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CARE AND YOUTH

CARIBBEAN NETHERLANDS

PURSUING THE BEST POSSIBLE CARE



A COVID-19 vaccine for the six islands

Keep an eye on diabetes!

Assisted Living for boys and girls on Bonaire

Foreword

Curvin George – Head of Care ZJCN

This edition of the Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands update includes looking back at an eventful time. COVID-19 has had an impact on everyone's life. But the effects of COVID-19 were particularly noticeable in the healthcare sector. Together with 22 employees, we spent a lot of time trying to organise care for the inhabitants of the BES islands. We can proudly say that we managed to meet their care needs. Despite COVID-19 and everything that came with it.

Organisation and planning-related problems were sometimes encountered during medical referrals. This could be attributed to the various restrictions imposed by the destinations themselves. It was a period where we had to act quickly and provide tailor-made care. Together with the Public Health departments, we implemented very strict safety protocols. And this was not always pleasant for our patients. However, it was necessary to offer care in a safe manner.

Together with us, our 9 colleagues in The Hague did their best to offer a sustainable range of care. We ensured extra personnel and IC beds on the CAS islands (Curacao, Aruba and Sint Maarten) as well as the BES islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba). This allowed us to tackle the threat of COVID-19. Thanks to the cooperation between hospitals and the health insurers on the CAS and BES islands, we were able to meet the COVID-19 pandemic head on. Thanks to the hard work of our



Curvin George – Head of Care ZJCN

employees, it was possible to effectively arrange all medical referrals in 2021. People should know that we are always there for them. We take all their questions and complaints seriously.

And we will be continuing with the same passion. We want to align our methods with the needs of our citizens. We want to offer you better information and continuously develop our services. This will allow us to move with the times. For example, we are working hard to protect our internal processes and your privacy as effectively as possible. The quality of our services is just as important to us as the quality of the provided care.

And that's how it will continue! My team and I are ready to assist you.

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Pursuing the best possible care



A COVID-19 vaccine for the six islands

A lot of work is involved when arranging a COVID-19 vaccine for six islands! Simone Baardse and Marisol Zambrano know everything about this. They have been working closely since November 2020. Simone is Public Health advisor at the Ministry of VWS. Marisol is facility account manager on Bonaire. They work with their colleagues and the RIVM to give everyone the chance to be vaccinated against COVID-19; on the BES islands (Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba) as well as the CAS islands (Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten).



Marisol Zambrano and Simone Baardse

“A lot of work was needed before the first people could come for their vaccine”, says Marisol and Simone. “And we are still working hard at the moment. Because the booster vaccine is also available. We regularly encounter people who come for their first or second vaccine.”

Simone: “My work involves the Netherlands as well as the six islands. I work with the RIVM to make sure that enough vaccines are sent to the islands whenever they are needed. But not only vaccines, also materials. From syringes and needles to special gloves.”

Marisol works from Bonaire. She helps to arrange vaccine transport between the islands. “This is done using cargo flights”, she explains. “The vaccines are transported in special cooled boxes. They must remain cold, and at a fixed temperature. This is quite a challenge in the tropics! That is why the vaccines must reach the islands as soon as possible. The vaccines are even delivered to Saba via helicopter. It is able to land anywhere and can keep the vaccines cold during transport. Once vaccines reach the islands, they immediately go into the freezer.

The temperature is continuously checked. Also during transport. This is referred to as the cold chain.”

Marisol barely felt her vaccination. “It is done with a very thin needle. But you can have a few side effects afterwards. A sore arm, muscle pain, and sometimes a slight fever. The vaccine helps to activate your immune system. You thus create antibodies and have less chance of contracting COVID-19. And even if you do contract it, it makes you less ill.”



Viruses are always mutating

The COVID-19 vaccine may be offered every year in the future, just like the flu vaccine. Because the flu virus is constantly mutating. And the same is also true of COVID-19.”



Booster vaccine

The booster vaccine ensures better protection against COVID-19. Also against the delta and omicron variants. Vaccination offers the best protection that is currently available. You can get a booster vaccine if you were administered your second vaccine at least 3 months ago.

