



Child Safeguarding in Barnahus

Guidance

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Acronyms

ICS	International Child Safeguarding Standards
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WHO	World Health Organisation
MoU	Memoranda of Understanding
CSO	Child Safeguarding Officer
CSFP	Child Safeguarding Focal Point

Introduction

Barnahus (Icelandic for “a house for children”) is recognised as a leading child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency model responding to violence against children. The purpose of Barnahus is to offer a coordinated and effective response and to prevent retraumatisation during investigation and court proceedings. One key role of the Barnahus, beyond protection and support for recovery, is to help produce valid evidence for judicial proceedings by eliciting the child’s disclosure so that the child does not have to appear in Court should the case be prosecuted.

In carrying out this role, Barnahus offers a one-stop-shop approach, embracing cooperation between relevant authorities and agencies such as police, social services, child protection, physical and mental health services and prosecutor in one child-friendly premise.

The European Barnahus Quality Standards mark the first effort in Europe to establish clear principles for the interventions and services known as the “Barnahus”. The term Barnahus, meaning “a house for children,” comes from Iceland, where the first such centre was established in 1998. Since then, the model has spread and gained recognition in Europe and beyond.

The way these services are established and organized varies across and sometimes within countries. Differences exist in target populations, the division of roles and responsibilities, and the structure of collaboration with partner agencies delivering core functions. These operational differences highlight the model’s flexibility and the creative ways it has been tailored to fit different legal frameworks, social systems, cultural norms, and professional contexts. This adaptability serves as both an inspiration and a practical guide for those looking to set up a Barnahus. Crucially, Barnahus is not a rigid model but a dynamic, evolving approach designed to meet the complex and changing needs of children who have experienced or witnessed violence.

The Barnahus Quality Standards bring together a set of cross-cutting principles, operational functions, and institutional structures that guide child-friendly, effective, and well-coordinated response to child victims and witnesses of violence. These standards cover a range of essential elements, including:

1. Key principles and Cross-cutting activities
 - 1.1. The best interests of the child
 - 1.2. The child’s right to be heard and informed
 - 1.3. Preventing undue delay in proceedings
2. Multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration
3. Target group definition
4. Creating a child-friendly environment
5. Interagency planning and case management
6. Conducting forensic interviews
7. Medical examinations
8. Provision of therapeutic services
9. Capacity building for professionals
10. Prevention through information sharing and external competence building
11. Child Protection

At the heart of the standards is the goal of preventing retraumatisation of children who have experienced or witnessed violence. This is achieved through child-centred practices, ensuring the child's best interests guide all actions, avoiding repetitive interviews, providing timely and coordinated support, and enabling children to participate meaningfully without being exposed to further harm, such as testifying in court.

These principles are not just guidelines; they set clear expectations. In fact, the Barnahus Quality Standards require that any organisation establishing a Barnahus must have a robust safeguarding framework in place. This framework must be designed to protect children from further harm, both within the Barnahus itself and through the system it operates in. Several key standards are crucial to developing this safeguarding framework:

- Standard 1.1: Best interests of the child, which must guide all decisions and actions.
- Standard 1.2: Children's rights to be heard and to receive information, ensuring respectful, inclusive participation.
- Standard 4: Child-friendly environment, which ensures both physical and emotional safety.
- Standard 9: Capacity building, which ensures all professionals are properly trained in safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches.
- Standard 10: Prevention, which includes building external capacity and sharing safeguarding knowledge with partners and other stakeholders in the system.

Together, these standards make it clear that Child Safeguarding is not a separate concern, but a foundation on which the Barnahus model must be built upon.

Purpose

There has been growing recognition that, as well as risks to children from staff and associates, inappropriately designed services, interventions and poor operational management can also create the possibility of risks for children. All projects and programmes must be designed to minimise the risk of harm to the children they come into contact with or impact upon directly or indirectly by taking sufficient account of child safety, whatever the focus of the work.

Barnahus is at the forefront of child protection efforts in Europe, and with that comes responsibility to **model best practice in safeguarding**. This requires not only responding to abuse but also recognising that **unintentional harm can occur in services**, which are **meant to help**. Proactively identifying and addressing those risks strengthens quality, and ultimately the safety and well-being of the children served. It also ensures that staff and other representatives are protected. This aspect of good governance is also critical in maintaining the reputation and credibility of individual Barnahus, and of the sector as a whole.

Barnahus must ensure that it takes account of the environment, local context, and impact (intended or unintended) on the children and communities with which it engages. This involves examining the context in which they are working alongside the potential risks that may be inherent to the specific role and mandate of Barnahus, including the organisation of the multidisciplinary teams and interagency collaboration, and the specific interventions it offers. Drawing on the

contextual analysis, Barnahus should adopt child-friendly approaches that include adapting policies and procedures for children to safeguard children in the context of its work.

The purpose of this guide is to provide knowledge and information to encourage and facilitate contextual analysis and the development of Child Safeguarding frameworks including safeguarding policies and standing operational procedures for Barnahus.

All tools and resources in this guide can be adapted to fit the specific country or local context in which the Barnahus operates. Barnahus are invited to use this resource to develop a solid child safeguarding framework that addresses the specific risks and challenges in their respective contexts, building on their inherent role and competence in ensuring justice, protection and recovery for children.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for already established Barnahus and organisations that are in the process of setting up Barnahus. It aims to help them develop and strengthen their Child Safeguarding frameworks. It provides practical guidance for establishing minimum safeguarding measures, clear policies, and standing operational procedures that are aligned with both the Barnahus Quality Standards and international Child Safeguarding requirements. It also supports them in contextual analysis and risk assessment.

As previously highlighted, the European Barnahus Quality Standards explicitly call for the development of comprehensive safeguarding documentation. This ensures that Child Safeguarding is integrated into every level of service provision and that all Barnahus services operate with a shared understanding and commitment to safeguarding principles.

By following this guide, Barnahus can ensure that their practices are not only effective and child-centred but also consistent, accountable, and in line with the ICS.

How to use this guide?

