

# WORK- SHOPS

for parents with disabled  
children

- couple workshops
- workshops for single parents

[www.bufetat.no/hvamedoss](http://www.bufetat.no/hvamedoss)

# WHAT ABOUT US?



Bufetat

## Couple workshops

*“What about us?” is a nationwide programme of couple workshops for parents with disabled children. The programme is directed centrally by the Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) and is implemented in the country’s regions by the directorate’s regional offices (Bufetat). Six selected family counselling offices have a special responsibility for organizing and directing the programme.*

*Families of disabled children may encounter major challenges associated with the child’s disability. Often, these will involve interaction with the public assistance apparatus. Sometimes, they will also include a guilty conscience in relation to the other children in the family. Little time may be available for relatives and friends. Some people may also struggle with their own reactions and emotions, in particular when they are weary or have had little sleep.*





Parents tell stories of feeling left alone with their experience of having a disabled child. Sharing the experiences can be difficult, as other people will often fail to understand the nature of this life, for example the physical and mental strains. On the other hand, they can also tell of the joy they feel when they meet understanding helpers and friends, or the delight they take in observing small, positive signs of change in the child's condition, that others may not recognize or understand.

Many couples feel that they have little time left to give priority to their relationship as a couple. Over time, this may cause many couples to distance themselves from each other and fail to communicate properly, and unnecessary conflicts may occur. Providing proper care for children also depends on the parents' ability to take care of themselves as a couple. A well-functioning relationship between the parents remains the pivotal point for making daily family life easier. This is why the *What about us?* programme has been developed.

*What about us?* is a meetingplace where parents can share their experiences, relevant knowledge and established facts about the life of such families. By listening to the experiences, solutions and challenges of others, couples can obtain valuable experience they can use in their own relationship and their own lives. A main objective of the *What about us?* workshops is to provide parents with an opportunity to strengthen their

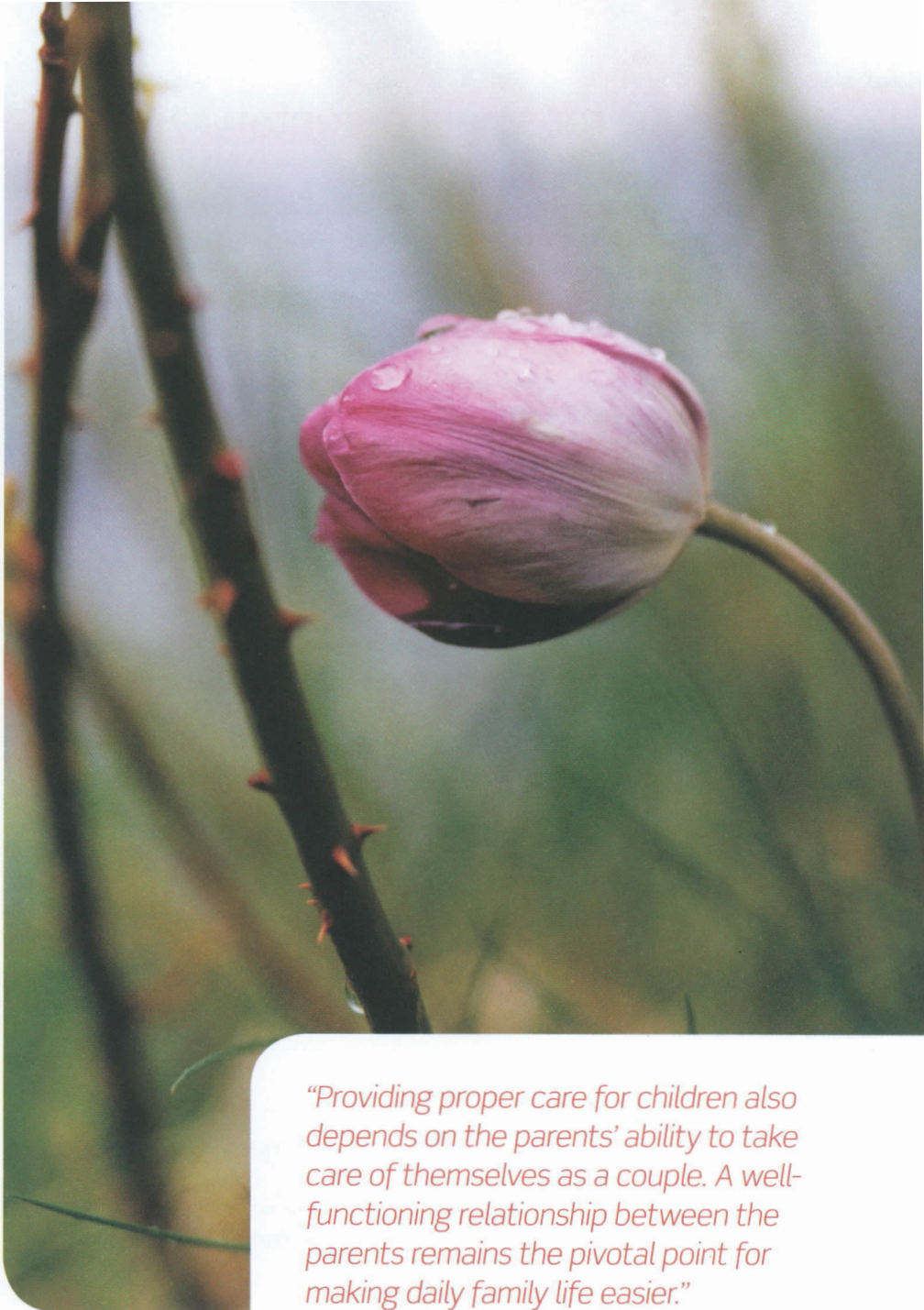
relationship and cooperation within the family.

