



# AVEC

The IDEAL model of child centred  
multiagency coordination

Short description

Maria Eriksson & Linda S. Jonsson

© Authors

Marie Cederschiöld University

Stockholm, 2022



This project was co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (REC 2014-2020) of the European Union. However, the content of this report reflects the opinion of its authors and does not in any way represent the opinions of the European Union. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information the report contains.

## Introduction

Every year, thousands of children stay at least one night at women's shelters in Sweden with their guardian. At shelters the violence stops, but children's rights are at stake. During 2021-2022 five organizations have been working together in the project AVEC – After the violence, to improve the situation for children in shelters: Save the Children Sweden, Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden, the Gothenburg Church City Mission Foundation, Marie Cederschiöld University (former Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College) and Barnafriid -National Center on Violence Against Children at Linköping University. The project was based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Charter, Directive 2019/29/EU and the Istanbul Convention. The overall objective of the AVEC project was the following: With a child rights approach, increase and improve protection and support for children at women's shelters who are victims of domestic violence; increase the children's mental well-being during and after their stay at the shelter.

This report outlines one part of the results from the AVEC project: the IDEAL model for child centred cooperation. The IDEAL model concerns different stages of the placement process, when children are coming into the shelter (I), during placement (D), when planning for and exiting the shelter (E), at the transition to life after the shelter stay (A), and it includes activities securing a more long-term situation that aids children's recovery (L). The model is focused upon cooperation between women's shelters and statutory services, that is, agencies making decisions on placements of adults or children at a women's shelter and agencies responsible for child welfare investigations, as well as agencies offering support to victims of violence.

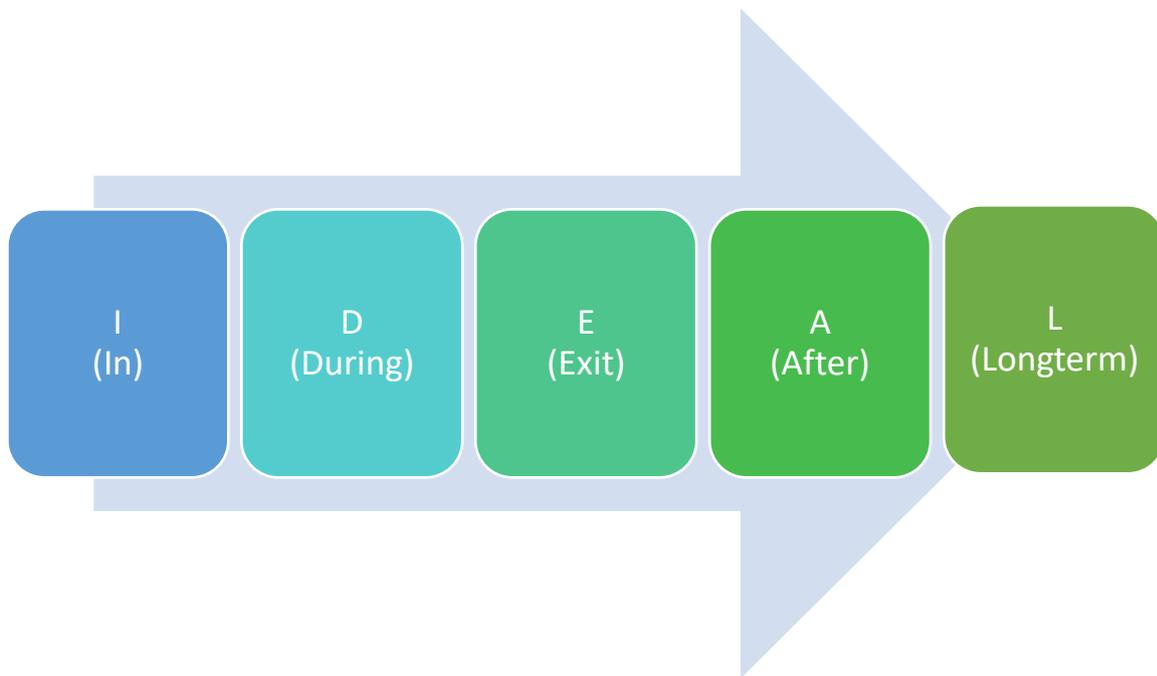
### Points of departure

The AVEC project was based on a child's rights perspective and on previous knowledge on violence in close relationships. The work to develop a model for multi-agency cooperation therefore approached children in shelters as both "developing" and as "social actors", that is, as subjects in their own lives with their own ways of creating meaning and acting to tackle their life situation. From this double approach to children followed, among other things, that children's agency and participation was a central concern. Furthermore, that also services here-and-now need to take possible long term consequences of violence into account to reduce risk for long-term negative effects of previous experiences of violence.

The first step of the work to develop a model for multi-agency and multi-disciplinary cooperation was to map the experiences of cooperation regarding children in shelters among relevant groups of practitioners in the local authority involved in the development work. The mapping pointed to critical issues in cooperation at all stages of the placement process, which formed the basis for the work to design, pilot and evaluate model for multi-agency and multi-disciplinary cooperation, and the resulting model outlined below. The aim was to develop a model that was focused and simple enough to be possible to use in other contexts than the one where it was developed, and possible put into practice in everyday work with children in women's shelters.

## The IDEAL model of child centred cooperation

The IDEAL model for cooperation focuses on the different phases of a placement process: the time of placement, during placement, at the time of planning for exit, during the transition to life outside, and has a long-term perspective. Cooperation activities at each phase have some specific aims, which are linked to the problems identified through the previous mapping of experiences of cooperation.



