

# P R O M I S E

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## Mapping child participation in Barnahus in Europe

Survey results 2021



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We would like to thank Terre des hommes, Regional office for Europe for their contribution in the elaboration of this Mapping Report.

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# Mapping Child Participation in Barnahus in Europe

At the PROMISE 3 project kick-off in May 2020, a large number of project partners and PROMISE Barnahus network members expressed their high interest in ensuring that the voices of children were properly sought through their journey in Barnahus. They were also keen to share their own experiences around child participation in their respective countries. In response to this, in May 2020, an informal Child Participation Working Group (CPWG) was set up with the overall purpose to promote a participatory culture in Barnahus through exchange, dialogue, research, capacity-building and development of policy and tools. The CPWG was adopted as a working group of the PROMISE Barnahus Network later in 2020. As first its assignments, the group took onboard to:

*“[Child-friendly justice is a] judicial system where a child is an active participant and not just a passive subject, a judicial system which is not about a child, but with a child.”*

*—/a 17-year-old Serbian boy and an 18-year-old Serbian girl<sup>1</sup>.*

1. Explore the opportunity to **apply the Lundy Model of Child Participation to Barnahus**. The CPWG therefore commissioned Professor Laura Lundy, Dr Mary Mitchell and Dr Louise Hill from Scotland to develop a concept paper<sup>2</sup> which explores ways of embedding child participation in Barnahus across Europe, drawing on the Lundy model. This model encourages decision-makers to address the qualities of rights-based participation using four concepts: Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. They apply to any issue and any decision affecting individual children or children as a group. The current mapping exercise feeds into this concept paper.
2. **Map child participation in Barnahus** to better understand how the voices of children are currently heard and expressed in Barnahus settings in Europe, as a baseline information.

The objective of the current mapping is to identify potential methods and processes that can help the Promise Barnahus Network to further empower children during their journey through Barnahus in an even more meaningful way.

For this purpose, a simple survey questionnaire was prepared by the Regional office of Terre des hommes for Europe, on behalf of the Promise Barnahus Network and in close collaboration with the CPWG. In December 2020, the questionnaire was circulated among the Network members. Eleven responses were received by January 2021 from Barnahus services, as well as centres envisaging to set up a Barnahus service, in the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, England, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Poland and Spain. The survey was answered by a various range of professionals: Case Managers, Barnahus Managers, Leads and Strategic Leads, Assistant Coordinators, Directors, Psychologists, National Therapy Coordinators and Programme Directors.

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<sup>1</sup> See the JUST with children Policy Brief: [http://tdh-europe.org/upload/document/7293/JUST\\_with\\_Children\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_EC\\_Strategy\\_Child\\_Rights.pdf](http://tdh-europe.org/upload/document/7293/JUST_with_Children_Policy_Brief_EC_Strategy_Child_Rights.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See: **Building a Culture of Participation in Barnahus: Implementing Children’s Right to Participate in Decision-Making**, Dr Louise Hill, Professor Laura Lundy & Dr Mary Mitchell, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/publication/participatory-cultures-in-barnahus/>

The questionnaire addressed the following items:

1. When are children's voices sought in their Barnahus journey?
2. What Child Participation methodologies and strategies exist and are currently used?
3. In relation to ethics and accountability, are there any available resources concerning ethical considerations and/or risks associated with child participation?
4. If the voices of children are heard and at which stage of their Barnahus journey (development of the service and/or to evaluating the journey before, during and after the Barnahus service)?
5. How does the service ensure that the Barnahus space is conducive to child participation (people, practices, routines, and surrounding environments within the context of the service: Physical environment, access, waiting area, meeting rooms, interview rooms, etc.)
6. Who in the Barnahus team is required to hear what children have to say?
7. Did the Barnahus services develop and/or conduct trainings on child participation with their teams?
8. How the Barnahus service could ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon appropriately (Impact of child participation, annual reporting, Children Membership, evaluation, etc.)?
9. Are there available audio/video/written information material for children, families, and professionals?
10. Which learnings can be shared related to Child Participation in Barnahus.

# I. Child participation in Barnahus: Cross-cutting issues

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## a. Introduction<sup>3</sup>

Barnahus (which means ‘a house for children’ in Icelandic) is a child-friendly, multi-disciplinary and interagency model responding to child victims and witnesses of violence. From the beginning Barnahus strives to ‘operationalize children’s rights to receive adequate support and protection and to have access to child friendly justice’ (Guðbrandsson 2017, pg. 5). To support the establishment of Barnahus models across Europe in compliance with European and international law, the Promise Barnahus Network developed the [European Barnahus Quality Standards](#). The main principles of these ten standards are:

- Respect for the participatory rights of the child by ensuring that she/he is heard and receives adequate information and support to exercise these rights
- Multi-disciplinary and interagency collaboration during investigations, procedures, diagnostic and needs assessments and service delivery, to avoid retraumatisation and securing outcomes that are in the best interests of the child
- Comprehensive and accessible services that meet the individual and complex needs of the child and her/his non-offending family or caregiver
- Ensuring high professional standards, training and adequate resources for staff working with child witnesses and victims of violence.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has underpinned the development of Barnahus and children’s right to participation, protection and provision of services for children who are victims or witnesses of violence. Children’s right to express views on all matters affecting them, and to have them given due weight, commonly described as child participation, is embodied in Article 12 of the CRC and applies to all children capable of forming a view.

