

Discussion Paper 28/2024

Programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027

Shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027

Suvi Nipuli and Maria Svetloff, THL

A shelter is a 24-hour crisis work unit that is free of charge for the client. A person or family experiencing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence can go to the unit on their own initiative or under the guidance of an authority or another party, also anonymously if necessary. A client of a shelter for victims of domestic violence will receive immediate help in a crisis, 24/7 secure living, and psychosocial support, advice and guidance related to their acute situation.

Shelters for victims of domestic violence have been special services funded by the state in Finland since 2015. THL is responsible for the guidance, assessment, development and national coordination of shelter services for victims of domestic violence.

The development of shelter services is guided by programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence, the implementation of which will be carried out in cooperation with THL, shelter service providers and stakeholders of shelters. The content of the development programme address the development needs highlighted in the Istanbul Convention, the Act on Shelter Services, National Quality Recommendations for Shelter Services, the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation and shelter work. The aim of the development measures is to ensure nationally high-quality shelter services.

Foreword

The third development programme for shelters for victims of domestic violence has been drawn up for the period 2024–2027. The development programme is a continuation of two previous development programmes, the first of which covered the period 2016–2019 and the second the period 2020–2023. The first two development programmes were intended only for the internal use of shelter services. The programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027 is openly available online, the purpose of which is to increase awareness on shelter services and the openness of operations. In addition to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and shelters for victims of domestic violence, stakeholders of shelters also have a better opportunity to learn about shelter services and participate in the implementation of the development programme.

The development programme consists of six sub-areas. Within each sub-area, there are several objectives and, there are measures, an implementation timetable and indicators that will help in attaining each of the objectives. All of Finland's shelter service providers and THL will participate in the implementation of the Programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027. Shelter service providers are responsible for developing their own activities independently. In addition, shelter service providers undertake development measures together with other shelters, THL and stakeholders. Pursuant to the Act on Shelter Services, THL's duties include the steering, evaluation, development and national coordination of shelter activities.

THL's shelter services professionals have been responsible for writing the development programme. During 2023, the shelter service providers social workers responsible for work with clients in shelters participated in content production at two working meetings. In addition, the staff of THL's Special Services Unit and, in particular, specialists of the Competence cluster for violence prevention work (VOSKE) have commented on the publication in their areas of responsibility. In addition to those mentioned above, we would like to thank Minna Viuhko from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the South Karelia wellbeing services county's shelter, the Lahti shelter, Lapland's shelter and the Villa Jensen shelter for commenting on the draft version of the development programme.

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Abstract

Suvi Nipuli and Maria Svetloff. Programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027. Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Discussion Paper 28/2024. 39 pages. Helsinki 2024. ISBN 978-952-408-314-0 (online publication)

The development programme will guide the development of shelter services in Finland in 2024–2027. The aim is to further develop Finland's already well-functioning and high-quality shelter services and make an effort to provide high-quality shelter services for those experiencing domestic violence or the threat of it.

A shelter is a 24-hour crisis work unit that is free of charge for the client. A person or family experiencing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence can go to the unit on their own initiative or under the guidance of an authority or another party, also anonymously if necessary. Shelters for victims of domestic violence provide immediate help in a crisis, round-the-clock secure accommodation as well as psychosocial support, advice and guidance related to an acute situation for those who have experienced domestic violence or live under the threat of such. Shelters for victims of domestic violence have been special services funded by the state in Finland since 2015.

THL is responsible for the guidance, assessment, development and national coordination of shelter services for victims of domestic violence. The content of the development programme address the development needs highlighted in the Istanbul Convention, the Act on Shelter Services, National Quality Recommendations for Shelter Services, the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence Quality Recommendation and shelter work.

The programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence consists of six sub-areas. Within each sub-area, there are several objectives and, measures, indicators, and a timetable have been defined for each of the objectives. The six sub-areas are client work in shelters, training of shelter personnel, safety of shelters, a well-functioning shelter network, communications, and service assessment, research and THL as a service organiser. THL is responsible for the implementation of the development programme together with shelter service providers. Some of the objectives also require that other actors, services and professionals engage in cooperation with one another.

Some of the development measures will require the establishment of separate working groups, the piloting of new activities or, e.g. taking part in workshops. THL invites shelters and stakeholders to take part in these. Some of the objective are such that they require continuous work. These include raising the awareness of the public and professionals about shelter services and ensuring that clients have access to further services after their shelter period comes to an end. These are the things that shelters and THL's shelter services develop also as part of their basic work in addition to the measures of the development programme.

THL is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the development programme's objectives. The attainment of the objectives is monitored annually, and measures to achieve these objectives can be defined in more detail if necessary. As a whole, the implementation of the development programme will be assessed at the end of the programme period when the next programme is being prepared.

Keywords: shelters for victims of domestic violence, domestic violence

Tiivistelmä

Suvi Nipuli ja Maria Svetloff. Programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence 2024–2027 [Turvakotipalvelujen kehittämisohjelma 2024–2027]. Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL). Työpäperi 28/2024. 39 sivua. Helsinki 2024. ISBN 978-952-408-314-0 (verkkojulkaisu)

Kehittämisohjelma ohjaa turvakotipalvelujen kehittämistyötä vuosina 2024–2027. Tavoitteena on kehittää edelleen jo nyt hyvin toimivia ja laadukkaita turvakotipalveluja Suomessa ja varmistaa lähisuhdeväkivaltaa tai sen uhkaa kokeville korkeatasoiset ja tasalaatuiset turvakotipalvelut.

Turvakoti on ympärivuorokautinen, asiakkaalle maksuton kriisityön yksikkö, johon lähisuhdeväkivaltaa tai sen uhkaa kokeva henkilö tai perhe voi mennä oma-aloitteisesti tai viranomaisen tai muun tahon ohjajana, tarvittaessa myös nimettömänä. Turvakotipalvelu on turvakodin tarjoamaa välitöntä kriisiapua, ympärivuorokautista turvattua asumista sekä akuuttiin tilanteeseen liittyvää psykososiaalista tukea, neuvontaa ja ohjausta lähisuhdeväkivaltaa kokeneelle tai sen uhan alla elävälle henkilölle. Turvakotipalvelut ovat Suomessa olleet valtion rahoittamia erityispalveluja lähisuhdeväkivaltaa tai sen uhkaa kokeneille vuodesta 2015 alkaen.

Turvakotitoiminnan ohjaus, arviointi, kehittäminen ja valtakunnallinen yhteensovittaminen kuuluvat Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitokselle (THL). Kehittämisohjelman sisältö vastaa Istanbulin sopimuksesta, turvakotilaista, turvakotipalvelujen kansallisista laatusuosituksista, Lapset turvakodissa -laatusuosituksista ja turvakotityöstä esille tuleviin kehittämistarpeisiin.

Turvakotipalvelujen kehittämisohjelma koostuu kuudesta osa-alueesta. Jokaisen osa-alueen sisällä on määritelty useampia tavoitteita ja tavoitteille on määritelty toimenpiteet sekä toteutumisen mittari sekä aika-tila. Kuusi osa-aluetta ovat asiakastyö turvakodeissa, turvakotien henkilöstön koulutus, turvakotien turvallisuus, toimiva turvakotiverkosto, viestintä sekä palvelun arviointi, tutkimus ja THL palvelunjärjestäjänä.

Kehittämisohjelman toteutuksesta vastaa THL yhdessä turvakotipalveluntuottajien kanssa. Osa tavoitteista on sellaisia, joihin tarvitaan yhteistyötä myös muiden toimijoiden, palvelujen ja ammattilaisten kesken.

Osa kehittämistoimenpiteistä vaatii erillisten työryhmien perustamista, uuden toiminnan pilotoimista tai esimerkiksi työpajatyöskentelyä. Näihin THL kutsuu turvakoteja ja sidosryhmiä mukaan. Osa tavoitteista on sellaisia, jotka vaativat jatkuvaa työtä. Tällaisia ovat esimerkiksi väestön ja ammattilaisten tietoisuuden lisääminen turvakotipalveluista ja asiakkaiden tarvitsemien jatkopalvelujen varmistaminen turvakotijakson jälkeen. Näitä kaikkia turvakodit ja THL:n turvakotipalvelut kehittävät myös osana perustyötänsä kehittämisohjelman toimenpiteiden lisäksi.

THL vastaa kehittämisohjelman tavoitteiden toteutumisen seurannasta. Tavoitteiden toteutumista seurataan vuosittain ja toimenpiteitä niiden saavuttamiseksi voidaan tarvittaessa täsmentää. Kokonaisuudessaan kehittämisohjelman toteutuminen arvioidaan kauden lopussa valmisteltaessa seuraavaa ohjelmaa.

