



## Information Pack

*The Pikler UK Association has been set up in the UK to promote and influence positively the way in which we care for infants in the UK by promoting the work of Hungarian paediatrician Dr. Emmi Pikler to everyone from parents to education and health professionals.*

*The Association aims to bring about a new consciousness of respectful care which encompasses the young child's need for both relationship and autonomy.*

*The Pikler approach is based on a respectful relationship between an adult and infant, through tender care moments, a naturally paced motor development, free self-directed movement and uninterrupted play.*

## CONTENTS

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- **Childhood Care: What the Pikler UK Association Offers**
- **Benefits and Practices of the Pikler Approach**

### BACKGROUND

- Dr. Emmi Pikler
- Lóczy Today
- The Pikler Approach to Childcare

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## Childhood Care: What the Pikler UK Association Offers

Exemplary early childhood care developed at the Pikler Institute in Hungary over the last 60 years is becoming well known all over the world. There are successful early childhood settings and trainings in countries as diverse as France, Spain, Germany, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the USA and countries in South America.

**What does the Pikler approach offer professionals all over the world involved in early childhood care and what does it mean that we now have a Pikler Association in the UK?**

The Pikler UK Association has been founded to promote the work of Dr. Emmi Pikler and the Hungarian Pikler Association. Founder members of the Pikler UK Association are convinced that the work of the Pikler Institute significantly raises our understanding of how to care for the very young child in a profoundly respectful way. Where the Pikler approach is practised, children are more content, secure, confident and active and the carers are happier, more motivated and less exhausted.

The first principle of the Pikler approach shows us how to create a co-operative partnership with small children, particularly during times of bodily care. It shows us how attachment and relationship are created through the practical details of co-operative care and the gentle presence of the carer.

The second Pikler principle of care shows us categorically what natural progression of motor development and early exploration and play looks like when young children's movement is not interfered with by adults or equipment. This natural motor development aspect of the Piklerian approach, thoroughly researched over 60 years, is a most needed addition to our understanding of young children in the UK. The Piklerian approach also provides guidance in providing a care environment which, in all its aspects, fosters children's health, security and happiness.

The Pikler UK Association was launched in June 2014 with the vision of positively influencing childcare practices here in the UK with the practical wisdom of the Pikler approach. We believe that the Pikler approach provides knowledge that is fully compatible with the EYFS but in addition takes early years trainings and practice out of the textbook and towards a new level of knowledge and skill. This can only enhance the care offered in early years settings.

Many early childhood professionals from different countries have trained at the Pikler Institute in Hungary, including Steiner, Montessori and mainstream trained professionals. What brings them to the Pikler approach? Dr. Emmi Pikler is the only early years pedagogue whose ideas are especially suitable for infants and toddlers under 3 years in a group setting.

In order to generate and facilitate a greater understanding and practice of the Pikler approach in the UK, the Pikler UK Association has already, in its short existence, created several initiatives.

Firstly, there has already been a very successful Pikler training in the UK. A part time training, attended by 15 early childhood practitioners and run by two Pikler pedagogues from the Netherlands, Hedi Meyling and Aafke Huisman, and Peggy Zeitler, a sensory awareness leader from Germany, was very successfully concluded in 2014. The next Pikler training in the UK commences in Spring 2016. In addition, a Level 3 (EYE) Diploma has been created that integrates the two main principles of the Pikler approach with Steiner early childhood studies.

Secondly, articles are being published on aspects of the Pikler approach to childcare – including nappy changing, mealtimes, movement and play – in early years and nursery magazines such as *Teach Nursery*. Without doubt, these are helping to raise awareness of important aspects of the Pikler approach.

Thirdly, the Pikler UK Association management committee is organising a major conference in February 2016 with Anna Tardos, president of the Hungarian Pikler Association, as the keynote speaker. This conference promises to be of great interest to all those who care for young children or are involved in creating early childhood regulations and policy in the UK.

Finally, there is the Pikler UK Association membership scheme, (available through the Pikler UK Association website), sharing newsletters and discounts and selling books and DVDs. Information about upcoming Pikler events in the UK are listed here and also on a very successful sister website called The Pikler Collection. [www.thepiklercollection.weebly.com](http://www.thepiklercollection.weebly.com)

The Pikler UK Association constitution states that;

The primary aim of the Association is to influence positively the quality of early childhood in the UK by promoting the work of Dr. Emmi Pikler to everyone, from parents to education and health professionals. Through education in the Piklerian approach to childcare, the Association aims to bring a new consciousness of respectful care which encompasses the young child's need for both relationship and autonomy.

The constitution also states that the aim will be fulfilled through the following activities:

- Promoting Emmi Pikler's work to parents, parents groups, children's centres, nurseries, childcare trainings and policy groups
- Liaising with other Pikler organisations and non-Pikler organisations
- Creating a database of Pikler resources; groups, mentors etc.
- Developing a website with Pikler information, training possibilities, a shop, live forum, contacts
- Organising events, conferences and trainings
- Getting involved in public debate and campaigns
- Providing information in the form of leaflets, translations and other publications

Members of the Association's management committee are pleased to report that already, in only one and a half years of existence, the Pikler UK Association is well and very active and beginning to make its influence felt. There should be no doubt that the Association offers a new vision and benchmark for childhood care that is fully compatible with children's needs in the 21st century.