The right to participation is set out explicitly in ***European Barnahus Quality Standard 1.2 - Right to be heard and to receive information: Children’s rights to express their views and to receive information are respected and fulfilled***. This right applies across all aspects of the Barnahus model and specifically highlights CRC Article 12 which states both that the child has the right to express his /her /their views freely and these views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (1) and that the child should be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child (2). In sum this means that any children who are involved with a Barnahus have the right to have express their views and have them given due weight at an individual and collective level.

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<sup>3</sup> Extract from “**Building a Culture of Participation in Barnahus: Implementing Children’s Right to Participate in Decision-Making**”, Dr Louise Hill, Professor Laura Lundy & Dr Mary Mitchell, May 2021. Available at: <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/publication/participatory-cultures-in-barnahus/>

Children's right to participation is further explicitly stipulated in the Barnahus Quality standards:

Standard 1.1 **Best interests of the child** (specific indicator on taking into account the child's views);

Standard 2. **Multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration** (child safeguarding and other internal policies)

Standard 3. **Inclusive Target Group** (access to equitable information and opportunities to express views for children with special needs/disabilities; interpretation);

Standard 4. **Child Friendly environment** (Barnahus is set up to enable children to be heard and receive information)

Standard 5. **Interagency case management** (support person, including a role to ensure continuous information and exchange with the child and non-offending caregivers, child safeguarding);

Standard 6. **Forensic Interviews** (ensuring the right of the child to be heard);

Standard 7. **Medical Examination** (information and child participation);

Standard 8. **Therapeutic Services** (information and child participation);

Standard 9. Capacity building (training of staff);

Standard 10. Prevention (child safeguarding).

## About the Lundy Model of Child Participation

The Lundy Model of Participation is grounded in Article 12 of the CRC, which enshrines the rights of children to express their views on matters that affect them and for their views to be given due weight. The Promise Barnahus Network is envisaging to mainstream the Lundy Model across Barnahus in Europe. The four sequential elements of the model are: 1) Space 2) Voice 3) Audience and 4) Influence:

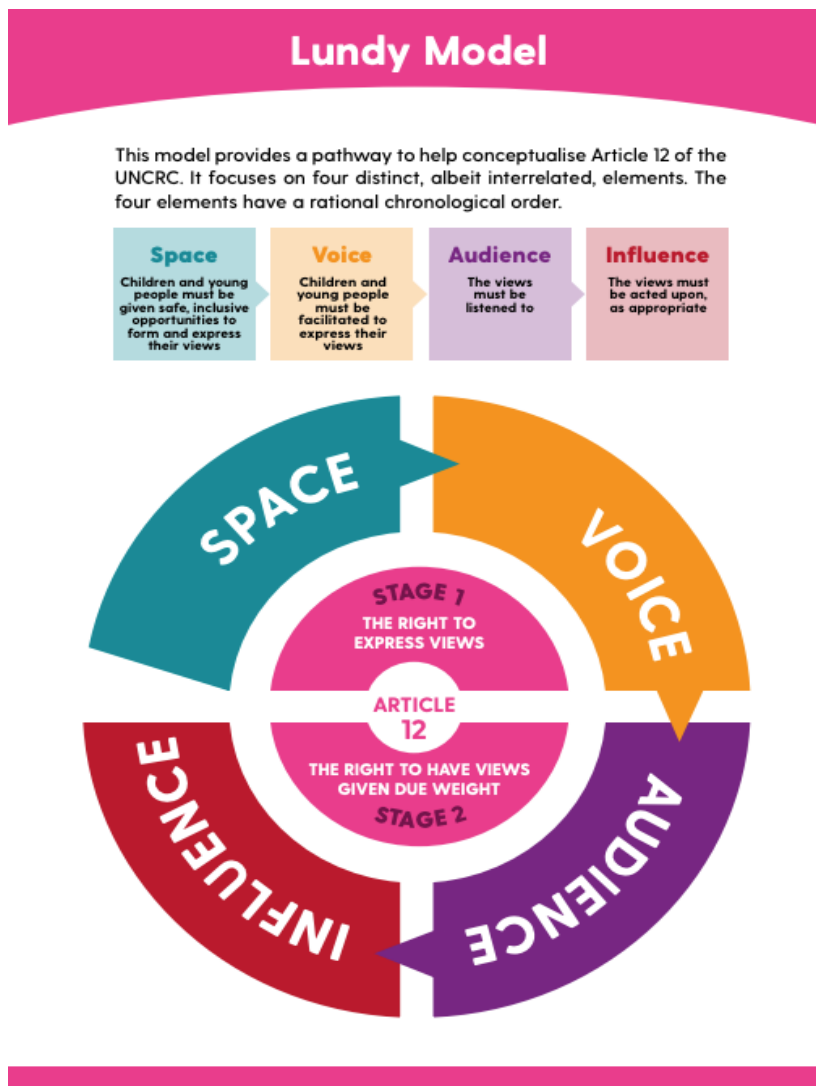


Figure one: The Lundy model as depicted in the Irish National Child Participation Framework<sup>4</sup>

Respondents were asked about how familiar they were with the actual Model of Child participation. From the 11 responses received, while over half of them (6) mentioned to be familiar with the Model, only 3 of them actually used this model in practice. In other words, 5 Barnahus respondents had no knowledge about the Lundy model and the majority (8) were not using the model in their daily practice at all.

<sup>4</sup> idem

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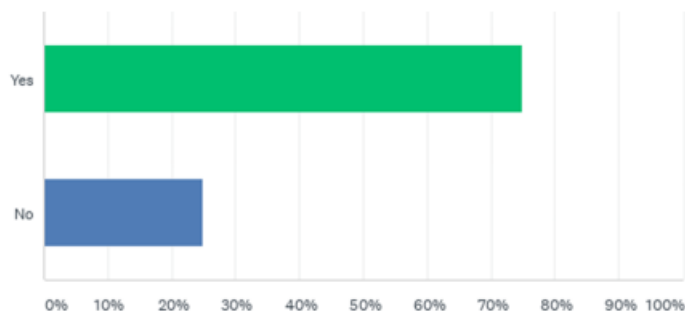
## b. About Child Participation Methodologies and Strategies

### STANDARDS 1.2, 2, 5 & 10

The survey explored to what extent the Barnahus services had developed internal child participation methodologies and/or strategies.

**Q3: Child Participation Methodologies & Strategies**  
Do you have internal child participation methodologies and/or strategies? If YES, kindly list them and provide links when available

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



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While the large majority of the respondents (9) shared that they did have such methodologies and/or strategies, some means to get children to participate were mentioned, meaning that it existed in practice. The explanations detailed by respondents under this survey question show a variety of modalities ranging from:

- A written organisational **child participation strategy** with clear guidelines on how to implement child participation (Bulgaria, Ireland)
- A Barnahus **Participation Reference Group**, which is an interagency reference group which oversees participation activities within Barnahus (Ireland)
- The organisation's **Internal procedures** making child participation obligatory at all stages of the project management cycle (surveys and focus groups with children, social awareness campaigns or educational campaigns addressing children and youth, researches seek children's perspectives on their lives/violence/etc) (Poland)
- **Children and Young People's forums**, a **Digital Youth Forum**, a **Board for Children** or **Youth Board**, who continuously meet to consult decisions and services that are necessary to them and their peers. Children are in these structures asked to give their opinions on issues related to the Barnahus governance, on how to make assessments and treatment processes more child friendly and what to change in the Barnahus services. In some cases, children and young people became a spokespersons for children and youth needs and mental health and included in various child abuse prevention activities. (Albania, England, Poland, Croatia)

In addition, for the organisations that considered they did not have such a fixed strategy or methodology, some respondents considered that this should be improved, while others shared the ways in which children are asked to express their views in their Barnahus journey. Among the suggestions listed, it is worth mentioning the following child participation structures and mechanisms:

- The use of **consent forms** and **satisfaction surveys** to be filled in by children (Spain, Poland)
- Participation of children in **interviewing** panels, **feedback** mechanisms and **external evaluations** (England)



- Invitation of children to develop **artwork** for the Barnahus service (England)
- In Albania, child participation has also been sought through the establishment of **Youth Parliaments** in some selected cities, for example, which, as part of their portfolio, are consulted periodically on the services provided by Barnahus; as well as a National Youth Network, a network composed of youth organizations throughout Albania working with children, young people and adolescents to increase their participation in every decision-making process at both local and central level.

