



# **Peer Review on “Comprehensive Follow-up of Low-income Families”**

**Host Country Discussion Paper - Norway**

**Is comprehensive and coordinated follow up  
enough for increasing labour market  
attachment?**

**Oslo, (Norway), 28-29 November 2019**

**DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**

Written by Ira Malmberg-Heimonen and Anne Grete Tøge, Oslo  
Metropolitan University

October, 2019



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Unit C.1

Contact: Mr Alberto Cortellese

E-mail: [EMPL-SPSI-PEER-REVIEWS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EMPL-SPSI-PEER-REVIEWS@ec.europa.eu)

Web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/mlp>

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

# **Peer Review on “Comprehensive Follow-up of Low-income Families”**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion  
Peer Review on “Comprehensive Follow-up of Low-income Families”  
Oslo, (Norway), 28-29 November 2019

**Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers  
to your questions about the European Union.**

**Freephone number (\*):**

**00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**

(\*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

#### **LEGAL NOTICE**

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission

This document has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information please consult:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>

© European Union, **2018**

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
1 Situation in the host country .....	2
2 Policy measure: Evaluation of a comprehensive follow-up model (HOLF) on low-income families on income, employment, housing and children's' situation.....	3
3 Results .....	5
4 Difficulties and constraints .....	10
5 Success factors and transferability .....	11
6 List of references .....	12

## Executive Summary

This discussion paper presents the situation of the host country and the Norwegian low-income family project. The paper demonstrates that although Norway has a lower at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate among children than a number of European countries, the share of children at risk of poverty has increased the latest decade in Norway. As a consequence, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration developed a comprehensive follow-up model for low-income families, the HOLF<sup>1</sup> model. The paper presents the HOLF model, its background and main elements, as well as main findings from the evaluation. The model has been developed since 2014, including a literature review and piloting of the model in three local Labour and Welfare offices (NAV offices). The model has been evaluated using a cluster-randomised design including 29 NAV offices, of which 15 were randomised to the experimental condition. Offices randomised to the experimental condition received the HOLF model, including manuals and schemes for comprehensive follow-up of low-income families by a coordinator as well as supervision structures supporting the quality of the follow-up. Offices randomised to the control group implemented local family projects, but in these projects, families also had access to a coordinator who followed them up comprehensively. Comprehensive follow-up is understood as the support and follow-up of the whole family in several target areas: employment, income, housing and the social situation of the children.

The results demonstrate that the HOLF model moderately increased the quality of family coordinators follow-up when compared to locally developed family projects, but for families, the model does not show any significant effects on the four target areas of employment, income, housing and the social situation of children. The research design also allows for investigating the effects of family coordinators *per se*, as the offer of comprehensive follow-up was drawn randomly. The results show no effect of the role and work of the coordinator on employment, income, health-related benefits or measures to increase qualifications, however, data on families that received follow-up from a coordinator (with and without the HOLF model) show a positive development on relational alliance, user involvement and increased visibility of children within NAV offices.

Overall, results indicate that comprehensive follow-up is not sufficient to increase work inclusion for this group of welfare recipients. The findings point to barriers related to the labour market, lack of education and language skills among parents, and hindrances within local NAV offices when it comes to work inclusion for this group of welfare recipients, such as accessibility to qualifying labour market measures, language courses or vocational education. Thus, most of these barriers are beyond the control of family coordinators. A recommendation from the evaluation is that the Labour and Welfare Administration and local-NAV offices need to identify and reduce barriers for work inclusion among this group, including barriers related to employers. Longer-term follow-up of the administrative data is recommended in order to detect any long-term effects of the HOLF model and/or coordinators.

---

<sup>1</sup> HOLF is a Norwegian abbreviation for comprehensive follow-up of low-income families.

## 1 Situation in the host country

Child poverty has been placed on the policy agenda in Europe and beyond; statistics from Eurostat demonstrate that 18.6 % of children were living in households below the AROP threshold in 2017 (Eurostat, 2019; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). In Norway this percentage is 10.8, which is significantly lower than the average in EU-27 countries. The main explanations for lower rates of children living below the AROP threshold in Norway are the comprehensive welfare structures, redistribution through taxes and a high share of labour force participation, also among women (Eurostat, 2019). Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of children living below the AROP threshold. In 2007, 9.9 % of children in Norway were living below the AROP threshold, whereas in 2017 this percentage had risen to 10.8%. The main explanation for this adverse development is increasing financial inequalities, driven by a disproportionately weak income growth among the low-income families and an increased income growth among the wealthiest families. Another explanation is a growing immigrant population with a lower employment rate and where the AROP rate is especially high among immigrant children living in single household families (Kirkeberg & Epland, 2016).

