

CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Sirpa Taskinen

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD	5
3 VARIOUS FORMS OF EVALUATION	6
3.1 Legislative evaluation of effects	6
3.2 Preparing assessments of effects on children	6
3.3 Child impact assessment models	7
4 DEMONSTRATING IMPACTS	9
5 ANALYSIS MODEL FOR EFFECTS ON CHILDREN	11
5.1 Information acquisition	12
5.2 Identifying impacts	13
5.2.1 Direct impacts on children	14
5.2.2 Indirect impacts on children	16
5.3 Handling acquired information	17
5.4 Analysis of impacts and options	17
5.5 Reporting	18
5.6 Monitoring	19
6. Further information	20
Two examples of human impact assessments relating to children	21
1. Villa in Runosmäki, Turku	21
Why was a human impact assessment performed?	21
Process flow and participants	21
Perspectives and effects of the assessment	21
What was the human impact assessment used for?	22
2. Riihimäki: Implementation of a municipal subsidy for child homecare support	23

1 INTRODUCTION

This guide relates to the national action plan 'A Finland Fit for Children' (STM 2005) prepared by the Finnish National Committee on the Rights of the Child, based on 'A World Fit for Children' published by the UN General Assembly in 2002.

The action plan emphasises that all civic action relating to children should take the best interests of the child into consideration as per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Compliance with the UNCRC requires that decision-makers are aware of the effects that their decisions have on children.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child ¹ recommends the commission of a separate *Child Impact Assessment* when preparing or implementing:

- New guidelines or programmes
- New legislation or resolutions
- Annual financial estimates on a national, regional and local level
- Organisational or governmental changes to various levels of society

The effects that various decisions have on the lives of children are most obvious when decisions relate to living environments. Children are more concretely and comprehensively linked to their living environment than adults. For example traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, park fittings, the sale of alcohol and the building of sports or swimming facilities etc. have a direct effect on the everyday life of children.

The external and operational features of day care centres and schools are particularly relevant to children. The locations of day care centres and schools are very important, as is the appearance of classrooms and school yards and what can be done in them. Do children have the opportunity to take part in fun activities that create a community spirit during their breaks? Are toilet facilities supervised by adults so that smaller children do not need to worry about bullying? Is the classroom ventilation sufficient if class sizes are increased? If the school gets a snack or a drink machine, how does that affect children's nutrition, teeth and weight?

Operational methods, class schedules and teaching plans are equally important as their physical surroundings. When, for example, a move was made towards classless teaching, it would have been important to carry out a careful examination of the effect on the children's social environment when the familiar class structure and the related close relationships between classmates diminished or disappeared all together. There is also a need for information about how various cuts in services and income streams have affected children's interpersonal relationships and everyday life in day care, schools and institutions.

Many other civic decisions and programmes have an effect on children's lives, even when children are not the primary consideration when the decision is made. It is important to find out, for example, how lowering alcohol tax affects children's lives. Statistics show that the consumption

¹ The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva oversees compliance with the UNCRC, to which signatory countries provide reports every five years on their actions relating to the Convention.

of alcohol, particularly strong spirits, increased after the alcohol tax was lowered. At the same time the need for child protection services has increased significantly, fuelled by the use of drugs and alcohol by parents and children.

It is important to include an evaluation of effects on children as part of the normal decision-making routine in the government's legislative process, as well as on a local level when town plans are drawn up and when decisions are made that relate to, or have an effect on children. It is far easier to fix projects that are still in their planning stages than the detrimental effects of poorly planned projects. Short-sighted financial benefit should not drive decision-making - after all, a cheap tailor can make expensive mistakes. On a civic level the results created by "cheap tailors" are often measured in millions of Euros.

2 BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

The “best interests of the child” is the leading principle behind the UNCRC. According to Article 3 of the Convention: *in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.* The future of the society depends on the development of children, so investing in it is vitally important to all.

The Convention only makes indirect references to the definition of the "best interests of the child". It includes, among other things, the right to school (Article 28), right to parents and family ties (Articles 7 and 8) and the right to be heard (Article 12). It is against the best interests of the child to suffer violence (Article 19), be separated from parents (Article 9), do harmful work (Article 32) or be subjected to any other kind of abuse (Articles 33-36). The UNCRC in itself provides direction as to what is good for the child.