Avainsanat: turvakoti, turvakotipalvelut, lähisuhdeväkivalta

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Introduction

A shelter is a 24-hour crisis work unit that is free of charge for the client. A person or family experiencing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence can go to the unit on their own initiative or under the guidance of an authority or another party, also anonymously if necessary. Shelters for victims of domestic violence provide immediate help in a crisis, round-the-clock secure accommodation as well as psychosocial support, advice and guidance related to an acute situation for those who have experienced domestic violence or live under the threat of such. Shelters for victims of domestic violence have been special services funded by the state in Finland since 2015 (Act on Compensation from State Funds to the Provider of Shelter Services 1354/2014, hereinafter the Act on Shelter Services).

At the beginning of 2024, there are 29 shelters in Finland, some of which have two departments. As the number of shelters with two departments has grown, the number of shelters has not recently increased in Finland, but the number of family places in shelters has increased. At the beginning of 2024, Finland's shelters for victims of domestic violence will have 230 family places. Family place refers to one room or apartment in a shelter. A client arriving alone or a client arriving with their underage children at a shelter will take up one family place. In Finland, shelter service providers form a shelter network that works in collaboration in which expertise and experiences are shared between the service providers. Cooperation is also concrete as client referrals: if one of Finland's shelters is full, a person in need of assistance is referred to a shelter with space. At the beginning of 2024, there will be at least one shelter in all of the wellbeing services counties, with the exception of the Central Uusimaa wellbeing services county (THL 2023a).

Pursuant to the Act on Shelter Services, the general management and direction of shelter service operations is the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) is responsible for the control, assessment, development and national harmonisation of shelter service operations. The purpose of the Act on Shelter Services is to safeguard comprehensive shelter services of a high quality in all parts of the country for persons who are subjected to violence in an intimate partner relationship or who live under the threat of such violence. Shelter services must be of uniform quality and based on data and knowledge nationwide.

THL produces national guidelines and recommendations for shelter services. These include national quality recommendations for shelter services and quality recommendations for work with children, the purpose of which is to ensure the uniform quality of shelters throughout the country. In addition, THL organises training for personnel working with clients at shelters and conducts guidance visits to shelters.

In addition to the Act on Shelter Services and quality recommendations, other statutes that have a central impact on shelter activities have been taken into account in the preparation of the development programme; these include the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (hereinafter the Istanbul Convention) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The implementation of the development programme will take place during the programme period of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government. The Government Programme titled A Strong and Committed Finland contains numerous objectives for preventing domestic and intimate partner violence, and shelter services and shelters for victims of domestic violence take part in implementing some of these (Government 2023). Objectives include improving the prevention and identification of domestic violence by authorities, municipalities and wellbeing services counties and increasing victims' awareness about opportunities for protection and security. The Government Programme also includes entries on improving the accessibility of shelters and rape crisis centres in Finland. In addition, the Government will assess the need for legislation obliging municipalities and wellbeing services counties to improve preventing of violence and strengthen the structures for work that aims to combat violence.

The development of shelter services is guided by programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence, the implementation of which will be carried out in cooperation with THL, shelter service providers and stakeholders of shelters. The content of the development programme address the development needs highlighted in the Istanbul Convention, the Act on Shelter Services, national quality

recommendations for shelter services, the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation and shelter work. The development programme has been prepared in cooperation with the shelter network.

Objectives and purpose of the development programme

During the previous programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence, the aim was for Finland to have the best shelter services in the world. The systems in various countries differ from one another, which makes it difficult to compare them, and it can even be impossible to rank the shelter services provided in different countries. However, our aim is to further develop Finland's already wellfunctioning and high-quality shelter services and make an effort to provide high-quality shelter services for those experiencing domestic violence or the threat thereof.

A shelter has several purposes, the most important of which is to provide people with protection in the event of an acute threat of violence and to make it possible for them to live in a secure 24-hour environment during the crisis phase. In addition to a roof over their head, the client is offered crisis assistance and psychosocial support at the shelter. The aim is to increase the client's own resources that will support them in a life where violence or a threat thereof no longer exists. Shelters also serve as important links to other services. The client is referred from the shelter to other services they need. Some of the services will be provided during the shelter period, some later. In addition to special services specifically for victims of violence, a person experiencing domestic violence will often also need other social and health care services, legal services and support for such things as housing arrangements.

Violence in an intimate relationship is not a private matter, quite the contrary, the prevention of violence requires action from society. Shelters work in an environment that is influenced by society's attitudes towards domestic violence as well as other services available to victims and perpetrators of violence and children exposed to violence. Together, these form a whole, in which case shelter services alone are not enough to guarantee a life free from violence and fair treatment for victims of domestic violence. The aim is to also invite the stakeholders of shelters to join together with the shelters in considering how victims of domestic violence can be comprehensively supported and helped as required by the Istanbul Convention and genuinely given them the resources for a life that is no longer overshadowed by the experiences of violence.

The development programme sets out guidelines for the development of shelter services for 2024–2027. The programme for the development of shelters for victims of domestic violence consists of six sub-areas. Within each sub-area, there are several objectives and, measures, indicators, and a timetable have been defined for each of the objectives. The sub-areas are:

1. Client work in shelters
2. Training of shelter staff
3. Safety of shelters
4. A well-functioning shelter network
5. Communications
6. Service evaluation, research and THL as a service organiser

Implementation and monitoring of the development programme

THL is responsible for the implementation of the development programme together with shelter service providers. Some of the objectives also require that other actors, services and professionals engage in cooperation with one another. We also hope that students will familiarise themselves with shelter services and find thesis topics in the development programme.

Shelters develop their activities as part of their basic work. In addition, some of the development measures will require the establishment of separate working groups, the piloting of new activities or, e.g. taking part in workshops. THL invites shelters and stakeholders to take part in these. Shelters participate in working groups, workshops and pilots as far as possible. When invited to the working groups, the equal treatment of the shelter network is taken into account so that as many shelters as possible can participate in development work that benefits the entire shelter network.

THL is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the development programme's objectives. The attainment of the objectives is monitored annually, and measures to achieve these objectives can be defined in more detail if necessary. As a whole, the implementation of the development programme will be assessed at the end of the programme period when the next programme is being prepared. Some of the objectives of the previous development programme for shelter services were not attained. These incomplete objectives have been integrated into the 2024-2027 development programme. In addition, some of the objectives require continuous work, such as increasing the awareness of the public and professionals on shelter services and the further services needed by clients after their stay at a shelter.

During the development programme period, things that have not been anticipated at the time of writing this publication may occur. The development of the shelter network can also be carried out outside the development programme if necessary. Development work also includes maintaining and reforming national quality recommendations for shelter services and the quality recommendations for work with children if necessary. Not all of these measures included in the basic work of THL's shelter services have been highlighted in the development programme.

1 Client work in shelters

The purpose of shelter work is to provide security, assistance, support and advice for those living with domestic violence or a threat thereof. The aim of the shelter's client work is to reinforce the client's resources and means of coping and to support the client in building a safe life. The client's wishes, opinions, interests and individual needs as well as their mother tongue and cultural background are taken into account in the work. The development of client work will take into account the experiences and development proposals of clients, which will be collected in everyday client situations, in the form of client feedback collected at the end of a client's stay at the shelter, and in the form of shelter studies.

1.1. Shelter services as part of service chains for preventing violence

The wellbeing services counties are charged with provide the support needed by those who have experienced domestic violence after shelter services. In addition to the services provided by the municipality and the wellbeing services county, shelter services engages in cooperation with other service providers, such as NGOs during and after the shelter period.

Objectives

- Each wellbeing services county will have service chains related to domestic violence.
- Shelters for victims of domestic violence will be part of the wellbeing services county's service chains for preventing domestic violence, which will increase the timely referral of clients to the shelter and guarantee the client with further services that meet their needs.
- Referral from outpatient services for domestic violence work to shelters and from a shelter to outpatient services will be effective.

Measures

- THL will organise a workshop in which the service chain is planned together with representatives of shelters and wellbeing services counties. People invited to take part in the workshop will include a representative from each shelter, members of each wellbeing services counties' intimate partner violence coordinators group and other persons invited by them.
- Shelters will participate in the work on the service chain in their own area together with the wellbeing services county and NGOs.
- The cooperation between outpatient services and shelter services for work with victims of domestic violence will be examined from the perspective of the client, and good practices will be shared within the shelter network in order to further develop this cooperation.