## c. About Ethics and Accountability

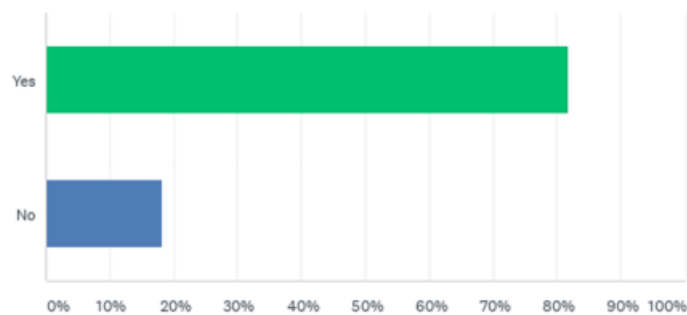
### STANDARDS 1.2, 2, 5 & 10

When asked about the existence of written resources (guidelines, protocols, commitments, etc) on ethical considerations and/or risks associated to child participation, from the 10 responses received, the majority (8) answered that they indeed had such documentation available.

#### Q4: Ethics and Accountability

Do you have any written resources (guidelines, protocols, commitments, etc) related to ethical considerations and/or risks associated to child participation. If YES, kindly list them here.

Answered: 11 Skipped: 1



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For three organisations, these considerations were a „Barnahus-specific” documentation, mainly integrated as a core element of the organisation’s child safeguarding policies, child participation strategy, a child and youth protection policy, or the commitments from caregivers of the children involved in the children and youth boards (Ireland, Albania, Bulgaria).

One respondent (Albania) detailed the content of its child and youth protection policy by mentioning the following (edited):

*“This internal document is known and signed by every staff member of [the organisation] in order to protect the highest interest of children and young people who receive services or participate in BARNAHUS. The policy consists of:*

- *Clear rules on how the staff working in the centre as well as each volunteer or other member should behave during their stay in the organisation and their direct work with children.*
- *This document obliges every employee, volunteer or member to sign a document where he/she declares that he/she has no criminal record, in order to protect every child who receives service from Barnahus*
- *This Policy includes the development of training with staff or volunteers on the policy itself, on the role and responsibilities that each person should have in the office and most importantly determines the rules and steps to be followed at the moment that a child is participating in activities organised by Barnahus*
- *This policy contains in itself the protocol of conduct. Every person (staff or volunteer) who will be in contact with children or young people must sign the code of conduct. Also, before organising an activity where young people or children will be part of, the staff should inform the parents/legal guardian and take the written consent. In other activities, in which schools are also involved, the staff should inform the principal of the school about the participation of students and give detailed information.*
- *Based on this policy, no child can be involved in the activity of Barnahus without the signature of the consent document by the parent and no photo can be taken during the activity without obtaining the written consent of the parent.*
- *Based on this policy, when the child has to leave school to attend a Barnahus activity or meeting, the agreement form must be signed in advance by the school principal.”*

For the other seven respondents, these considerations were either non existing or deriving from the countries' legislations relating to child protection and safeguarding.

It is noteworthy to mention however that most respondents linked this question to matters relating to child safeguarding, while ethics and accountability can go beyond as well.

## II. Space: How conducive is the Barnahus environment?

### STANDARDS 1.2, 3, 4 & 6

In relation to SPACE, the survey aimed to explore how Barnahus services were conducive to child participation (people, practices, routines and surrounding environments within the context of the service). All respondents mentioned several features which, in their opinion, made the space child friendly. The characteristics they cited can be grouped around the following 5 themes: easy access, stress-reducing equipment, comfortable and child-friendly setting, building confidence and age-appropriate features:

- **Easy access:** short distance to walk through the service; various child-friendly physical spaces identified throughout the service; dedicated space/room/area to meet with the child; a dedicated waiting area for children; mascots used for signage throughout Barnahus.
- **Stress-reducing equipment:** fidget toys, mascots, teddy bears, books and magazines; anti-stress balls, plants and soft chairs in interview rooms; Internet access is available; creative corner with artwork designed by children; special therapy room for young children with sand therapy, art therapy, play therapy and relaxation; preferring natural light to clinical lighting.
- **Comfortable and child-friendly setting:** rooms - including therapy rooms - designed according to age group (*i.e.* children could choose wall colours, artwork in waiting area, furniture types, pictures. etc.), Waiting area for children and adolescents are designed by our Youth Board, refreshments, natural light, plants, soft chairs or comfortable sofas.
- **Building confidence:** *photo board* containing information on Barnahus staff; staff not wearing uniforms or lanyards at work; use of name badges for staff with first name on it; trained/specialised professionals involved, trained on child development or child psychology; child meets the interviewer before the interview; serving refreshments (cookies and juices); children asked about his/her experience at the end of the interview; information material for parents is available; information material and a library available for children where they can access materials, books, flyers which are related to the protection of children and young people from any form of violence; devices that enable the screening of documentaries and sensitization videos for children and young people; children offered choice to make appointments.
- **Age-appropriate features:** two waiting rooms depending on the age of the child; age-appropriate toys; child-sized and age-appropriate furniture; specially dedicated interviewing, therapy rooms and waiting rooms.