In Finnish legislation, proper care and upbringing for children is defined in subsection 1 of the Act on Childcare and Visiting Rights (556/94). The best interests of a child can be evaluated based on how various different actions and solutions will secure the child's:

- Balanced development and wellbeing
- Close and continuous human relationships
- The possibility to receive understanding and affection
- Supervision and care based on age and development level
- Education based on wishes and tendencies
- Safe growing environment
- Physical sovereignty and
- Responsibilities that come with growing up and gaining independence.

Other key principles of the UNCRC are the prohibition of discrimination (Article 2), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6), and the obligation to take the child's view into consideration in relation to the child's age and development level (Article 12). Based on these the so called three P's programme was created: *protection, provision, participation*. According to the programme, children must receive 1) particular protection and, in addition, 2) their own share of society's financial resources *to the maximum extent possible*. Children should also be guaranteed the opportunity to 3) take part in the planning of matters concerning children and to bring their own ideas to the decision-making process.

The child's right to protection has generally been well protected in Finnish legislation and services, although there is still room for improvement on a practical level. On the other hand, not enough attention has been paid to ensuring that appropriate resources are allocated to children or children's services, as they are not provided in proportion to the percentage of children in the population when budgets are drafted. Opportunities for children to become part of the different levels of society must also be improved.

3 VARIOUS FORMS OF EVALUATION

3.1 Legislative evaluation of effects

Finnish legislation has required an *evaluation on the effects on people* ever since 1994, when the Environmental Impact Assessment Methods Act (468/1994) came into force. In addition to individual projects, the *environmental effects of plans and programmes* must also be evaluated if they could have a significant effect on the environment (200/2005).²

Regulations concerning the *assessment of environmental effects of water treatment plans* are included in the legislation relating to water treatment. (1299/2004). The European Parliament and Council directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment provides a basis for the Finnish legislation (SEA 2001/42/EC), along with the UN European Financial Commission's strategic minutes covering environmental assessment.

The Gender impact evaluation is based on the Equality Act (609/1986) and its requirement for official bodies to promote equality, as well as the Constitution and its sections on basic rights, which must all be taken into consideration when preparing new legislation.³

3.2 Preparing assessments of effects on children

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendation for the preparation of assessments of effects on children has a wider scope than that mentioned above, because it does not limit itself to the environment or equality. An assessment of effects on children can still be easily included as part of the aforementioned assessments. In addition to these, effects on children should be assessed when preparing or implementing:

- New guidelines or programmes
- New legislation or resolutions
- Annual financial estimates on a national, regional and local level
- Organisational or governmental changes to various levels of the society

Assessments of effects on children should be included in the decision-making process and an appropriate budget should be allocated so it can be done effectively. As a guideline, one percent of the budget allocation should be set aside for the assessment.

² Further information is available from www.ymparisto.fi

³ Further information is available from www.eurofem.net/valtavirtaan/lakisuvaus.html

The assessment will be performed by the decision-maker to clarify the effects of the various options available. The first task is to evaluate whether the programme/law/plan has an effect on children's lives. Criteria for this could be the direct and indirect effects on children outlined below (5.2.1 and 5.2.2.). The list can be reviewed with, for example, an expert on child affairs. In the event that the preliminary review does not find any of the aforementioned effects to be likely or relevant, the assessment can be dropped. This should be logged in the planning documentation. If, however, some of the effects seem possible and important, an actual assessment of the effects on children must be carried out.

The assessment could be skipped if it is found to be too labour-intensive and time consuming. This is another reason why careful consideration should be given to how in-depth the assessment should be. The enclosed model can help to pick the required parts for various situations. The most important aim is for the child impact assessment to become engrained into planning processes and found to be useful and required.