This document provides an overview how you can set a high level of standard in safeguarding children, and what you need to do to develop or strengthen your Child Safeguarding framework including policies and standing operational procedures according to the requirements outlined in the Barnahus Quality Standards.

The steps described here will help you indicate key actions that should be taken to establish a safeguarding policy as a core component of your safeguarding measures.

The guidance also provides a range of tools, examples and templates that accompany this guide, which covers in more depth how to adapt, develop, and set up your policies and SOP. Finally, it includes a tool to help Barnahus assess child safeguarding risks.

Child Protection and Child Safeguarding

Child Protection refers to the protection of all children from violence, exploitation, and abuse, according to Article 19 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In the international context it describes the work being undertaken to strengthen laws, policies, and systems designed to protect children in each country, in his or her own family and community.

According to UNCRC Article 19, child protection requires action.

1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

‘Do no harm’ is a principle refers to organisations’ responsibility to minimize the harm they may do inadvertently during organisational activities.

Child Safeguarding is a set of policies, procedures, and practices that an organisation employs to ensure that it itself is a child safe organisation. It is the responsibility of all organisations, including Barnahus, to ensure that their staff, operations, interventions and programmes ‘do no harm’ to children and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work are reported to the appropriate authorities.

Definitions of harm

Definitions of different types of abuse must appear in every Child Safeguarding policy. Definitions must be comprehensive and exhaustive specifying attitudes and behaviours.

Behaviours of misconduct must be stated in the code of conduct.

Definitions should include, and be aligned, with definitions of violent crimes against children specified in national law. The following definitions can be used as a guide.

Physical abuse: actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. it may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual abuse: forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape,

oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation: a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual. Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

Neglect and negligent treatment: allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and /or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy because of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

Emotional abuse: persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Commercial exploitation: exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

Setting the standard for child safeguarding in Barnahus

What?

The responsibility of Barnahus to make sure that their staff, organisation, services, interventions, partners and operations do no harm to children.

Barnahus takes special measures to practice in a way that does not harm children, including introducing policies and procedures to prevent harm, and address concerns.

Why?

Developing ways of keeping children safe is a crucial part of operating ethically and making sure that children are protected. It also ensures that staff and other representatives are protected. This aspect of good governance is also critical in maintaining the reputation and credibility of individual Barnahus and of the sector as a whole.

International and European instruments impose obligations on States to protect children from violence—most notably Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention provides a comprehensive framework for protection of children against sexual violence. At the EU level, Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights promote and protect children's rights. There are also several EU directives, notably on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation and on victims' rights that concern the protection of children.

How?

Child safeguarding is an ongoing process, which needs a carefully prepared implementation plan that supports incremental progress in achieving the elements described in the examples of indicators below. Examples of good practice include:

- The service has a child safeguarding policy and reporting mechanisms in place, in line with national legislation and covering the four international child safeguarding standards: Policy, People, Procedures and Accountability.
- The policy, endorsed by the service's highest authority, e.g the lead agency and other authorities in the multidisciplinary team and interagency collaboration.
- The policy is comprehensive in the sense that it contains sections and provisions generally considered to be standard, i.e. a clear statement of commitment to protect children, scope, code of conduct, prevention measures identified such as safe recruitment, training of staff and others, clear reporting requirements and identified ways of raising concerns/making complaints.
- The consequences of breaching the policy are clear and linked to organisational disciplinary procedures.
- There are clear, well-publicised reporting procedures in place that allow staff, children and families to raise concerns, confidentially, if necessary, about unacceptable behaviour or actual/potential abuse by staff or contractors and that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take.

- The reporting procedures are informed by/adapted to local contexts in which they are to be operated, i.e. taking account of legal, policy and other frameworks and systems for child protection.
- The reporting procedures demonstrate concern for the safety and security of all those involved in the reporting and response processes, are based on the laws of natural justice and entail timely and appropriate responses to concerns/complaints.
- Reporting procedures and response mechanisms have child-friendly versions that recognize the difficulties children may have in reporting possible/actual harm, facilitate access to complaints mechanism for children and anticipate the need to support children involved in the reporting/responding process, either as witnesses, victim or alleged perpetrators.
- Reporting procedures identify named individuals responsible for receiving and responding to concerns/complaints and their details as well as information on how to complain about child protection concerns are widely disseminated.
- Systems exist that mean reports are dealt with in a timely, appropriate and effective manner by staff that are sufficiently well trained/experienced and/or of sufficient seniority.
- Concerns/complaints are recorded, logged, notified, actioned and followed up – i.e. there is an active case management system in place.
- Provision exists for internal audits and/or investigation of concerns/complaints.
- There are policies and procedures or agreed ways of recruiting staff and contractors that include assessing their suitability to work with children, and that where possible, police and reference checks are undertaken.
- Additional safe recruitment measures exist for posts/positions that involve working with/contact with children, e.g. additional background checks (including criminal record checks or equivalent where possible).
- The child safeguarding policy stipulates that the policy and its implementation is subject to regular review at a stated interval, e.g. every 3 years.
- There is a plan that is regularly reviewed/reported on in order to track progress on child safeguarding policy implementation.
- Child safeguarding is incorporated into risk assessment processes within the organisation to allow for regular review and evaluation of child safeguarding measures.
- The service ensures, through partnership or other contractual agreements, that associates, including contractors and sub-contractors (implementing partners, for example) working/in contact with children, also have in place child safeguarding measures that are in line with Oak's minimum standards.
- The service has in place systems for monitoring the performance of its associates in the area of child safeguarding.

The international child safeguarding standards (ICS)

The international child safeguarding standards (ICS) are used widely to ensure quality in the delivery of services and interventions to children, and accountability to those who are using or benefiting from them.

The first ICS were launched in 2002 by a coalition of relief and development charities that later became known as Keeping Children Safe. The Standards describe good practice for organisations to ensure their programmes, operations, staff, and partners do not put children at risk of harm and to enable them to respond appropriately when concerns and incidents arise.

As such, these Standards provide a comprehensive benchmark for preventing harm to children and are complementary to other standards and principles.