Indicators and timetable

- THL will have organised a service chain workshop in 2024 (yes/no). The measure will be successful if a representative from shelters in all wellbeing services counties and operating areas take part in the workshop and the planning of the service chain begins or continues in all wellbeing services counties.
- THL monitors the development of service chains for preventing domestic violence in wellbeing services counties. The aim is for the service chains to cover the whole of Finland and shelters for victims of domestic violence to be represented in their wellbeing services county's working group on preventing domestic violence (yes/no). A follow-up survey for wellbeing services counties will be carried out in 2025.
- Cooperation between outpatient services and shelters in work to prevent violence has been investigated and good practices have been shared between the services (yes/no).

1.2. Comprehensive support for the client's life situation

In addition to services related to preventing violence, a person who has experienced domestic violence generally needs other services provided simultaneously to make a client's life safer. Good cooperation between shelter services, the wellbeing services county and the services provided by the municipality will make it possible to provide comprehensive assistance to the client and may have a significant impact on helping them leave a violent life situation.

Objectives

- The parties to domestic violence will be provided services that make it easier to break free and recover from violence. These services include, legal and psychological advice, financial assistance, housing arrangements, training and assistance in finding employment as set out in the Istanbul Convention.
- Professionals working in social work, service needs assessment and child welfare services for families with children have been provided more information on domestic violence and its impacts on family members.

Measures

- Shelters will work in even closer cooperation in the wellbeing services county with those services for which shelters feel that the services are not yet organised in a sufficiently timely manner or in a manner that meets the needs of the shelter clients. Different areas may have different needs for developing co-operation.
- Shelters highlight the effective practices used in their own areas. Good practices are collected from shelters annually at working meetings or through separate surveys. Regional good practices for effective co-operation between shelters and other services are modelled.
- It is ensured that shelter workers have sufficient information on legal assistance issues and where support is available at regional level. THL ensures that an information package on legal matters for the use of shelter personnel is up-to-date and available in all shelters.
- THL's shelter services together with THL's Competence cluster for child protection and Barnahus actors will review the contents of the Handbook for Child Protection and the Barnahus.fi website from the perspective of domestic violence issues. The information content of the websites will be supplemented if necessary.

Indicators and timetable

- Closer cooperation between shelters, wellbeing services counties and municipal services. To be examined in 2025 and 2027. The change will be the indicator.
- Modelling of good practices (one per year).
- An information package on legal matters for the use of shelter personnel will be updated by the end of 2025 (yes/no).
- The Handbook for Child Protection and the Barnahus.fi website will have been reviewed in 2024 and the necessary updates and additions will have been made by the end of 2025 (yes/no).

1.3. Promotion of equality in shelter services

Persons from different backgrounds must have equal opportunities to receive high-quality shelter services. Factors related to a person, such as their origin, mother tongue, religion or belief, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, must not affect whether or not a person can become a client of a shelter and the quality of the service they receive from a shelter. The client has a right to good treatment in a manner that respects their dignity, beliefs and privacy. The client's wishes, opinions, interests and individual needs as well as their mother tongue and cultural background are taken into account when providing the service.

In the case of persons with disabilities, the realisation of equality can be improved with measures such as accessible shelters, increasing the knowledge of professionals and by making reasonable adjustments at shelters. Reasonable adjustments refers to necessary and appropriate changes and arrangements made in individual cases that do not impose a disproportionate or unreasonable burden and ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy or use all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. In the context of shelters, reasonable adjustments can include arranging a parking space for a client in the immediate vicinity of the shelter entrance, acquiring an assistive device that promotes functional capacity, reorganising the shelter's furniture in public spaces or a family room to make it easier for the client to move around the spaces, personal assistance or making adjustments, for example for the purpose of cooking or other everyday tasks. When making reasonable adjustments, the starting point is the needs of a disabled person in the given situation.

Objective

All those who experience domestic violence or the threat thereof will have equal rights and possibilities for being provided high-quality shelter services.

Measures

- Shelters will develop their services to meet the needs of clients from different backgrounds and increase dissemination of information on shelter services in their own area. Developing the service and increasing awareness will help eliminate obstacles to seeking and receiving help.
- THL organises training on non-discrimination and its promotion for shelter personnel. Training sessions will be organised annually throughout the development programme. In 2024, training will be organised on domestic violence experienced by the Roma and the elimination of the stigma related to substance abuse and mental health, and a training series will be organised on sexual and gender minorities.
- THL and shelters work together with organisations and other actors that promote the equality of shelters. THL together with shelters and organisations will produce new material for professionals, such as Know & Act brochures on the themes of sexual and gender minorities in shelter services and shelter services for older people.
- New materials will be collected and, if necessary, produced for clients from different backgrounds to support client work and ensure client rights. Such materials may include the addition of language versions for key tools used in client work as well as shelter information and brochures and client feedback forms.
- Work will continue to improve the accessibility of shelter facilities and promote reasonable adjustments in shelters. More information will be provided to shelter personnel and other social welfare and health care professionals on persons with disabilities as victims of domestic violence and on the right to and ability of persons with disabilities to access shelter services.
- It will be determined which population groups may be underrepresented as users of shelter services and information on shelter services will be disseminated to these groups.

Indicators and timetable

- The experiences of shelters and stakeholders the possibility of clients from different backgrounds obtaining high-quality shelter services. A possible change during the development programme period will be investigated in autumn 2027.
- The number of training sessions organised on the topic of equality and the themes related to promoting it, and the participation of shelters in training sessions and feedback received from training sessions. Monitored annually.
- New materials related to promoting equality will have been produced (yes/no). The sexual and gender minorities as clients of shelter services Know & Act brochure will be published by the end of 2024. The older people as clients of shelter services Know & Act brochure will be published by the end of 2026.

- Accessibility repairs made in shelters for victims of domestic violence. Monitored annually.
- The number of events at which information on persons with disabilities as victims of domestic violence and information on shelter services have been distributed to professionals. Monitored annually.
- By the end of 2025, it will be determined which client groups are underrepresented in shelter services have, and information on shelter services will have been disseminated to these population groups in 2026–2027.

1.4. Trauma-conscious approach to work in shelters

A trauma-conscious approach to work means understanding trauma and its effects. It is also important to understand what is not a trauma-conscious approach to work (e.g. trauma therapy). Work carried out at shelters with victims of domestic violence is based on trauma awareness, and personnel must have a trauma-conscious approach to the work. In addition to a trauma-conscious work approach, the work communities of shelters must be trauma-informed. In this case, the work community must pay attention to such things as minimising the vicarious traumatisation of personnel and strengthening the welfare of the work community and workers.

Objectives

Shelter employees will have a trauma-conscious approach to their work, they will have an understanding and information about trauma and stress reactions and their impacts on the individual's behaviour. The working methods used at a shelter will promote the client's experience of safety and the structures of the work carried out in the shelter will not be detrimental to the client. Work communities at shelters for victims of domestic violence will operate in a trauma-informed manner, work communities will be healthy and able to act in a culturally sensitive manner.

Measures

- A trauma-informed perspective will be taken into account in all training organised by THL for the shelter network. In addition, THL will organise training/a workshop on trauma-informed work communities for those responsible for client work.
- THL and shelters will review the client process at shelters from a trauma-informed perspective.
- Shelters will see to the implementation of adequate occupational wellbeing measures and minimise the vicarious traumatisation of employees.
- The shelter service provider will take the trauma-informed work approach into account in management.

Indicators and timetable

- Training / a workshop on a trauma-informed work community will be organised in 2025.
- The client processes of shelter work will be examined from a trauma-informed perspective in 2026.
- Each year, shelters will provide THL with an account of their own measures related to wellbeing at work as part of their action plans and annual reports.

1.5. Establishing the Suojassa method in shelter work

The Suojassa method is an interview method brought from Sweden to Finnish shelters. The purpose of the method is to systematically assess and compile information on risk and safety factors related to children in shelters. The method was piloted in nine shelters between 2019 and 2020. THL is responsible for supporting the use of the Suojassa method, and the method will be developed from the perspective of the shelter, taking into account the shelter network.

Objectives

The Suojassa method will be established as part of the work carried out with children at shelters to map the child's experience of violence, and as a method to assess risk and protective factors. Current research data will be taken into account in the development of the method. The method will be developed in strong cooperation between THL's shelter services and the shelter network. The training package of the Suojassa method will be effective and the use of the method will be supported, guided and maintained by THL.