3.3 Child impact assessment models

Child impact assessments are closely related to human impact assessments (IVA), which include a social impact assessment (SVA) and a health impact assessment (TVA). The purpose of human impact assessments is to evaluate the significant effects on human health and wellbeing caused by the project, plan, programme or decision, from a multi-disciplinary standpoint. Its key principles are:

- Pre-emptive review at the planning stages
- The production of information to support decision-making
- Multi-disciplinary approach and cooperation
- Participation and interaction
- Process that progresses in stages⁴

Therefore, human impact assessments are only pre-emptive; they only review the impact of decisions that are being planned. Child impact assessments can also be performed during the project or some time after the decision is implemented. The different models of child impact assessment are:

- (1) Assessment; where the likely impacts of a planned decision, action or programme are assessed before it is implemented,
- (2) Process evaluation; where the progress of effects and implementation is analysed during the decision/action/programme implementation,
- (3) Evaluation, monitoring; where a previous decision/action/programme is evaluated in terms of its impact on children's lives.⁵

⁴ Kauppinen, Tapani & Vilja Tähtinen (2003). Ihmisiin kohdistuvien vaikutusten arviointi -käsikirja. Aiheita 8/2003. Helsinki: Stakes, 9–10.

⁵ In Finnish, the word *arviointi* (assessment) can mean either pre-emptive or post-decision assessment so for the benefit of clarity, post-decision assessment should be called *seuranta* (monitoring).

The differences between these models are particularly linked to how and where information and materials can be sourced. (See: Demonstrating impacts)

Regardless of the timing of the evaluation, the areas and content to be analysed are very similar. Usually an evaluation is required of both the direct impacts on children (health, human relations, living, movement, participation and equality) as well as indirect impacts (e.g. family finances and services, impact on society, the region and social relationships). When necessary, we can also evaluate how the decision is related to the UNCRC. There is also often a need to monitor the decision-making and implementation processes in terms of, for example, how children have been listened to and how they have otherwise had the opportunity to participate. The best interests of the child create a framework for the evaluation of impacts.

4 DEMONSTRATING IMPACTS

In some simple situations impacts can be anticipated rather easily. It is clear that it is in the child's best interest if, for example, the school hires student care staff or if the day care building is repaired to better meet the needs of children. In such cases it could be beneficial to monitor whether the anticipated effects materialise as planned. Usually, however, causal connections in civic decision-making are not easily identified and are not always straightforward.

Natural sciences will usually attempt to demonstrate causality through the use of test situations. They will, for example, compare two identical groups where one is subjected to an action and the other is not. Because the groups are otherwise similar, it is then possible to clearly show the effects of the action.

Civic decision-making, however, rarely provides the opportunity to compare two identical groups of children. Particularly when trying to evaluate ahead of time, such opportunities do not exist or there is no time to set up a testing environment. Effects are rarely visible directly and the unequivocal demonstration of the reasons for changes provides many different types of problems. Some of the effects are only temporary, for example disturbances during a building-phase, and others are visible only after many years. Impacts on humans are often caused through a joint effect of many different actors and after long causal chains. Particularly in child impact assessment, we must often use indirect data, probability, prior experience and other information relating to children.

Assessment reaching far into the future is particularly risky. It is almost impossible to unequivocally predict what will happen after many years. The same situation arises in all civic decision-making. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the implications that decisions could have on children as much as possible. There is existing information based on experience that is available for common use in assessment. We can make educated guesses about, for example, what effects the introduction of snack vending machines will have in schools in terms of the children's appetite, teeth or weight. It is often possible to utilise experiences gained from elsewhere and some effects can be modelled. Even the smallest glimmer of light on a dark road is better than total darkness.

Post-decision reviews are usually easier to perform. Measuring change requires an evaluation of the situation before and after the action. Change can be qualitative or quantitative. When evaluating the impact on children, qualitative assessment is often the most appropriate approach, in which attention is paid to, for example, social relationships, comfort, experiences and everyday life. With large population groups, we can use quantitative alongside qualitative assessments to cover, for example, child sickness levels, requirements for child protection services, school drop-outs and so on.

So far, there are very few standardised individual child-specific measurements. Most of these have been developed for health monitoring, but some also for psychological development.

Specific evaluations aimed at groups of children are, for example, atmospheric measurements. These types of reviews can be performed particularly in day care centres and schools when, for example, a rowdy class is divided into small groups or a class assistant is provided for those requiring individual attention. The effect of actions can also be monitored by mapping the class atmosphere and wellbeing before and after the said action.