ICS are written in a way that makes them relevant and achievable in all contexts. However, they may be more difficult or challenging to implement in some countries and local contexts than in others. Examples of some of the difficulties that have arisen in applying the ICS locally are:

- Reporting abuse to local or national authorities may not be straightforward if the reports are not handled properly. There are, however, organisations working nationally and locally that can provide advice on reporting cases, and local mapping will identify these.
- Applying standards of practice that are not supported by national law; for instance, where the age of consent is less than 18 years and where young people under age 18 are legally able to work can be problematic. However, organisations must remember that Keeping Children Safe Standards are designed to prevent harm to all children under 18.

There are enormous variations in local practice and circumstances but experience in applying the standards in different contexts demonstrates that they do not need changing or diluting because of cultural or contextual differences. Nor do harmful practices have to be tolerated or condoned.

The advantages of implementing ICS are:

- Children are more protected: No standards can offer complete protection for children, but following these Standards minimises the risk to children of harm.
- Staff and associates are more protected: By implementing these Standards, all Barnahus staff and associates will be clear about how they are expected to behave with children and what to do if there are concerns about the safety of a child.
- The Barnahus and its reputation are more protected: Implementing ICS makes clear the commitment of a Barnahus to keeping children safe, and to move toward best practice in this area.

The ICS and Barnahus – a practical framework

Everyone involved in working with children has a fundamental duty of care towards them, and must recognise the risks to children of abuse and exploitation and our responsibilities to keep them safe. In building safe environments for children where their rights are respected, and they are protected from harm, professionals have an important part to play.

This means making sure that professionals understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities, and that they always behave with the utmost professionalism and integrity. For this to happen consistently, it is fundamental to have a systematic approach to Child Safeguarding.

This chapter introduces a practical framework for Barnahus to strengthen child safeguarding in their work, drawing on the international child safeguarding standards (ICS).

The ICS include four standards: Policy, People, Procedures and Accountability, providing a practical framework to support child safeguarding in Barnahus.

Barnahus should discuss how best to apply the standards in the local context, what behaviour they should demand of their own staff and partners and how they want to be credible as child-safe Barnahus. Barnahus which are already working to a set of standards can use the ICS to ensure their quality and accountability initiatives do include safeguards for children.

Standard 1. Policy

Barnahus has a policy that describes how it is committed to preventing and responding appropriately to harm to children.

What is the standard?

A clear Child Safeguarding policy that prevents harm to children and outlines what measures are in place to respond when safeguarding concerns arise.

Why should organisations meet this Standard?

Developing a Child Safeguarding policy makes it clear to everyone that children must be safeguarded and not put at risk of harm because of the Barnahus' contact with, or impact on, children.

How to meet the Standard?

1. Designing the policy

A good Child Safeguarding policy is developed through consultation with staff and associates and, where appropriate, children, local leadership, and communities. If you want your safeguarding policy to be effective, you need to make sure it is central to the Barnahus, and that different parts of the Barnahus and all professionals who work there have been consulted on its development and implementation.

Use a working group or task team to lead on the development of the policy. To design your policy,

you will need to:

- Understand the level of contact, or impact upon children that your Barnahus has as part of its activities and the associated risks.
- Identify what policies and procedures already in place which support Child Safeguarding, such as good recruitment practices, and define any gaps.
- Determine what your policy must include so that risks to children are reduced and strengthen your organisational policies and procedures.
- Identify the key stakeholders who need to be involved in the development, implementation, and ownership of your policy.

Child Safeguarding policies should:

- Express the philosophy of your Barnahus: set out what the Barnahus wants to say about how it keeps children safe.
- Recognise the needs of all children to be safeguarded: state explicitly that the Barnahus is committed to safeguarding all children, irrespective of ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality, and culture. The policy should also recognise that types of risk may vary according to the child and that the means of addressing risks may also vary.
- Always apply to all staff and associates: make explicit that preventing harm to children should be a commitment staff and associates make whilst at work and outside of work. Staff and associates need to understand that they represent, or are identified with, the Barnahus.
- Identify and manage risk: describe how a Barnahus will identify and manage risk. Having a Child Safeguarding policy does not mean that all harm to children is eliminated. It means that the Barnahus does everything possible to minimise risk and address concerns and incidents appropriately when they arise.
- Integrate safeguarding measures into all areas of the Barnahus: provide an overarching commitment to preventing harm to children. The policy should refer to organisational policies and procedures in all areas of the Barnahus and include confidential reporting mechanisms for Child Safeguarding concerns.

2. Writing the policy

The policy should be written in a manner that is globally and locally appropriate. Where necessary, it needs to refer to other organisational policies which support Child Safeguarding. The policy should contain, or refer specifically to, a code of conduct for staff and associates. It may need to be translated to ensure all staff and associates understand it and presented in a manner that is readily understood by all relevant communities, including children.

3. Signing off on the policy

A broad sign-off is essential to ensure shared leadership, accountability, and a unified commitment to addressing concerns and supporting children, staff, and associates in meeting their responsibilities.

It is therefore important that the child safeguarding policy is signed off by senior management in Barnahus and the collaborating agencies. Depending on how the governance of Barnahus is set up, it should also be signed off by e.g. the Barnahus' board, steering group or equivalent, and a potential leading agency. It is also good practice to refer to the policy in interagency agreements. A date should be set to review the policy and a process should be put in place to evaluate its impact.

4. Publicising the policy

The policy should be made available to all staff and associates, partners, children, and communities. This could include:

- Presenting a poster of the Barnahus' commitments in public places such as meeting spaces and office reception areas
- Ensure a copy is available on the Barnahus' intranet and internet sites
- Enclosing a copy to all contracts and service level agreements
- Presenting the key requirements as part of the introduction to the Barnahus for potential sponsors and donors.

Ways of providing evidence:

The following documents can be used to provide evidence that the Standard has been met:

- A copy of the policy signed by the management board.
- Policy translated into local languages.
- Examples of ways the policy has been promoted to partners, children, and communities.

Standard 2. People

Barnahus places clear responsibilities and expectations on its staff and associates and supports them to understand and act in line with these.

What is the Standard?

