'Child safeguarding in women's shelters, the realization of safety for children'

SafeShelter, Child safeguarding in women's shelters

Women's shelters are one of the most crucial, specialised support services for women survivors of gender-based violence and their children. Children residing in shelters are witnesses of violence against their mothers, and over a half of them have also been emotionally, physically, or sexually abused by the perpetrator, very often their father. Every child should live a life without harm and fear, no matter the age, gender, ethnicity, or religion. The shelter must be a safe place for the mothers and their children. Children are also an individual and have a right to be protected from any harm or fear.

The European project SafeShelter, started in 2021 and financed by the European Commission, aims to improve the protection and safety and well-being of children during their stay in a shelter.

Want to learn more about how it works in practice?

A child safeguarding policy in a women's shelter describes how the specific shelter and staff will respond to any concerns related to child safety, in the best interest of the children, inside as well as outside of its premises. Within this project, 4 short videos have been developed, each focusing on a different theme. They clearly show how safety can be realized for children in the shelter and what this means for the children, the mothers and the professionals working in the shelters. These videos are also available on the project website: https://safeshelter.aoef.at

All videos are based on interviews with children residing in women's shelters, their mothers and staff of women's shelters conducted in 2021 in 6 European countries.

---

1. SafeShelter: A way to safety. Through children's eyes.

Moving into a shelter is a big change for children. Women's shelters strive to ensure the change is as smooth as possible and that the child is provided with a proper reception and receives enough of space for dealing with their emotions under professional care.

This video shows the impact for a child when suddenly placed in a shelter, what goes on inside a child and what does that mean?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sPxWIBo9rE&list=PL2onSfVlRckUV1xkTjm2OeKGIEnlkXZ4v&index=3

---

2. SafeShelter: Child safeguarding policies for women's shelters.

Professionals working in a shelter work hard to make it as safe as possible for the mothers and children. However, they often lack guidelines or formal written policies to do this in the best possible way. What does it mean for professionals to have a safeguarding policy?

This video shows the added value for them and what this means for mothers and children in the shelter.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=987qhXSD18U&list=PL2onSfVlRckUV1xkTjm2OeKGIEnlkXZ4v&index=7

---

3. SafeShelter: Child safeguarding issues in women's shelters and potential solutions

When a child is placed in a shelter, the individual/best interest and safety of the child is always paramount. Often a child wants to have contact with the father, but this can entail possible risks.

This video gives an insight in the potential risks and offers also possible solutions how to handle these.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcL-bl_GmeM&list=PL2onSfVlRckUV1xkTjm2OeKGIEnlkXZ4v&index=9

4. SafeShelter: Child safeguarding in shelters: additional resources are needed!

Within the SafeShelter project, interviews were held in 6 European countries among professionals who work in shelters. The outcomes show that women's shelters are also children shelters and highest attention to their well-being is the focus. However, safeguarding and protection are not enough, we need more resources to offer children a safe childhood, without the fear of violence.

This video gives an impression of what according to the professionals is needed!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1s-7Ugtd0E&list=PL2onSfVlRckUV1xkTjm2OeKGIEnlkXZ4v&index=13

All videos (English, French, German and Spanish) are also available on the EFJCA YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2onSfVlRckUV1xkTjm2OeKGIEnlkXZ4v