5 ANALYSIS MODEL FOR EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

The model below uses questions to investigate key views that should be taken into consideration when evaluating the various effects on children and their lives that can be imposed by decisions. It has been developed based on the analysis structure⁶ by Louise Sylwander's, the former Swedish children's ombudsman, and the human effects analysis model (IVA)⁷ developed by Stakes.

The model has six parts:

- 1) Information acquisition
- 2) Identifying impacts
- 3) Information handling
- 4) Analysis of impacts and options
- 5) Reporting
- 6) Monitoring

Different parts of the model can be used depending on the circumstances. The requirements for the analysis can be ascertained through, for example, giving a short questionnaire to experts and children. The publicity that the matter receives can also point out the need for the analysis.

Timing. The assessment is carried out before the decision in question is made. It should be included as a part of the preparation process rather than as a separate or parallel project. A review of the process can either be carried out during the preparation process or soon after. Reviews are performed 1-5 years after the decision, when its impacts are visible.

Assessors. It is recommended that the assessments are performed by two or more people working together, unless the person doing the work is extremely experienced. The assessor should be familiar with the analysis methods and they (or at least someone in the group) should have expertise in matters relating to children.

Close cooperation between area experts is recommended. Such experts can be found on a local level working in, for example, social care, child protection agencies, family guidance services, day care and healthcare centres, or from among psychologists. On a regional level, contact should be made with the county government. In matters relating to the population as a whole, the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health (sometimes the project sponsor) or the Ministry for Education are the de facto partners.

Preparation process. In some instances it might also be necessary to find out how the project has been prepared and who has been part of the process.

- How have children's views been taken into consideration during preparation and how was this information collected?

⁶ *Child Impact Assessments (2001) Swedish Experience of Child Impact Analyses as a tool for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs; Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden.*

⁷ Kauppinen, Tapani & Tähtinen, Vilja (2003) *Ihmisiin kohdistuvien vaikutusten arviointi* -käsikirja. Aiheita 8/2003. Helsinki: Stakes.

- Where and when are the decisions made?
- Who are the operators responsible for the different phases of the process?
- What impacts will be monitored and which measurements will be used?
- What is the timeframe for the review of the impacts of the decision or plan?

5.1 Information acquisition

Collecting information. The most important sources for basic information are documents, any previous plans and statistics. Other key sources for child impact assessments are child and parent interviews and questionnaires. Views and information provided by various officials should also be mapped. Usually social, health and school officials are part of the project, but in many cases the police, youth welfare services and the church, etc. could hold key information.

Public consultations and reviews are also often held as part of local projects, where various interest groups are invited to attend. In terms of local and regional projects, information about possible impacts can also be acquired from other residents in the area, businesses and organisations. Local newspapers can also be good sources of background information.

Before big decisions are made, it is usually beneficial to run a pilot trial, whose results can be used to draw conclusions and to make any possible changes to the original plan. Assessments will often also include views and analyses by child development experts.

The reliability of information sources should also be measured. It is important to note that information collected through different means can be weighted in different ways. For example in public consultations, the loudest voices could possibly be those who are against the project and those who believe their own benefits are infringed upon. Interviews provide more individual views, but they can take a lot of time and they cannot encompass a very large group of people. Internet questionnaires are only accessible to those adults and older children with access to, and mastery of the relevant technology and connections. All these different methods should be combined to reach a sufficiently trustworthy picture.

Collecting information from children is a demanding task, but it is usually essential. Key considerations include the use of language and terminology that the children will understand. When drafting time schedules, it should be taken into consideration that when working with children, the best results come from when face-to-face work is carried out sufficiently slowly. The key to success is to ensure that the children are confident that their views and opinions are valued and taken into consideration.

The information acquisition process could be carried out as follows:

- | |
|---|
| 1) Familiarisation with the background information through the use of documents. In regional projects local visits are essential to ascertain what kind of an environment is in question. |
| 2) Arrange a topical round of interviews or a public consultation where information, views, justifications and expectations are collected from various groups. |
| 3) When necessary, wider-ranging paper questionnaires, telephone interviews or internet ques- |

tionnaires are used to provide information on which views are more prevalent, and the attributes of said views. For larger plans and programmes, expert panels and the Delphi method can replace questionnaires and interviews.

