

Detska Kushta

Plovdiv



IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

June | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

Family Type Care Center (FTCC) Detska Kushta--the Children's Home--is a residential care center designed specifically to provide a family-like atmosphere for children who cannot enter the foster care system or receive care from family or relatives. The home can accommodate 15 residents. Currently, 12 children--seven girls and five boys, ages 1 to 13--are cared for at Detska Kushta.

The director at Detska Kushta, Yordanka Popova, leads a group of several social workers, a nurse, and caregivers. The team at Detska Kushta strives to maintain an environment where the children in their care have opportunities to develop both as individuals and as members of a community. The director and staff at Detska Kushta work to help the children gain cognitive and social skills, especially aware of their need to overcome traumatic and stressful situations. The FTCC also works with any available family members, including parents and relatives, to minimize the child's stay at Detska Kushta. Family reunification is the highest goal if it is considered in the child's best interests.

The uniqueness of Detska Kushta lies in the children, Yordanka, the team of caregivers, and the atmosphere they create together. Their pet dog, Lucky, helps too! Despite high turnover, the current staff is motivated and wants to provide excellent care for children.

Good connections and partnerships:

Over the years, Detska Kushta has benefited from the partnership of several organizations,

including Agapedia Bulgaria Foundation, Educational Support, Social Teahouse (Varna), Divisi (Plovdiv), Plusheno Meche, and the Movement of Bulgarian Mothers. These organizations provide funds for activities and holidays for the children. Children with special needs also receive opportunities to develop their talents through additional funding and opportunities. Thanks to these partnerships, the services, and facilities for children and young people have been improved. This, in turn, allows Detska Kushta to continue to function and strive to offer children a happy and normal life.

Recent Accomplishments

- Detska Kushta received both a piano and xylophone in the last six months, and the children have been able to participate in musical productions with these new instruments. They have even been invited to participate with the Plovdiv Orchestra! Three of the children have been able to attend piano lessons from a very good teacher in Plovdiv, who has received donations to fund this opportunity.
- Detska Kushta was able to secure a donation of a new washer and dryer.
- Private tutors in literature and mathematics have been made available to the children.
- Personnel turnover has decreased over the last six months.



