

Inspection visit to the mother-child department of Tallinn Prison

On 6 March 2020, advisers to the Chancellor of Justice visited the mother-child department of Tallinn Prison. At the time of the visit, there was one mother with her 15-month-old baby at the department. The advisers examined the department's premises and talked to the mother and the deputy director of the prison.

The general impression of the department was positive. However, the prison should put more effort into creating an environment in the department that protects the health and well-being of children and is as similar to a home environment as possible. The play area of the department should be made safer, more comfortable and more conducive for development. Going outdoors should be made easier. Officers and staff must always prioritise the health of the children staying at the department.

Due to existing circumstances, the detention of the mother who is staying at the department has substantively developed into a situation resembling solitary confinement. The prison must provide the mother with more opportunities for meaningful communication. The mother's opportunities for participating in social programmes and hobby and leisure activities (e.g. using the gym, guided training sessions, participating in art and handicraft groups, etc.) must be equal to those available to other women. For those periods of time, the mother must have the opportunity to leave her baby with a qualified person.