A disproportionate share of low-income families has an immigrant background. While only 5.5 % of children with parents born in Norway lived in low-income families in 2016, this percentage was 37.8 % for children with immigrant parents (Epland, 2018). The situation is explained by lower labour market participation among immigrant parents, a disproportionately high share of one-income-households among these parents, and less full-time employment than in the general population. The unemployment rate is also higher among immigrants. While the unemployment rate for the whole population was 2.3 % in 2017, the immigrant population had an unemployment rate of 5.6 %. For immigrants from African countries, the unemployment rate was especially high, at 9.6 % (Kirkeberg & Epland, 2016). There is a difference in the AROP rate depending on the country the parents have immigrated from. Children with parents that have immigrated from Somalia are the largest group in Norway. Among these children, 79 % live in low-income families. Of children from Syria, over 80 % live in low-income families.

In a comparative perspective, Norway is among the countries in Europe with the most generous welfare system, including benefits and public services (Saltkjel & Malmberg-Heimonen, 2017). The labour market participation rate is high: 79.2 % for the general population and 76.5 % among women, which is significantly higher than the average in the EU-28 countries (73.2 % and 67.4 %) (Eurostat, 2019). In addition to benefits in case of sickness, unemployment, disability and/or old age, there are also several types of benefits for families. Receiving these benefits requires that various eligibility criteria are fulfilled. Benefits for families include child benefits, cash benefits, transitional benefits and benefits during parental leave (NAV, 2019):

- Child benefit is given to parents with children under 18 years. This is a flat rate universal benefit, with extensions for single-parent households with children under the age of four (NAV, 2019).
- Cash benefit is a flat rate benefit given to parents with children between one and two years when the family have not applied for and received a day-care place for the child (NAV, 2019).
- Transitional benefit is a flat rate benefit given to single parents with children under eight years old. However, income from work will reduce the benefit. Moreover, recipients of transitional benefit are obliged to take part in courses, practices and other activities arranged by NAV (NAV, 2019).
- Parental benefits are provided for the care of children of 12 months or younger, and the amount depends on the last (three) years of income from work and the rights the applicant has in the National Insurance Scheme (NAV, 2019).

The Social Services Act regulates social assistance in Norway (NAV, 2019). Social assistance is the last resort of financial support and it can be given when no other types of income support are available, including lack of entitlement to subsistence allowance from the National Insurance Scheme. Social assistance is means-tested, which implies that each family's needs are individually assessed. During the assessments of needs, other types of financial support or income from work are taken into account. Social assistance can be provided as a supplementary top-up benefit when other incomes are not sufficient to cover basic subsistence costs. The national guidelines for the level of social assistance in 2019 recommend 10 250 NOK (1 026 Euro) per month for couples, 6 150 NOK (621 Euro) for single applicants, and 2 400 NOK (240 Euro) per month for children from 0 to 5 years, 3100 NOK (310 Euro) per month for children from 6 to 10 years and 4 000 NOK (404 Euro) per month for children from 11 to 17 years. Housing costs and some other individual expenses are not included in the guidelines and are calculated in each case. Despite these national guidelines for the level of social assistance, the actual benefit amount varies due to differences in needs and how the guidelines are interpreted, as well as possibilities for discretion in the calculation of the benefit. Families can also get means-tested housing allowance from the Housing Bank (Husbanken, 2019).

Although, the Norwegian Social Services Act specifies that families and children should receive comprehensive and coordinated welfare services, there is little guidance on how low-income families should be followed up by supervisors within local NAV offices. Nevertheless, the increase in children living below the AROP rate has prompted the Norwegian government to implement targeted initiatives to reduce child poverty. A specific concern is the risk of intergenerational transmission of poverty where children of poor parents grow up to be poor themselves. A central thought is that early identification, follow-up and targeted interventions for these families will prevent the transmission of poverty from one generation to another (Malmberg-Heimonen, Tøge, & Fossestøl, 2018). Targeted family-focused interventions have traditionally been more common in the UK and US (White, Warrenner, Reeves, & La Valle, 2008) than in the Nordic countries, where redistribution of economic resources and universal public services are more prevalent (Fløtten & Grødem, 2014).

To address these concerns, a comprehensive follow-up model has been developed by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, called the HOLF model. In addition to tools and methods for coordinating and case-based counselling, the model introduces family coordinators as a new position within NAV.

## **2 Policy measure: Evaluation of a comprehensive follow-up model (HOLF) on low-income families on income, employment, housing and children's' situation.**

The first policy document describing the needs for developing a programme to improve the follow-up of low-income families is a report written by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration in 2014 (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2014). This report gave two main reasons for developing the HOLF model. Firstly, it pointed out the need to counteract intergenerational transmission of poverty and social problems and suggested that better and more coordinated support for low-income families would contribute to social inclusion, hence reducing the risk of future poverty and social problems among children in these families.