Measures

- The materials of the Suojassa method will be developed to be suitable and appropriate for shelter work. THL is responsible for updating the forms together with a working group formed from the shelter network.
- A method implementation plan will be created together with a working group consisting of members from the shelter network, on the basis of which a training package supporting the implementation and maintenance of the method will be implemented.
- During 2025–2027, the Suojassa method will be established as part of the work with children in shelters including an assessment of the child's experience of violence, a risk assessment and the assessment of protective factors.

Indicators and timetable

- By the end of 2024, the forms for the Suojassa method will have been updated and it will better meet the needs of shelters for victims of domestic violence. Completed forms as the indicator.
- By the end of 2025, a training package supporting the implementation and maintenance of the Suojassa method will have been completed. A new training package as the indicator.
- During 2027, a survey will be carried out in which shelters are asked about the use of the Suojassa method as an established practice that is part of the work with victims of violence at shelters.

1.6. Work with children and young people exposed to violence to strengthen their sense of security

Security is both a prerequisite and objective in work with victims of violence. The aim of work with children and young people in a shelter is to increase their physical and mental safety and to identify and reinforce the child's own constructive means of coping. At the beginning of the shelter period, the child's sense of security is reinforced by informing the child about the shelter's practices, and daily life at the shelter, showing them the shelter's facilities and giving the child the opportunity to ask questions and have their own views on issues.

Objective

Shelters will use of materials intended for children and young people that describe the activities of the shelter. Shelters will have uniform work methods and tools in place to strengthen the sense of safety of children staying in the shelter. In particular, the shelter network will utilise materials produced for shelter work.

Measures

- The information materials intended for children staying at shelters and their need will be examined. A decision will be made on further measures on the basis of the collected material. The need for the translation of information materials intended for children will also be examined regionally.
- The need for shelter work methods and tools to strengthen children's sense of security will be examined. Further measures will be selected on the basis of the survey.

- The use of materials produced during the previous development programme (books *Mainio ja Zataar* and *Rohkeasti minä!*) at shelters will be supported and monitored.

Indicators and timetable

- THL will examine the information materials available on each shelter intended for children and young people during 2024.
- THL will determine the needs of shelters for uniform work methods and tools in 2025.
- The number of events and training sessions for shelters each year in which materials produced for shelter work have been presented and their use has been supported.

1.7. Methods for working with adult clients

One-on-one work with the client is an essential part of the work carried out at a shelter. It is important for clients to receive information on different forms of domestic violence, domestic violence as a phenomenon and its impacts. The mapping and reinforcement of the client's resources are an essential part of recovering from the experience of violence. In addition to one-on-one work, the shelter should also have group activities.

Objective

All shelters will have use of effective tools and methods used with adult clients that are suitable for different client situations.

Measures

- Instructors at shelters will share good tools and methods for work with adult clients with instructors from other shelters. Each shelter will select the suitable methods for implementing the cooperation.
- If necessary, shelters together with THL will produce new tools and methods for work against violence carried out with adult clients.
- THL will organise a method day for working with adult clients in autumn 2024. After the method day, the shelters will be asked if there is a need to organise similar training regularly.
- Information will be collected on the types of professionally guided peer groups used by shelters. The information will be shared with the entire shelter network.
- In 2024, two shelters will to the extent possible continue the piloting of the “*Turvallisuuden tunne harhateillä*” peer group method launched in 2023. THL will publish an assessment on the suitability of the method for shelter services, and after the assessment a decision will be made on whether use of the method will be continued.

Indicators and timetable

- Tools and methods will be shared between shelters throughout the development programme period. At the halfway point of the development programme period, THL will ask about the shelters about their experiences on sharing tools and methods and assess together with the shelters whether there is a need to develop new tools and methods.
- Tools and methods produced jointly by THL and shelters for work with adult clients during the development programme period.
- Method days for working with adult clients held during the development programme period.
- Number of shelters with group activities at the end of the development programme period.
- THL will have published an assessment of the suitability of the “*Turvallisuuden tunne harhateillä*” peer group for shelter services and its clients by the end of 2025.

1.8. Information management by social welfare in shelter services

Information management in social welfare involves taking over the life cycle of information generated and needed in social welfare. Information management will, for example, facilitate the recording of data, support the client process and harmonise social welfare case management and client relationship management. The information can also be used in management and service development.

In the scope of shelter services, THL acts as the controller referred to in the legislation on personal data processing and data protection. Pursuant to legislation and a decision on service provision, shelters for victims of domestic violence have the right and obligation to store and process data in the Kanta service as necessary on behalf of THL. Shelters archive the client data generated in their services directly via the Kanta service in the client register of THL, which acts as the controller of shelter services.

As a result of joining Kanta, shelters can make use of the client's previous data and also the data stored by different shelters in Kanta, as this involves the use of the THL register to which shelters have a right of use based on a decision on the provision of the service. Documents on shelter services are not displayed at all in MyKanta (OmaKanta) to protect a person who has experienced domestic violence.

Shelter service providers must store the client documents generated in shelter service in the social welfare client data archive no later than 1 September 2024. The social welfare client data archive is a service that enables the use of electronic social welfare client data and secure storage. The implementation of Kanta integration is above all an operational change, in which the most important factors for implementation are change management, a Kanta-compatible information system and the systematic use of data and data fields in the client information system.

Shelters have several different information systems in place. However, all shelters have common document structures in place, and information is recorded in these documents in a structured format. A structured document follows the social welfare document structures defined by THL, which have been published in the Sosmeta service. When records are stored in a structured manner, client data and document contents recorded in client work can be used with different information systems, and the data can be utilised better than before, for example, in scientific register research. Shelter services and Kanta services comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation and data protection legislation for the implementation of personal data protection and data security.

Objective

Client work will be recorded in a uniform manner in shelters and the data will be stored in the social welfare client data archive.

Measures

- Shelter service providers will become a client of the Kanta services and introduce the Social Welfare Client Data Archive by 1 September 2024.
- It will be ensured that shelters have sufficient competence in the uniform use of structured documents. Training on structured recording will be organised for shelter professionals.
- The Kanta services will be utilised in the collection of shelter statistics and in scientific research. Separate data collection related to statistics will be continued for clients who sign into shelters anonymously.
- Documents created during THL's time as the register controller (starting in 2015) will be archived in Kanta by the end of the development programme period.

Indicators and timetable

- By 1 September 2024, all shelter service providers will have joined the Kanta services and introduced the Social Welfare Client Data Archive and started storing the documents of new clients in the archive (yes/no).
- Structured recording is sufficiently uniform in various shelters (yes/no). This will be investigated in 2027.

- As a rule, the shelter statistics report to be published in 2026 will be compiled from the data collected in Kanta services (yes/no).
- The archiving of old data will have been completed by the end of 2027 (yes/no).

2 Training of shelter personnel

Work carried out in shelters is demanding client work. In view of the demands of the work, employees should be provided with adequate basic and continuing training on the phenomenon of violence and on different areas of violence. THL organises training throughout Finland for shelter service providers. In addition, the service provider must provide the necessary continuing education for its personnel (section 7 of the Act on Shelter Services). The personnel's adequate training and a shared understanding of domestic violence as a phenomenon and how to intervene in it at shelters is a prerequisite for a high-quality and uniform shelter services.

THL organises uniform training for shelters nationally on certain key areas of shelter work. All shelter personnel working with clients must have completed the content of this training or have corresponding competence. Shelters must ensure that permanent personnel, substitutes and long-term temporary agency workers have the opportunity to participate in training that supports professional competence.

The lessons learned in the training should also be shared with other employees in the work community and the themes should be discussed together. In this manner, the entire work unit has a shared understanding of the key issues affecting shelter work.

2.1. Diversification of training methods

THL organises a number of training sessions for the shelter network each year. The training needs of the growing shelter network will change with time, and the turnover of shelter personnel must be taken into account, in such things as the time span for organising induction training. The ways in which training is implemented have become more diversified over the past few years. There are currently different opportunities for training, such as online schools and other independent training methods, hybrid training, training where attendance is required and multisite training. In addition to developing the knowledge and competence of shelter employee, the aim of training organised by THL is to ensure that the employees of different shelters meet each other in attendance training and can network.

Objective

The aim will be to develop and diversify training methods and flexibility. As the diversity of training methods increases, it will be ensured at the same time that sufficient contact surfaces are maintained between the employees of the shelters.

Measures

- The manner in which training is carried out, its scope and its frequency will be examined together with the shelter network so that THL can offer appropriate and timely training packages for the shelter network.
- Training packages suitable for shelters will be added to the cooperation space for shelter services. Shelters will be responsible for ensuring that personnel working with clients utilise the training modules created.