Simone is pleased that people now also have the opportunity to vaccinate their children. “Families on the island spend a lot of time together. Grandfathers and grandmothers, children and grandchildren... At this moment in time, children do not suffer a lot if they contract COVID-19, but can also become ill in rare cases. And they can infect others. For example, their grandfather or grandmother. In the meantime, vaccination is possible for everyone over the age of 5. I hope people will seize this opportunity. Certainly if you are sick of all the misery associated with COVID-19.”

Marisol agrees: “Vaccination allows you to protect yourself and the people around you. It is very important for us all to help one another!”

Interview

Maideline Martijn

Head of Youth at ZJCN

A lot has changed over the past 2 years when it comes to youth care on the BES islands. Youth care now falls under the program directorate of the ministry of VWS, Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands (ZJCN). Maideline Martijn, Head of Youth at ZJCN, explains the structure of Youth care and what the department does.

Focus on the child

“Since 2019, we have been using a new approach to youth care: the Child Focus Approach. This approach puts the safety of the child first. To make sure that the child is safe, we compile a plan for the whole family. We operate on the basis of 1 family, 1 plan. This means attention is given to all children within the family. This allows us to work preventively. We talk to everyone in the family, also in the presence of the child. The main aim is to primarily offer children the required assistance within their own home environment. We do this by also supporting the parents. Youth care does its best to not remove children from their homes wherever possible. We only do this if there is really no other option. A home where the child is part of the family, is the best setting for any child.”

“The results are very positive. Families now need less assistance. They are managing to make progress without our help. This means waiting lists are also shorter. Youth care primarily wants to protect children. This means allowing children to grow up in a safe environment, develop personally and go to school. This involves a lot more than physical safety alone. The help we offer is voluntary. Youth care only enforces measures when necessary and if the family refuses to cooperate.”

Finding creative solutions

“Youth laws that apply in the Caribbean Netherlands are not quite the same as those in the Netherlands. The culture here is different. And, in addition, there are a lot fewer people here. Due to our small scale, we cannot offer all the services available in the Netherlands.

But that is what actually makes us so creative. We are able to devise practical, tailor-made solutions. This means needs can often be met immediately. We believe it is important to focus on the child. We truly want to make a difference for the child.”

Maideline provides a good example of this. “In the Netherlands, youth care is separate from welfare and foster care. In the Caribbean Netherlands, youth care is responsible for welfare as well as foster care. There are short lines of communication, which means we can help children quickly.”

“We also work with other organisations to come up with out-of-the-box solutions for children that require a custom-made solution. A practical example of this is Youth care working with and Piskabon, which is a cooperation of fishermen on Bonaire and other organisations, to devise a tailor-made solution



Maideline Martijn, Head of Youth at ZJCN

for youngsters. This means youngsters now get the chance to follow practical education. As a result, they can turn their passion into a living. This partnership is a good example of the creative approach we use to devise our solutions.”

Youth Academy

“Youth care has been working on improving the expertise of its employees since 2019. Employees receive training from, for example, our alliance partner Youth Protection region Amsterdam, but also from our in-house qualified trainers. The training programme of the Youth Academy includes training for conversational techniques when talking to children, dealing with transgressive behaviour in children, and intensive parenting support. We try to share this knowledge with others, but also welcome the expertise of other partners in our youth chain. This means we can all continue to develop together.”

Always on the move

“The Youth department at ZJCN is always on the move”, says Maideline. “And we are always aware: what is going on? Are there any new developments? The problems that youngsters now face differ from those faced by youngsters 10 years ago. We continue to adapt and develop further. With the main goal: to keep children safe.”



Interview Curvin George Head of Care at ZJCN

Pursuing the best possible care

The ZVK and Youth care merged in 2020. Both organisations were previously run by the VWS directorate of International Affairs. However, healthcare and youth care on the BES islands required more specific attention. That is why the programme directorate ZJCN (Care and Youth Caribbean Netherlands) came into being. The directorate helps to create closer ties between policy and implementation. Our colleagues in The Hague and on the islands regularly consult one another, which means policy is more in line with the culture of the BES islands.

Curvin George is Head of Care at the Programme directorate ZJCN. He explains what ZJCN has been working on lately. And what the plans are for the coming years.

