

Barnahus Model



Type of intervention



Counselling



Residential



Legal

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Tertiary Prevention

Children and Young People (Victims)

Children and Young People (victims)(<18 years) | Male & Female | Residential | Counselling | Swedish, Norwegian, Greenlandic, Danish

Tertiary Prevention

(Potential) Offenders

Children and Young People (offenders)(<18 years) | Male & Female | Residential | Counselling | Swedish, Norwegian, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Danish

Target population

- Children about whom there is a suspicion of sexual abuse (Iceland)
- Children who are suspected or had been subjected to violent crimes (crimes against life and health), unlawful deprivation of personal freedom, trafficking, unlawful duress, unlawful threat, harassment, and other crimes (crimes against freedom and peace) (Sweden)
- Children who have witnessed violence against a relative (Sweden)
- Women subjected to female genital mutilation (Sweden)

Delivery organisation

Barnahus originates in the Child Advocacy Model adopted in the US in the 1980s. It was firstly implemented in 1998 by Iceland followed by other Nordic countries (Sweden in 2005, Norway in 2007, Greenland in 2011, Denmark in 2013) under the name 'Barnahus,' or 'Children's House.'

Barnahus is a child-friendly, interdisciplinary, and multi-agency centre for child victims and witnesses where children could be interviewed and medically examined for forensic purposes, comprehensively assessed and receive all relevant therapeutic services from appropriate professionals.

Mode and context of delivery

Environment:

The premises are located in residential areas and the interior is child friendly;
Most of the Children`s Houses have no operations for adult perpetrators on their premises.

Services provided:

Forensic interviews
Medical examination
Therapeutic services
Family Counselling/ Support

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Barnahus is a place at which the social services, the police, the public prosecutor`s office, forensic medicine, paediatrics and child and adolescent psychiatry (CAP) can confer and collaborate, particularly in the initial stages of the preliminary investigation and the social investigation.

As a rule, the social services play a coordinating role, and one or more social workers are based on the premises. At one of the Barnahus the regular staff also includes police officers, while at others, it includes continuous access to child psychiatric competence. At consultative meetings and in urgent cases by phone, professional representatives consult with each other, plan and assign tasks. If a preliminary investigation is opened the forensic interview with the child takes place at the Barnahus. The professionals who need to hear the child`s narrative can follow the hearing by video in an adjacent room. There are also rooms for medical examinations and interviews. Every effort is made to ensure that forensic pathologists and paediatricians can work together at medical examinations, which are requested by the police or the office of the public prosecutor. The social services or Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) provide crisis support to the child.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

The intensity/extent of engagement with the child is dependent on the individual situation. Barnahus operates in such a way as to minimise the distress of the child, eg. limiting the number of times they must tell their story to authorities and social care professionals.

Description of intervention

A Barnahus is described as having four `rooms` and each contains a particular operation. These are: criminal investigation, collaboration/protection, physical health and mental health.

Interview

The child is interviewed in a special room by a trained investigative interviewer according to evidence-based protocol and it is adapted to the child's developmental age.

Listening-in

In order to spare the child from having to tell his or her story on several occasions and to several individuals, the interview is observed in a different room (a listening-in room) by a judge, who is formally in charge of the procedure, a social worker from the child protection authorities, the police, the prosecution, the defence attorney and the child's advocate. The interview is videotaped and is used in court at the main proceedings if an indictment is made. This arrangement makes it possible to do with only one interview with the child as the child need not appear in court.

Medical examination

After the interview the child may have the medical examination in the medical room of the house. The job of healthcare personnel at a Barnahus is to investigate the child's somatic status, assess the presence of injuries, and investigate, assess and meet the child's need for somatic treatment. The purpose of the medical investigation is to document injuries and issue a forensic certificate on the basis of the examination results.

Crisis support and treatment

Crisis support for children, parents and other family members may be offered on site by specially appointed personnel or team members, as long as the investigation and the legal process are ongoing or they may be referred to other care providers at another site.

The House also provides treatment services for child victims of sexual abuse and their families. The child is assessed for therapeutic purposes and an individual treatment plan is designed and executed either at the facilities or, if the child lives outside of the capital area, as near to her/his home as possible.

Evaluation

Save the Children Sweden has completed an evaluation of Barnahus which you can read here:
<https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/quality-review-23-swedish-barnahus>

References

https://childhub.org/system/tdf/what_is_barnahus_and_how_it_works.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=27787

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