Indicators and timetable

- In 2024–2025, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare will conduct a survey on the views, thoughts and wishes of shelters concerning different training methods. On the basis of the report, further measures will be selected, and these will be implemented when training is organised in 2025–2027.
- The number of training modules compiled in the cooperation space for shelter services at the end of 2027 and a survey for shelters on the utilisation of training modules stored in the cooperation space.

2.2. Work with children and relevant legislation at shelters

In the same manner as an adult, a child is a client of a shelter, and they have the right to work through their experiences of violence with an employee. Training and a shared understanding of domestic violence and how to intervene in it at shelters is a prerequisite for a high-quality and uniform shelter service. Training related to work with children will emphasise the content of the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation and it will be made part of practice at shelters. One day of the three-day training will focus on multidisciplinary work from the child's perspective and legislation relevant to shelter work. The training is intended for all permanent employees of shelters and long-term substitutes.

Objectives

- The personnel working with clients in shelters will have completed the training or acquired similar competence through other suitable training.
- The personnel engaged in client work at shelters for victims of domestic violence will take part in the training segment on legislative section on shelter work regularly.

Measures

- THL will organise a three-day training package on work with children each year.
- Shelters will be responsible for ensuring that personnel working with clients take part in training.

Indicators and timetable

- Training organised in 2024–2027, number of participants and feedback collected and received on the training.

2.3. Methods for working with children and young people

Training related to the methods for working with children and young people will emphasise the content of the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation as part of practice at shelters. The importance of play for the child and functionality are at the core of the work. The training is intended for all permanent employees of shelters and long-term substitutes, who have completed THL's training (3 days) on working with children or who have otherwise acquired the same information.

Objective

The competence of shelter personnel on working with children and young people will be added to and the use of different methods will be encouraged through training where attendance is required.

Measure

THL will regularly organise training on the use of methods for working with children and young people.

Indicators and timetable

- Training organised in 2024–2027, number of participants and feedback collected and received on the training.

2.4. Training in crisis and trauma work

The Act on Shelter Services defines a shelter as a 24-hour crisis work unit that provides secure housing and psychosocial support, advice and referrals. In addition, the Act on Shelter Services requires that a shelter's

personnel must have training and work experience and be familiar with crisis work related to domestic violence. As a shelter is a crisis work unit, the entire personnel must have expertise in crisis and trauma work in order to provide the client with the right psychosocial support during their stay at a shelter. The training is intended for all permanent employees of shelters and long-term substitutes.

Objective

All shelter employees have will sufficient competence in crisis and trauma work.

Measures

- THL will organise training on crisis and trauma work for personnel at shelters. The aim of the training will be to increase understanding of the trauma and crisis caused by domestic violence and to provide the means for finding stability the crisis phase and for stabilising work with a traumatised person. The training will strengthen a trauma-conscious approach to work in shelters.
- Shelters must ensure that personnel working with clients participate in training or that the personnel have sufficient expertise in crisis and trauma work for demanding crisis work related to domestic violence.
- Shelters will regularly monitor the competence needs of their personnel and, if necessary, the service provider will organise further training for their personnel.

Indicators and timetable

- Training organised in 2024–2027, number of participants and feedback collected and received on the training.

2.5. Induction training for new shelters and new employees of shelters

All shelters have their own induction training plan for shelter work. The purpose of the training organised by THL is to supplement the induction training organised by the service provider for new employees. The training is intended for all new employees who work with clients in the shelter network. The training consists of independent study and training days organised by THL. Independent studies consist of completing the online training course on how to intervene in violence and its additional sections (digital violence and honour-based violence) as well as familiarisation with the national quality recommendations for shelter services and the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation.

Objective

New employees at shelters be provided an induction on shelter services and the national shelter network.

Measures

- Once a year, THL organises training for the new employees of shelters.
- Shelters will make it possible for new employees and, at their own discretion, substitutes and long-term temporary agency workers to participate in the training.
- Self-study material on key themes that is suitable for induction will be added to the cooperation space for shelter services.

Indicators and timetable

- Training organised in 2024–2027, number of participants and feedback collected and received on the training.

- THL will produce independent-study material to support induction in the cooperation space for shelter services in 2026–2027.

2.6. Training on domestic violence and other themes supporting shelter work

In addition to the annually repeated training, THL organises shorter training on topical themes requested by the shelter network or on other themes related to shelter services or its clients. Training can focus on different forms of violence and legislative amendments as well as special issues (e.g. challenging divorce situations and post-divorce violence) or phenomena (e.g. human trafficking). As a rule, training will be carried out remotely. Some of the training sessions are provided jointly with other actors involved in preventing domestic violence and violence against women, such as the Nollalinja helpline, the MARAK working groups, Barnahus activities and Seri Support Centres.

Objective

The training needs of shelter personnel will be responded to.

Measures

- THL organises training throughout Finland for shelter service providers. Feedback and wishes submitted by shelter personnel are taken into account when planning training content.
- Providers of shelter services provide the necessary continuing education for their personnel.
- Shelters will make it possible for their employees to participate in training.

Indicators and timetable

- THL will organise training every year during the development programme period. The number of training packages organised in 2024–2027 and the number of participants and the feedback collected and received on the training.
- The shelter service providers report annually on the training they have planned and organised as part of their action plans and annual reports.

2.7. Work of those responsible for client work to be supported through training

Provisions on the qualifications of shelter personnel are laid down in a Government decree (Government Decree on shelters for victims of domestic violence). According to the decree, the person in charge of the shelter must be a qualified social worker. The person in charge of the shelter is responsible for managing the client work of the shelter. Generally there will only be one social worker at each shelter, which means that encounters with other social workers in the shelter network are important. THL supports those responsible for client work at shelters by organising working meetings twice a year in THL's premises in Helsinki to which all shelter social workers are invited to take part. Working meetings involve discussion on topical issues, and content that is central to the activities of the shelter network will be worked on together. Persons responsible for client work will also be supported by organising joint training for them and by providing induction training to new social workers on THL's shelter services.

Objective

The persons responsible for client work will have sufficient information on the activities of the shelter network and the laws, quality recommendations and guidelines guiding it. The aim will be to ensure that client work carried out at all Finnish shelters is sufficiently uniform at the national level.

Measures

- THL's shelter services will provide remote induction training for social workers who are new employees at shelters. The training includes information on national shelter services and key legislation related to shelter activities as well as the impact of THL's position as controller on shelter work.
- THL supports social workers responsible for client work at shelters by providing regular training on topical themes. Some of the training is organised face to face as part of the working meetings for persons responsible for client work at shelters while part of the training is organised as separate short sessions utilising remote connections.

Indicators and timetable

- Organised induction training for new social workers working in shelters for victims of domestic violence in 2024–2027.
- Organised training in which the target group is persons responsible for client work at shelters, the number of participants and the feedback collected and received on the training.
- Working meetings organised for those responsible for client work between 2024 and 2027.

2.8. National Shelter Day

National Shelter Day was organised for the first time in 2017. Since then, National Shelter Day has been organised once every two years. The aim of the day has been to bring together shelter service providers and stakeholders of shelters. National Shelter Day provides up-to-date information, creates visions for the coming years and enables national meetings between the shelter personnel and stakeholders in shelter services.

Objective

The coherence of the shelter network and the possibility for professionals to encounter the employees of shelters and stakeholder representatives will be strengthened. National Shelter Day will bring together representatives of the shelter network and stakeholders to hear about and discuss topical themes related to shelter work.

Measure

THL, together with the shelter network, will organise a National Shelter Day once every two years.

Indicators and timetable

- National shelter days organised in 2025 and 2027.

3 Safety of shelters

Security is both a prerequisite and objective in work with victims of violence. The work will require an environment where it is safe to both be and work. The safety of shelters for victims of domestic violence consists of many different areas. Shelter buildings are designed to provide protection to their clients. The premises always have recording camera surveillance and lower-level windows and doors are secured. The shelter personnel have safety buttons, and shelters are also protected by guards and police officers.

The shelters, as independent organisations, will be responsible for the safety related to their own operations. In terms of safety, the development programme focuses on developing nationally more uniform operating practices for maintaining safety and, in particular, improving the safety and sense of security of clients at high risk.

3.1. Maintaining safety

The shelters report to THL on any situations where the shelter, its clients or personnel are subjected to violence or threats or a hazardous situation occurs. On the basis of these reports, THL is able to monitor the safety situation of shelters nationally. The aim of the development work is to help shelters to ensure that their safety management is up to date and reduce the number of violent and dangerous situations affecting shelters. The capacity of shelters to act in exceptional and crisis situations is also part of maintaining safety.