Cooperation during COVID-19

“Due to the COVID-19 crisis, there has been much more cooperation between the BES islands, but also with Curaçao, Aruba and Sint Maarten (CAS islands),” explains Curvin. “Hospitals from the 6 islands jointly set up the Dutch Caribbean Hospital Alliances (DCHA). The aim of this partnership is to always offer the best care in the region; to everyone on the BES and CAS islands. The objective of the DCHA is to improve the quality of care. If we work alone, we cannot offer care close to people’s homes”, says Curvin. “We thus need each other. Health insurers on BES and CAS are also working together more often. We learn from one another and also support one another.”

“The COVID-19 crisis presented a lot of challenges. ZJCN assigned extra resources and specialised personnel to the hospitals of CAS and BES. In addition, ZJCN supported the vaccination programme on all 6 islands. Not only on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, but also on the CAS islands.”

Working on quality

“In order to improve the quality of care, we always look at what we need. Where can patients be referred in case of an emergency? What is the best way to cooperate with the islands as well as hospitals in Colombia and the Netherlands? What is the best way to organise the logistical process for medical referrals? Which aspects of the service offered to patients can be improved? We are working hard on all these matters.”

Successful population screening for breast cancer

“The population screening for breast cancer, which was carried out by RIVM, is a major success”, says Curvin. “ZJCN supported this pilot on Bonaire. Employees gave their all and nearly 1000 women took part in the screening. The cervical cancer screening pilot is currently rolled out on Saba and will also be launched on Sint Eustatius soon. This allows us to discover these diseases in good time. As a result, treatment may still be possible in many cases.”

Assisted by technology

“We also closely monitor the latest technological developments. For instance, modern technology allows us to improve contact with patients.



Curvin George, Head of Care at ZJCN

And to communicate faster. For example, we are seeing whether more things can be done electronically. However, we must first know if everyone can cope with such innovations and whether they are safe. The COVID-19 app is also one of the projects that received intensive support from ZJCN. This has all happened in a short space of time, and under a lot of pressure.”

“It is our mission to make healthcare increasingly reliable and accessible, and to deliver high quality. This is an ongoing process. And we all play a role in it”, concludes Curvin. “By effectively caring for ourselves and the people around us.”



ZJCN Bonaire

New opening times ZJCN

“The opening times of the ZJCN office have changed since the 1st of February 2022. This means ZJCN is able to arrange medical referrals more effectively. With more personal attention for customers. This is improving the service we offer.”

Opening Hours (for registration)

Monday:	08:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Tuesday:	13:00 AM - 16:30 PM
Wednesday:	08:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Thursday:	13:00 AM - 16:30 PM
Friday:	08:00 AM - 12:00 PM



Care tailored to the needs of each patient

Interview Primary Care Caribbean (PCC) – Roos van der Niet and Freek van der Meulen

Freek van der Meulen and Roos van der Niet

PPrimary Care Caribbean (PCC) has been set up to support General Practitioners (GP) and emergency GP services on Bonaire. So that everyone receives the best medical care. Roos van der Niet and Freek van der Meulen are responsible for managing the PCC. They explain exactly what the PCC does.

Freek van der Meulen summarises: “PCC ensures effective cooperation between all providers of medical care. Such as general practitioners, specialists and assistant practitioners. But this also includes dieticians and medical pedicurists. Due to better collaboration, patients always receive care that is tailored to their needs.”

“At the moment, patients often need to visit the hospital for examinations and treatment”, adds Roos van der Niet. “That is why we are training assistant practitioners. It is better if you have your diabetes examination carried out at your own GP office. This helps to minimise potential obstacles. And there is more personal attention for each patient. In the near future, assistant practitioners will also be available to people with cardiovascular issues. As well as people with minor mental disabilities.”

