

Bairns' Hoose project plan

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Ministerial Foreword

We have made a clear commitment to deliver an ambitious programme which aims to ensure that all eligible children in Scotland will have access to a 'Bairns' Hoose' by 2025.

This provides Scotland with an opportunity to provide a child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma. Children who have been victims or witnesses of abuse or violence, as well as those under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm, will have access to Bairns' Hoose services. The services they need will all be available through a coordinated approach designed to minimise the number of times children have to recount their experiences to different professionals. This will contribute, for example, to a range of other improvements being made to reduce the need for children to give evidence in court in the most serious of cases, and so reduce the potential of further trauma for child victims and witnesses.

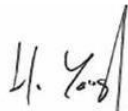
This project plan will help further develop a rights-based Scottish approach to establishing a national Bairns' Hoose model which will be based on the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The model will also be aligned with the Scottish Government's policy programmes of Keep The Promise and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), which seek to recognise that all children must receive the right help at the right time.

We are committed to a partnership approach in the design, delivery, implementation and improvement of the Bairns' Hoose Model recognising that much of the dialogue around design and delivery will be between partners at a local level and through local structures. Strong and effective leadership will be critical, maximising collaboration and establishing trust, as we jointly respond to the complexities of system change in an already uncertain operating environment.

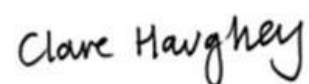
We very much welcome this project plan, which provides the next steps for future work in Scotland to ensure that every child victim/witness will have access to a Bairns' Hoose to receive the support that they need.



Keith Brown
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
and Veterans



Humza Yousaf
Cabinet Secretary for
Health and Social Care



Clare Haughey
Minister for Children
and Young People

Introduction

Barnahus is internationally recognised as an evidence-based model of excellence for children and families. The Barnahus model was established in Iceland in 1998. It seeks to provide a trauma-informed response to child victims and witnesses of serious and traumatic crimes in a familiar and non-threatening setting.

The international model has at its heart 4 key principles:

- respect for the participatory rights of the child by ensuring they are heard and receive information and support to exercise their rights
- multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration during investigations and procedures with the aim of avoiding re-traumatisation and securing outcomes that are in the best interests of the child
- comprehensive, accessible services to meet the complex, individual needs of the child and their non-offending family or caregivers
- ensuring high professional standards, training and resources for those working with child victims and witnesses.

Strategic context

As highlighted in [A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Programme for Government 2021-22](#), the Scottish Government aims to ensure that all eligible children who are victims or witnesses to abuse or violence will have access to the services of a 'Bairns' Hoose' by 2025.

That means the services they need will all be available via a coordinated approach designed to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences to different professionals.

Children below the age of criminal responsibility, whose behaviour has caused harm, will also have access to the support and recovery services it will provide.

The [Bairns' Hoose Vision](#) sets out in broad terms our vision of how Barnahus should be implemented in Scotland, the values which should underpin the model and our approach to its practical implementation.

The Scottish approach to Barnahus

We will continue to work with key stakeholders, and children and young people, to develop a rights-based Scottish approach to establishing a national Bairns' Hoose model which reflects all relevant policy and legislative developments across children's services, justice and health and social care in Scotland. This will be based on the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and aligned with the Scottish Government's policy programmes of Keep The Promise and Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), which seek to recognise that all children must receive the right help at the right time.

Scale of ambition

The timetable to achieve the Programme for Government commitment by 2025 is hugely ambitious, in particular given the level of consultation and detailed policy development that will be required; the scale of potential legislative change, potential identification, purchasing and repurposing of physical sites, scale of change in

service delivery and workforce resource required and the need to pilot before national delivery.

It will be a challenging journey requiring total commitment, careful planning, extensive collaborative working, potentially new legislation, and appropriate resource.