Secondly, addressing children's needs was important in order to fulfil requirements in the Norwegian Social Services Act, which states that children and families should receive comprehensive and coordinated welfare services and that they need to be acknowledged in all decisions within social and welfare services. The report also pointed out that improving the situation for low-income families requires that the local NAV offices improve their internal and inter-organisational coordination of services, with an aim to promote children's and parent's health, housing, education and



employment. The report also highlighted the need to prioritise children and youth areas, for example ensure child-care, school related activities, after-school services, and leisure activities. The programme described in the report in 2014, later became an official part of the Norwegian Government's political strategy on child poverty 2015 - 2017 (Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet, 2015). As a part of the strategy, the Government decided to develop and pilot a comprehensive follow-up model for low-income families. At the same time, it was decided that the project would be evaluated.

Before the project began, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration commissioned a literature review (Fløtten & Grødem, 2014) that summarised existing research regarding family intervention projects in the Nordic countries and the UK. The aim was to identify family intervention models suitable to be implemented in the Norwegian welfare context. The review revealed that there was a lack of robust evaluations of family intervention projects, and consequently, insufficient knowledge of their effects. The existing Nordic projects were small-scaled, local and not suitable for upscaling, whilst the UK family intervention models were not fully transferable to the Norwegian context, due to differences in welfare structures between the countries (Malmberg-Heimonen et al., 2018). Based on these insights, the Administration decided to develop a family intervention model for the Norwegian welfare context, the HOLF model. Accordingly, they commissioned an independent evaluation of its effects. A research group at Oslo Metropolitan University lead by Professor Ira Malmberg-Heimonen conducted the evaluation using an experimental design.

#### *The HOLF model*

The long-term goal of the HOLF model is to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty, while the short-term objectives are to develop and implement a comprehensive model for follow-up of low-income families and improve the coordination of existing services. Within the model, coordinators work with all family members and four follow-up areas; employment, income, housing and social inclusion of children. All follow-up activities with the families should support at least one of these four areas. The HOLF model has two interacting intervention levels; the first is the follow-up work that family coordinators do directly with the families, and the second is inter-professional collaboration to improve the coordination of welfare services. In order to succeed with the coordination of services, an action network is established. The action network involves family coordinators, relevant collaborators of welfare and social services that are relevant to the families, and leaders. Regarding barriers for the coordination of services, the action network is expected to solve problems related to a specific family, and - at the organisational level - solve problems related to institutional barriers and promote inter-professional collaboration at the municipal level.

The model is described in two manuals developed by the project group at the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. The HOLF Process Manual describes the work of the family coordinators, including the model, tools, and details of the work processes, while the HOLF Implementation Manual describes the implementation of the model in local offices, including the responsibilities of office leaders (Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet, 2016a, 2016b). The model has been developed by the project group at the Labour and Welfare Administration, but with substantial influence from the three labour and welfare offices where it was piloted as well as input from the researchers. To support implementation of the HOLF model, the Labour and Welfare Administration has arranged six seminars for family coordinators and office leaders. Each seminar treats a specific perspective of the HOLF model; one example is the child perspective. Office leaders are key actors in implementing the model. They are responsible for establishing inter-professional collaboration and supporting the work of family coordinators, especially by removing institutional barriers. The project group at the Administration supervises all office leaders from offices randomised to the experimental group in order to ensure that they follow the implementation manual.

The HOLF model also includes continuous supervision of family coordinators. The supervision follows a train-the-trainer principle, where the project group within the Labour and Welfare Administration supervises and trains family coordinators from the pilot offices, who in turn supervise and train family coordinators from the 15 experimental group offices. The project group provides family coordinators from pilot offices with monthly group-based supervision in face-to-face or Skype meetings. In turn, the family coordinators from pilot offices provide family coordinators from offices randomised to the experimental group with supervision on how the various forms and tools of the model should be used in specific cases. The supervision follows a specific structure. The family coordinators present challenges from their work with families. Thereafter, the supervisor (one of the family coordinators from the pilot offices) asks specific questions about how the coordinator thought, how the coordinator acted, and whether and how the coordinator could have thought and acted differently. Other coordinators participate in the discussion, giving their advice on the specific case.

#### *Forms, Tools and Principles of the HOLF model*

Within the HOLF model, the family coordinators should use three different types of documents in their follow-up work: the charting form, the family plan, and the PCE form. The charting form assesses the four follow-up areas of employment, housing, income, and the social inclusion of children. Family coordinators use this form at initial meetings with the family. The family plan is a list of subsections related to the four follow-up areas. The coordinator and family members discuss the family's needs, possibilities, and goals, and they write down the goals and the actions they have to take to reach each of the goals. The PCE form is a list of issues related to preparing for, conducting, and evaluating meetings. Coordinators use this form to prepare for and evaluate meetings with families, collaborators, and leaders.

The HOLF model involves tools that family coordinators should apply in meetings with families and collaborators; these tools have been partially inspired by other methods, such as motivational interviewing and appreciative inquiry. Coordinators should use an appreciative approach, implying a communication style that is positive and based on recognition, in all communication with families and collaborators. IIMM (Inform, Involve, Mobilise, and Make responsible) is a tool for informing and involving the family and collaborators and making them responsible for reaching their goals. The Menu Agenda is a tool that family coordinators use in meetings with the family with a view to acknowledge each family member's wishes and needs. The family and family coordinator fill in important themes to work on: they are discussed, collectively agree upon and prioritised for each specific meeting. IAR is a tool for Investigating, Adding information and Re-investigating. The family coordinator makes inquiries into the information needs of the family and communicates this information to the family; thereafter, the family coordinator investigates whether the family has understood the given information. SMART goals are another tool; goals set with the family should be Strategic and specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results based, and Time bound.

