

THE BOOK / THE GUIDE

REVIEW

"The first Flemish government put child abuse on the agenda in 1987. More than 25 years later, both social services, legal and protective initiatives have been professionally elaborated. Time for the next stage: the bringing together of all of these fragments in one approach, the chain. Research shows that it reduces the stress for children, because they need fewer people to tell their stories. And the chance of stopping violence increases by bridging the gaps between the judicial, the carers and the research teams. We still have some way to go to realize a victim-friendly approach in all aspects, but the chain approach is a landmark in the right direction. None of us should forget to strengthen the chain by hooking its own link. This book is required reading."

Peter Adriaenssens, child and adolescent psychiatrist



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OBJECTIVE

The aim of this guide is to inform interested professionals, services and organisations from the different European Member States about the content and the multidisciplinary approach to child abuse and domestic violence. We also want to inspire and support them in achieving an optimal collaboration with other professionals involved, in order to help children and families by sustainably breaking the circle of violence.

The guide specifically addresses the issue of child abuse, also in relation to the broader theme of domestic violence. It makes recommendations, without wanting to standardise, and offers support for developing successful, professional collaboration. It does so consistently from the perspective of providing children and families that are victims of domestic violence and abuse with optimal assistance.

TARGET GROUP

This guide has been customised for organisations that are actively involved in the theme of child abuse (in and outside of the family) and by extension in all forms of violence that are classified as domestic violence. It is particularly aimed at professionals in the police, judicial and social services and administrators.

The authors also want to specifically appeal to the services and professionals that are considering collaborating more closely, those that want to take the first steps to do so or those that already support or coordinate a collaboration partnership. This guide aims to serve as a manual for starting or optimising partnerships that strive for a successful approach to child abuse and domestic violence.

More broadly, this guide is also useful for other professionals that (want to) collaborate. It clearly explains what you can achieve and how you can do so step by step. We are convinced that this guide can help you understand certain challenges and find solutions for tackling child abuse and domestic violence as well as other social themes using a multidisciplinary framework.

STRUCTURE

The guide starts with several general perceptions related to the issue of child abuse and domestic violence, about the challenges that victims and offenders as well as professionals face. Challenges in which multidisciplinary collaboration can offer a solution. This constitutes the guide's focus. Collaboration between the services and professionals involved has become increasingly important in recent decades in a sustainable approach to social problems such as abuse, mistreatment and violence. We see this in various European Member States, although we notice a distinct difference in tempo.

In Module 1 we specifically zoom in on the broad issue of child abuse, focusing on theoretical as well as practical aspects. The latter uses interviews with experts, cases that have been made anonymous and practical tips from clinical psychologist and system therapist Ingrid Delameillieure. The module provides guidelines for professionals and those responsible for policy that work in the field of child abuse and by extension domestic violence, or that are confronted with it. Practitioners must be able to recognise abuse by developing knowledge about the different types of violence of which children can be victims. It is also important that professionals are aware of the possible consequences of child abuse. Abuse does not have the same effect on every child. A great many factors (related to the parent, child, relationship between the parent and the child, the family and the environment) can form a risk or a buffer to abuse. It is the combination of these factors that will determine what effects the abuse has on an individual child. A safe context in which all involved actors (parents, school, social workers, doctors, the police and judicial services) collaborate and form a chain, will offer the greatest chance of safeguarding a child against child abuse.

Module 2 explores this collaboration in more detail and focuses specifically on chain collaboration, using two Belgian real-life examples. Optimal collaboration and coordination between all the organisations involved is necessary in every respect to be able to help clients effectively with the complex issues they experience. The question is whether organisations are sufficiently aware that collaboration requires them and their partners to demonstrate specific knowledge, skills and behaviour. A clear collaboration framework on which the organisations concerned can fall back is therefore also a prerequisite for successful collaboration. 'Chain collaboration' offers this kind of framework. It is a model that enables several organisations from different fields to collaborate in a multidisciplinary manner to provide clients with customisation. But how do you draft a collaboration framework? What exactly is chain collaboration and what does it offer? And how does your organisation and others achieve this type of collaboration in practice? This module provides answers to all these questions.

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