Assistant practitioners at your GP

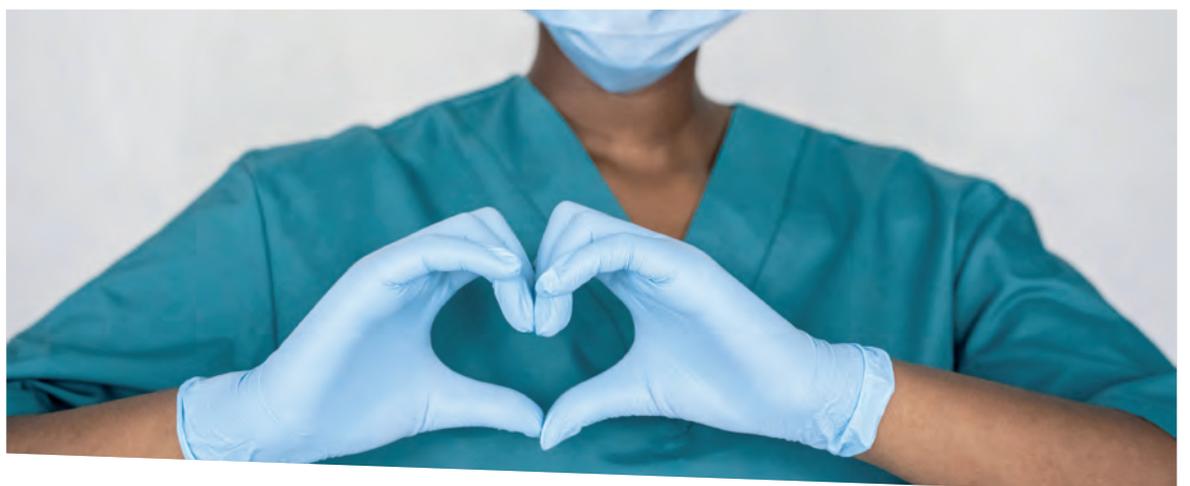
Who are these assistant practitioners? Roos: “They are specially trained nurses, such as diabetes nurses and GGZ (mental healthcare)

nurses. We can train these people ourselves on Bonaire. We are mainly looking for people who speak the local languages. And who are familiar with the culture of the islands. This helps the patients to trust the process.”

“The nurses all work at a fixed location”, says Freek. “One works at the surgery of Doctor Schröder. One at the surgeries of Doctor Lont and Doctor Bernabela. And the third with Doctor Eijsenga and Doctor De Castro. This is good for patients because they always see a familiar face.”

develop diabetes. But the consequences are severe. For instance, you can become blind or suffer wounds that do not heal. And this may cause you to become disabled. More and more people are suffering from type II diabetes. In the past, this was referred to as old-age diabetes. But the number of young people with type II diabetes is increasing. This even includes children.”

Freek: “Do you often feel tired or are you always thirsty? Do you have to urinate regularly? Then visit your GP. Your doctor can do a simple test to see if you have diabetes. Effective treatment is important! It can help avoid a lot of problems.”



Diabetes on Bonaire

Roos: “Unfortunately, diabetes is very common on Bonaire. The disease affects over 10% of the population. People often feel very little if they

Obesity is a major cause. If you are overweight, you have a much higher risk of diabetes. A dietician or your GP will help you if you want to lose weight or want to live healthier!”

Keep an eye on diabetes!

An interview with Anais Sakoetoe – diabeteszorg Bonaire

D diabetes is an invisible illness. And Anais Sakoetoe has witnessed this first hand. She is a diabetes nurse on Bonaire. She is very knowledgeable about the disease. “Diabetes mellitus is the official name, although it is commonly referred to as diabetes. Initially, people often do not realise that they have diabetes. And if they start experiencing symptoms, they tend to ignore them for too long.”

Anais specialised as a diabetes nurse at the Fundashon Mariadal Academy on Bonaire. She earned her diploma in 2017. She now works as a diabetes nurse for PCC (Primary Care Caribbean), at the practice of Doctor Schröder. Anais has a lot of contact with her patients.

Getting a grip on diabetes

“I examine people with diabetes every 3 months. Sometimes more often. In addition, they also undergo an extensive examination each year. I examine the laboratory results. I then consult the general practitioner if necessary. I inspect things like blood pressure, weight, blood sugar levels and the feet. If necessary, I refer patients to the diabetes clinic at Fundashon Mariadal. I am in contact with

the dietician, optometrist, ophthalmologist, medical pedicurist and podiatrist. Patients often have a lot of questions. What can and can you not eat? That is why I offer lifestyle advice. Because you can do a lot yourself to control diabetes. Or better still: to avoid it!”