4) To monitoring projects, information is collected from interviews, statistics and various document sources about what types of changes the matter in question has caused in the lives of children.

Background information. The analysis requires information about the laws, other background material and children's living conditions relating to the decision or plan.

- Which laws, decisions or other documents is the matter in question based on?
- Have they taken the UNCRC articles into consideration, in particular:
 - The ban on discrimination, Article 2,
 - The priority of the best interests of the child, Article 3,
 - Right to life, survival and development, Article 6 and
 - Giving due weight to the views of the child, Article 12.
- If it is a development project, describe the project's background, founding principles and objectives.
- The following are required if the planning concerns a particular and specific area or group of children:
 - A description of the population structure (e.g. number of children, family types, income levels, employment)
 - A general description of values and culture (e.g. lifestyles, regional identity, community conflicts)
 - Previous studies relating to the matter

5.2 Identifying impacts

As pointed out before, the best interest of a child consists of various aspects. The long list of possible impacts shows how varied and complex the impacts of decisions can be. Even if not all of the factors shown below are included in the analysis, they should still be carefully considered early on in the project. Impacts of seemingly simple decisions can come to light in surprising and completely unpredictable ways.

Child impact assessments pay particular attention to those factors that reflect on the child's development and wellbeing, social relationships and the safety of their growing environment. In addition we can assess the possibility to include children in the decision-making process, children's equality and the proportion of society's resources allocated to children.

5.2.1 Direct impacts on children

The direct impacts on children form a key part of the analysis. The impact assessment details change based on the content of the assessed plan or decision. The following is a general list of important factors with varying impacts. The assessment should examine the quantity, direction and quality of change. Often it is appropriate to perform a closer examination of those children who have special needs, for example as a result of psychological or developmental problems.

DIRECT IMPACTS ON CHILDREN

HEALTH

- does implementation increase or decrease the risk of accidents? how?
- does implementation create impurities in air or water (dust, smell, gases, minerals, radiation)?
- will noise pollution be increased or decreased?
- will implementation have an effect on children's nutrition or eating habits?

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- will implementation improve the child's relationship with their parents?
- will implementation increase opportunities for contact with other adults?
- what effects will implementation have on the children's peer relationships and grouping?
- will the natural co-existence between different age groups be increased or will children withdraw into their own spaces?

LIVING AND MOBILITY

- can children move without hindrance in their neighbourhoods, on their way to school and hobbies?
- will implementation affect the mobility opportunities for disabled children?
- will the voluntary participation of children in sports increase or decrease?
- will the comfort and health of homes/neighbourhoods be improved?
- will there be a sufficient provisions for play, mobility and living space for children?

FLOW OF EVERYDAY LIFE

- will implementation have an effect on children's sleep / wake-up time / daily rhythm?
- are children forced to constantly move from one place to another?
- are children repeatedly made to wait for things?
- are the children provided with privacy and personal space?
- will opportunities for hobbies increase or decrease?
- what effects will the implementation have on the children's safety?
- will implementation increase the time families have to spend together?

PARTICIPATION

- are children given more opportunities to take part in decision-making?
- will children have better access to information?
- are withdrawal risks increased or decreased?
- do children feel like they are / will be heard?

EQUALITY

- will the matter affect children's regional equality?
- will the matter affect children's social equality?
- will the matter affect the equality between boys and girls?
- will the matter affect ethnic / cultural equality?

5.2.2 Indirect impacts on children

Even if the plan is not directly aimed at children, it can still have an indirect effect through, for example, parents, other family-members or the community. In fact, these indirect impacts can have a significant effect on children's lives in the long-term. This is why a careful analysis is important.

Families struggling with drugs and alcohol are a good example of indirect impacts on foetuses/children. Working with pregnant drug or alcohol users provides a concrete example of how a child's life can be indirectly affected.

IMPACT ON FAMILY FINANCES AND SERVICES

- will employment/unemployment increase?
- are family living costs changed?
- what types of impacts will the decision have on the structure of public and private services (e.g. healthcare, housing and leisure services, education, traffic and mobility, shopping)?
- will service-levels and availability be improved (particularly day care, schools, and mother-child clinics)?

EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY AND REGION

- what kinds of changes are anticipated to values, norms and behaviour?
- will there be changes to quality of life or lifestyles?
- will safety be improved?
- will stimulation and leisure opportunities be improved?
- will the area's aesthetics be improved (beauty, view, landscape)?
- will there be a change in housing costs?
- will people move away from the area in fear of the change?

IMPACTS ON SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- can changes be anticipated in social relationships or in the status of population groups?
- will the conflicts between interest groups be reduced?
- will the regional identity and sense of togetherness increase?

5.3 Handling acquired information

It is important to choose analysis methods that reflect the collected material. Interviews and group work provide a small amount of material that can only be subjected to a qualitative analysis. We can, for example, apply a topical approach whereby qualitative material is grouped under various topics. This makes it possible to compare the appearance of specific topics. After topics have been grouped, the materials can also be divided by type. This provides an insight into views within topics and a typical example can then be created.

Large sets of data can be analysed using quantitative methods. Statistical material can be used to calculate averages, percentages and correlations and these can be used to perform analyses with multiple variables. In some instances they can also provide indicators, which condense the information from various data banks into comprehensive sets. Indicators have been collected in Stakes' Sotkanet database, among other places, where most information is town-specific (see www.stakes.fi).

5.4 Analysis of impacts and options

It is often easy to list a large number of possible impacts, as can be seen from the aforementioned lists. The final analysis can only usually include some of the larger sets of material. Only those factors from the original list that seem to be the most significant or which children themselves have felt are important, should be chosen for the final assessment. The analysis should also include those parts that have been highlighted by answers from multiple parties or which have created the most conflicting views.

Collected information can be examined in table format, which helps extract the views of different groups from the topics.

Example table: Views of different groups about building plans for a new park

Impact topic	School A pupil opinion:	Parent opinion:	Official opinion:
play, sports and living spaces	improved, nice new playgrounds	too far from home, keeping an eye on children is difficult	increases sporting opportunities for both children and adults
friend relationships	no effect	bullying can increase as there is no supervision	increases opportunities for cooperation
comfort	improved	no effect	improved

The table also helps to identify and handle conflicting justifications. There is no reason to hide conflicts; they should instead be included in the assessment process. Different justifications from various parties can also indicate fears and incorrect information about the project. These conflicts, fears and presumptions can be taken constructively into consideration when planning participation, interaction and information flow.⁸

Significance of impacts. The significance of impacts can be gauged, for example, with the following questions:

- Is there a fear of death, disability or sickness?
- Will the decision cause any types of social impacts that cannot be reversed?
- How likely are these risks?
- Which groups of children will the impacts affect? (e.g. age, gender, ethnic background)
- How long-lasting is the impact? Is it temporary, seasonal, long-term or permanent?
- Can the negative impacts be compensated or reduced in some way? If so, what are the possible ways to achieve this?
- Does the project have cumulative effects?

5.5 Reporting

During the assessment process some interim reports on the process can be published to inform the public about the assessment and to maintain contact with the various interest groups by informing them about the progress of the assessment. In some instances, the final report alone will suffice.

The key task for a child impact assessment is to analyse what impact a suggestion / decision / programme will have on children, either directly or indirectly. The commissioner of the assessment can also give detailed instructions relating to reporting. The assessment should use clear language and terminology to ensure as many readers as possible can understand it.

It is also important to clarify what benefits to various groups, particular problems or conflicts of interests may arise from the proposal. Is there a need for compensating actions and how can these be implemented? Any possible suggestions should take both the needs of the commissioners and the different interest groups into consideration, which can sometimes mean the drafting of several reports based on their intended use.

Often it is important to evaluate what types of costs will be incurred by society, families and possibly some groups of children as a result of the proposal. This requires realistic and fact-based calculations, in which it is important to take into account indirect cost effects and effects on other areas of governance. It would be a mistake to look at savings based on the view of just one governing body if the result is increased costs for others.

