



Policy Plan (Beleidsplan)

2022 - 2023



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Who Are We?

Ark is a not-for-profit, individual guidance and treatment centre for children with autism, established in Amsterdam in 2011. We provide specialised supervision and therapies for children aged 3 - 13 years with autism and additional complex developmental disorders. Our focus is especially on children who, because of their challenges, are exempt from the school system and require constant one-to-one supervision.

As well as requiring specialist care, children who are exempt from school will have limited opportunities to interact with peers and with the wider community. Learning with others, growing together, and negotiating relationships with peers are crucial components of every child's development; as is learning to interact with the physical and social world around them. For children with autism, social communication and interaction lie at the core of their challenges. Limited access to group learning, play, and other social activities can exacerbate these challenges and restrict a child's potential for development, independence, and meaningful inclusion in society.

Ark provides the constant one-to-one support these children need; but we do this in the context of a dynamic small group setting. We offer a child-focused learning environment with individualised development plans. At the heart of our programme are supported peer-to-peer and community activities designed to develop the children's independence, and at the same time raise awareness in the wider community and improve our responses to children with special needs – *helping all of us to reach our full potential.*

Our Mission Statement

***“All children have within them the potential to be great kids.
It's our job to create a great world where this potential can flourish.”***

Stanley Greenspan, M.D. (*'Great Kids'*, 2007)

Our Objectives

Ark's objectives are to:

- Support children with autism and additional complex developmental challenges to develop their communication skills and social competence, in order to become more independent and included members of society.
- Improve the lives of families with children with special needs.
- Improve the responses of professionals and wider society to children with special needs.



Our Client Group

Our clients are children exempt from school who have significant developmental delays, usually with disorders of communicating, interacting, and relating (such as Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder, communication & language delays).

Ark operates a *Total Communication Policy*: as well as Dutch and English, we try to accommodate any other preferred language. As a result, we work with a high proportion of children and families whose first language is not Dutch, and who are thereby at further risk of isolation and marginalisation. For this reason, our main external communication language is English.

We also work with non-verbal children using signing and a range of other augmentative communication systems such as visual timetables, electronic talkers, and picture exchange systems.

The following criteria apply when considering a child's admission to Ark:

- The number of children on site per day should not exceed 10.
- We will not be able to offer a place if doing so is likely to have a significant negative impact on other children at Ark.

Ark is not able to offer a place to a child in any of the following circumstances:

The child is:

- younger than 3, or older than 13 years.

The child has:

- a medical condition (such as severe epilepsy) that requires medical or nursing care.
- a serious psychiatric disorder (such as psychosis, personality disorders, severe depression etc.).
- physical challenges or disabilities that could compromise health & safety guidelines.

Ark personnel are not permitted to administer any prescription medicines to children.



Approach & Philosophy

Traditional approaches often focus on managing behaviour and teaching standard, testable skills. Ark's model is child-focused, based on the *Developmental, Individual differences, Relationship-based (DIR) Intervention Model* [Greenspan & Wieder, 1998]. DIR is widely known as "DIR/Floortime".

We believe every child has unique strengths to be developed and challenges to overcome and that every child should be valued and celebrated. We set SMART goals appropriate to each child's unique sensory and developmental profile. Progress occurs through meaningful, experience-based interactions with educators, with other children, and with the wider community. We believe that such relationship-based experiences are the building blocks for all learning and that these experiences help children to:

- Sustain attention to activities & interactions.
- Understand & express a range of emotions.
- Understand & negotiate the world around them.
- Develop adaptive & coping strategies.
- Develop a strong sense of self.
- Use creativity & imagination, think logically, and solve problems

Collaboration

Ark believes in a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach. Parents, other family members and carers, as well as other therapists, specialists, and professionals working with the child are all part of the child's team. Collaboration among this team is central to our model.

Individual Development Plans are made in collaboration with the whole team; consent is sought from parents or legal guardians for each new goal plan. We provide daily reports of each child's responses to the day's activities. Evaluation and progress reports are made twice a year. Goals and strategies are continually evaluated and revised in collaboration with the team.



Officers & Other Personnel

Board of Directors

Chair - Jill Adler

Secretary - Marieke van Dam

Treasurer - Mark de Jonge

Management Team

Head of Care - Paulla Keen

Head of Programmes - Kevin Walton

Head of Finance and Administration - Sander van Leeuwen

Educators & Associated Professionals

Ark works with a creative group of dedicated, talented, and experienced freelance educators and therapists. They include remedial teachers (orthopedagoog), psychologists, support workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, sensory processing therapists, speech & language therapists, movement therapists, art therapists, music therapists. All are chosen for their skills and experience and their commitment to our methods, philosophy, and vision.

Location & Programme Hours

Ark's registered and visiting address is Sloterveerlaan 1 - C101, 1064GX Amsterdam, Netherlands. The organisation currently works directly with children from 9:00 to 15:00, Monday to Friday, 42 weeks per year. We also provide additional 'after-school' and holiday care outside these times.

Income Streams

Ark receives income from fees paid indirectly by clients, and from private and corporate donations.

Ark's clients are nominally the children enrolled for its services. However, since all Ark's clients are below the age of consent, parents or legal guardians of the child will act on the child's behalf. Clients will be in receipt of funding from municipalities (gemeentes) in the form of a personal budget (Persoonsgebondenbudget (PGB)). In addition Ark also has a number of individual payment agreements (IBO) directly with local authorities. Ark charges fees at standard rates set by municipalities and these fees are paid to Ark via the Social Insurance Bank (Sociale Verzekeringsbank) or directly from local authorities. Ark charges no fees directly to clients.