Everyone connected to the Barnahus should know how to keep children safe and have appropriate learning opportunities to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to keep children safe.

Partners, authorities, and agencies that contribute to Barnahus operations, should be encouraged to have Child Safeguarding measures consistent with the ICS.

Children and families should be supported to understand the Barnahus commitment to Child Safeguarding and what to do if concerns arise.

Why should organisations meet this Standard?

Everyone in contact with children has a role to play in their safeguarding. They can only do this confidently and effectively if they are aware of the issues and have the necessary understanding and skills to keep children safe.

It is therefore important that Barnahus ensure that all those associated with the organisation understand what is meant by harm to children, what their obligations are to prevent harm, and what to do if harm arises.

How to meet the Standard?

1. Designating roles and responsibilities for Child Safeguarding

All Barnahus should have a named, designated person who is a focal point for child safeguarding. The designated person is responsible for making sure that the Child Safeguarding measures are integrated throughout the Barnahus. This role should reflect the nature and structure of the Barnahus, and the person should be senior enough, and have enough support and resources, to carry out the role.

It is good practice to identify the designated person and make everyone aware of their contact information. In larger Barnahus there should be a structure identifying several designated people across different teams, interventions and activities. At each appropriate level or setting there should be a named person who people can talk to about Child Safeguarding matters.

Barnahus can develop the role according to their organisational needs. However, the designated person should not normally be a head of service or have sole responsibility for the management of Child Safeguarding for the Barnahus. It is always better to ensure there are other lines of accountability and responsible people so there is not one reporting route only.

2. Recruitment and engagement of staff and associates

The Barnahus should outline its commitment to Child Safeguarding at the earliest opportunity in recruitment adverts, interviews and as part of contracts of employment. Staff, consultants, and volunteers should be recruited to clear job or role descriptions that include a statement on the position or the role's responsibilities to meet the requirements of the Barnahus' Child Safeguarding policy.

All interviews should include a discussion on Child Safeguarding, the candidate's understanding of this and the Barnahus commitment. Job offers for those whose work will bring them directly into contact with children, or gain them access to children's information, should be dependent on suitable references and criminal record checks.

3. Guidelines for staff conduct

A code of conduct is a clear and concise guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when employed or engaged by the Barnahus. It should include acceptable and

unacceptable behaviour regarding children. All staff and associates, including volunteers, should agree to the code of conduct when they are employed and/or start their job. It is an essential element of a Barnahus Child Safeguarding policy and, when implemented properly, should reduce or limit the risk of child abuse occurring. It should also be made clear what action the Barnahus will take if the code is broken or not followed correctly.

Staff who work for Barnahus with a Child Safeguarding policy and code of conduct need to follow that code within and outside the workplace. This means adopting appropriate behaviour themselves and reporting on concerns they have about a child whether in work or outside. This can often present a challenge for staff, but it is important to understand that the Barnahus is creating an environment that contributes to keeping all children safe.

4. Training and education

Education and training are very powerful ways to improve practice. It is essential that all those employed or engaged by the Barnahus have access to regular training on Child Safeguarding that is appropriate for their role and responsibilities, beginning at the induction/orientation stage.

Staff with designated responsibilities for Child Safeguarding need to have access to advice and support where concerns or incidents arise. These staff will also need to be able to identify sources of support for children and their families.

5. Agreements with partners

A Barnahus typically has a range of partners, including collaborating national and local authorities, agencies and services, (e.g. social and child protection services, law enforcement, health services, victim support services), government, NGOs, donors, schools, contractors, and suppliers. All need to agree to a commitment to keep children safe that is appropriate to that partnership, including clear language about the following.

- Partners are clear about the nature of the partnership relationships that they enter.
- There is a sound assessment of the partner's contact with, and impact on children during the partnership and what this means for Child Safeguarding agreements.
- Agreement is reached on how your Barnahus and the partner will support one another to achieve compliance and competence around Child Safeguarding, including the provision or exchange of resources.
- Partnership agreements delineate reporting and responding to Child Safeguarding concerns as is outlined in the Barnahus Quality Standards.
For instance: what is the line of responsibility for reporting between partners? What are the implications for the partnership agreement of concerns being reported and confirmed?
- Termination should be dependent on the partner's mishandling of the concern; terminating agreements based solely on concerns being raised should be avoided.

6. Partnerships with children and families

Barnahus can develop partnerships with children, families and communities that are appropriate to support their work on safeguarding. To ensure effective safeguarding policies, Barnahus and its collaborating partners it is important that:

- All partners ensure that parents, children, and relevant others know about Child Safeguarding commitments and measures.

- Communication is adapted to children, families and the communities in which the Barnahus operates.
- The Barnahus and its partners develop a complaints procedure with children, families, and communities, and publicise it to make sure that everyone knows about it.

Barnahus are encouraged to integrate child safeguarding into its work to involve children, both at collective and individual level.

- Discuss with children what makes them feel safe and unsafe and agree on ways for children to complain if they have a concern about themselves or their friends.
- Devise a process for ensuring children are consulted and their voices are heard, and that their views inform and influence the development of organisational safeguarding measures.
- Involve children in developing codes of good behaviour for staff and for children.
- Devise ways of obtaining feedback from children, parents, caregivers, and communities to find out what you are doing well, what is not working. Check what people know about the Barnahus and how it operates.

Ways of providing evidence:

- A copy of training plans, course attendance records and course evaluations
- Copies of information for children about sources of support
- Lists of contacts for specialist advice and information
- Partnership agreements, funding application and reporting forms
- Codes of conduct.

Standard 3. Procedures

Barnahus creates a child-safe environment through implementing Child Safeguarding procedures that are applied across the organisation.

What is the Standard?

Safeguarding policy commitments are integrated into existing Barnahus processes and systems and, where necessary, new procedures are introduced. The procedure details the steps that need to be carried out to fulfil the policy.

Why should Barnahus meet this Standard?