Objectives

The internal and external security of shelters will be further developed, and a national overall picture of security threats to shelters will be maintained, and it will be ensured that safety management is up to date. Shelters will be able to prepare for exceptional and crisis situations so that their activities are not disrupted during such conditions.

Measures

- THL will monitor and analyse factors affecting the safety of shelters based on threat reports and other information received from shelters. Shelters and THL will utilise collected and analysed information to support their development work.
- THL, together with a group compiled from the shelter network, will develop instructions and a form related to threat reporting.
- Shelters will maintain a crisis communications plan and a preparedness to act in exceptional situations. If necessary, the documents will be updated. This will be discussed shelter-specifically during THL's visit to each shelter.

Indicators and timetable

- Each year, a summary of threats to shelters prepared by THL will be reviewed in connection with the spring working meeting. A summary will be presented to the shelter network annually (yes/no).
- Threat reporting and its related instructions will be harmonised and the form will be modified if necessary. Will have been implemented by the end of 2026 (yes/no).
- The shelter's crisis communications plan and preparedness to act in exceptional situations are up to date (yes/no). The situation will be monitored annually.

3.2. Safety of shelter clients

The situations of the shelter clients are different. The safety situation of most clients is such that everyday life can continue relatively normally despite living in a shelter. In this case, the client can, work and the children can attend early childhood education and care or school as their resources allow. However, sometimes due to a security threat, the client's life is very limited during their stay at a shelter. In these situations, the client may not be able to move outside the shelter and the threat of violence may have a strong impact on their entire life. During their stay at a shelter, the client's security situation must be such that the client feels that they can cope with everyday life independently or through other support measures. When their stay at the shelter comes to an end, the client should no longer be subjected to domestic violence or its threat, or if the threat still exists, the client must have the necessary support and protection against it. This usually requires close cooperation between several authorities and the client.

Objective

The identification, safety and sense of security of shelter clients at high risk will improve.

Measures

- THL, shelter services and other specialists work together to investigate and develop measures for identifying high-risk clients and ensuring their safety.
- The national MARAK development support group will start its work in 2024. The support group will include a representative/representatives of the shelter network from one shelter for the entire development period.
- A shelter's representative is a member of the MARAK working group in their own area. The participation of shelters in regional MARAK working groups is monitored through MARAK consent forms.

Indicators and timetable

- Possible challenges in identifying and assisting high-risk clients will be investigated in 2024–2025. The measures will be implemented in 2026–2027.
- A representative of the shelter network has participated in the national MARAK development support group throughout the development programme period (yes/no).
- The share of MARAK working groups (0–100%), which include representation from a shelter.

4 A well-functioning shelter network

Shelters are independent organisations that work together as part of the national shelter network. In order to ensure the best possible assistance for clients in need of a shelter, the shelter network should be expanded, cooperation between shelters should be intensified and developed further, and the accessibility of shelters should be ensured for all client groups.

4.1. Number and location of shelters

The Istanbul Convention requires Finland to take the necessary measures to ensure an adequate number of easily accessible shelters. Pursuant to the Act on Shelter Services, THL will select the necessary number of shelter service providers to ensure that sufficient shelter services are available in different parts of the country. The funding provided by Parliament for shelter activities sets the marginal conditions for the number of shelters and the number of family places in these.

The Istanbul Convention and Act on Shelter Services have led to the systematic development of the shelter network in Finland, and the coverage and capacity of the service has been significantly increased. Funding for shelter services and, consequently, shelter places have been added to annually to ensure that Finland better fulfils its national and international obligations to help those who have experienced domestic violence.

However, the shelter network should be further strengthened in areas where such services are completely lacking and in areas where the service is not sufficient for the population and needs of the area. There are still areas in Finland where the geographical distance to the nearest shelter is too long. Such blind spots currently exist, for example, in the Sámi Homeland. According to a study conducted by THL in 2020, the need for family places in shelters in Finland is between 262–367 family places instead of the current 230 family places (Hietamäki et al. 2020). In its programme, Petteri Orpo's Government has committed to ensuring the accessibility of shelters for victims of domestic violence (Government 2023).

Objective

The demand-supply ratio of shelters for victims of domestic violence is well balanced.

Measures

- The adequacy of the number of family places in shelters for victims of domestic violence will be monitored using statistical data collected from shelters and the manner in which the number of places corresponds with need will be assessed. When assessing regional differences across Finland, the number of places in the entire shelter network and the number of clients referred elsewhere due to lack of space will be taken into account.
- The shelter network will be added to in areas where the service is not available at all and in areas where the service is not sufficiently available in proportion to the area's need and population size. The number of shelters can be increased within the limits of the annual state budget.
- GREVIO's observations to Finland on the lack of shelter places in the Sámi Homeland will be addressed by opening a targeted service provider search in the Sámi Homeland.

Indicators and timetable

- Increase in the number of family places at shelters for victims of domestic violence. The indicator will be monitored annually.
- The number of people referred to other shelters due to the lack of space has decreased in wellbeing services counties with only one shelter. If there are several shelters in the wellbeing services county, the

number of days, when all shelters in the county have been full simultaneously is monitored. The indicator will be monitored annually.

- A targeted service provider search has been opened in the Sámi Homeland during the development programme period (yes/no). The timetable for the service provider search will be influenced by the funding of shelter services and how fast parties interested in service provision can be found.

4.2. Key figures related to access to and the use of shelters

At the beginning of 2024, Finland will have 29 shelters with 230 family places. Shelters are different in terms of the number of places, their facilities and geographical location. The utilisation rates of shelters also vary significantly across Finland. Some shelters are constantly full, while others are very rarely full. Client numbers at shelters vary a great deal from year to year. Certain indicators are monitored annually already at present and will be published as part of the statistical report on shelter services. Such key figures include the utilisation rate of shelters and the number of days an individual shelter has been full and clients have been referred elsewhere due to lack of space. During the development programme, the necessity of new key figures related to access to shelters and the use of shelters as well as recommendations for existing key figures to be monitored will be examined.

Objective

Key figures will help in the national and uniform assessment and development of access to the service and the use of shelters.

Measures

- THL, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and shelters, will define the recommendations related to the utilisation rate of shelters, the maximum number of clients referred to another shelter and the maximum number days when a shelter is full. The recommendations will serve as indicative limit values that take into account regional differences.
- The necessity of new key figures will be investigated. New key figures refers to key figures that are not published regularly in the statistical report on shelter services. Such key figures may include the annual number of child clients in a shelter, the number of family places in a shelter per 10,000 inhabitants in the wellbeing services county, the costs of a family place and the number of persons living long distances from a shelter.
- The key figures are used in the development of shelters and the allocation of shelter places within Finland.

Indicators and timetable

- The recommendation related to the key figures will have been published by the end of 2025. At the same time, the necessity of new key figures will be assessed.
- Key figures will be monitored annually throughout the development programme period.

4.3. Cooperation between shelters situated close to one another

Finnish shelters together make up a national network of shelters. In practice, this means that shelters will work closely together, situations such as client referrals, shelters can consult other shelters, and the quality of shelter services will uniform in different shelters. During the previous development programme, cooperation between shelters situated close to one another increased significantly, and the same good development will continue during 2024–2027.

Objective

Cooperation between shelters situated close to one another will be further increased in client work, training and balancing of client numbers.

Measures

- Visits between shelters close to one another, networking of shelters and sharing of good practices between shelters will be promoted.
- The possibility for organising regional training will be investigated.
- If there are several shelters close to one another in the area, an effort will be made to refer the client to a shelter that is best suited for them already at the time the client enquires about a shelter place. Suitability may be affected by the location of the shelter in relation to the client's daily life, the size of the shelter's client rooms and the shelter's current client situation.

Indicators and timetable

- THL will monitor the implementation of cooperation between shelters situated close to one another through their action plans and annual reports.
- The number of regionally implemented training packages during the development programme. Monitored annually.
- Cooperation between shelters situated close to one another has increased during the development programme period.

4.4. Shelter-provided services from the perspective of different client groups

In recent years, the shelter network has been developed to meet the different needs of clients. One shelter specialises in helping women with an immigrant background. A growing number of shelters will make it possible to access the shelter together with a pet. The shelter network can be further developed to better serve different client groups. At the same time, obstacles to the use of the service can be eliminated.

Objective

The shelter service responds to the needs of different client groups and steps are taken to eliminate any obstacles to using the shelter service.