For children who are likely to be witnesses in the criminal justice system, the model will be more closely aligned with the framework that already exists in Scotland, for example through the Vulnerable Witness (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019 and the use of pre-recorded evidence of child witnesses in the most serious of criminal cases. Our aim is to create a child-friendly and trauma-informed Bairns' Hoose, which, as far as possible, we would also look to develop in line with related initiatives, such as the recommendations from the [Evidence and Procedure Review](#).

For children who are victims or witnesses of matters relating to child protection (sometimes as well as being witnesses in the criminal justice system), Bairns' Hooses will be equally as important.

We are already considering if the developing Standards would require a statutory underpinning, and what that would mean in practice, as a means of ensuring consistency of approach across Scotland, or whether that policy aim would be better achieved through collaboration and consensus, such as an agreed Protocol. A consultation on the standards will be held in late summer 2022 and consideration will be given to whether there is significant benefit in looking to place the standards on a statutory footing.

Delivery of the model within rural and island settings "Under one roof" is likely to present specific localised challenges. In response, pathways may need to be developed for island and rural locations, which would include putting significant contracts in place between local authorities or health boards. A full range of impact assessments will be conducted, including the Island Communities Impact Assessment. Significant work will be required to ensure 'consistent' services across the country to reflect the findings (including flexibility to tailor to locality, situation etc.) to make sure the service is fit-for-purpose.

Whilst there are significant benefits of having all services under one roof, there are, a number of challenges that require to be overcome to reach the point where this is possible. These include the carrying out of forensic medical examinations outwith Health Board facilities and this may not be an appropriate model for Scotland. Further work will be required with the health sector to explore this area.

Leadership and Ownership

One of the critical early discussions will be around leadership and ownership, recognising the drivers within the Scottish Government's Programme for Government and where statutory responsibility currently rests with some of the envisaged component parts of the Bairns' Hoose proposal. While it is anticipated that this relationship will develop during the course of the project plan, it will also help to shape broader considerations around longer term resource commitments and requirements, and future related policy development.

Governance

An early action is the establishment of a national Bairns' Hoose Governance Group and related workstreams. It is anticipated that this Group will develop close links to existing Scottish Government programmes of activity but will retain an element of objectivity through the appointment of a Chair who will be independent of Ministers. Conversely its work will also be reflected within the remit of other related Scottish Government and external working groups.

Bairns' Hoose Governance Group

The focus of the Group will be to provide the necessary specialist input and strategic governance to promote and support the development of an evidence-based, comprehensive, child-friendly national Bairns' Hoose model for Scotland. The Group will provide policy and practice expertise to support the development, shape testing and piloting of the Bairns' Hoose, and offer oversight for the Scottish Barnahus standards development.

The membership of the group will bring together cross-sector representation from justice, health, children's services, and third sector stakeholder partners, along with academia and subject matter specialists.

Connectedness

As noted earlier, our approach to developing a national Bairns' Hoose model will reflect all relevant current and developing policy and legislative developments across children's services, justice and health and social care in Scotland.

A key element of this will be embedding the new model for Joint Investigative Interview within the Bairns' Hoose - the Scottish Child Interview Model - and being aware of wider developments around the use of pre-recorded evidence in the most serious of cases. Our work to explore the Barnahus concept in Scotland in line with the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019 is an important factor in that consideration.

We will work to align the Bairns' Hoose with

- the GIRFEC national practice model
- our commitment to the UNCRC and to Keep The Promise

and the implementation of

- the revised National Child Protection Guidance
- the Clinical pathway for Children and Young People who may have experienced sexual abuse.
- the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019
- the Forensic Medical Services (Scotland) Act 2021
- the Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) (Scotland) Act 2019

We will also ensure that developments align with any proposed changes to children's services in the review of the national care system, should children's services be included.

Progress to date

We have commissioned Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate to develop Scotland-specific standards for our approach based on the European PROMISE Quality Standards. In September 2021 they held a Symposium event and published a Foundations report to celebrate the pace and development of children's rights, recovery and justice in Scotland, and to explore the foundations on which we will build Scotland's Barnahus. The Standards Development Group has been reconvened to develop draft standards for consultation next summer. These will be published by the end of 2022.