Child Safeguarding measures need to be integrated throughout the Barnahus' systems, processes, and operations to ensure the organisation implement measures to keep children safe. Simply publishing a commitment to keep all children safe is unlikely to inspire the necessary action and/or changes within an organisation. This Standard helps Barnahus take the necessary

steps to integrate safeguarding requirements and ensure the actions are globally relevant and locally appropriate.

How to meet the Standard

Child Safeguarding measures must be integrated into an organisation's systems and processes. The measures must work for the local context but also adhere to global and regional standards.

Definitions of violence, child protection, age of consent and other aspects that inform child safeguarding may differ according to national law and cultural understandings. Child Safeguarding measures must be sensitive to national legal requirements and the local culture but the issue of who is a child and what constitutes abuse is clearly set out in global and regional standards and frameworks and must be applied across the board.

The Barnahus Quality standards are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which define children as anyone less than 18 years of age. Article 19 of the Convention imposes an obligation on States Parties to protect children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse".

Barnahus also need to be prepared to act locally when concerns arise. They will therefore need to have information on local services, authorities to whom reports should be made, and organisations working locally, which can provide support where needed.

Organisational systems, procedures and processes may differ across services, collaborating partners, regions, and countries. It is crucial that they are all assessed and that strategies are developed for integrating Child Safeguarding where relevant.

Risk and how to avoid risk are a major part of many Barnahus' working strategies. The more we talk about and recognise risk, the more we can think about preventing it.

Risk assessment involves seven stages:

1. Establishing the context, scope and setting of your Barnahus.
2. Establishing your potential impact on and contact with children in relation to child safeguarding.
3. Identifying and analysing the potential risks of that impact or contact.
4. Evaluating the risks in terms of likelihood they could occur and the seriousness of the impact on children.
5. Implementing strategies to minimize and prevent risk.
6. Reviewing and revising risks and preventative measures.
7. Communicating and consulting.

The list below can help Barnahus assess their risk in terms of context, scope and impact on children:

- Are there legal or procedural inconsistencies between agencies (e.g. police, social services, judiciary) that could compromise a child's safety or rights?
- Is there a risk of re-traumatisation of children due to procedural, environmental, or institutional factors (e.g. repeated interviews, unfamiliar staff)?

- Are cultural, linguistic, or disability-related barriers adequately addressed to ensure all children receive equitable, child-friendly support?
- Are there procedures in place to assess and manage the risks posed by non-staff adults involved in the child's case (e.g. visiting professionals, interpreters, family members)?
- Do external political, legal, or media pressures have the potential to influence or undermine child-centred decision-making or confidentiality?
- Is the child safeguarding policy and practice regularly reviewed to address emerging risks and reflect evolving standards (e.g. KCS, national guidelines)?

Implementing strategies to prevent/minimise risk

There are various elements a Barnahus can address to encourage a culture of safety in their work and workplaces and prevent or reduce the risk of harm to children. Consider the following elements when integrating Child Safeguarding measures throughout the Barnahus to address and mitigate risks.

- Organisational culture: changes may need to be made to the culture of the Barnahus so that Child Safeguarding is considered relevant and important, and so it is transparent about how it addresses concerns and incidents. Organisational culture is determined by a range of factors including management and leadership style, focus of business and, in some cases, where it is located.
- Roles and responsibilities: changes may need to be made to existing roles and responsibilities to ensure that responsibilities are clearly articulated for staff with specific safeguarding roles, and new roles may need to be introduced (see Standard 2 which covers this).
- Policies and procedures: existing policies and procedures may need to be adapted to integrate Child Safeguarding, including recruitment and selection policy and procedures and the staff code of conduct. New policies and procedures may need to be introduced such as a whistle-blowing policy to support staff who raise concerns.
- Systems and processes: existing systems and processes may need to be adapted, such as risk assessment and quality assurance systems, processes for designing and implementing programmes and projects, and quarterly or annual reporting processes. New processes may have to be developed, such as for reporting on suspected or actual concerns about children.
- Capacity building: a range of capacity building initiatives are required to inform and educate staff and associates about their responsibilities and obligations to safeguard children. These will need to be appropriate to your organisation, your national legal, socio-economic and cultural context, according to Standard 2.

Ways of providing evidence:

- Risk registers which have recorded risk assessments and mitigating strategies
- Information from local mappings
- Reporting flow charts for offices and partners.

Standard 4. Accountability

Barnahus monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures.

What is the Standard?

The Barnahus has in place measures and mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing safeguarding measures and to ensure both upward and downward accountability in relation to Child Safeguarding.

Why should organisations meet this Standard?

As with other organisational functions, it is important to measure Child Safeguarding performance to find out if measures and efforts are being successful. Active monitoring, before things go wrong, involves regular checking to ensure that Standards are being implemented and safeguards are working. Reactive monitoring, after near misses or when things go wrong, involves learning from mistakes. Good case management can provide a valuable insight into why the abuse took place and whether the Barnahus could have done anything to prevent it.

How to meet the standard?

If you have integrated Child Safeguarding into your Barnahus systems, procedures and processes, it will be relatively straightforward to report regularly on whether these measures are working, for example during regular reports on your Barnahus' performance. Reporting should not focus only on e.g. the number of cases that have been addressed, but also on how systems and processes are working to prevent the risk of abuse. Your organisation's risk register is a good place to start. Lack of reports may mean that your policies and procedures are not working well rather than that there have been no incidents.

Reporting between collaborating partners and other partner organisations should include how safeguarding measures are being implemented, and whether they are effective in the respective organisations. Barnahus should encourage all partners to undergo internal audits.

Ways of providing evidence:

- Risk registers
- Self-audit tools
- Internal audit reports
- External audit reports.

A Child Safeguarding Framework for Barnahus

Child Safeguarding refers to the responsibility of all organisations to ensure they do no harm to children. This means that Barnahus should do all they can to take a proactive approach and prevent exploitation and abuse from happening in the first place, but to respond appropriately if it does happen.

Child safeguarding is an important element of achieving international and national legal obligations to protect children from violence. An essential element of national child protection systems is to ensure that effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to protect children from violence.

This guidance offers Barnahus user-friendly and flexible recommendations to understand and act upon national legal child protection obligations, and how it impacts on their own commitment and obligations to keep children safe in the context of their work.