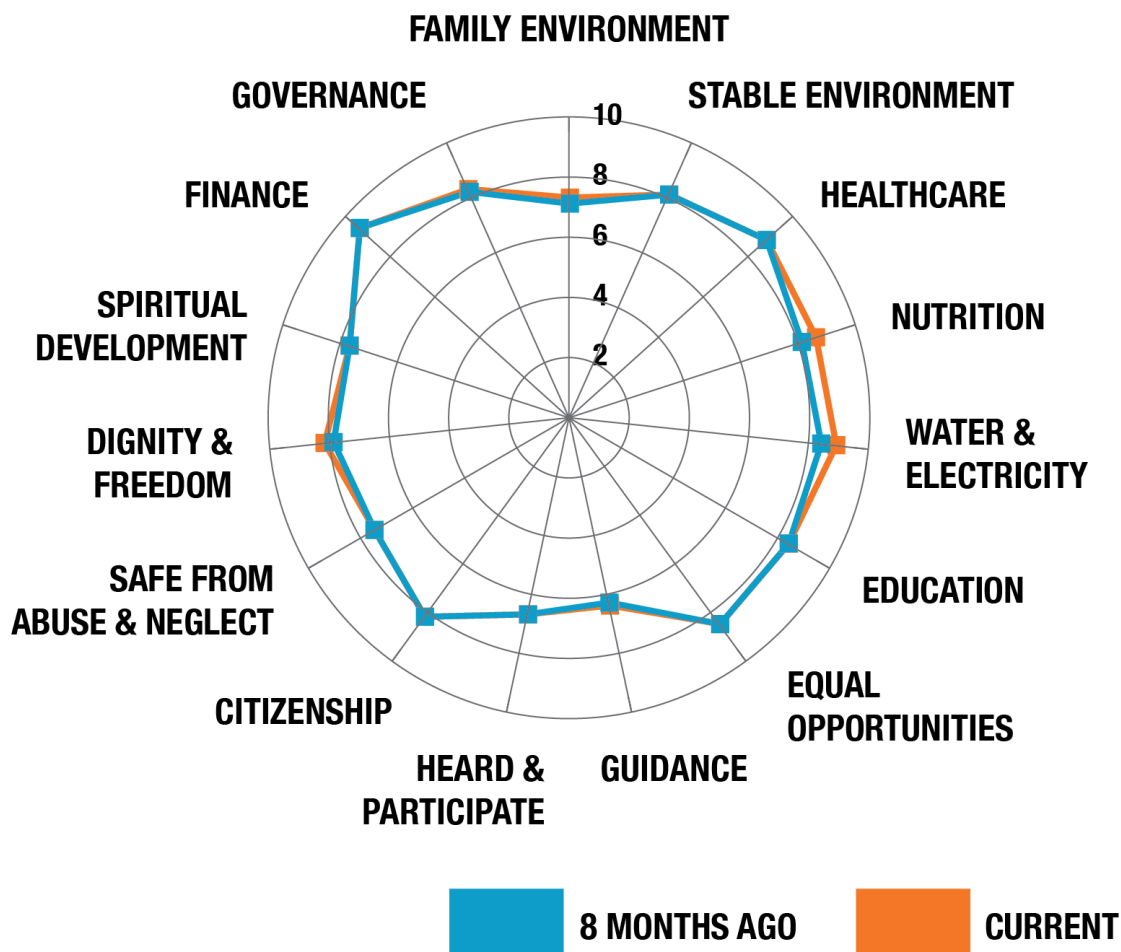
The Thrive Assessment

What is the Thrive Assessment?

In 1959, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines children's rights to protection, education, healthcare, shelter, nutrition and more. We have codified all 13 Rights, as well as a Finance Standard and a Governance and Human Resource Standard, resulting in a total of 15 standards. These standards ensure that children receive care that truly helps them to thrive, now and in the future.

The Thrive Assessment will be administered every 6 months with each partner home to chart the progress of each standard. Our team works with caregivers to outline next steps which are then compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

Current Thrive Scale



Strategic Initiatives

BATHROOM RENOVATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Purchase new plumbing fixtures, sinks, toilets, and tile. (\$800)
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$800

YARD RENOVATION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Level and pave the yard so that the children can play there. (\$2,000)
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$2,000

ROOF REPLACEMENT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Replace the entire roof. (\$20,000)
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$20,000



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a SUSTAINING level. Over the past six months, Detska Kushta has increased their score by ensuring that the children have a real family-like atmosphere. One way they are enduring this is by hiring caregivers who have more than two years of experience and by scheduling the caregivers to stay with the same group of children for five or more days of the week.

The caregivers work eight-hour shifts, ensuring that the children are cared for around the clock. Yordanka tries to create a work environment where social workers are motivated to stay on the job. But this is a difficult task because of the low pay for this type of work and workers' lack of awareness of the responsibilities they are taking on. Yordanka has managed to gather a team of young people, but she is skeptical about whether they will be able to keep up with the physical and emotional demands of this kind of work. She realizes that with such low wages, she cannot attract quality people willing to stay for a long period. Another factor she sees as a problem is that social workers become friends with children, leading to a blurring of boundaries.

There are 12 children living at Detska Kushta, 7 girls and 5 boys, ages 1-13 years old. Yordanka has been asked to try to keep one space open in case of emergencies. Currently, all of the children have living relatives. When appropriate, the children can have contact with their parents or relatives after the first two or three months. Currently, three children visit their biological families on weekends. One child is taken twice for two hours each month. There are currently no children registered for adoption.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a SUSTAINING level. The children do feel like a family. Although--like all children--they often quarrel, they are quick to defend each other from outsiders. Yordanka and her team maintain order and discipline while giving love and attention to the children treated with love and respect. All children are addressed by name, and derogatory nicknames are forbidden. Both social workers and caretakers interact and play with the children and engage them in various activities, including games and art. The social workers keep records of each child, and staff members meet at least once a month for a team meeting.

Yordanka and her team have put a lot of effort into establishing age-appropriate rules and consequences as they help the children mature into responsible adults. For example, rather than corporal punishment, discipline includes the temporary loss of an item or extra chores.

The FTCC does not have catering but instead fosters a family-like environment by all cooking

together. In addition to at-home activities such as cooking, the children go to the movies or the theater once a month. For out-of-town trips, a parent must fill out informed consent forms. Despite efforts made by Yordanka and the team to arrange field trips--to the sea or the mountains, for example--they face difficulties. To get permission for such activities, Yordanka has reached out to Child Protective Services and is waiting to hear back from them. There is an approved list of camps the children can visit, but the funding for such activities comes from donors, so there is often little money available. Currently, in Bulgaria, children living in FTCCs are victims of prejudice; they are often considered inferior and undeserving of typical childhood experiences. For example, although they sometimes go to the seaside near Bourgas, they are only allowed to use the unrenovated student housing.

Detska Kushta would gladly accept volunteers to accompany the children and their caregivers on excursions or field trips.