The preventive effect of *What about us?* not only concerns how to reduce the development of conflicts and the risk of divorce. Statistically, there is no basis for claiming that the rate of divorce is higher among couples with a disabled child than among couples in general. However, the additional challenges may cause the relationship to develop in a negative direction. A *What about us?* workshop may help bring to light key aspects of the couple's life together that ought to be given higher priority, such as communication, conflict management, sharing of emotional reactions and not least, sharing of positive moments together as a couple and as partners.

As a rule, *What about us?* workshops take place from Friday night to Sunday afternoon, and address the following topics:

- Introduction, about family life and couples
- Communication as a key or as a lock?
- The complex emotions
- Men and women - two worlds?
- When we hurt each other
- Creating life-space for all family members
- The importance of friendship, joy and humour





*“Providing proper care for children also depends on the parents’ ability to take care of themselves as a couple. A well-functioning relationship between the parents remains the pivotal point for making daily family life easier.”*

# Workshops for single parents

Single parents/providers who have disabled children may experience many of the same challenges as couples. However, in several respects the strains and weariness may feel even more acute, because the responsibility rests on only one person. This may concern the practical tasks, the worries and all those complex and complicated emotions that may oscillate between joy and despair. Many single providers who have been divorced also encounter problems with regard to parental cooperation.

Separate workshops for single parents/providers of disabled children therefore constitute an important element of the *What about us?* programme.

The schedule of workshops for single parents also runs from Friday night to Sunday afternoon, and addresses the following topics:

- That's life: A short narrative from each participant
- Parental cooperation
- Communication: The key to cooperation and understanding
- Family and network: How to use these positively without feeling guilty
- Emotions are facts: On the complex emotions and the importance of sharing them with someone
- Energy, joy and courage: How to establish a space for oneself and have enough energy for the children

# More on “What about us?”

## Website

You can find more information on the content of the workshops by visiting [www.hvamedoss.no](http://www.hvamedoss.no) or [www.bufdir.no](http://www.bufdir.no)

You can also contact the local family counselling office responsible for the programme in your region.

## Regional contacts

Six resource offices are responsible for the regional implementation of the programme in the country's five regions.

### REGION NORTH:

Resource office:

Harstad Family Counselling Office

Telephone: +47 46615650

Contact person: Sissel Roland

E-mail: [sissel.roland@bufetat.no](mailto:sissel.roland@bufetat.no)

### REGION CENTRAL

Resource office:

Sør-Trøndelag Family Counselling Office

Telephone: +47 73990500

Contact person: Sverre Jor

E-mail: [sverre.jor@bufetat.no](mailto:sverre.jor@bufetat.no)

Contact person: Egil Rian

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### REGION WEST

Resource office:

Sogndal Family Counselling Office

Telephone: +47 46619290

Contact person: Ann Kristin Sæbø

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### REGION SOUTH

Resource office:

Grenland Family Counselling Office

Telephone: +47 35505870

Contact person: Kristin Askevold

E-mail: [kristin.askevold@bufetat.no](mailto:kristin.askevold@bufetat.no)

Contact person: Bjørg Tofslund

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### REGION EAST

Resource office:

South Oslo Family Counselling Office

Telephone: +47 23384480

Contact person: Hege Wathne

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Contact person: Geir Dager

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Contact person: Mette Kronberg

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## Resource office:

Lillehammer Family Counselling Office

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Contact person: Gordon A. Dickens

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Contact person: Anne Marie Johnsen

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