The guidelines do this by addressing several important questions:

1. What is Child Protection?
2. What is Child Safeguarding?
3. What is child abuse?
4. What is the legal, socio-political, and development context of my country?
5. How should organisations start to consider and shape an effective and sustainable Child Safeguarding framework?

Scope

The scope of a Child Safeguarding framework extends to any harm that children might be exposed to in the context of the Barnahus collaborative approach, its respective interventions, operations and partnerships, covering a broad range of risks that might place the safety and wellbeing of children at risk. It is a complex challenge that must be approached from multiple angles, including legislation, governance, education, policy and society, and other internal principles and relevant documents such as the Barnahus Quality Standards.

In addition, Child Safeguarding must be based on an understanding of both general and local-specific risks, threats and harms facing children.

For Barnahus, it is also important that the scope of the framework considers the impact and potential risks related to the specific role and mandate of Barnahus, for example:

- The multidisciplinary collaboration, including specific risks and challenges that may occur in the context of coordination and collaboration between several agencies with different mandates, roles, responsibilities, organisational cultures, and internal policies and procedures, including for whistleblowing and reporting of safeguarding concerns. The collaborating agencies may also have different levels of commitment and understanding of child safeguarding in the context of their work.

- The respective interventions in Barnahus, including specific risks and challenges in the context of forensic interviews with children, child protection, medical examinations and potential treatment, therapeutic interventions, crisis support, and victims support respectively.
- Joint case management, information sharing and liaison with the child and caregivers.
- Measures to address cultural diversity and sensitivity, non-discrimination, equity, gender-based violence, language, special needs etc.
- Child participation, both at collective and individual level, and the impact of the specific culture of participation in the Barnahus.
- The specific environment in the Barnahus and its surrounding, including both the physical environment in Barnahus (e.g. privacy, accessibility, supervision and emotional support), and the location and access to Barnahus.
- Partnerships with external actors, e.g. hospitals, social services, victim support organisations, NGOs etc, in particular in the context of ensuring onwards support and referrals.
- External capacity building, stakeholder involvement, including outreach, education and study visits etc.

Principles

Ten cross-cutting principles are set out here, which taken together, can help in the development of a forward-looking and holistic national Child Safeguarding framework.

A Child Safeguarding framework should:

1. Ensure children have equal rights to protection from harm.
2. Recognise that everybody has a responsibility to support the protection of children.
3. Acknowledge that Barnahus have a duty of care to children with whom they work, are in contact with, or who are affected by their work and operations.
4. Acknowledge that when Barnahus work with partners, they have a responsibility to help partners meet the minimum requirements on safeguarding.
5. Ensure that all actions on Child Safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.
6. Respect and be consistent with the fundamental rights of children as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other key international conventions and laws; respect and be consistent with existing, similar and related domestic laws and strategies in place such as the criminal code, specific laws concerning children and violence against children, Barnahus laws and other relevant laws, and child protection and safety strategies.
7. Be developed with the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, including children, addressing their needs and responsibilities and meeting the needs of minority and marginalised groups.
8. Be set at the highest level of management, which will be responsible for assigning relevant roles and responsibilities and allocating sufficient human and financial resources.
9. Guide and support efforts of stakeholders to empower and educate children on safeguarding and their right to be protected from harm and exploitation.

10. Be developed with a view toward a greater understanding of other relevant internal documents and effective application of Child Safeguarding by all key stakeholders in a national child protection system.

How to prepare for drafting a child safeguarding framework?

Before a Child Safeguarding framework can be drafted, the proper groundwork needs to be carried out so that the framework is as comprehensive as possible.

Barnahus is at the forefront of child protection efforts in Europe, and with that comes responsibility to model best practice in safeguarding. This requires not only responding to abuse but also recognising that unintentional harm can occur in the services meant to help. Proactively identifying and addressing those risks strengthens quality, and ultimately the safety and well-being of the children served.

Barnahus teams should recognise the importance of examining how specific interventions, forensic interviews, medical examinations, therapeutic support, victim and caregiver support, can carry safeguarding risks if not consistently implemented in proper ways.

This means analysing:

- How children experience each stage of contact.
- How well the system ensures continuity, clarity, and communication across agencies.
- Whether the professional cultures and priorities conflict or align.
- How accountability and responsibility for safeguarding are understood and distributed.

The Risk Assessment Tool annexed to this guidance provides further guidance!

Understanding the national context

Effective child protection systems are essential as children, like all vulnerable and marginalised groups, need to be protected to achieve other rights, such as health, growth, and equity. Key components of a successful child protection system include a legal framework; a coordinating agency; child-friendly justice; child participation; a trained workforce; adequate resources; standards and monitoring mechanisms and data collection systems.

These elements typically shape the Barnahus practice, including its approach to child safeguarding. In developing the Barnahus child safeguarding framework, it is therefore important to understand these elements and how they may impact on Barnahus.

What is the legal framework?

Has a review been carried out to identify gaps in the law, standards and best practice? More specifically:

- Has a legal mapping been carried out of your country's relevant child protection/Child Safeguarding relevant laws, including international and regional conventions?

- Has a review been carried out of international standards relevant to child protection and Child Safeguarding?
- Has a review been carried out of international best practice?

For Barnahus, it is essential to identify the legal frameworks governing interagency collaboration and its individual interventions, to ensure a shared understanding of mandates, roles, responsibilities, and procedures—and how these impact the joint commitment to safeguarding children.

What are traditional practices that protect/harm children?

Identifying and recognising harmful traditional practices helps Barnahus ensure that no form of harm is overlooked, especially those that may be hidden behind cultural norms or not reported in conventional ways. This will help Barnahus to develop inclusive, legally sound and culturally informed frameworks, that are effective in reaching vulnerable children.

There are many different practices worldwide that harm children. Examples include child marriage, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, breast flattening, child abuse linked to faith or belief and so-called ‘honour’-based abuse, forced begging and corporal punishment.