Finally, the HOLF model involves five principles that family coordinators should apply in their work with families, as well as with collaborators and leaders. The principles are: 1) acknowledge the situation and needs of the family, 2) clarify roles and expectations, 3) provide adequate and relevant information, 4) identify the family's resources and opportunities, and 5) define support needed to achieve the goals.

### **3 Results<sup>2</sup>**

#### *The evaluation*

---

<sup>2</sup> The data and results presented in this chapter derive from the final HOLF-report: Malmberg-Heimonen, Tøge, Rugkåsa, Fossetøl, Liodden, Bergheim, Gyure, Buzungu (2019) Helhetlig

As mentioned above, the Norwegian Welfare and Labour Administration commissioned an independent evaluation of the HOLF model's effectiveness. The evaluation is conducted as a cluster-randomised study, with 29 participating NAV offices. Besides the effects of the intervention, implementation processes have also been investigated. The research protocol for the evaluation project has been registered at Clinicaltrials.gov (Identifier: NCT03102775), and the research protocol is published in a peer reviewed journal (Malmberg-Heimonen et al., 2017).

Concerning the families, information on subjective housing quality as well as children's participation in child-care and other leisure-time activities is obtained from survey data, while information on effects on employment and income are obtained from the administrative registers. The data material also includes comprehensive qualitative data, including interviews and observations with leaders, family coordinators, collaborating services and families. In the evaluation, 29 NAV offices were randomised into experimental (15 offices) and control groups (14 offices). The experimental group offices have implemented the HOLF model, while the control group offices have defined their follow-up approaches themselves.

All offices, regardless of the experimental set-up, received funding for 1.5 coordinator positions, while they funded 0.5 positions themselves. As all offices got funding for family coordinators, we are able to estimate the effects of the HOLF model itself. Hence, there are three major similarities between coordinators using the HOLF model (experimental group offices) and coordinators using other existing approaches (control group offices):

- Family coordinators with a low caseload: Two family coordinators have a constant case load of 21 families.
- Comprehensive follow-up: Family coordinators address the four target areas and all family members.
- Emphasis on service coordination and user involvement.

Prior to randomisation, family coordinators (58) and leaders (29) in the 29 Labour and Welfare offices responded to a baseline survey (response rate of 100 %). In each office, a target group of families was identified according to the following inclusion criteria:

- Reliance on social assistance as a main source of income for at least six of the last 12 months, or
- receiving social assistance in addition to other types of welfare support for at least six of the last 12 months, and
- having up to four children under the age of 16.

Families were excluded from participation in the project if:

- They were participating in other comprehensive family projects,
- one or both parents/caregivers were undergoing treatment because of heavy substance abuse and/or serious mental disorders,
- the child or the children were temporarily placed in child welfare institutions or living with relatives or other caregivers,
- the family was under investigation by child welfare authorities, due to suspected child neglect or because a placement to new caregivers was in process.

After these procedures, researchers created a final family list including 3 033 families covered by the participating 29 offices. The family list is used for recruitment of families into family projects; family coordinators randomly pick participants from the list and invited them to participate in the follow up by a family coordinator (with and

without the HOLF model). Each family chosen is invited to attend an information meeting, and if they wish to participate, they give their written consent and respond to the baseline survey. Families that were not randomly allocated to a family coordinator received ordinary follow-up at NAV. Consequently, the three groups we compared in our analyses of administrative data were:

1. Families with a coordinator using the HOLF model,
2. Families with a coordinator not using the HOLF model, and
3. Families with no coordinator, but who receive ordinary follow-up in NAV. Ordinary follow-up involves a NAV-supervisor (with heavier caseload) and in many cases some measures from local NAV offices.

See Table 1 for the number of parents and families in each of the three groups.

Table 1. Number of parents and families in each of the three groups by experimental condition. Number of families in brackets.

	Number of parents (families)		
	Experimental group HOLF model	Control group Local family work	Total
Total	2 398 (1 790)	1 797 (1 243)	4 193 (3 033)
Randomly chosen for follow-up by coordinator	1 130 (828)	1 093 (769)	2 223 (1 597)
Of which:			
- received follow-up by coordinator	512 (383)	493 (360)	1 005 (743)
- declined or were not offered follow-up	618 (445)	600 (409)	1 218 (854)
- were never randomly picked (third group: ordinary follow-up in NAV)	1 268 (962)	704 (474)	1 972 (1 436)

Source: Malmberg-Heimonen et al. (2019), p. 219

At the time of enrolment to the study, 78 % of the parents in the families were immigrants and, on average, they had been living in Norway for 12 years. Two out of five families were single parent households and there are, on average, two children in each family. Of the parents, 30 % were in employment when enrolled, and 49 % had elementary school or lower education. Furthermore, 31 % of parents reported to have a poor or very poor health. In the Norwegian population, the same holds for only 5 % (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2015).