An example structure for the report is shown below:

1. Introduction. Describe the starting points of the assessment process, its commissioner and possible documentation.

⁸ More information is available from <http://info.stakes.fi/iva/FI/index.htm>

2. Assessment objectives. Why? What? If the report includes the evaluation of different options, various hypotheses can be created, which will then be tested.
3. Process description. Describe the methods being used, cooperative parties, schedule, etc.
4. Child impact assessment. List the results (e.g. as described in section 5.4), note possible conflicts and gauge the significance of the impacts. Financial impacts are evaluated, if this is part of the project.
5. Summary. Examines the results and compares various options are compared. If negative impacts can be anticipated due to the decision, possible compensation methods will be examined. In some instances the process may uncover better options than the original proposal. Depending on the project, it is also possible to make recommendations but the final conclusions are usually left for the commissioner to make.

5.6 Monitoring

It is important that post-decision monitoring is put in place to assess the actual impacts and to compare this data to the pre-decision assessment. This stage covers the monitoring and checking of actions. Did the impacts reflect the initial assessment and what possible further action may be needed? Monitoring should take into consideration any cumulative and indirect impacts that were not part of the initial assessment.

Perspective	Monitoring type	
	one-off	continuous
for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discussion forum - questionnaire - interview - thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recurring forums - recurring questionnaires/interviews - newspaper/blog monitoring - customer feedback
for officials for service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluation study - barometer/questionnaire to officials - behaviour monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - statistical monitoring, indicators - budget monitoring - permit terms monitoring - action implementation monitoring

There are many different post-decision monitoring / assessment processes and models.⁹ Monitoring can be either one-off or continuous, but the same methods and information sources fit into both categories. Monitoring should be thought of from both the point of view of children, as well as that of officials or legislators. Monitoring improves the impact evaluation assessment and can be used to check whether the pre-assessment assumptions were correct. A key consideration is to listen to the experiences and opinions of children who have been impacted by the action/decision.

⁹ Further information is available from Stakes' FINSOC Group pages (<http://groups.stakes.fi/FINSOC/index.htm>)

6. Further information

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Committee on the Rights of the Child: www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/

Convention on the Rights of the Child. United Nations 1989.

Child Impact Assessments. Swedish Experience of Child Impact Analyses as a tool for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs; Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden 2001.

“Finland fit for Children”. Finland's national plan as required by the UN General Assembly's special hearing. Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Publications: 2005:5

Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unicef Finland 1990.

Human impact assessment:

Kauppinen, Tapani & Tähtinen, Vilja. Ihmisiin kohdistuvien vaikutusten arviointi -käsikirja. Helsinki: Stakes. Aiheita 8/2003.

Further information and examples: <http://info.stakes.fi/iva/FI/index.htm>

Evaluation:

Further information is available from Stakes' FINSOC Group pages

<http://groups.stakes.fi/FINSOC/index.htm>

Gender equality impact assessment:

Further information is available from www.eurofem.net/valtavirtaan/lakisuvaus.html

Environmental impact assessment:

Further information is available from www.ymparisto.fi

Two examples of human impact assessments relating to children

1. Villa in Runosmäki, Turku

Why was a human impact assessment performed?

Runosmaki is the largest district in Turku. Runosmaki was built in the 1970's in a forest some 6 km from the city centre, in an area that was previously completely undeveloped. Today it has over 10,000 inhabitants. It is also an ageing suburb: 10% of the population is 50-54 years old. Unemployment stands at 20 percent.

The Mustalampi Pond is an important local leisure area for the inhabitants. The Mustalampi Pond was previously left in its natural state as a typical Finnish forest pond. As the area was degenerating and suffering from littering in the early 1980's, many stakeholders decided to do something about it. There were many different opinions as to what should be done to the area.

In 1984 the area around Mustalampi was cleaned up and a playground and a villa were built next to the pond. The villa was built for everybody in the community to use but from the very beginning it was particularly popular among young people. It was also a rest place for the elderly and a camp site for children. However, in 2002 the villa was demolished because it had fallen into disrepair. Planning for a new villa began after the old had been demolished. Local youths and a multi-disciplinary workgroup submitted their proposals concerning the location of the new villa. As the Turku Technical University was looking for a suitable thesis project on human impact assessment, the workgroup and a regional worker got excited about carrying out a human impact assessment of the villa project.