To coincide with the Symposium event we published our [Bairns' Hoose Vision](#). Also in September 2021, we announced over £2m funding for the national rollout of the Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviews. The new model of interviews will represent one of the key functions of the Bairns' Hoose, and will deliver a ground-breaking approach that secures the child's best evidence at the earliest opportunity and minimises the risk of further retraumatisation. Continuous improvement in the quality and professionalism of these interviews can lead to their increased use as a child's evidence in chief in criminal proceedings.

The development of the new Scottish Child Interview Model has been a truly collective endeavour, and a tremendous example of what can be achieved when there is a clear and agreed ambition.

The Plan

Early actions

The following actions set out the immediate next steps to realise the above ambition over the next 3 - 6 months.

- Establish Strategic Governance
- Develop and publish a participation and engagement plan for lived experience children and young people
- With justice partners identify challenges and develop a route map through the justice system to enable the delivery of the aims of the Bairn's Hoose
- Engage with key stakeholders to identify the potential number of Bairns' Hoose' required to ensure access for all children in line with our Programme for Government commitment
- Map out the related operational and policy connections with existing Scottish Government working groups and forums

Collaborative approach

The Barnahus Model provides Scotland with an opportunity to provide a child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma. A co-ordinated and collaborative approach across justice, health and children's services, and third sector partners will be essential to achieving this.

Strong and effective leadership will be critical from all partners, maximising collaboration and establishing trust, as we jointly respond to the complexities of system change in children's services. We will continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders to overcome barriers and problem solve critical questions.

We are committed to a partnership approach in the design, delivery, implementation and improvement of the Bairns' Hoose Model recognising that much of the dialogue around design and delivery will be between partners at a local level and through local structures.

The successful collaborative working and national roll out of the Scottish Child Interview Model for the Joint Investigative Interview (JII) programme will be a cornerstone of Bairns' Hoose. We can benefit from the learning as it continues to be implemented, in particular around provision in rural and remote and island settings.

We are committed to ensuring that children and families' experiences will be at the centre of our work and will influence the design and development of a national model in a way that is trauma informed, meaningful and connected. One of the early considerations of the national Governance Group will be to determine the best and most accessible structure to hear and learn from the views and experiences of children and young people and their families. This will be an early action for the Group and will be reflected in our Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Plan.

Actions

The following actions set out the next steps over the next 6 - 12 months.

- implement participation and engagement plan for lived-experience children and young people
- develop a child-friendly version of the participation and engagement plan
- develop and publish a Partner engagement plan.

Physical infrastructure

Bairns' Hoose will bring together services in a 'four rooms' approach with child protection, health, justice and recovery services all made available in one setting. A key element of Barnahus is the child friendly setting and the whole team around the child.

The location, type of premises and layout are all important factors in ensuring children can access the services in a safe, welcoming and homely environment. Potential Bairns' Hooses may be developed from an existing service or set up in a purpose-built or refurbished property. The key factor across all potential sites is the ability to provide a safe, neutral and age appropriate environment that reflects the needs of all children, and their families, who use the service.

Our approach will be to develop test sites (and to encourage the participation of those multi-agency sites currently active and/or planning to be operating) and capture learning from a pilot programme on a targeted basis before scaling up nationally, informed by emerging practice developments, in line with other European models.

Actions

The following actions set out the next steps over the next 6 - 12 months.

- establish relevant workstreams within governance structure to take actions forward
- engage with COSLA and other statutory partners to explore existing estate for potential test site development and local plans for Bairns' Hoose style initiatives and to map out potential Bairns' Hooses across local partnership areas
- assess existing and proposed JII/SCIM sites for commonality of Bairns' Hoose components and principles
- develop and carry out surveys to include assessment and analysis of:
 - site location and overview
 - services and access
 - workforce
 - multi-Agency working/governance
 - resourcing
 - data and evaluation
- carry out scoping site visits of relevant existing multi-agency initiatives both within Scotland and outside
- scope out and invite areas to become test sites
- develop indicators for test site modelling and evaluation model
- develop and publish plans for test sites including costings
- develop test sites for pilot delivery
- establish a good practice learning forum for test sites.