#### Main findings

The main question is whether the HOLF model and/or the coordinator role will demonstrate positive effects on the various target areas: employment, economy, housing, and children's social inclusion. Due to survey data, we are able to compare families that have a family coordinator using the HOLF model with families that are followed-up by a family coordinator using other approaches in all four target areas. Accordingly, we are able to use administrative data to compare all three groups of families, that is also families in ordinary NAV follow-up. The ordinary follow-up group receives measures from NAV offices to a varying degree and has a supervisor from NAV, but no coordinator. However, as we only have administrative data for this third

group of families, we can only analyse effects on employment, income, active labour market policies and health-related benefits.

#### *Effects of the HOLF model on all target areas*

For families, there are no effects of the use of HOLF model on the four follow-up areas: employment, income, housing, and children's situation. Compared to families receiving follow-up from family coordinators using other approaches, parents show no improvement in transition to employment and no increase in working hours and income. Further, the HOLF model does not lead to an improved self-reported financial situation, compared to families who received follow-up from a family coordinator using other approaches. Regarding the housing situation, we find no effect of the HOLF model on satisfaction with the local area or the size and standard of the dwelling. Regarding the situation of the children in the families, we find no effect on any of our outcomes from the survey conducted among parents, including access to normal goods, wellbeing in various social arenas, and bullying.

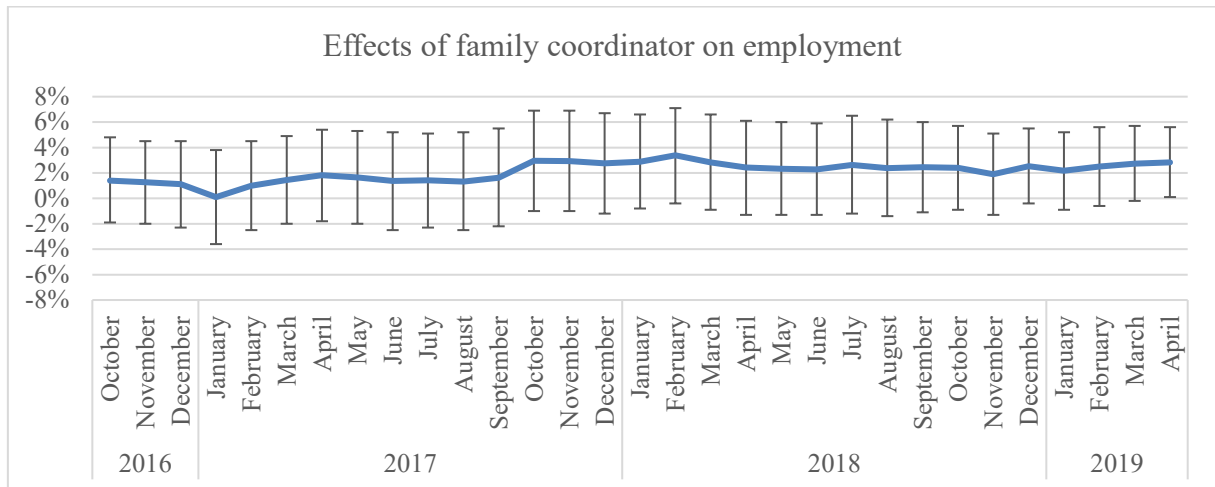
We have also analysed the effects of the HOLF model on family coordinators' assessments of their professional competence. Prior to randomisation and 18 months later, family coordinators evaluated their competence on five areas important to the follow-up work: goal-focused meetings, relational skills, empowering follow-up processes, comprehensive follow-up work and the coordination of services. The findings demonstrate that family coordinators from the experimental group NAV offices (HOLF model) achieved more goal-focused meetings and demonstrated more relational skills compared to their counterparts from control group offices. Both groups of family coordinators demonstrated significant improvements in empowering follow-up processes and comprehensive follow-up work, while there were no differences in family coordinators' evaluation of their competence over time when it came to the coordination of services. We see this positive development among family coordinators that have used the HOLF model as a result of the supervision structure, the follow-up by the project group at the Labour and Welfare Administration, as well as a result of the model itself, its forms and various tools.

#### *Effects of a coordinator on parents' employment and income, labour market activation measures, and health related benefits*

As families were randomly chosen to be followed up by a coordinator, we were able to analyse effects of the HOLF model, but also the effects of a family coordinator, regardless if they use the HOLF model. The comparison is with families that never got enrolled in the follow-up by a coordinator, but who have received ordinary follow-up by their local NAV office. Although some of the parents in the ordinary follow-up group are likely to participate in labour market activation measures, they do not have a family coordinator with a low caseload that follows up all family members and several target areas. When we compare families that have a family coordinator (with and without the HOLF model) with families that have received ordinary follow-up in NAV, there are no significant effects of having a coordinator on employment, income or on other activities arranged by NAV offices, such as participation in courses or in the qualification programme.

