

## **UBI Banca and Cesvi together to help minors who are victims of abuse**

*The Bank supports the birth in Bergamo of the Cesvi NGO project “A happy childhood: counselling, protection and inclusion for children and families”. More than 300 child and family member beneficiaries.*

**Bergamo, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017** – A project to prevent and fight the phenomenon of child abuse. This is what UBI Banca and Cesvi, a humanitarian organisation founded in the city of Bergamo in 1985, have implemented for the first time in the city. The Bank has decided to support the initiative entitled “*A happy childhood: counselling, protection and inclusion for children and families*” conceived of by this NGO to fight violence to minors, by helping the children and families in difficulty, within which this abuse originates.

According to the latest estimates, the highest number of children taken into care by social services in Italy, which totalled almost 100,000 minors, can be classified as cases of neglect: in reality 47.1% of cases of abuse regard forms of material and emotional neglect. Next come 19.4% of cases consisting of witnessing violence in the family and then 13.7% of cases of psychological abuse.

Cesvi’s work in this area, supported by UBI Banca, has started in the Bergamo area and mainly regards two areas of intervention: prevention of neglect and diagnosis and care for cases of abuse. In the first case specialist intervention has been commenced to repair trauma. These are courses of psychotherapy designed to reduce damage in child victims of maltreatment reported by social services. Structured counselling and involvement facilities have been created for groups of children in residential and semi-residential care. The objective is to establish an active dialogue with children in order to understand their needs and identify possible signs of difficulty; it involves around 200 beneficiaries.

Prevention work involves setting up special workshops for third-year pupils in secondary schools. One of the first initiatives undertaken was a video-making workshop at the ‘Savoia Mille’ school in Bergamo. Another three schools in the province, at Bariano and Brignano, were involved in the months that followed to cover a total of 130 pupils.

“Attention to social issues and closeness to communities are two key values for the Bank”, said **Luca Gotti, Manager of the Bergamo and West Lombardy Macro Geographical Area**



at UBI Banca. “With this initiative we wish to support a project with a strong social impact originating in one of the communities where UBI Banca has its strongest roots and is destined to grow throughout Italy. Cesvi is an organisation founded in Bergamo which has become one of excellence in Italy with its projects, many of which for children, destined to people in developing countries or those hit by natural disasters. We are happy to be able to support this project designed to support victims of child abuse and to increase awareness of the phenomenon among pupils and families in the city”.

“The protection of children is one of the most important fields of Cesvi’s work in the world. Significant examples of this”, said Giangi Milesi, President of Cesvi, “is the historical initiative of the *Case del Sorriso* (Homes of Joy) which, in the rundown outer districts of large cities in very poor countries such as Haiti, Zimbabwe, India and South Africa, provide shelter to children exposed to poverty and the dangers of life on the streets. In recent years Cesvi has also worked to protect foreign unaccompanied minors who have landed on Italian coasts. It provides them with job training courses to enable them to find work and achieve the financial autonomy they need. With this experience behind it”, Milesi continued, “Cesvi is making a new commitment to victims of child abuse in Italy where, in some particularly difficult contexts, it is taking on the aspect of an extremely serious crisis”.

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