A healthier life

“People often think their diet is greatly restricted, but that is not true”, says Anais clearly. “However, it is important to eat healthy food and not too much at once. It is not good to eat too much salt, sweets and fat. It is also best to avoid drinking juice or soft drinks, instead you should drink enough water. Also be careful about fruit you eat: it is best to eat 1 type of fruit instead of a mix of different fruits. Losing weight and plenty of exercise are two very important factors. And that is where I can help patients.

“It is extremely important to attend the consults”, adds Anais. “We can get the disease under control by working together. Diabetes causes a lot of damage. You can suffer wounds that do not heal. Or a heart attack. You can even become blind or may need to amputate a foot. People sometimes suffer renal problems and require dialysis.

However, effective checks and a better lifestyle can help to avoid all this or ensure early diagnosis.”

No better reward

“What do I like about my job? When patients say to me: ‘I am pleased that I visited you; I now feel a lot better without all the diabetes issues.’ I want to give my patients a better life and a longer future. By involving them in their own care, I allow them to make their own choices. So they change their behaviour and do not return to old habits. I do this by listening, asking questions and looking for a solution together. If I am able to do this, there is no better reward!”

When do you have a higher risk of type II diabetes?

- The likelihood increases as you get older
- If you are overweight, particularly around the stomach
- If your cholesterol levels are too high
- If your father, mother, brother or sister have diabetes
- If you have high blood pressure
- If you have had gestational diabetes
- If you smoke
- If you use certain medicines, such as prednisolone

See your general practitioner if you:

- You have to urinate regularly
- Are always thirsty
- Are losing weight without a reason
- Are suffering from a dry mouth
- Are tired, even after resting
- Have problems with your eyes: like red or burning eyes, blurred vision, double vision or poor vision
- Often have bladder infections
- Have wounds that heal slowly



“We can keep diabetes under control by working together!”

Anais Sakoetoe – diabeteszorg Bonaire



Assisted Living on Bonaire

Following the start of the Assisted Living project on the 15th of March 2021, Bonaire now has a safe place to live for youngsters - both male and female and between 16 and 23 years old - who are unable to live at home due to certain circumstances. This is a 2-year pilot project for youngsters from the BES islands.

The Youth care department had identified the need for such a facility. And this advice was also reiterated by the National Ombudsman. Assisted Living helps the youngsters that stay here to become self-sufficient and autonomous. We met with residential assistants Mildred Allee, Indianara Jansen and Roëltta Faneyt-Clara, and coordinator Solange Martilia, at the Assisted Living facility. A yellow apartment complex with a courtyard full of old palm trees and a colourful wall. The 4 employees share their thoughts about Assisted Living on Bonaire.

Who lives in this house?

5 youngsters currently reside at Assisted Living. Most youngsters have normally been part of a support scheme at the Youth care department, and have reached a new phase in their lives. Together with their mentors, they practice a wide range of skills that are needed if they want to become independent.

“In my role as coordinator, I believe that it is important to take responsibility. This requires perseverance, insight, knowledge and patience. If something does not work, I always devise another strategy. So that goals can be realised. It’s about considering what is possible. This is also what we teach the youngsters; to think out-of-the-box. Believe that everything that you want to achieve is possible. All you have to do is work for it.” Solange Martilia, coordinator

There is space for 9 to 11 youths. “They have their own studio with a bathroom and kitchen unit”, explain the residential assistants. “They share the kitchen. The youngsters really enjoy the fact that they have their own space here. This allows them to relax in a safe environment. Personnel are present 24 hours a day at the residential facility.”

Life at Assisted Living

“When a youngster arrives, we discuss the house rules and make certain agreements. They are given a warm welcome by their housemates and their mentor. The mentor is responsible for guiding, coaching and advising the youths. This is done based on our support structure. They are given things to do during the day and follow a weekly programme. In addition, they receive tailor-made support and work with goals that take into account their

personal needs. They learn a lot of positive things from one another. ”

“The youngsters have a lot of influence on what happens here. For instance, we often organise workshops. They can also propose their own topics for a workshop. Like interacting with one another, healthy food and managing money. But we also talk about bullying, sexuality and social media. The youth council gathers every Monday. They are able to make decisions about many things. This allows them to take control of their lives. There is a constant dialogue, and we always ask them: “What do you need?”