Process flow and participants

The human impact assessment was performed in the spring of 2003 as a thesis project at the Turku Technical University. The students assessed the impact of the different location options from the point of view of the local population. They mapped the impacts of the different options in pairs from different perspectives, utilising the society analysis method, among others. Assessments were performed in terms of the city structure, living environment and the local population, as well as from the perspective of children, school pupils, youth, social and health services, the police and property services. Information on impacts was collected from interviews, monitoring and drawing, among other tasks. Even the Runosmaki regional worker took part in the human impact assessment by familiarising the students with the area and the discussions held about the villa.

Perspectives and effects of the assessment

The human impact assessment reviewed the following locations for the villa:

VE 0: Not everyone feels that the building of a new villa is important or even beneficial. Therefore one option is to not build a villa at all.

VE 1: The youth group's proposal would place the villa next to the pond by a jogging trail.

VE 2: The regional workgroup would place the villa slightly more out of the way and, at the same time, somewhat further from the pond, about 50 metres away.

Pros and cons of the different options into a summary table.

What was the human impact assessment used for?

The human impact assessment was used as a conversation starter. Who would benefit from the villa, who would it be disadvantageous for? Where should the youth of Runosmaki be now or in the future? If they cannot meet at the villa, where will they meet up? Can the villa also work to support the social and health sectors? Can the villa enhance health and wellbeing? Can it be used to enhance the creation of a good environment? The Mustalampi villa human impact assessment report was distributed to all participants.

The Runosmaki regional workgroup sent a proposal to the city that the new villa should be built as per the findings of the human impact assessment. The new villa was built at the end of the autumn as per the youth group's proposal.

<http://info.stakes.fi/iva/FI/Esimerkkeja/Sovellukset/turku.htm>

2. Riihimäki: Implementation of a municipal subsidy for child home-care support

The proposal for the assessment of the introduction of a municipal subsidy came from the city council. The city had too few childcare places in relation to demand, which is why it was desirable to ascertain whether a municipal subsidy could be used to alleviate the situation.

The assessment was carried out by the basic services director and the regional director of services. Initially examples were collected from various towns that had introduced a municipal subsidy. The Internet was another source for required information. Based on the information collected, five different models were created for the municipal subsidy and their financial and childcare queue impacts were assessed. Cost and day care capacity calculations were performed by comparing the changes to the current situation. Calculation models were based on the subsidies paid by Hameenlinna and by relating these figures to Riihimäki.

VE1: Subsidy is paid to every family with at least one child under 3 years of age and who care for their children at home.

VE2: Subsidy is paid to every family with at least one child under 2 years of age and who care for their children at home.

VE3: Subsidy is targeted at those families who have a child under 3 years of age and where one parent postpones their return to work.

VE4: Subsidy is paid to families with at least one child under 3 years of age and who care for their children at home. The amount of subsidy is determined by family income.

VE5: Subsidy is paid to families with at least one child under 3 years of age and who care for their children at home. Subsidy is paid if the family's income gives them the right to a nursing supplement.

A financial impact assessment was presented for each option: "Subsidy recipients: 370 families (350 current families + 20 new families). Releases 40 day care places. Subsidy cost €891,472 per year. Day care income reduction for 40 children is €75,600 per year". After the financial assessment a qualitative evaluation was performed: " - Paying the municipal subsidy cannot be considered a financially viable option. Then again, it can be justified based on the benefit to children. A sufficiently close and good relationship between the parents and their child in the first three years will enhance the development of the child. Parents can create a sufficiently close relationship with their children whilst working, but it is easier if the child is cared for at home."

The assessment also looked into how much subsidy is sufficient in light of various questionnaires. The implementation of the subsidy was also justified based on the worsening financial situation in families with children, and on the benefit for the child. The subsidy was seen as a good action for supporting families with children and for offering options.

<http://kunta.riihimaki.fi/kaupunki/ptk/petula/2003/19081800.0/pyk108.htm>

<http://info.stakes.fi/iva/FI/Esimerkkeja/Sovellukset/riihimaki.htm>