Figure 1 demonstrates the effects of the family coordinators on employment. In this figure, we compare parents that received comprehensive follow-up by a coordinator with parents that were not enrolled but received ordinary follow-up at their local NAV office. The blue line demonstrates parents that received comprehensive follow-up by a coordinator, when compared to parents in the ordinary NAV follow-up group, which is standardised at 0 % over time. Results indicate a slightly positive effect of a family coordinator varying between 0.1 and 3.4 percent; however, it is not statistically significant. It is only at the latest point in time (April 2019) when the lower part of the confidence interval demonstrated as vertical lines is above 0 % and the result can be interpreted as a significantly positive effect.

Figure 1. Effect of family coordinator on parents' employment between October 2016 and April 2019, when families in ordinary NAV follow-up is standardised at 0%. Confidence intervals are demonstrated as vertical lines.

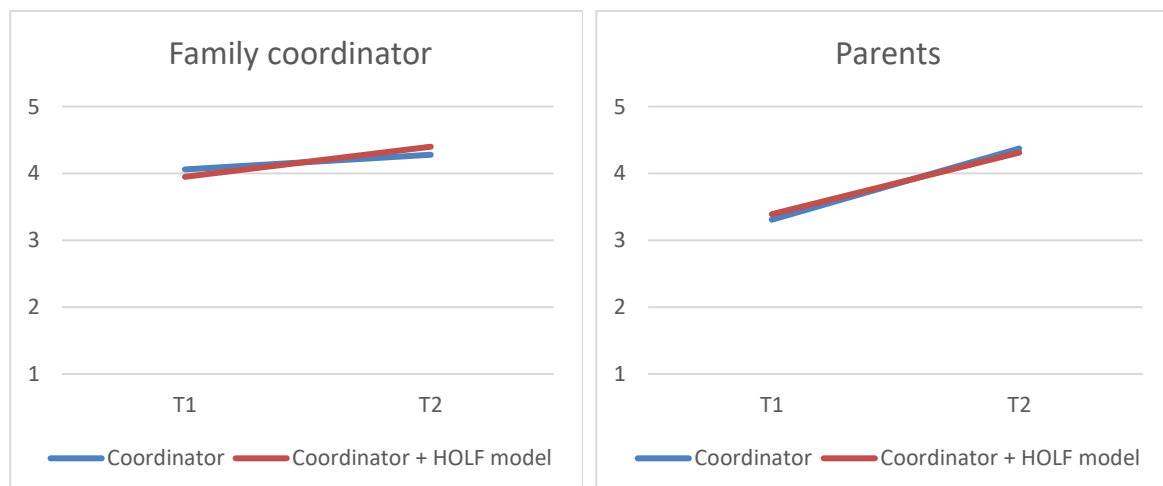


Source: Malmberg-Heimonen et al. (2019), p. 225.

Interviews with staff demonstrate that the project itself has brought the child perspective on the agenda in the participating offices. There is also an increase in the amounts of parents who report that the contact persons from NAV talk to their children, the increase is from 12 % (experimental) and 20 % (control) at the first questionnaire to 53 % at the second questionnaire 12 months later. Also, parents report an improvement in their evaluation of NAV's support for their children's leisure activities: at the first questionnaire parents reported that NAV 'seldom' (2.0) supports children's leisure activities; 12 months later parents report a higher mean at 2.6, that is between 'seldom' and 'a few times'. A similar result is for parents' evaluation of NAV's support to provide children with leisure equipment (skis, bikes, etc.). Nevertheless, there are no differences in parents' evaluations depending on whether family coordinators use the HOLF model or not.

In both experimental conditions, parents are pleased with the family coordinators and find them accessible. Independent of the HOLF model, there is a sharp increase in relational alliance between the time of the baseline and the time of the evaluation 12 months (family coordinators) and 18 months (parents) later (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Family coordinators and parents' evaluation of the relational alliance at baseline (T1) and at follow-up (T2), measured 18 months later for family coordinators and 12 months later for parents.



Source: Malmberg-Heimonen et al. (2019), p. 67.

Tables 2 to 4 summarise the primary and secondary effects of the evaluation for families and professionals. Overall, results demonstrate that the favourable effects for families derive from their access to a coordinator and that the HOLF model itself does not produce effects. Nevertheless, for the professionals' perceptions of their competence, there were favourable effects of the HOLF model.