All these practices in isolation are physically and/or emotionally abusive. However, their continued adoption in society as a whole or in specific communities means that they stop being seen as abusive and start to be seen as acceptable, in some cases even a rite of passage, therefore losing the label of abuse.

- Has a review been carried out of traditional practices that protect children from harm, as well as traditional practices that harm children?

Have stakeholders been identified?

The development of a Child Safeguarding framework needs to consider all relevant stakeholders. They can be divided into positive stakeholders and negative stakeholders. A positive stakeholder is a person, community or organisation that will see the benefits of having a framework and will have a positive attitude toward it. A negative stakeholder is a person, community organisation potentially opposed to the framework, or elements of the framework. They may believe that the framework undermines traditional values. Some may see the framework as a threat to their religious beliefs.

- Has a stakeholder analysis been carried out? If so, have both positive and negative stakeholders been identified?
- Has a strategy been developed to maximise the support of the positive stakeholders for the national Child Safeguarding framework?
- Has a strategy been developed to minimize the reactions of negative stakeholders to the national Child Safeguarding framework?

How will the key actors of the local child protection system be consulted?

Since a Child Safeguarding framework is expected to align with other actors, including partners, that make up the local child protection system, they should be consulted in identifying the

strengths and weaknesses of the current system, including legislation. Ideally, the process should result in a coordinated action plan.

Standing Operational Procedures for Child Safeguarding in Barnahus

It is recommended that Barnahus develop standing operational procedures for child safeguarding. These can be stand-alone SOPs or be integrated into the Barnahus general SOPs. The SOPs should be signed off at senior managerial level in Barnahus and its governing body.

The SOPs should cover measures for prevention, reporting and response and monitoring and review:

Prevention

1. Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is an exercise that examines all aspects of services from a safeguarding perspective, to establish whether there are any practices or features of the service that have the potential to put children at risk. Risk assessments need to be regular and must reflect all operations and activities, etc.

Risk assessments should record various pieces of information relating the risks potentially arising from all relevant actors including, for example, any potential consequences of these occurrences. They need to provide a platform for preventing or mitigating identified risks. They form part of a wider risk management process which allows organisations to track and monitor how the services might be negatively affecting those they are trying to help.

For Barnahus, it is important that the risk assessment considers the impact and potential risks related to the specific role and mandate of Barnahus, including both multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration, and the respective interventions it carries out.

One way of determining what the risk assessment should include, is to use the Barnahus Quality standards as a risk assessment framework, looking at specific risks and challenges in the context of each Barnahus Quality Standard.

Also see the risk assessment tool annexed to this guidance.

2. Safe Recruitment

Safe Recruitment is a critical aspect of Child Safeguarding. It needs to ensure that the individuals hired who have access to children are properly selected, vetted and monitored.

For Barnahus, this may present a challenge since the staff who come to work in Barnahus, often are recruited and employed by different agencies with different recruitment procedures. It is therefore important that there are mutually approved criteria for safe recruitment for all collaborating partners that practice in Barnahus. It is good

practice to reflect this in interagency agreements or other common policies.

Criteria include but is not limited to:

- Job descriptions that clearly state safeguarding responsibilities
- Background checks
- Written and signed off references from previous employers
- Safeguarding focused interview process
- Signed declaration that the code of conduct has been read and understood
- Probation period
- Induction and follow-up refresher training on Child Safeguarding

3. Induction and Training

All staff members that are employed by Barnahus, or who come to practice in Barnahus are expected to receive training on Child Safeguarding, including annual refreshers. There should be reports on training and lists of attendance.

Reporting and Responding Mechanisms

All staff and associates have the obligation to report on all the concerns they have about a child. A prompt and appropriate response must be ensured. The following principles should be considered:

- Internal and external reporting should be ensured through establishing confidential reporting channels suitable for all target groups.
- Proposed child-friendly channels should be discussed with children and communities.
- Identifying information about children should be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.
- Reports should be treated seriously and with confidentiality.
- The priority should always be the safety and best interests of the child.
- Allegations against staff should result in immediate suspending from their employment.
- Those who raise concerns should be protected.
- Victims and survivors should be protected.
- Subject(s) of Complaint and witnesses should be protected.
- Investigations must be carried out only by trained professionals.

The process of reporting should be described step-by-step and visualised through flowchart(s). The clearer the procedure is, the more likely that it will be followed.

Early identification and response involve very practical measures that need to be taken, and all actors need to be aware of them. As part of the work, definitions of harm (categories of abuse) should be used to produce guidelines (including child-friendly) raising awareness on the indicators and early signs of abuse.

As noted above, this may present a specific challenge to Barnahus, which engages and works with staff and associates from different agencies that may have different approaches, procedures, understanding and commitment to child safeguarding. It is therefore crucial that interagency

agreements and/or other policies and procedures set out a clear and common commitment and obligation to report and respond to concerns according to a mutually agreed reporting mechanism.

The above elements are extensively covered by the Barnahus Quality Standards, namely Standard 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

Monitoring and Review

To ensure that the International Child Safeguarding Standards are implemented in line with the requirements set by the Barnahus Quality Standards, there should be a constant monitoring as well as periodic reviews. The management/governing body of the Barnahus oversees the implementation through quarterly safeguarding progress reports.

Monitoring activities include but are not limited to:

- Review of major Child Safeguarding incidents.
- Review of case records, referrals and overall reporting and responding.
- Review the time before first signs and action, as well as the outcome of early interventions.
- Review of code of conduct development and staff adherence.
- Visits to track progress of safeguarding implementation.

Resources

Barnahus should invest in ensuring that child safeguarding resources are adapted, published and that stakeholders are made aware of them.

Below are a few examples of things to consider:

Training: Educate staff, caregivers, and children about how to use resources correctly and appropriately.

Cultural Sensitivity: Tailor resources to the cultural context of the children they aim to safeguard. Ensure they respect and reflect diverse backgrounds, language and needs.

Regular Review: Continuously evaluate and update resources based on feedback and changing needs.

Child Participation: Involve children in developing resources. Seek appropriate consent from parents or guardians before involving children

Risk Assessment Tool

This tool was developed to support those who are setting up or currently operating Barnahus, with the aim of helping them carry out child safeguarding risk assessments. It consists of 4 parts that help take you through the 'why', the 'what' and the 'how'.