- ☐ Maintain an activities budget for field trips.
- ☐ Identify donors for summer/winter camps.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a THRIVING level. Children have access to basic medical and dental care, and caregivers help them learn good health and hygiene habits daily. The home is clean, but it is outdated and in need of repair. Children have easy access to water and soap. All children are vaccinated, and girls are provided with sanitary supplies and counseling. Detska Kushta works with a pediatrician and an emergency hospital. There is one child with diabetes who receives regular medical care and one with mild mental retardation at the FTCC.

Each child is given a thorough medical check-up at check-in, including necessary blood tests and vaccinations. The children are regularly checked for lice, and the staff uses preventive measures against lice infestations.

Children don't get regular orthodontic checkups because they are expensive. They have had only one significant case, and the child received appropriate care.

Although difficult, the Detska Kushta has set aside money for emergencies. With the municipality's permission, money from the budget can be transferred from one line item to another.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is THRIVING! Compared to the previous six months, they improved their score by ensuring that the children get 2-3 servings of both fruit and vegetables each day. The center does not have a nutritionist, but weekly and monthly menus are prepared by a nurse who ensures that the children receive a balanced diet, including fruits and vegetables. Standards of hygienic food preparation are followed. Donated food is accepted but must be accompanied by a certificate with an expiration date. The FTCC participates in food preparation training every 2-3 months with a certified trainer.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is THRIVING! The motion detectors which were needed during the last six months have been purchased and installed. The home has developed an evacuation plan, with twice yearly "evacuation drills." There is a part time maintenance worker who is available when there are issues or problems at the home.

The home has access to clean drinking water, but several plumbing fixtures are in need of repair. Although the power goes out very rarely, there is no backup plan for heating in case of such a circumstance. Because the summers are very hot, new air conditioning units would be a wonderful addition to the home.

- ☐ Repair bathroom fixtures (sink, shower, and tile). (\$500)
- ☐ Purchase three air conditioning units. (\$2,700)



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a SUSTAINING level. Two children attend kindergarten, and a third child, 5 years old, is sick and, therefore, not yet enrolled. The remaining children attend school. Appropriate testing is done to identify children with special needs. Some children have difficulties in school and are enrolled in educational support activities. If an educational problem arises, a psychologist is on call. If there is a child with special needs, then it is necessary to issue a referral so that the child can receive appropriate services. Currently, there is one child of Roma origin who is learning Bulgarian. He can count to 50 and knows the

letters, but he has problems speaking and reading in Bulgarian. Children who attend school have access to a computer if they are involved in online learning, but they have to take turns as there are only two computers. They don't have tablets.

Seven of the children visit The Agapedia Foundation once a week. This foundation conducts group activities for the children. For example, it encourages them to save money for their summer and winter camps by helping them make cards and sell them. The children also attend the workshops facilitated by the Foundation Center for Street Children, where they mainly take the pottery course. Children make tiles, little houses, and cards. The children have access to art supplies. They also attend demonstrations at the fire station.

The children have time to pursue their own educational interests, even though there is no funding to study an additional subject outside school. The children often read books, and sometimes the older ones read to the younger ones. The caregivers also read them stories.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a THRIVING level. The children have appropriate opportunities based on their ages. For example, they decide what clothes to wear and have the right to decide what to do in their free time if they receive permission.

Sometimes the children hold meetings to discuss various issues, such as menu items. Children have the right to ask questions about any health procedures they undergo. Among the children, some individuals stand out as leaders. Sometimes games are organized in which children play the role of a social worker

Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a SURVIVING level. Compared to the last six months, the FTCC has increased the children's access to monthly therapy, whether as a group or on an individual basis. There is access to a psychotherapist every week, and some children have weekly meetings with a psychologist, which is determined by the Department of Child Protection. When children are placed at Detska Kushta, they are evaluated to see if they would benefit from psychological help. This guidance and counseling are available for 6 months to one year if the child needs it. Some children visit a psychologist for support with difficult topics. No matter what happens, the children are always encouraged to talk to Yordanka.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Detska Kushta is at a SUSTAINING level. The children can decide what to wear and what to do in their free time and are involved in planning the menu. The children are taught about the importance of following rules. If they break a rule, they may lose a favorite item, for example, their PlayStation. This positive discipline has had a very good effect on the children. If they were asked why they lost the privilege to play with the PlayStation, they recognized that it was because they were disobedient.