### In (I): When coming into the shelter

At the time of the child coming into the shelter with the parent, the model aims at the following:

- To ensure that there is an agency that takes overall responsibility for the child's situation.
- That all agencies involved share the understanding of the family in placement.
- Shared planning and cooperation between statutory services, as this cooperation is key to a beneficial situation for the child in the shelter.
- Establishing communication between all agencies involved in the case already at the stage of placement, to secure the continued communication over time.
- Safeguarding child and parent participation at this stage of placement.

To fulfil these aims, the following cooperation activities are expected from all agencies involved in the case:

- If someone else than statutory child welfare services is responsible for placement, the agency deciding on placement of a parent and child in a shelter needs to involve statutory child welfare services.
- A placement cooperation conference is held.

- Convener: The agency making a placement convenes a cooperation conference.
- Participants: Statutory services (adults, child welfare services), the women's shelter.
  - If there already is a support intervention in place/ongoing, the agency offering services is also invited (by the agency commissioning the support intervention or child welfare services).
- Contents: Information sharing about history and reasons for placement, joint planning for who-is-doing-what and when (including enabling child and parent participation), planning for ongoing communication during placement.
- Children and parents receive information, and children and parents are consulted and invited to take part in decision making when appropriate and possible considering the child and the situation.

## During (D): During placement

During placement, the model aims at the following:

- Continued communication between statutory social services (adult and child welfare services respectively) throughout the time of placement, and ongoing communication between these agencies and the women's shelter.
- Counteracting that the child welfare investigation is closed down with reference to the shelter stay only, to ensure that the child's needs of protection, support and treatment beyond the shelter are investigated properly.
- Attention being paid to the child's possible needs of additional support (e.g. parental support) during the placement period.
- Safeguarding child and parent participation during placement.

To fulfil these aims, the following cooperation activities are expected from all agencies involved in the case:

- The development and use of local guidance for ongoing dialogue between all parties involved.
- Cooperation conference if needed, which any agency involved in the case as the convener.
- Children and parents receive information, and children and parents are consulted and invited to take part in decision making when appropriate and possible considering the child and the situation.

## Exit (E): Planning for leaving and leaving the shelter

At the time of planning for the parent and child to move out of the shelter, and the parent and child leaving the shelter, the model aims at the following:

- Mapping and recognition of needs of protection and support in the post-placement period.
- Planning of post-placement services, including access to pre-school or school and different forms of protection, support, and treatment interventions.
- A well-planned process of moving out, also in cases of short stays at the shelter.
- Moving out following the plan as closely as possible.

- Safeguarding child and parent participation when preparing for exit from the shelter.

To fulfil these aims, the following cooperation activities are expected from all agencies involved in the case:

- When moving out is becoming an option, the agency responsible for the placement contacts the statutory child welfare services as early as possible, and the child welfare services informs support services so that the support services can make preparation to offer the intervention "Support during the transition" when it is time to move out.
- An exit cooperation conference is held.
  - Convener: Child welfare services
  - Participants: Women's shelter, statutory services (adults, child welfare), and support services.
  - Contents: joint planning for who-is-doing-what and when at the time of moving out of the shelter (including enabling child and parent participation), planning for the intervention "support during the transition".
- Children and parents receive information, and children and parents are consulted and invited to take part in decision making when appropriate and possible considering the child and the situation.

## After (A): The transition to life outside

During the transition to a life outside of the shelter, the model aims at the following:

- Supporting the transition to life outside the shelter.
- Bridging any gap between the shelter and other protection, support, and treatment interventions.
- Contributing to a shared understanding of the situation among the agencies, of what has been working well and less well in the case.
- Safeguarding child and parent participation during transit to life outside of the shelter.

To fulfil these aims, the following cooperation activities are expected from all agencies involved in the case:

- Child and parent are offered the support intervention "Support during the transition", consisting of help with practical matters, and of helping children making sense of the move out of the shelter as well as helping the parent and child developing a shared narrative about moving out from the shelter/ moving to a new home.
- Joint evaluation of cooperation in the particular case, initiated by the statutory child welfare services and carried out in a way that is considered feasible (e.g. phone or digital conference, over the e-mail, or through a personal meeting).
- Children and parents receive information, and children and parents are consulted and invited to take part in decision making when appropriate and possible considering the child and the situation.

## Long term (L): Securing a situation aiding the child's recovery

In the period immediately after the shelter placement, the model aims at the following:

- Safeguarding an everyday life situation aiding the child's recovery, including housing, access to pre-school / school, leisure time activities, social networks etc.
- Mapping and highlighting any continued needs of protection, support and treatment interventions.
- Bridging the gap between the intervention "Support during the transition" and other protection, support and treatment interventions.
- Safeguarding child and parent participation during support interventions post-placement.

To fulfil these aims, the following cooperation activities are expected from all agencies involved in the case:

- Follow-up of the intervention "Support during the transition".
  - Participants: Statutory child welfare services, support services offering the intervention.  
Contents: Sharing information regarding the child's situation after moving out from the shelter, and about possible continued needs of intervention.
- Children and parents receive information, and children and parents are consulted and invited to take part in decision making when appropriate and possible considering the child and the situation.

## Further reading

Eriksson, M. & Jonsson, L.S. (2022). *AVEC: The IDEAL model of child centred multiagency coordination. Experiences of development and implementation*. Stockholm: Marie Cederschiöld University.