

CU FA Offers Child Care Service

For more than a year, Charles University's Faculty of Arts has run a babysitting service for its students and staff inside the Faculty building. The Child Care Centre, housed at the Faculty's main building in the vicinity of the entrance from Kaprova Street, now registers twenty-eight parents, eight of whom use the babysitting service on a regular basis.

The Child Care Centre was launched in December 2010. Initially, it was used only by members of staff and administered by an external firm. Studying parents were invited to use the facility in February 2012, when a new model of babysitting was introduced. Explaining the model, Nora Koubová, who is currently in charge of the Centre, says: "The Centre works on the principle of self-help babysitting, with children looked after by parents who use the Centre. However, we have involved students of degree programmes that have some relevance to child care. The service is free of charge."

Nora Koubová, a student in her final year of an M.A. programme at the Department of Social Work, CU FA, and a mother of three, is the Child Care Centre's coordinator

The fact that the Centre has no qualified staff has kept the costs of the facility low; however, the self-help model has brought numerous other changes. Nora Koubová recommends that parents interested in the service should familiarize themselves with the General Rules and Operating Rules: "It is essential that they realize that the babysitter in the Child Care Centre does not assume any responsibility for their child. We make sure this fact appears in all our documents and it is one of the things we emphasize to parents when they register their children in the Centre. Besides, the Rules contain instructions for parents and strict rules for

babysitters. When registering their child, parents acknowledge the Rules by signing the consent form.”

The Child Care Centre offers its clients new equipment purchased with funds from the Prague – Adaptability Operational Programme. A new playground with toys was built, in addition to sanitary facilities. Equipment now available includes lockers, an electric kettle and a microwave to prepare meals for the children. Nora Koubová says the Centre is more than a babysitting facility: “Parents come to us in order to play with their children so whenever I come to the Centre, even outside the babysitting hours, there is always someone.”

With the Child Care Centre in relatively high demand, Nora Koubová intends to guarantee the service in future: “If the Centre should stagnate or be closed down, it would be a pity because it is used a lot. As for myself, I would like the Centre to gain in popularity and continue to exist since when you look at other faculties in Prague and other universities, they offer pre-school facilities as well as babysitting. It would be worth making the Centre more professional. What we lack, though, are sufficient financial resources to employ enough staff to provide all-day service. Another question is how important such changes are since as it is now, the Centre is able to meet the demand. Given the fact that parents do not seek babysitting every day, it seems unnecessary to offer a constant service. But it may be that if the Centre had constant professional staff with more responsibility, parents would trust it and use the service more often.”

Upon their first visit to the Child Care Centre, parents submit a registration certificate of their child, and sign the Consent to Personal Data Processing. From then on, they are entitled to make full use of the facility. Babysitting must be booked via an online booking system not later than three days

in advance, or via telephone. The new model of the child care service is explained, among other things, in the General Rules and the Operating Rules of the Child Care Centre or in other documents available at the website of the facility.

“The Centre has been running thanks to the immense support of, among other people, the Faculty’s Bursar, and Hana Pazlarová of the Department of Social Work, both of whom were extremely helpful when the self-help model was being introduced and have been very supportive ever since,” says Nora Koubová.

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