Table 2. Effects on primary outcomes. Families

	Employment	Financial situation	Housing	Children
Effects of the HOLF model (everything else equal)	No	No	No	No
Effects of coordinator role independent of HOLF model	Very small (not significant)	Small increase in social assistance (not significant)	Unlikely	Probably

Table 3. Effects on secondary outcomes. Families

	Relational alliance
Effects of the HOLF model (everything else equal)	No
Effects of the coordinator role independent of HOLF model	Yes, probably a large effect

Table 4. Effects on secondary outcomes. Professionals

	Relational alliance	Goal focused meetings	User involvement	Comprehensive follow-up	Coordination
Effects of the HOLF model (everything else equal)	Yes (small)	Yes	No	No	No
Effects of the coordinator role independent of HOLF model	Yes, probably a large effect	Difficult to estimate	Probably	Probably	No

#### 4 Difficulties and constraints

There were no substantial effects of the use of the HOLF model or follow-up by the family coordinator on employment or income when we compared with ordinary NAV office follow-up, although a positive development was found for relational alliance with parents and the visibility of children at NAV offices. For family coordinators, there were favourable effects of the HOLF model on goal-focused meetings and relational skills. However, there were no effects on family coordinators competence related to the coordination of services. In interviews, family coordinators pointed to internal

collaboration at the NAV office as a major challenge in the project. Since they were not supposed to function as caseworkers for the families, but rather as coordinators, they had to rely on their colleagues to process demands on behalf of the families. Their colleagues at the office generally had much larger caseloads and did not have the same in-depth knowledge about the families. This meant that progress in the cases was often slower than desired from the point of view of the family coordinators. Moreover, they often had to place considerable effort into convincing their colleagues that the families were eligible for the benefits they requested.

These results also raise a question of what the needs are for this group of welfare recipients, especially when it comes to work inclusion. Of the parents, 78 % were immigrants and 49 % had primary or lower education and a large proportion lacked language skills. Our study has shown that close, comprehensive and coordinated follow-up does not seem to be sufficient for this group of welfare recipients. For instance, due to poor language skills, parents are not qualified to take part in vocational qualification programmes, or they have already used their rights for these kinds of programme. Also, work practice requires language skills (B-level). As such, there are hindrances internally in NAV offices that complicate family coordinators follow-up work, although they have low caseloads within the project. Due to lack of measures to improve housing, this target area was especially difficult for family coordinators to improve. The results also demonstrate that the interpretation services are of a poor quality and they were used to a varying degree in the 29 NAV offices. Research has further shown that immigrants were discriminated on the labour market (Birkelund, Heggebø & Rogstad, 2017). However, many of the above-mentioned barriers related to the labour market and access to measures within NAV offices are outside family coordinators control.

Regarding the evaluation of the HOLF model, results show that NAV offices and staff have local competence in the follow-up of low-income families. With resources and defined target areas, as well as skilled staff, they are able to follow-up families in similar ways to the offices where the HOLF model was implemented. However, it is important to underline that the HOLF model increased family coordinators perceptions of their competence, especially regarding goal-focused meetings and relational skills.

## **5 Success factors and transferability**

Within this project, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration has developed a national programme, that has been piloted in three NAV offices and monitored the implementation of the HOLF model through supervision and reporting structures in 15 NAV offices. In the evaluation of the HOLF model, we have analysed the implementation quality and demonstrate that it is high (Malmberg-Heimonen et al., 2019). Family coordinators have used the various forms and tools of the HOLF model, and office leaders have followed up the implementation. This implementation strategy developed by the project group at the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration is transferable to other similar implementation projects. Also, the close collaboration between researchers and the project group at the Labour and Welfare Administration has been a valuable part of this project. The research group has participated in the development of the HOLF model, evaluated its piloting and developed the program theory for the model (Malmberg-Heimonen, Tøge, Fossetøl, 2018)

Although, the results of the study may not be that encouraging when it comes to increasing work inclusion or income, they demonstrate that close and comprehensive follow-up of these families, including the coordination of services, is not sufficient due to various barriers for work inclusion related to the target group, their access to qualifying measures, as well as barriers in the labour market. This insight should not be interpreted as a failure, but as an invitation to re-evaluate the policies and measures needed for this group of welfare recipients.