## Benefits and Practices of the Pikler Approach

**Emmi Pikler saw the importance of healthy attachments in the overall well-being of a child and their physical and emotional (psychic) development. She found the primary caregiving moments of feeding, changing and bathing offered vital opportunities for the infant and carer to build secure trusting relationships.**

These moments of caregiving occupy a large majority of a daily routine through which the infant learns about himself, how the carer perceives him as an individual and about relationships. Therefore it is crucial that during these moments the infant feels secure, recognised as an individual and valued as a partner in the relationship. How an infant experiences these care moments will influence their physical and emotional well-being throughout their early development.

Pikler recognised that through respectful care and well-choreographed care routines, babies and toddlers will build secure attachments, developing a healthy self-image and understanding of their competencies. She found this enabled the infants to freely explore their bodily movements and the environment without interruption from the adult.

What makes this a unique care model is the full, undivided attention the carer devotes to the infant during the whole of the care routine. She shares her attention with him, speaking in a soft, calm tone, announcing what she is doing and answering the infant's gestures and movements in such a way as to give him orientation.

The carer maintains the communication, showing him the cloth for wiping his face or asking the infant to reach out his foot so a sock can be put on. Every time, the carer waits patiently for the infant to process this and to respond with eye contact or a movement, such as lifting a foot to have the sock put on. The carer attentively responds to the infant's method of interaction and also follows his interests, always coming back to the activity in hand. From the very beginning, a dialogue begins to develop.

Another important aspect of this unique care model is that the infant is invited to be an active partner who can contribute to the event and influence the relationship. This means that all aspects of the care routines are carried out 'with' and not done 'to' the infant. The carer is mindful of her hands and uses slow, gentle, announced

movements, allowing the infant to follow and then participate in the activity. Due to the adult's genuine and natural interest, the infant begins to anticipate the care sequence, reducing any element of surprise in her actions and therefore allowing him to relax into the moment.

The carer patiently waits for the infant to process and respond to her invitation before she carries on. She allows him time to express himself, giving him the opportunity from the beginning to determine the tempo and rhythm of these care moments. Since it is a partnership, the carer adapts to the infant's movement, changing a nappy while the baby lays on his front or in standing when this is what the infant prefers, for example. This freedom of movement is made possible by the specially designed changing tables with a supporting wooden rail secured around the back and sides of the table.

The aim is never to force an infant to do something he is not ready for or that goes against his will. Rather, the carer will find a way in which the infant feels comfortable to co-operate with what she wishes from him.

Pikler's work shows that true co-operation comes from the respect and trust the carer shows in the infant's competencies as an active partner and that he should experience the care moments as a pleasant and enjoyable togetherness. The level of the infant's participation corresponds to the infant's abilities and his interest in doing things independently. The true value of independence comes when the infant has a real enjoyment in doing things by himself.

This high standard of mindful, respectful care flows throughout all these times of bodily care where the infant quickly learns that his physical and emotional needs will be satisfied with the trust and security of his carer. He feels accepted and recognised as an individual.

*For further information visit the Pikler UK Association website: [www.pikler.co.uk](http://www.pikler.co.uk)*



## BACKGROUND

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### Dr Emmi Pikler

Emmi Pikler was born in 1902 and grew up in Vienna and Budapest, both then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the First World War she studied medicine in Vienna where she encountered and worked with two innovative paediatricians of the day - Clemens von Pirquet and Hanz Salzer. She later moved with her husband to Budapest where, in 1935, she qualified as a paediatrician.



In Budapest, Dr. Pikler set up a private paediatric practice working closely with parents of babies and young children. Through weekly visits she supported parents to build trusting relationships with their children, notice their competence and allow time for natural development.

In this way, over the next decade, Dr. Pikler became a well-known family paediatrician. In 1940, her first book was published, *What Can the Baby Already Do?* Soon after, in 1946, she set up a residential home for infants, to provide care for the many abandoned or orphaned children in Budapest after the war.

The home became known as Lóczy, after the street where it was located in the attractive Rozsadomb area of Budapest. Here Dr. Pikler was able to implement her approach to early childhood care on a large scale. She gave much attention to the choosing and training of appropriate staff so that the children consistently received attentive, personal, good care. The children developed well both physically and psychologically which attracted the attention of professionals. A large amount of data was collected to document the results of the work and from 1960 publishing of this research in books and scientific papers began.

Until her death in 1984, Emmi Pikler worked tirelessly to establish her approach to the care of the very young. She not only supervised the running of the residential home and the conducting of research, she also wrote further books, most notably *The Book of Mothers* (not translated) which ran to sixteen editions and became the standard text for mothers in Hungary at the time. Her third book, published in three volumes, became the course book for training in caregiving in Hungary for twenty five years.