Last but not least, several respondents indicated that children from various age groups had been consulted for: the design and organisation of the Barnahus space, to design the artwork to be displayed, to advice on lighting, among others.

It is also noteworthy to mention that one respondent shared that despite the child-friendliness of the service, usage of this space was dependent on the decision of the judge who might want to hear the child in the courtroom. Another respondent mentioned that Barnahus police officers visited the Barnahus units where children were interviewed to check how child-friendly and safe the spaces were.

### III. Voice: When and how are voices of children heard?

#### STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9

In relation to VOICE, the survey aimed to explore when and how children’s voices were listened to in relation to the development of the service and for evaluating the journey of the child before, during and after the Barnahus service.

#### In relation to when children’s voices were sought

**Q2: When are children's voices sought? When thinking of the Barnahus Model and the Quality Standards, please indicate at which level you include children's voices before, during and after the Barnahus service. You can tick as many boxes as relevant.**

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
In Barnahus' Governance Structure, including the review of Barnahus Quality Standards	41.67%	5
To set up a Barnahus Service	66.67%	8
During criminal investigations (forensic interviews, court hearings)	75.00%	9
During physical health examinations, treatments and referrals	91.67%	11
When providing Protection services (individual assessments, exploratory interviews)	75.00%	9
During mental health assessments, treatments and referrals	91.67%	11
When conducting coordination/MDIA interventions	33.33%	4
To evaluate the performance of a Barnahus Service	41.67%	5
Other, please specify	8.33%	1
Total Respondents: 12		

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The responses revealed that children’s voices are systematically sought during physical health examinations and mental health assessments, treatments and referrals. They are almost always sought during criminal investigations, while providing protection services and while setting up a Barnahus service.

Responses were more divergent in relation to having children expressing their views in Barnahus Governance structures, to evaluate the performance of the Service or when conducting MDIA interventions. In these cases, less than half of the respondents indicated that children played an active role.

In the responses provided, emphasis was given on the following to really “move at the child’s pace”:

- Internal strategies or methodologies required in some cases to consult with children throughout the service development process.
- For forensic interviews and medical examinations in particular, in order to make the child feel safe and in charge of their body, he/she attends them **only if he/she agrees to do so**, knowing that the child can stop the interview/examination at any time. The forensic medical team moves at the child's pace and if the child is reluctant to engage in intimate examination there is an option to self-sample (Ireland, Iceland).
- Recording of interviews is foreseen for various services (forensic, protection, mental health assessment, etc).

*“When coordinating MDIA interventions, the views of the child are asked during interagency meetings and this is used to influence intervention planning. Interventions move at the child's pace and we often advocate for additional liaison with the child if they are feeling left out of planning etc. For example, we have often requested that a police liaison person is appointed to ensure that the child feels informed about the criminal investigation process at all times. We are also currently developing a partnership with family support services and an external advocacy service to ensure that the voice of the child is heard in any procedures relating to them.”*

— Quote from Barnahus Galway.

One respondent in Iceland shared about the evolution of child participation since the beginning of the Barnahus Service, explaining how child participation shifted from expression through drawings on the walls to consolidating a group of young people to meet with ministers and share their thoughts about how to improve the Barnahus service.

## **In relation to how children’s voices were sought**

The respondents to the survey shared a wide range of ways in which they seek the voices of children:

### **▪ Children and Youth Boards**

Children and young people are asked to give their opinions about assessments and treatments processes. Through Child Boards, Youth Boards and Forums, children and young people can be directly involved in consultations and periodic meetings on the development of a new Barnahus service, as well as for the improvement of existing services (Albania, England), or approving the organisation’s Participation strategy (Ireland).

### **▪ Continuous information provided throughout service delivery**

Information to children is provided directly to children – through leaflets but also verbally, including in children’s local languages where possible –at the beginning and during the interview, as part of medical examinations and therapeutic assessments (about the Barnahus, child’s rights, who is present in the back room listening etc.) (Finland, Spain, Albania, Ireland, Iceland, England). Information to children can also be provided via their parents, through leaflets handed out before the interview, in order to guide them on how to discuss the meeting with their children.

Some Barnahus centres were in the process of developing a website for smaller children and for teenagers, to provide them with information about how the Service operates. Children's voices are also sought to develop written information material (leaflets, brochures, etc.) for children. (Poland)

One respondent mentioned that sensitive information (e.g. information about sexual health) is made available in quiet spaces in Barnahus (e.g. in toilets) so that children can access them out of sight of others (Ireland).