- ☐ Receive guidance in developing individual future plans for each child.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Detska Kushta is at a SUSTAINING level. Each child has a copy of his or her birth certificate. The children are taught to accept responsibility for their actions. For example, if a child breaks something on purpose, they must pay for it out of pocket money. The children are also expected to fulfill their personal responsibilities. They are responsible for general household chores, setting and clearing the tables, and making beds. The caretakers and social workers are examples of good etiquette and appropriate social interaction with the children. In the case of inappropriate behavior, the first response is a discussion with the child, many times, if necessary. When punishment appears appropriate, it is administered in an appropriate, positive way.

In order to improve their score in this area, the FTCC would like to identify opportunities for the children to be taught about ethics and the democratic process. They would also like to identify mentors who can teach the children life skills.

- ☐ Identify opportunities for the children to be taught about ethics and the democratic process.
- ☐ Identify mentors who can teach the children life skills.



Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Detska Kushta is at a SUSTAINING level. The team members at the FTCC treat the children with respect and avoid physical punishment because it is prohibited by law and because they do not believe in this method of discipline. Yearly, staff members attend a seminar on positive discipline techniques and alternatives to corporal punishment. The staff members are not allowed to be alone with a child in their room for more than 5 minutes.

The children have access to social workers in case there is any type of abuse happening in the home. The children also have access to a “complaints” box to ensure their voices are heard. When resolving issues, social workers act as referees or counselors, and the children naturally turn to the people with whom they have built a relationship of trust. Often, however, the children who do the most complaining are the same ones who are the aggressors in the conflict. Because of this, the team finds it useful to discuss problems with all involved children. The social workers would like more training in abuse prevention.

The FTCC has access to a psychologist every week. When a child is placed in the FTCC, he or she is assessed to determine whether or not appointments with a psychologist are indicated. Some children are required to meet with a psychologist by Child Protective Services. Often these meetings are required from 6 months to a year.

There are no safety issues at Detska Kushta. During the night, there is outdoor lighting, the outer door to the courtyard is locked, and the home's watchdog, Lucky, always warns the nighttime personnel if there are unwanted visitors.

☐ Provide abuse prevention training for the social workers who visit the home.



Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta improved in this area by encouraging the children to be kind to each other and providing positive discipline for teasing, rudeness, and bullying. The home is currently at the SUSTAINING level.

The children have the right to privacy within the limits of what is safe. The children have nicknames for each other that would be considered derogatory if one of the staff used them, but they use them in between themselves without feeling offended. Yordanka and her team teach good manners and respect for others. For example, the children make a very good impression on people because they always speak respectfully, using the correct grammatical formal terms when addressing adults.

Twice a year, Yordanka takes the children on a one-week holiday - in the summer to the sea and in the winter to the mountains. If the full amount is not covered by donors, the rest is taken from their budget. One of the organizations sponsoring them is the Movement of Bulgarian Mothers.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at the SUSTAINING level. The children do not usually take part in a spiritual community. However, they have the right to attend church if they want to. The home celebrates important religious holidays such as Easter, Christmas, birthdays, and the liturgical name days of the children, Yordanka, and the team. The only spiritual or religious material available and accessible is the Bible.

To move to the thriving level, the home could provide more spiritual and religious materials and encourage children to attend church and liturgy if they like. One possibility could be for children to learn about the Orthodox Church's role in Bulgarian history.

- ☐ Provide spiritual and religious materials appropriate to the culture of the children.
- ☐ According to the wishes of the children, make arrangements for them to participate in religious services as appropriate.



Finance Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta is currently at a THRIVING level. The FTCC has a full-time accountant. All expenses are accounted for, and there is no misuse of funds. Every year, an internal control and inventory are carried out, as well as an audit. Everything that is bought is accounted for; otherwise, it must be paid for with personal money.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Detska Kushta improved their score in this area by ensuring that staff meetings were held weekly in order to provide opportunities for staff members to receive support and guidance. The home is currently at the SUSTAINING level.

The home meets licensing, audit, and management requirements. Members of the team have regular monthly staff meetings and all incident reports and training records are maintained. The staff attends training with a supervisor on appropriate boundaries, work expectations, and work habits and methods. The supervisor for these meetings is an external psychologist and psychotherapist, and team interaction is discussed with him. In addition to monthly team meetings, individual interviews are conducted every four months. The FTCC does not have a board of directors, as this role is performed by the mayor.



Current Improvement Partners



Hope • Life • Future for Orphans

One Heart Bulgaria

One Heart Bulgaria was founded in 2003 in order to improve the lives of children living in Bulgarian orphanages. Since that time, they have impacted thousands of children through their programs and initiatives. Visit www.oneheart-bg.org for more information!

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to
www.ACHF.org/Projects



A CHILD'S
+ HOPE
FOUNDATION