and energy.
- The staff assesses that the overall well-being of the families has increased by 20%.

## Children & Youth



- The children's school absenteeism has decreased by almost 25%.
- The employment of young people in part-time jobs has increased by 66%.

## Economic Savings



- The municipality saves an average of over 100,000 DKK per family per year in the social sector.
- Over a four-year period, Staircase to Staircase is estimated to have resulted in total savings of at least 15 million DKK in the social and employment sector for the 62 families

## More information

For further information please visit our website  
or get in contact with Pernille Randrup-Thomsen,  
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 <https://sus.dk/opgang-til-opgang/>