



# ALLiES eGuide

## Family café

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The family café is a place where adults with small children can meet each other. The café is supervised by a volunteer whose duty it is to open the doors, organize coffee for adults and play opportunities for children, as well as ensure that the space is clean and locked after the café hours. The family café is open once in a week for a couple of hours. The family café is based on a concept by the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, but the one piloted in Allies has been developed further to create the first “safe” family café, where the aim is not only to have an impact on communality through networking of parents and children, but also to increase parents’ awareness about safety and wellbeing of children in families and institutions through lectures and activities. In this kind of family café, attention is also paid to the creation of the family café itself as a safe space for parents and children; there are common rules made together and, for instance, adults intervene in any conflicts between children.

Here are some suggestions for themes and lectures on family safety and wellbeing:

- Getting to know each other
- What brings wellbeing to our family?
- Violence prevention in kindergarten and school
- Alcohol use of parents from the point of view of children
- Making of a Father’s day present for fathers and a Mother’s day present for mothers
- Our family plays sports!
- Baby blues and how to overcome them
- Media education: screen time in family
- Introduction to local possibilities for parenthood support (such as Parents’ Academy, Women’s and children’s shelters, peer groups organized by third sector NGO’s)

It is worth noting that when a lecture or discussion is organized for the parents, the children should have an opportunity to play in another room with the volunteers. The next step for developing this idea is to create small activities for children on the theme of safety. It is also important to make sure that the time in family café is not too overloaded with lectures etc., so there is enough time for free discussion for adults and free play for children.