Measures

- The number of family seats where the client can bring a pet will be increased.
- The remote shelter will be piloted for the clients of the shelter, whose stay at the shelter would otherwise be interrupted due to active substance abuse.
- It will be examined whether there is a need to increase the number of shelters at secret addresses or shelter services specifically for women in Finland.
- The shelter operating practices related to minors seeking shelter alone will be detailed and it will be ensured that shelters have uniform information on operating practices.
- The views of the shelter network on obstacles to the use of the shelter service and the suggestions made by the shelters will be examined.

Indicators and timetable

- The increase in the number of family places to which a client can bring a pet. The situation will be monitored annually, taking geographical distances into account.

- During 2024, a remote shelter will start operating for clients whose stay at a shelter would otherwise be interrupted due to active substance abuse (yes/no).
- THL will examine the operating practices in place for unaccompanied minors seeking a place in a shelter in 2024. Further measures will be decided on the basis of the report.
- THL will examine the views of shelters on developing the service throughout the development programme period. Information will be collected annually at working meetings and by means of separate surveys or reports.

5 Communications

Communications will make shelter services better known to both the general public and professionals. A harmonised and shared communication style between THL and the shelter network will increase the awareness on shelter services and the image professionals and the public have of high-quality services. Through communications, professionals will be made more aware of the services that the state is responsible for organising, their availability and the various phenomena of domestic violence. The national quality recommendations for shelter services, the Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence quality recommendation and the development programme for 2024–2027 are available online as open documents. Professionals in different fields, supervisory authorities and students gain information about shelter services on the basis of the documents available to the public. Communication campaigns are used to highlight things that will lower the threshold for those experiencing domestic violence to seek shelter services to the public.

5.1. Professionals will be better informed of the content and uniformity of shelter services

Objectives

The status of shelter services will be strengthened nationally as a unified special service and a reliable partner for professionals encountering victims of domestic violence and other parties to domestic violence in different fields. More and more professionals will be made aware that shelter services are of uniform quality and are guided by equal criteria and quality recommendations, regardless of the producer organisation. Government is responsible for arranging the service and the service is free of charge.

Measures

- The provision of information on shelter services will be focused to different professional groups and new materials will be made available to professionals.
- The actors in the shelter network and THL will produce joint addresses for national events intended for professionals and publications for professions journals and will highlight topical themes together, for example, through blog posts.
- THL participates in national events, such as trade fairs for professionals and other events in which it increases awareness on shelter services, for example through speeches and by sharing information on shelter services in other ways.
- Shelters increase awareness on shelter services in their own areas by participating in regional events and cooperating with networks and educational institutions.

Indicators and timetable

- The number of press releases and news produced by THL's shelter services annually and the monitoring of their effectiveness using media data.
- During the development programme period, representatives of the shelter network and THL will publish a joint blog annually on a topical topic.
- The number of addresses produced jointly by representatives of THL and the shelter network during the development programme.
- The number of events intended for professionals during which THL has shared information on shelter services. Monitored annually.
- The improved awareness of professionals on shelter services will be measured by ordering a awareness measurement of shelters in 2027.

- Each year, shelters report their own measures aimed at professionals (e.g. presentation of activities and training) to THL as part of their action plans and annual reports.

5.2. Public awareness on shelter services to increase and become diversified

Objectives

The recognition of shelter services is increasing among those living in Finland. An increasing amount of information will be made available on the content of shelter services so that the threshold for those experiencing domestic violence or the threat thereof is lower.

Measures

- Shelters will engage in cooperation with other actors that reach the same target group, i.e. those experiencing domestic violence and professionals who enter them, to increase awareness on shelter services. In 2024, marketing will be carried out in cooperation with the Nollalinja helpline. Marketing is carried out in social media channels and in other channels considered to be most effective, such as on the radio or on hospital screens.
- Each year, a joint campaign will be organised with THL and the shelter network to raise awareness of shelter services among the public.
- Shelters actively provide information on shelter services in their own area.
- Joint communication material will be developed so that these will be accessible and versatile from the perspective of different client groups.
- Shelters will map out the client groups in their own operating area that have not yet been sufficiently reached. Based on this, information on shelter services will be produced regionally for these client groups.

Indicators and timetable

- The success and effectiveness of the joint THL-Nollalinja campaign to be implemented in 2024 will be monitored with the help of media data, social media and other indicators, and a decision on the continuation of joint marketing will be made on the basis of the results.
- Number of campaigns and press releases implemented together with partners during the development programme period.
- The information campaign carried out annually by shelters in their own areas using THL's materials has been implemented (yes/no). Feedback will be collected from shelters annually on the success of the campaign.
- Each year, shelters will report their own communication measures to THL as part of their action plans and annual reports.
- In 2025, shelters will survey underrepresented client groups and, in 2026–2027, they will direct information about their services to these groups.

6 Service evaluation, research and THL as a service organiser

Pursuant to the Act on Shelter Services, THL is responsible for the control, assessment, development and national harmonisation of shelter service operations. Shelter services are based on up-to-date information, which is based on the views of service providers' arising from the daily life of shelter work, statistical and research data on service use and separate studies. The evaluation and studies will help in monitoring and developing the content and structures of shelter work.

In addition to THL, other actors also conduct research related to shelters. THL, as the controller, grants research permits. A research permit or consent is also required from the shelter service provider. The premise for granting a research permit is scientific research when the research concerns service clients. All studies related to shelters must comply with the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity on the ethical assessment of research in human sciences. For more information on research permits, visit [THL's website](#) (2023b).

6.1. THL visits to shelters

In 2022, THL visited all shelters for victims of domestic violence in Finland. The visits were preceded by a preliminary survey intended for service providers on the operating practices, personnel and premises of the shelter. The purpose of the preliminary survey and visits was to ensure that the service provider complies with the national quality recommendations for shelter services and to hear service providers on their development proposals for shelter service activities in their own area and nationally. The visits will continue regularly.

Objective

Visits to shelters will help THL gain concrete information on the daily life of shelters, the different facilities of shelters, and matters affecting the daily life of shelters as well as the conditions. Shelter visits are an important part of the development of shelter services.

Measure

During the development programme years (2024–2027), THL will visit all Finnish shelters and meet with personnel working with clients in their own work environment. Agree with the shelter network on the implementation and timing of the visits.

Indicators and timetable

- Visits will be carried out steadily throughout the development programme period. THL's actual visits to shelters during the development programme period will be the indicator.

6.2. Discretionary government grants to be developed

For the time being, those selected as shelter service providers have applied for discretionary government grants from THL by email each year. The received applications have been archived in the Helmi document management system and in the disk drive where the processing of the applications has taken place. Decisions on discretionary government grants have been signed electronically and saved in the Helmi document management system. Applicants have been notified of decisions individually by e-mail. The payment of grants has been done manually on a monthly basis, depending on the number of instalments of each beneficiary (2–

12). In the current system, the call for applications for discretionary government grants and information on decisions have not been publicly available, and information on the application and decision has been sent to each service provider by e-mail.

Shelter services will gradually be transferred to the shared practice for discretionary government grants, and shared digital services that support it will be introduced in the next few years. All applications for discretionary government grants and information on the recipients of the grants and the granted amounts are publicly available. The new system will also serve as a document archive and enable more efficient processing of applications and decision proposals. In addition, the system will automate the payment of grants, thus reducing human error.

Objectives

To increase the transparency and openness of discretionary government grants and make applying for and granting discretionary government grants more seamless.

Measures

- In the future, discretionary government grants for the provision of shelter services will be applied for through the Haeavustuksia.fi service.
- THL's shelter services grant subsidies through the Hallinnoivustuksia.fi service.
- Decisions on discretionary government grants are published in the Tutkiavustuksia.fi service. Through the service, anyone can check how many discretionary government grants have been granted, to whom and for what kind of purposes.

Indicators and timetable

- The use of digital services will be possible for shelters by the end of 2024 (yes/no).

6.3. Evaluation study of shelter services

Pursuant to the Act on Shelter Services, the evaluation of shelter activities is a duty of THL. No extensive research on shelters has been previously carried out in Finland. Many factors affect the provision of help at the shelter and the assistance that clients receive after leaving the shelter. The participation of shelters and those who have experienced domestic violence in the planning of the study plays a key role in the planning of the studies. The research results will help in the development of work carried out in shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of services provided by shelters for victims of domestic violence. In the first phase of the Path to Safety study (1st study), the aim is to use interviews with professionals in work related to violence and those who have experienced domestic violence to form an understanding of the factors they consider to be the most important in client work carried out in shelters for victims of domestic violence, and how it would be important to organise services after the victim is no longer a shelter client. A second objective is to examine how the data collection for a longitudinal study (2nd study) can be carried out safely and to facilitate the participation of shelter clients in longitudinal surveys.