### ▪ **Creating comfortable conditions for the child to express their views**

The space in which the child is heard by the interviewer is conducive. The interviewer, trained in child development, asks if the child has any anxiety and if they would ask any questions before the interview. Often the child has met the person from CPS and their legal advocate before they come to Barnahus and they have the opportunity to get all information about the interview and ask questions. In the interview, the interviewer also lets them know about the people watching, their legal right not to disclose if the offender is in near relations with the child like father/mother, stepparents, grandfather/grandmother or sibling. The child can play with the camera. (Iceland)

In Spain, children's voices are heard before talking to his/her parents.

### ▪ **Recording interviews with children**

Several respondents mentioned that interviews or sessions with children were recorded, so that the child did not have to disclose his/her story again. In some countries, children under the age of 15 do not have to testify in court; they do it in Barnahus when the case is still in its pre-trial investigation phase (Iceland, Spain).

### ▪ **Preparing the child, sharing information about the process**

The majority of respondents referred to carefully preparing the child for his/her journey through Barnahus. Children are informed about what is going to happen, how and why, and they could even in some cases choose a social worker or the psychologist when possible (Bulgaria). This information ranged from documenting the child's opinion, making child-friendly therapeutic books available, to negotiating the various steps throughout Barnahus with the child and asking children to feedback at various stages on the service they received. (Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain, Iceland). In some countries (Ireland for example), children can be offered a tour through Barnahus, a staff member will offer to visit the child at home if they are nervous about attending the service, and children's information leaflets were at the time of answering the survey being developed by a group of young people to be sent to children in advance of attending Barnahus. In England, children can find on the website a virtual floorplan in the style of Minecraft to show them around the site.

## ▪ Feedback mechanisms

Several respondents referred to a feedback or evaluation mechanism in place to ask the child about the service that they have received (Poland, Spain, Finland). Some respondents recognised that this was either not systematically done, that participants did not systematically fill the feedback form, or that the feedback methodology was not always fully developed. Verbal feedback (Finland) or written feedback through anonymous questionnaires or surveys (Poland, Ireland) was sought from the child. It was also mentioned that using the NICHD protocol is expected to facilitate the children's own voice (Finland).

In some cases, the respondent mentioned that individual feedbacks are reviewed on an annual basis with a view to improve the service and to provide information to decision-makers (Bulgaria).

## ▪ Training staff to communicate with children

Capacity building has been mentioned as a key component on how to best communicate with children. Child participation training is made available for all Barnahus staff and is compulsory for many. For children with communication difficulties, information is sought from other professionals in order to support communication (e.g. adaptations as recommended by Speech and Language Therapy) (Ireland).

*“It is also worth noting that during the provision of the services, children and young people are constantly asked about the suitability of the service provided and if they would like to change something or if they would like would that something would be better adapted to their specific needs.”*

— Quote from Albania

## IV. Audience: Who is required to hear what children say?

### STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9

In relation to AUDIENCE, the survey aimed to explore not only who is required to hear what children have to say in the journey through Barnahus, but also if the service has developed and/or conducted trainings on child participation with their teams.

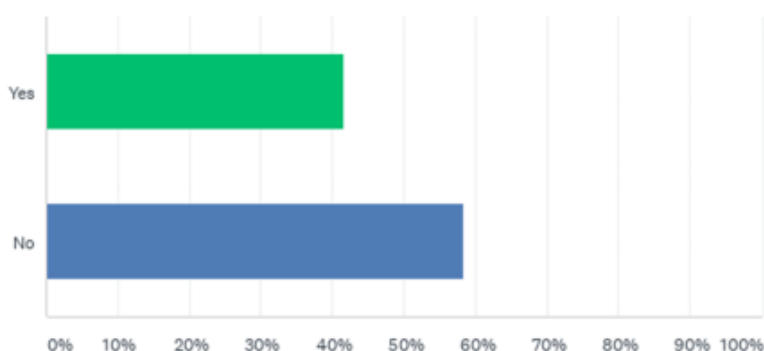
A variety of staff has been cited by the respondents as playing a role in hearing the child:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A psychologist, in some cases also the interviewer, in some cases also acting as case manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's lawyer</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consulting psychologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Therapist when required</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front line staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police officer who is in charge of the investigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Barnahus research and evaluation department</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A child psychiatrist/paediatrician</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Care workers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Barnahus Participation Reference Group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The heads of service, the service manager, the strategic lead, the senior partners who sit on the delivery board, the commissioners who agree to funding the service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professionals involved outside of Barnahus</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth, Children Boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Barnahus Staff</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents boards</li> </ul>	

#### Q10: In relation to AUDIENCE: Capacity Building

Have you developed and/or conducted trainings on child participation with your teams? If YES, could you please elaborate your response and share available material which could be of interest for other Barnahus Centres/Houses?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 0



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In terms of **capacity building** efforts, just over half of the respondents (6) had not developed and/or conducted specialised trainings for their staff (*i.e.* on child participation or child development). Respondents recognised that this should be done systematically throughout Barnahus services, that, when it was provided, this was not always part of a continuous training programme for staff, but rather as a one-off training event, as part of an externally funded project or programme. To strengthen the skills of their staff, Barnahus centres were offering the following:

- Dedicated sessions of the organisations' annual meeting to child participation
- One respondent mentioned that its staff had received a one-off training on the Lundy Model of Child participation
- One respondent, while not having set an actual capacity building programme, shared that they had developed for this purpose good practice protocols for court professionals which will be made available to the public online.
- One respondent shared that a Barnahus-specific child participation training was at the time of responding to the survey being developed. Pre-existing training is available to all staff, which is compulsory for employees in Barnahus.
- One respondent shared that their service received a series of trainings on child participation (methodology, safety, involvement of children, advocacy, rights of the child, violence against children, case assessment, reporting sexual violence, case management, etc). They also had developed a specific training series for psychologists.

## V. Influence: How are children's views taken seriously?

### STANDARDS 1.1, 1.2, 5, 6, 7 & 8

In relation to INFLUENCE, the survey aimed to explore whether children's views were given due weight in accordance with their age, maturity, and circumstances and how they received feedback about their views at Barnahus services.

Respondents provided examples taken from their practice demonstrating how children's views were taken seriously at governance level, during service implementation, but also for monitoring, evaluation and communication purposes. Despite the mentioned promising practices, some of the respondents indicated that **further improvement in this area was needed, including a more structured system** within their services. **to give even more weight to children's views.**

#### Accountability at Governance level

- The views of children are taken into account when developing strategies, action plans for service development or producing the organisation's annual report. The annual report can include reference to how the Participation Strategy has been implemented (Ireland). Children's voices are either incorporated into the annual report (England, Croatia) or an annual report is drafted by the children and young people themselves (Croatia).
- Feedback of children and young people is presented to the management team on a quarterly basis and action plans put in place to respond to their feedback; they can also participate in interview panels (England).
- Children's views are shared with policymakers in order to influence policy changes (Bulgaria).
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#### Service implementation

- Children's views influence the planning of the intervention, the way sessions are conducted and the manner in which a service is designed (Bulgaria, Albania). The child's opinion is included in the reports that are testimonies in the court.
- The views of children are sought from the early stages of service conception (Albania)
- Children's views are discussed by the whole Barnahus team on a case by case basis and they are acted upon (Finland).
- Children who participate in the Children and Youth Boards have influenced concretely the waiting area design, the information contained in the information leaflets, the way to communicate with children prior to coming to entering the Service (Croatia).
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#### Monitoring and Evaluation

- Children's views are included in the organisation's evaluation mechanisms (Poland) or the principles of participation are to be incorporated into the Barnahus Research Strategy to ensure that children are involved in outcome measurement as well as the research process. (Ireland)
- Satisfaction surveys are reviewed and analysed annually to take into account children's suggestions for service improvements (Spain)
- Children and young people are interviewed by external evaluators from a University (England); The Participation Strategy is reviewed by an external expert on child participation (Ireland).
- An annual evaluation report is drafted by the children and young people themselves to measure impact of the Service (Croatia).

## **Child-led communication**

- Any information material produced by Barnahus is reviewed and approved by young people (Ireland).
- Children and young people are actively involved in the development of information and advocacy campaigns led by the Barnahus Service (Albania).

## VI. Resources: What information material is available on Child Participation?

### STANDARDS 1.2, 5, 3 & 10

Barnahus Respondents were asked if they had developed any specific audio/video/written information material for families, professionals and/or children:

- From the 11 responses received, a large majority of respondents (9) had available material for families
- From the 11 responses received, a majority of respondents (7) had available material for professionals
- From the 11 responses received, just over half of the respondents (6) had developed child-specific material.
- A few respondents mentioned that information material for children was at the time of this survey being developed and/or translated.

**In relation to information material for children**, respondents mentioned: information leaflets, brochures, child-made YouTube videos, child-friendly therapeutic books, videos made by professionals. The themes covered by this material were: the child's journey in Barnahus, therapeutic services, emotional wellbeing, physical health, forensic interviews.

**In relation to information material for families**, respondents mentioned: a library for families, information leaflets, questionnaires for caregivers, posters, invitations to meetings. The themes covered by this material were: the investigation process, the Barnahus units, a guide on forensic psychology.

**In relation to information material for professionals**, respondents mentioned: website sections for professionals, brochures about the investigation process and the Barnahus unit, leaflets, guides, briefings to staff. The themes covered by this material were: investigation process, Barnahus units, guide on forensic interviews, individual assessments, Barnahus referral process.