A vibrant legacy continued after her death. Besides the ongoing work with the children, further books and articles were published by the doctors, psychologists and pedagogues who had trained and worked with Emmi Pikler. Later, documentaries which convey the approach to early childhood care were published. Now available as DVDs, these continue to be sold to an international audience. In time, a training programme was developed for early childhood educators from around the world who wanted to learn more about Emmi Pikler's approach. This training programme continues today.

## Lóczy Today

Lóczy is often referred to as the Pikler Institute, the name it acquired in 1986, but in fact, in the decades following its founding in 1946, Lóczy changed its name several times, reflecting changes in its status.

During the last decades of the twentieth century the Institute had a leading role guiding infant care in Hungary. It was charged with supervising staff development and support in all the infants' homes countrywide. However, social perceptions were changing and this would affect the future of the Institute.

In 1997, Hungary ratified a UN declaration which endorsed the rights of children 'to grow up in a family'. Public support and funding for the work of the Institute were slashed and fewer and fewer children came to the residential home which was finally closed in 2011 by the state. But the work with young children continued at Lóczy which became a nursery and a centre for parent and child groups. These programmes continue to run in the same building.

Today there are three organisations - The Emmi Pikler Daycare (the nursery), The Hungarian Pikler Association and the Lóczy Foundation for Children - which work together to continue the work of the Pikler Institute. The name 'The Pikler Institute' is maintained as the term referring to these three organisations as a whole.

Many exceptional professionals – paediatricians, psychologists, pedagogues and nurses – have worked at the Institute over the decades. Emmi Pikler herself was the first director, followed by Dr. Judit Falk, Dr. Gabriella Puspoky and Anna Tardos. Together they supervised the recording of over sixty years of research on Pikler's approach to care.

The scientific papers, books, trainings and recorded footage have inspired an international community of professionals to take up and promote this unique approach. There are now recognised Pikler associations in the UK, the USA, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Austria.

## The Pikler Approach to Childcare

In the 1920s, Emmi Pikler was studying paediatrics with Professor Clemens von Pirquet at the University Children's Hospital in Vienna. There, in the accident statistics, she noticed there were fewer fractures and concussions among the children of lower class families who played out on the street than for the children of well-to-do families who were kept inside under the careful watch of a governess.

It seemed that the children who enjoyed the freedom to roam, run and play where they liked were more alert, more physically capable, and were able to fall without hurting themselves. By comparison, the children of well-to-do families were over-protected, their movements were limited and they did not know their own physical capabilities or limits.

Looking further into the ways children were being raised from a physical perspective, Dr. Pikler noted that all children, across all social classes, were being assisted, sat, propped and walked. Dr. Pikler did find, however, that the well-to-do families spent extra time manually exercising their babies' limbs in order to encourage physical development.

In 1931, Emmi Pikler herself became a mother. Her husband also held progressive pedagogical views and together the new parents decided not to force their daughter's development with exercises, by propping her to sit or by steadying her to walk. They allowed plenty of space and time for her physical development to unfold naturally through freedom of movement and independent play. While Dr. Pikler's approach involved doing less and allowing more freedom, its success was dependent upon her unique respectful approach to care which forged the strong parent-child relationship.

The family of three moved to Trieste in Italy for a year. There Pikler spent time on the beach observing parents with their infants. She witnessed parents teaching their infants to sit, to stand and to walk before they were able to do so for themselves. Learning from these observations, she also started to connect the relationship between the physical and the mental. Judit Falk commented, "She [Pikler] asked the question, 'Does this communicate to the child that what he is doing is not good enough, and that he should be doing something of which he is not yet capable?'"

In 1932, the family moved to Hungary and three years later Dr. Pikler started her private practice in Budapest. It was in her practice with over 100 families that she was able to incorporate what she had learned from deciphering accident statistics in Vienna, observing 'helping' adults in Trieste, and in the raising of her daughter. During the time Pikler was setting up her practice, she was introduced to the work of Elsa Gindler and later became friends with Gindler's student Elfriede Hengstenberg. Pikler and Hengstenberg's meeting was to be the start of a great friendship and it was also very important to each woman professionally.

Gindler, Pikler and Hengstenberg all recognised the relationship between the emotional and the physical, influence the structure of the body. They also recognised that the inner laws of movement governing the body, unfold when given the opportunity and right environment. Both Gindler's and Hengstenberg's work was correctional, redressing misalignments that had occurred in the body. Dr. Pikler's approach was preventative - the practice of uninterrupted development and emphasis on emotional security resulted in physical unfolding without distortion. After the Second World War, Dr. Pikler set up an orphanage to care for the babies the war 'left behind' and for those whose parents were tubercular. This presented Dr. Pikler with the opportunity to begin what turned out to be decades of research into the natural unfolding of motor development in the infant. The orphanage setting offered her controlled research conditions.

Many refer to Dr. Pikler's work and research on natural infant motor development; her work is cited in many papers and publications including various publications from the Pikler Institute. Pikler's unique work expanded professionals' knowledge and understanding of the motor development of infants and young children and continues to stand alone as a beacon, even today.