Measures

- The Path to Safety preliminary study (1st study) will be carried out first, and then this will be used to help in planning the implementation of a broader longitudinal study (2nd study).
- The interviews for the preliminary study (1st study) will be carried out and an article on the key factors of shelter services will be published based on the interview material.

- They data collection for the longitudinal study will be planned and implemented.
- Applications will be submitted for external funding for the implementation of longitudinal study.

Indicators and timetable

- The interviews for the preliminary study (1st study) will have been conducted in spring 2024.
- An article on key factors of shelters will have been published by the end of 2025.
- The first phase of the longitudinal study will be ready for piloting in early 2025.
- The second phase of the longitudinal study (2nd study), the actual data collection, will be carried out in 2025–2026, after which the data collection will be continued with a follow-up study for approximately 5–6 years.

6.4. Shelters providing safety study

The target group of the Turvallisuuden tunne harhateillä – kohti turvallisia ihmissuhteita group method is clients of shelters who have a background involving early and long-term traumatisation. The group method was developed by Anne Suokas (Emerita), the long-standing Director of the Center for Trauma Therapy and Trauma Education. Training instructors at the Center for Trauma Therapy and Trauma Education have trained the instructors for two shelters for victims of domestic violence in the use of the method. The pilot shelters used the method for the first time in autumn 2023. For further information on the study, please see the [study's website](#) (THL 2024).

Objectives

The use of the Turvallisuuden tunne harhateillä – kohti turvallisia ihmissuhteita group method in shelters will be examined. The impacts of the group method on the participants and the suitability of the method for shelter services will be examined. A decision will be made on the suitability of the group method in shelter services on the basis of research results, the experiences of shelters and available resources.

Measures

- Groups activity participants and instructors will be interviewed.
- Initial and final surveys will be carried out for those who participated in group activities and for those in the control group.
- Feedback will be requested on group activity meetings from those who participated.

Indicators and timetable

- The research data will be collected by the end of 2024.
- Preliminary research results will be presented to shelter service providers at a working meeting in autumn 2024.
- A scientific article on the results will be published by the end of 2025.

6.5. Research of the Suojassa method

Shelter services must have use of knowledge-based working methods that are also designed and modified especially for shelter work. The development and research of the Suojassa method will address the need for Finnish shelters to have a uniform method based on research data to assess the safety and risk factors of children and young people staying in shelters, who have been exposed to domestic violence. Two doctoral dissertations will be conducted on the basis of the Suojassa method's pilot phase.

Objective

More research data on the Suojassa method and more information on its suitability for shelters will be made available.

Measures

- The information produced by doctoral studies will be utilised in the development of the Suojassa method.
- Scientific articles and their research results will be presented to the shelter network during work meetings and training.
- We will engage in cooperation with developers of the Swedish iRiSk (Suojassa) method in research cooperation and the development of the method.

Indicators and timetable

- The information produced through scientific research has been utilised in the development of the Suojassa-method.
- Information produced through scientific research has been distributed to the shelter network.
- There has been cooperation with the developers of the Swedish iRiSk methods.

6.6. Utilisation of statistics and client feedback in the development of shelter services

The regular collection of statistical data on shelter services by THL began in 2015 when the Act on Shelter Services entered into force. The shelter statistics collected by THL contain information on shelter client relationships and the duration of client relationships, the types of violence experienced, and the clients' background information. The information is collected annually from all service providers producing the shelter services.

THL has collected feedback from shelter clients since autumn 2016. The survey examines client satisfaction with the shelters for the victims of domestic violence. Clients can respond to the client feedback survey anonymously. There are separate surveys for adult and child clients. The collected data is used for development and research of shelter services. A summary of the numerical feedback provided by clients and the verbal feedback provided by clients are sent to the shelter twice a year.

Objective

Shelter services are developed using statistical data collected from shelters and client feedback.

Measures

- THL will compile annual statistics on shelter services and analyse any changes compared to the previous year. Shelters utilise statistics in developing their own activities and THL utilises them in national development work.
- Twice a year, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare compiles client feedback provided by shelter clients and delivers client feedback summaries to shelters. Shelters utilise client feedback in developing their own activities and THL utilises it in national development work.
- A scientific article or other publication will be written on client feedback on shelter services.
- THL and service providers will together examine how the client feedback form needs to be developed and, if necessary, the form will be modified.
- THL and shelters for victims of domestic violence will together develop practices that ensure that all clients have the opportunity to give feedback.

- Data collection for shelter statistics will be developed so that in the future, statistics can be collected mainly through Kanta services. However, the statistical data on clients who arrive at the shelter anonymously are not available through the Kanta service.

Indicators and timetable

- An annual statistical report and an analysis of key changes by shelter and nationally.
- Shelters review their own client feedback in their working groups twice a year. THL will publish the numerical responses to client feedback nationally once a year in 2024–2027.
- A scientific article or other publication on client feedback on shelter services for the period 2016–2026 will be published by the end of 2027.
- A report on the development needs of client feedback forms will be prepared by the end of 2027.
- THL will monitor the share of clients who have provided client feedback shelter-specifically each year during the development programme period. In 2027, practices will be developed to ensure that more and more clients give feedback on their stay at a shelter.
- Shelter statistics for 2025 will, as a rule, be collected through the Kanta service. Statistics for 2025 will be published in spring 2026.

6.7. Study on the implementation of shelter services in different organisations

THL selects the necessary number of shelter service providers through an open application process so that sufficient shelter services are available in different parts of the country. Both private and public organisations provide shelter services. At the beginning of 2024, eight of the service providers are wellbeing services counties and 18 are NGOs. The background organisations of service providers may influence, such things as a shelter's activities, its personnel structure, its stakeholder cooperation and its costs. Some shelters operate in a property owned by the service provider while others are located in rental premises. The service providers' own organisations may also offer e.g. legal support for shelter activities to varying degrees.

THL will compile a report on the administrative methods used by all service providers to produce shelter services. The report will be based on information received in connection with funding applications and a separate survey or interviews with service providers.

Objective

The ways in which the different structures of shelter service providers will affect the provision of shelter services and their costs will be examined.

Measures

- THL will compile a report on the implementation of the shelter service in different organisations.
- Recommendations and instructions can be issued to service providers on the basis of this report.

Indicators and timetable

- The report will be published by the end of 2026.

6.8. Act on Shelter Services ten years old

The purpose of the Act on Shelter Services is to safeguard comprehensive shelter services of a high quality in all parts of the country for persons who are subjected to violence in an intimate partner relationship or who live under the threat of such violence. In 2025, Finland's Act on Shelter Services will have been in force for ten years.

Objective

The development of shelter services will be described during the Act of Shelter Services' period of validity and the awareness of professionals, specialists and decision-making officials of shelters and their impact on shelter services and clients will be increased.

Measure

THL, shelter service providers and specialists will work together to produce a summary of the Act on Shelter Services and its impact on the provision of shelter services.

Indicators and timetable

- The Act on Shelter Services tenth anniversary publication event will be held at the Shelter Day in 2025.

6.9. Responding to changes in the operating environment

It is possible that national legislation as well as regulation at the EU level related to the prevention of domestic violence will be amended during the development programme period.

The Council of Europe's body of independent experts on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO) will make a country visit to Finland in January 2024 and submit a report to Finland on its recommendations in autumn 2024. If Finland is issued improvement notices related to shelter services, they will be added to the development measures for shelter services.

In July 2023, the European Commission adopted a proposal to amend the Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (2012/29/EU) (the 'Victims' Rights Directive'). The proposal includes new regulations on, such points as advice, protection and support services for victims, support and protection of child victims and safeguarding the rights of victims with disabilities. Talks on the reform of the directive have been ongoing during the preparation of the development programme.

The European Commission has also proposed new legislation to combat violence against women and domestic violence. The proposal for a directive would include provisions on such points as access to legal protection for victims of crime, services for the protection and support of victims, prevention of crime and coordination and cooperation between different actors. The proposed directive aims to achieve the objectives of the Istanbul Convention by complementing the existing EU acquis and the national legislation of its Member States. Talks on the proposal for a directive were still ongoing during the preparation of the development programme.

Objective

Responding to changes in the operating environment of shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Measures

- Changes to national legislation, changes to the EU acquis and other changes affecting the operating environment of shelters for victims of domestic violence will be closely monitored and addressed.
- In autumn 2024, the new GREVIO report will be reviewed and a scheduled plan for responding to any improvement notices related to shelter services will be drawn up.

Indicators and timetable

- Changes will be monitored annually throughout the development programme period.

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