Service development

The Barnahus model provides Scotland with an opportunity to provide a genuinely child-centred approach to delivering justice, care and recovery for children who have experienced trauma, including but not only, child sexual abuse. That means the services they need will all be available via a coordinated approach designed to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences to different professionals.

The Scottish approach to Barnahus will be based on the European Barnahus Quality Standards. Ministers have agreed that overarching principles are essential, with flexibility for local delivery partners to adapt the model for their local context, underpinned by national standards which will provide a framework for a Barnahus model in Scotland. This will ensure a consistency in the child's experience, with flexibility for local delivery partners to adapt the model to suit local circumstances in recognising that it may not always be feasible to co-locate all relevant services. Close collaboration across agencies and between local partnerships is a pre-requisite for development, implementation and evaluation of the approach.

Barnahus proposals will continue to observe the Lord Advocate's independent role as head of the system of investigation and prosecution of crime in Scotland. The model will be compatible with the independent responsibilities of police, prosecutors and the judiciary.

The work undertaken to enhance our approach to Joint Investigative Interviews, and in particular the roll out of the Scottish Child Interview Model, will continue to ensure that interviews are conducted with the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. This includes scope for this interview to be used as the whole or part of the evidence in chief of a child, if an application for the relevant special measure is made by the prosecution and granted by the Court.

In some cases, it may be necessary to ask the child some further questions to supplement their evidence in chief. In most cases the child will still require to be asked further questions for the purposes of cross-examination. On the application of the prosecutor these elements of the child's evidence can be pre-recorded by means of "taking of evidence by a commissioner". Evidence "taken by a Commissioner" is evidence that has been pre-recorded in advance, to avoid the need for a witness to appear in Court. For High Court trials, these sessions are presided over by a High Court Judge (the Commissioner), and the witness can be questioned by both the prosecution and the defence. In many instances this will reduce the need to give evidence in Court.

The principles underpinning the Scottish Child Interview Model for Joint Investigative Interviews will be a fundamental aspect of our Bairns' Hoose model. It may also be possible to utilise Bairns' Hooses as a location in which evidence by commissioner in advance of trial could take place, but this may be a longer term ambition.

The following areas are the proposed themes that the standards will cover:

1. Key principles and the rights of the child
2. Collaborative leadership and governance
3. Inclusive access
4. Design and environment
5. Coordinated planning process
6. Investigative interview
7. Involvement in the court and legal processes
8. Health assessment and medical examination
9. Wrap-around care and access to therapeutic support and recovery services
10. Multidisciplinary staff training and support
11. Outreach, sharing knowledge and learning from good practice.

Actions

The following actions set out the next steps over the next 6 - 12 months.

- develop and consult on Barnahus Standards
- publish Barnahus Standards
- embed JII/SCIM model within Barnahus policy
- consult on approach to Barnahus – including what aspects, if any, should be mandated by Scottish Government

12 – 18 months:

- build on learning from the test site survey analysis to develop and agree service delivery model(s)
- develop cost modelling and funding structures
- develop evaluation methodology

- develop and publish delivery plan for pilot programme
- develop information sharing protocol/ agreements
- identify any legislative requirements and/or alternative mechanisms for delivery (potentially standalone primary legislation or part of other Bill commitments)

18 months – 3 years

- deliver pilot
- prepare for developing primary legislation (if required)
- develop and publish guidance
- develop quality assurance plan
- agree the approach to national implementation.

This plan will be subject to ongoing review to reflect emerging learning from test sites, pilot development and international Barnabus developments, wider conversations about how the Bairns' Hoose should work in Scotland, and discussions relating to the scope of the standards.



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