In addition, respondents also mentioned in relation to available resources on child participation:

- Their involvement in projects which led to the publication of **studies, evaluation reports and awareness-raising materials** to empower professionals and organizations when working with children and young people, in order to increase the participation of children and young people in various decision-making activities.<sup>5</sup>
- Video and written information on the **Barnahus referral process including guidance on consent.**

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<sup>5</sup> Resources can be shared upon request to the PROMISE Network.

## VII. Learnings and Promising Practices: Some useful insights

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### a. Some Learnings

Respondents shared useful learnings and promising practices around child participation in Barnahus. Among the learnings shared, respondents mentioned the following:

#### About the Lundy Model of Child Participation

- The Lundy model is highly helpful in supporting us to formulate the organisation's "Participation Strategy".

#### About child participation oversight and professional involvement

- To avoid divergent interpretations of what participation can mean and the concept of true participation, oversight is needed. Therefore, designating a **focal person/group with responsibility and authority**, or any equivalent oversight process, will assist in promoting participation practices in Barnahus.
- All **four dimensions** of child participation (voice, audience, influence, space) are interlinked - participation is linear.
- The program, through the psychologist's contact with the minors, obtains information about the interests of the children and is used to adapt the interventions.
- The **role of the psychologist** is key to better understand the best interests of the child.

#### About child empowerment

- Respondents emphasised the benefits of an **active involvement** of children in the process. They also mentioned the importance to better understand **children's feelings, how children see** the system, and of **feeling valued** throughout the process. For example, it is advisable to consider **training the children** and young people who express their views in **co-designing** Barnahus activities and/or events.

#### About child empowerment and Barnahus Governance

- Children's participation can lead to **real service improvement** (Iceland). There are real benefits to involve Youth Parliaments and have children meet with Ministers when possible.
- The setting up of **Children and/or Youth Boards** to act as advisory mechanisms helps to make processes more child friendly. These boards have in some occasions been involved in study visits, in producing video and theatre material on children's rights or participated to round tables events (Albania, Croatia).
- One respondent advised to consider a payment for the young people who were actively involved in participation schemes, as a form of gratification (England).

*"It is very important to listen to children. My experience in Barnahus has also given me a lot of information about children feelings and how they see things in our systems. I have presented that towards Ministries and rulers and even hold many lectures for judges, prosecutors, the police and other professionals working with children and helping them to understand best interest of children."*

— Ólöf Ásta Farestveit,  
Leader of Barnahus, Iceland

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## b. Some Promising Practices

Survey respondents finally shared the following promising practices, which could inspire current Barnahus, newly established or Barnahus-to-be centres when considering integrating child participation processes and mechanisms with their services:

- An Interagency Reference Group that oversees child participation (Northern Ireland)
- A Children’s Board, a Youth Board and a Parents’ Board involved in the Barnahus Governance (Croatia)
- Professionals not wearing uniforms in Barnahus services (Iceland)
- BARNAHUS Albania has developed a series of trainings with psychologists. This cycle of trainings has been made in the framework of the National Community of Psychologists in Albania, which is created by BARNAHUS Albania in cooperation with Psychologist Order in Albania. Trainings have been focused on the work for the protection of children and young people from sexual violence. Currently the manuals and the studies are only in hard copy which we can be shared by email.
- Child participation can be ensured through drafting the Barnahus annual report led by the children themselves in which the provision of the services for child protection, including sexual violence, as well as the assessment of the institutions in local and central level, has been analysed. (Albania).

*“The child needs to have the feeling that he/she is in charge of their body.”*

*— Ólöf Ásta Farestveit,  
Leader of Barnahus, Iceland*



# P R O M I S E

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## Implementing the Barnahus Quality Standards throughout Europe

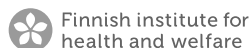
PROMISE is supporting Europe to adopt the Barnahus model as a standard practice for providing child victims and witnesses of violence rapid access to justice and care. We undertake this work to fulfil the PROMISE vision: a Europe where all children enjoy their right to be protected from violence.

A Barnahus provides multi-disciplinary and interagency collaboration to ensure that child victims and witnesses of violence benefit from a child-friendly, professional and effective response in a safe environment which prevents (re)traumatisation. With the formal support from national authorities, PROMISE provides opportunities to translate national commitment into action and engage internationally in the process. In addition, regular networking and strategic communications continually activate our growing network of professionals and stakeholders who are committed to introducing and expanding Barnahus services nationally.

The first PROMISE project (2015-2017) set European standards and engaged a broad network of professionals. The second PROMISE project (2017-2019) promoted national level progress towards meeting the standards and formalised the PROMISE Barnahus Network. The current project (2020-2022) is expand these activities to include University training, case management tools, with a view to establishing a European Competence Centre for Barnahus and laying the groundwork for an accreditation system for Barnahus.

PROMISE is managed by the Children at Risk Unit at the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat.

Access the PROMISE tools and learn more at [www.barnahus.eu](http://www.barnahus.eu)



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