## 6 List of references

- Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet. 2014. *Fattigdom og levekår i Norge. Tilstand og utviklingstrekk -2014*. (Poverty and level of living in Norway. Situation and trends). The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. Available at: [https://www.google.no/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjQi6yP\\_fjYAhWqiKYKHXFqBpkQFggsMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nav.no%2Fno%2FNAV%2FBog%2Bsamfunn%2FKunnskap%2FAnalyser%2Bfra%2BNAV%2F\\_attachment%2F401552%3F\\_download%3Dtrue%26\\_ts%3D14a77991db8&usg=AOvVaw2TfcPUQJGkGfVIRfBa9VWr](https://www.google.no/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwjQi6yP_fjYAhWqiKYKHXFqBpkQFggsMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nav.no%2Fno%2FNAV%2FBog%2Bsamfunn%2FKunnskap%2FAnalyser%2Bfra%2BNAV%2F_attachment%2F401552%3F_download%3Dtrue%26_ts%3D14a77991db8&usg=AOvVaw2TfcPUQJGkGfVIRfBa9VWr)
- Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet. 2016a. *Helhetlig oppfølging av lavinntektsfamilier. Implementeringsveileder*. (Comprehensive follow-up of low-income families. Implementation Guide). The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.
- Arbeids- og velferdsdirektoratet. 2016b. *Helhetlig oppfølging av lavinntektsfamilier. Prosessveileder for oppfølging av familier*. (Comprehensive follow-up of low-income families. Process Guide) The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.
- Birkelund, G. E., Heggebø, K., Rogstad, J. 2017. Additive or multiplicative disadvantage? The scarring effects of unemployment for ethnic minorities. *European Sociological Review*, 33 (1), 17-29.
- Epland, J. 2018. *Flere barn i husholdninger med vedvarende lavinntekt*. (More children in households with persistent low income), Oslo, Statistics Norway. Available at <https://www.ssb.no/inntekt-og-forbruk/artikler-og-publikasjoner/flere-barn-i-husholdninger-med-vedvarende-lavinntekt>
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2018. *Combating child poverty: An issue of fundamental rights*, Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Available at: [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2018-combating-child-poverty\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-combating-child-poverty_en.pdf)
- Eurostat. 2019. *Labour force statistics*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Labour\\_market\\_and\\_Labour\\_force\\_survey\\_\(LFS\)\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Labour_market_and_Labour_force_survey_(LFS)_statistics)
- Eurostat. 2019. *Children at-risk-of-poverty threshold*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/employment-and-social-inclusion-indicators/social-protection-and-inclusion/investing-children>
- Fløtten, T., Grødem, A.S. 2014. *Helhetlige tiltak mot barnefattigdom : en kunnskapsoppsummering*. (Comprehensive measures to reduce child poverty) Oslo, Fafo. Available at: <http://www.fafo.no/index.php/nb/zoo-publikasjoner/fafo-rapporter/item/helhetlige-tiltak-mot-barnefattigdom>.
- Folkehelseinstituttet. 2015. *Fakta om egenvurdert helse*. (Facts about subjective health) Available at: <https://www.fhi.no/historisk-arkiv/artikler/faktaark/egenvurdert-helse-faktaark/>
- Gugushvili, D., & Hirsch, D. 2014. *Means-testing or Universalism: what strategies best address poverty?* A review contributing to Joseph Rowntree Foundation's development of an anti-poverty strategy. (Report No. 0946831408). Loughborough Available at: [https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/content/crsp/downloads/reports/Means%20testing%20or%20Universalism\\_Final%20Report.pdf](https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/content/crsp/downloads/reports/Means%20testing%20or%20Universalism_Final%20Report.pdf)
- Husbanken. 2019. *Housing allowance in Norway*, The Housing Bank. Available at <https://www.husbanken.no/english/what-is-housing-allowance/>
- Kirkeberg, M.I. and Epland, J. 2016. *Barnefamilienes inntekter, formue og gjeld 2004-2014*. (Income, wealth and debt of families with children in Norway, 2004-2014) Statistisk sentralbyrå, Oslo. Available at: <https://www.ssb.no/inntekt-og->

forbruk/artikler-og-publikasjoner/barnefamilienes-inntekter-formue-og-gjeld-2004-2014

Malmberg-Heimonen, I., Tøge, A.G. Rugkåsa, M. Fossetøl, K. Liodden, T. Bergheim, B. Gyure, K. Buzungu H. 2019. *Helhetlig oppfølging av lavinntektsfamilier* (Comprehensive follow-up of low-income families). Oslo: Skriftserie 2019, nr. 10.

Malmberg-Heimonen, I., Tøge, A.G. Fossetøl, K. 2018. Program theory within policy-initiated evaluations: the Norwegian low-income family study. *Journal of Evidence-Informed Social Work*, Vol. 15 (4), 337-350.

Barne- likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet. 2015. *Barn som lever i fattigdom. Regjeringens strategi mot barnefattigdom 2015 - 2017*(Children who live in poverty, the Governments' strategy against childpoverty 2015-2017) Oslo, Ministry of Children and Families. Available at:

[https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ff601d1ab03d4f2dad1e86e706dc4fd3/barn-som-lever-i-fattigdom\\_q-1230-b.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ff601d1ab03d4f2dad1e86e706dc4fd3/barn-som-lever-i-fattigdom_q-1230-b.pdf).

NAV. 2019. *Financial support from NAV*. Available at:

<https://veiledearbeidssoker.nav.no/utenfor-arbeidslivet-lenge/okonomisk-stotte?sprak=nb>

Saltkjel, T, Malmberg-Heimonen, I. 2017. Welfare Generosity in Europe: A Multi-level Study of Material Deprivation and Income Poverty among Disadvantaged Groups. *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 51 (7), 1287-1310.

White, C., Warrener, M., Reeves, A. and La Valle, I. 2008. *Family intervention projects: An evaluation of their design, set-up and early outcomes*. DCSF Research Report, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.





Publications Office