Asset Management

Income is used by Ark to pay the fees of the professional educators who work directly with the children. These fees also cover other day to day running costs of the centre, and the administration and management of clients' development and care plans.

Other costs, such as fees for specialist therapists, special activities, resources, or equipment, are not covered by PGBs or IBOs. Ark funds these costs through donations to the Stichting.

Any profit is returned to the Stichting to improve and enrich the services we offer children and their families, and to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the Stichting and its objectives. Such funds are kept in a separate savings account with the ING Bank. For further details of spending plans on activities and projects for 2022 and 2023, see below "Additional Projects for 2022 - 2023).

Remuneration Policy

Ark does not pay any bonuses or dividends to personnel or office holders. Statutory duties and activities of Board members are not remunerated beyond reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out these activities. All other personnel at Ark are freelancers and receive fees set at standard reasonable rates according to their experience, qualifications and the nature of the services they provide.

Other Policies & Protocols

The following policies and protocols are in operation at Ark. These are reviewed regularly and are available to view on request.

- Health & Safety Policy
- Coronavirus Policy & Protocols
- Fire Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Guidance for Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Intimate Care Policy & Guidance
- Child Protection & Domestic Violence Policy & Reporting Protocol
- Privacy & Data Protection Policy and Statement

Activities & Projects

Ark addresses its objectives by:

- Maintaining & equipping suitable premises to accommodate a specialised treatment centre for children with autism and additional complex challenges.
- Providing a playful, child-focused learning environment, with one-to-one supervision from trained professional educators and therapists.
- Providing appropriate personnel, equipment, and resources to run a daily programme of individual and small group activities (Mon. - Fri. 09:00 - 15:00) to develop children's communication, language, social skills, daily life skills and independence.
- Implementing *Individual Development Plans* to support the development of each child's cognitive, motor, social communication, and independence skills.
- Providing appropriate space, equipment, and opportunities for children to receive a range of on-site specialist professional therapies (speech & language therapy, occupational & physiotherapy, movement therapy, sensory integration therapy, art therapy, music therapy).
- Providing opportunities for children to interact and form relationships with their peers.
- Providing opportunities for children to interact with the wider community through visits to shops, museums, libraries, parks, theatres, galleries and other public spaces and amenities (including public transport).
- Providing outreach, family support & advice services (including a range of after-school and holiday care services).
- Monitoring, evaluating, and improving the content and delivery of our programmes with reference to latest research and good practice guidelines.
- Creating relationships with schools, local governments, special educational needs liaison services (samenwerkingsverbanden) etc. to find appropriate placements and support for children when they become ready to attend a more mainstream educational environment.
- Providing training, knowledge-sharing and other learning opportunities for parents, other family members, educators, therapists, and other professionals.
- Increasing the awareness, knowledge, and skills of those who come into contact with children with special needs (including workshops for schools and other community organisations, and through our daily engagement with the wider community in Sloterveer, Amsterdam and beyond).



Additional Activities & Projects for 2022 - 2023

Objectives

The primary goal for these activities is to improve the current organisational and administrative systems so that personnel can focus on the enhancement of the direct services to children with special needs and their families. Further rapid growth is not a current objective, but rather focussing on greater streamlining, professionalisation and codification of the daily practice and the administrative systems needed to support the core activities.

1. Continue receiving services from fiscal judicial advisors to resolve fiscal and ANBI status.
2. Completion of the project to implement a new professional, secure, cloud-based platform for email, file storage and sharing. Candidate firm: *SolidQ* have worked with Monoquest and the Secretary of Ark's Board on a similar project for a related Stichting. Cloud-based platform: *Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams*.
3. Review and update current privacy and GDPR compliance policies and statements
4. Maintain sufficient capital reserves to cover running costs in case of loss of funding, and/or potential costs associated with points 5 and 6 below.
5. Tenancy of our current space expires in March 2024. We need to find a new space and potentially renovate, adapt and equip it.
6. Employment project. Investigate and seek legal advice on the option of payrolling for less volatile and labour-intensive staffing and rota management; and facilitating budgeting processes.
7. The Ark Manual. There are many more children in the Netherlands that would benefit from the uniquely specialised services provided by Ark. These children could be helped if there are more organisations providing similar services. Ark wants to inspire and support entrepreneurial professionals and larger organisations to do so. With this in mind, Ark would like to capture their best practices and business model into a 'manual' so others can benefit from the knowledge and insights they have accumulated over the years. The secondary goal is, therefore, to grow Ark's specific method of childcare by actively stimulating others to get involved in setting up similar organisations. These processes are linked - to achieve this secondary goal, the primary goal of professionalisation and codification is an essential first step.

Additional Projects Budget (Draft)

Description of Consultancies and Project Components	One-off Fees/costs
RVW Advies: legal/fiscal advice about ANBI and fiscal status	€ 5.000
Monoquest: project management coordination & oversight of Microsoft 365 Migration	€ 2.500
SolidQ: migration of all Ark's file storage & document sharing to Microsoft 365 environment; provide IT support for initial set-up; Ongoing IT support and microsoft tenant service	€ 5.500
Emergency costs: contingency in case of loss of funding, costs associated with employment project and/or acquisition and adaptation of new space	€ 185.000
Additional Resources & Equipment: for Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Physiotherapy and general development	€ 3.000
Additional costs of day trips and extracurricular activities	€ 3.000
Total additional project costs	€ 204.000