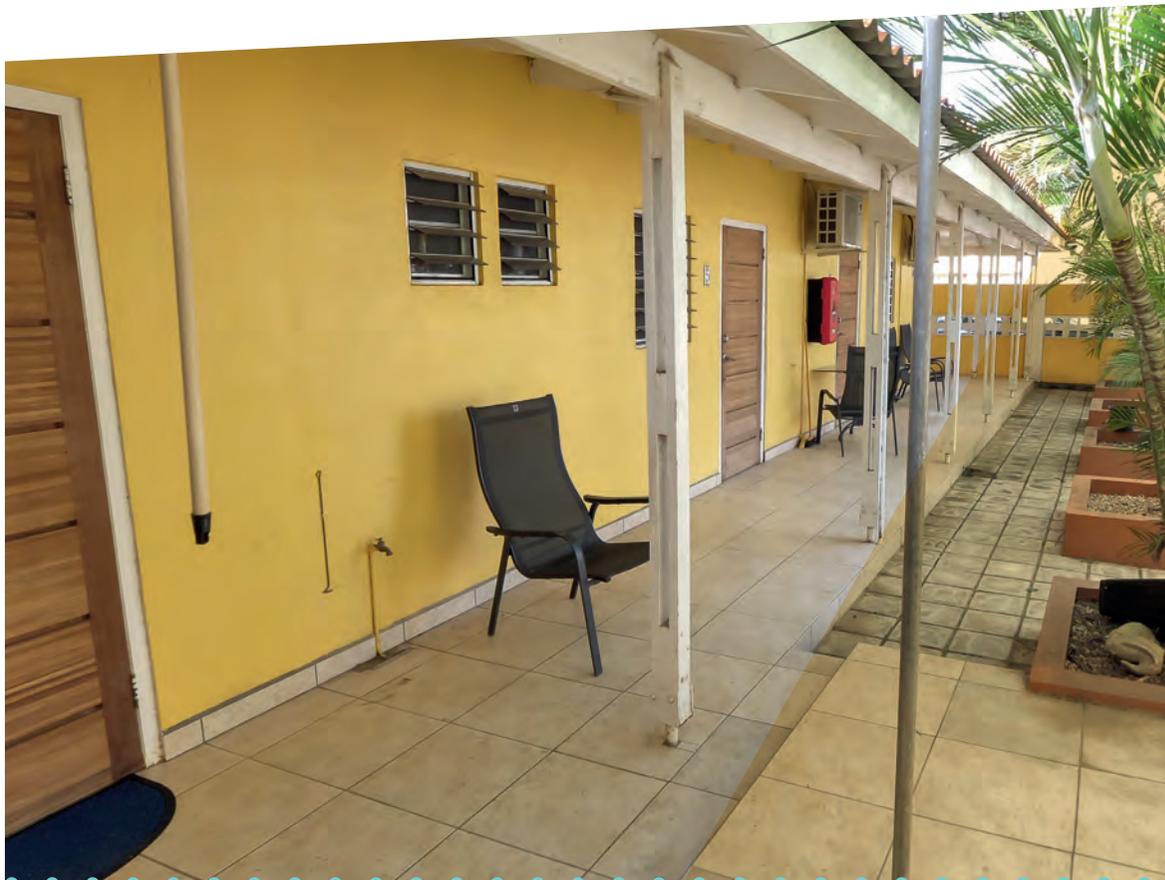
Three phases

“We work with 3 phases. In phase 1, youngsters learn to develop skills in various fields, like washing clothes, personal hygiene and work ethic. They are given pocket

money and learn how to manage it. By phase 2, youngsters tend to be reasonably autonomous. They receive coaching and further develop their practical skills. They learn how to take responsibility. For instance, they pay for their own electricity if they are in paid employment. By the time they reach phase 3, youngsters are completely self-sufficient, thanks to tailor-made advice. The workshops continue to play a role in all three phases.”

What happens after Assisted Living?

All good things come to an end. At the end of the scheme, youngsters go to live by themselves. And they are able to start their lives as grown-ups. But we continue to provide after-care on a temporary basis. We all do our very best to give these youths a bright future!”



Cooperation FCB and ZJCN for new assisted living facility

Housing corporation Fundashon Cas Bonairiano (FCB) and the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) will jointly realise new housing for an assisted living facility for young people on Bonaire. On the 11th of March, the cooperation covenant was signed by director Ben Oleana (FCB) and deputy Secretary-General Abigail Norville (VWS).

In the facility on Bonaire young people from the Dutch Caribbean between 16 and 24 years are guided towards more independence. These young people have completed a long-term assistance programme at Youth Care, but can no longer live at home because of the unchanged home situation. The residential facility will be realised for this group.

Pilot

The cooperation follows a pilot for assisted living that started a year ago. The past year was used to consolidate the facility. This was successful and crowned with a very positive assessment from the Inspectorate of Healthcare and Youth (IGJ).

At the moment, the assisted living facility is housed in a rented apartment complex on the Kaya Sabana. In order to make structural continuation of the facility possible, VWS has now entered into a cooperation covenant with Fundashon Cas Bonairiano.

Covenant

In the covenant agreements were made about the construction and financing of the new accommodation, the loan agreements and the flow of young people to social housing of Fundashon Cas Bonairiano. Especially the latter is very important for successful corporatization projects, because by guaranteeing the flow the facility will maintain its right of existence and young people from the Dutch Caribbean will really get the chance to build their own lives independently.

The new building will be built on the Kaya Mendelssohn and will offer space to 12 young people. The design takes into account the possibility of future expansion. The completion date of the new building is planned for May 2023.



The cooperation agreement is signed on behalf of Fundashon Cas Bonairiano by director Ben Oleana and on behalf of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport by deputy Secretary-General Abigail Norville.

Guana Chat Child Helpline expands to other islands

The partnership between Fundacion Telefon pa Hubetud Aruba and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) for the 'Guana Chat' child helpline in the Caribbean Netherlands is a reality. State Secretary Maarten van Ooijen from VWS and director James Sneek from the Aruba child helpline signed a collaboration agreement on the 25th of June to expand the services of the Aruba-based child helpline to Saba and Bonaire.

The child helpline for the Caribbean Netherlands is called Guana Chat 918, and children from Sint Eustatius have been able to use it since the 16th of March. Saba was connected to the 918 number on 27 June, and Bonaire will follow later this year. The special telephone line allows youngsters to anonymously phone volunteers from Telefon pa Hubentud Aruba free of charge every day between 2 pm and 6 pm.

For over 20 years, the Aruba child helpline has been offering telephone and internet-based support, advice and information to Aruba-based children and youngsters between the ages of 8 and 24 years. The expansion of their services to the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands represents an important development for youngsters. James Sneek: "The child helpline is for all children who need someone to talk to. 'The child helpline allows you to talk about EVERYTHING'. Support can always be requested and/or you can always talk about your experiences."



Director 'Telefon pa Hubentud', James Sneek, State secretary VWS Maarten van Ooijen and members of 'Fundacion pa Hubentud Aruba' during the signing of the Child helpline agreement.

State Secretary van Ooijen:

"It's great news that children from the Caribbean Netherlands now have the Guana Chat 918 to go to with everything that is on their minds. I hope that it will now become the norm for children and youngsters to contact us when they have an urgent question or just want to talk because they feel like it. We all feel that need sometimes to be more comfortable in our own skin."

Launch for children on Saba

Starting the 27th of June, the free telephone number 918 is available every day between 14:00 and 18:00. The website www.guanachat918.com gives information on the use of the helpline and the different topics children and young people want to talk about.

The Guana Chat helpline is a collaboration between the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS) and Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), the child helpline of Aruba, 'Telefon pa Hubentud' and the Public Entity of Saba, St. Eustatius and Bonaire.



Promotion Team Guana Chat

The Fundashon Mariadal hospital and Amsterdam UMC working together!

Many doctors from Amsterdam UMC work at the hospital in Bonaire. Some for a short period of time, others for longer. Joger Jacobs is a doctor in the Emergency Care ward and one of the two medical managers. His colleague Alex Schwengle, who is a respiratory doctor, deals with planned care. Joger deals with emergency care. He has been living on Bonaire since 2021 and will definitely be staying for 2 years. He explains the partnership between Fundashon Mariadal (FM) and the Amsterdam UMC.

From 6 to 30 specialisms

“The hospital care on Bonaire has grown massively over the past 10 years. In 2010, there were 6 specialisms on the island. Now there are 30! That is why 80 percent of all care can now be provided on the island. At a standard that is equivalent to the European Netherlands. This shows huge progress.”

Care on the island

“For instance, FM now has a polyclinic for rheumatology, algology, revalidation and ophthalmology. This is much better for



Entrance Fundashon Maridal

A fully-fledged hospital

Fundashon Mariadal hospital employs 650 people. FM is therefore a major employer! In 2019, 2911 people were admitted to hospital on Bonaire. During that year, 1985 operations were carried out. The air ambulance is needed increasingly less. People can now stay on Bonaire for 80 percent of all care. And that is one less thing to worry about for inhabitants.

patients. Many people can now simply undergo an examination or treatment on Bonaire. Chemotherapy is a good example of this, as are colon examinations. Previously, you would have had to fly to Curaçao or Aruba. But now, patients can remain here. We also have an ophthalmology polyclinic, and there is always an ophthalmologist on the island. This means we can perform cataract surgery on Bonaire.”

Change of doctor

Patients sometimes ask themselves: ‘why do I always see a different specialist each time?’ Joger explains why. “Bonaire has approximately 21,000 inhabitants. This means there is not enough work for every specialist. Thankfully, not every illness is encountered here on a regular basis. If doctors do not perform enough treatments, they will lose their registration. That is why many doctors are only here for a few months, before returning to the Netherlands. Even the doctors that work permanently on Bonaire must go to the Netherlands each year for training and to perform enough treatments.”

“But there is also another reason”, says Joger. “If a disease is not commonly encountered and is not in need of acute treatment, it is very expensive to have such specialists permanently stationed on Bonaire. We prefer to spend this money on care that is always needed, like care for the elderly. That is also why not all specialists stay here the whole year round.”

More and more doctors permanently on the island

Joger explains: “Take surgeons, for example. They will be here for one year. But they will have fewer opportunities to operate here than in the Netherlands. Because we simply

don’t have enough patients. So they must regularly return to the Netherlands to perform operations. This allows them to retain their skills as well as their registration as specialists.”

“We are working hard to keep doctors here for a longer time”, continues Joger. “And we are becoming increasingly better at doing so. We now have a permanent nephrologist for kidney patients. As well as two permanent cardiologists, and a permanent neurologist, oncologist and psychiatrist... And these are just a few of the examples.”

“Nearby if possible, far if necessary! That is the objective of Fundashon Mariadal hospital. Thanks to the help of Amsterdam UMC.”

Home on Bonaire

“Fundashon Mariadal would like doctors who are born and bred on the island. But Bonaire is small. Only a few of Bonaire’s residents have trained as medical specialists. However, we believe it is very important for doctors, who come here for a long period of time, to become familiar with the language and culture. That is why they receive lessons in Papiamentu, as well as courses about the culture of Bonaire.”

Joger and Alex are willing to lend a helping hand on this front. “But there are not many helping hands on Bonaire. That is why it is such hard work. We have to work long hours. But it is good to see how far we have already come. Bonaire has a really good hospital for such a small community.”



Fundashon Maridal



Working together on better opportunities for youngsters

On the 8th of December 2021, the Covenant 13+ was agreed between the Caribbean Netherlands and the Central government. The two public entities and 5 ministries have decided to work together to improve opportunities for youngsters between 13 and 23 years old. The aim is to allow all youngsters to develop and have access to good opportunities.

The parties will be working together in the following areas: housing for youngsters and young adults, leisure, prevention of poverty,

youth participation, domestic violence, child abuse, education and employment.

The partnership was realised thanks to the study called 'Het maakt uit waar je wieg heeft gestaan' (loosely translated: 'It matters where you were born'), by the National Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children. In this report, the Ombudsmen wrote that cooperation between all parties is very important. By working together, it is possible to give children and youngsters the best opportunities.



Photos from left to right: Orlando Wilson (Openbaar Lichaam Saba), Abigail Norville (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport), Carsten Herstel (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid), Hanneke Sint (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid), Henk Brons (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties), Margrite Kalverboer (Kinderombudsman), Marjan Hammersma (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap), Nina den Heyer (Openbaar Lichaam Bonaire), Alida Francis (Openbaar Lichaam Sint Eustatius)

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Protect yourself and people around you