It provides practical guidelines for the process of risk assessment that is aligned with both the Barnahus Quality Standards and the Child Safeguarding Framework for Barnahus described above.

For a risk assessment to be well informed and detailed enough, consider involving all relevant staff in this process. If applicable, children should also be asked to participate, using a child-friendly methodology.

PART 1: Q&A

What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is an exercise where all aspects of service are examined from a safeguarding perspective, to establish whether there are any practices or features of the service that have the potential to put children at risk.

Why is it important to do risk assessments?

A risk assessment of services, intervention, collaboration, organisation and project activities can support you to:

- a) Identify possible/potential risk to children;
- b) Understand the level of risk to children; and
- c) Integrate strategies to mitigate risk to children into the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes, operations and activities which involve or impact upon children.

What is the purpose of this tool?

The overall purpose of this tool is to:

- Establish the need for Barnahus to analyse and incorporate child safeguarding while delivering services and interventions in a multidisciplinary context.
- Provide guidelines on understanding child safeguarding risks and its mitigation; and
- Provide guidelines in identifying child safeguarding risks within the scope of work.

What is the expected outcome when using the tool?

Using this tool, you will be able to:

- Contextualise the child safeguarding risk assessment.
- Identify potential risks for children in the context of services, interventions, collaboration, projects and organisational procedures.
- Identify and come up with strategies to mitigate the risks identified.

When can this tool be used?

- During establishing multidisciplinary policies and practices.
- During the planning phase of the service, intervention, collaboration or event.
- During service, intervention, collaboration or event implementation phase.
- While developing or reviewing child safeguarding policies and standing operational procedures.
- During induction of a new partner; and
- While planning all activities involving children.

PART 2: HOW TO USE THE TOOL

Step 1: Identify the ways in which you encounter children (interventions, consultation, follow up, child advisory boards or other child participation etc.).

Step 2: Based on the results of step 1, identify the risks faced by children.

Step 3: Identify who exactly is at risk.

Step 4: Identify what is the likelihood of the risk and the possible impact.

Step 5: Identify any existing controls to address the identified risk or mechanism to minimize the factors that put children to risk.

Step 6: If any existing controls are already in place, try to find if there are any gaps in its planning, implementation and monitoring.

Step 7: If there is no existing control in place, consult a larger group (including more staff from the multidisciplinary teams, collaborating agencies, external partners etc) to develop mitigation plans or controls to minimize the risks. You can also consult with other Barnahus in your country or within the Barnahus Network.

Step 8: Set monitoring controls in place to ensure that the mitigation plans work at the field level.

Note: As part of the risk assessment, it is highly recommended to involve multidisciplinary staff from the team, collaborating agencies and external partners. Wherever appropriate, the participation of children is recommended as they will know best where they feel safe/unsafe.

PART 3: RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL

Using the step-by-step guide above, try to fill in the table on the next page.

Risk assessment								
Risk categories	What is the risk?	Who is at risk?	Likelihood H (high) M (medium) L (low)	Impact H (high) M (medium) L (low)	What controls are in place?	What additional agreed controls are to be put in place?	By whom?	By when?
Inter-Agency Collaboration	This assesses risks in relation to the interagency collaboration, taking into account that different agencies may have different approaches, policies, reporting mechanisms etc. It can also involve looking external partnerships including in the context referrals, follow up and onwards support.							
1.								
2.								
3.								
Multidisciplinary Team	This looks at risks in relation to working as a multidisciplinary team, considering that professionals may have different understandings, approaches, attitudes, skills, habits, policies, professional standards, training etc. Also consider that some staff may be employees of Barnahus, and others may only come to practice in Barnahus, the use of volunteers etc. It also looks at risks in relation to joint planning and intake meetings, case management, joint preparation, observation and follow up to the forensic interview. etc.							
1.								
2.								
3.								

<i>Child contact in relation to interventions</i>	<i>This looks at risks in relation to child contact in the context of the different action and interventions in Barnahus that involve contact with children. Each intervention should be assessed separately to identify specific risks that may occur in the context of the intervention. This also includes activities such as welcoming the child to Barnahus, planning, follow up and information meetings, child participation. victim support etc.</i>							
1.								
2.								
3.								
<i>Facility and Environment</i>	<i>This looks at risks that may occur as a result of the place, environment and interior of the Barnahus location, for example if the area in which the Barnahus is placed is safe, outdoor and indoor accessibility and mobility, fire safety, emergency exits, furniture, stairs etc. as well as privacy and preventing contact with persons who may harm the child.</i>							
1.								
2.								
3.								
<i>Procedural Gaps</i>	<i>This looks at risks that may occur as a result of procedural gaps.</i>							
1.								
2.								
3.								

PART 4: EXAMPLES

Below you will find examples of risks. This list is not exhaustive. Please consider that there may be many other risks that are not listed here!

1. Risks Related to Interagency Collaboration and Multidisciplinary Teams

These arise from the fact that Barnahus brings together professionals from different institutions (e.g. law enforcement, social services, healthcare, therapeutic services) with diverse mandates, procedures, and safeguarding cultures.

- Conflicting roles or mandates (e.g. therapeutic vs investigative)
- Gaps in information sharing and confidentiality protocols
- Lack of accountability mechanisms across agency lines
- Failure to report concerns

2. Risks Related to Direct Contact with Children

These are linked to services that involve interviews, medical exams, therapeutic sessions, and support provision, all of which require physical or emotional closeness with the child.

- Inadequate supervision during interviews or therapy
- Inappropriate or excessive physical contact (e.g. during medical exams)
- Boundary violations
- Failure to explain procedures in child-friendly ways, increasing trauma
- Risk of re-traumatisation or/and secondary victimisation
- Cultural or language barriers leading to misunderstanding or fear

3. Risks Related to Staff, Volunteers, and External Professionals

This covers anyone working within Barnahus or in contact with children, regardless of employer or contract status.

- Staff with unknown or unchecked criminal backgrounds
- Volunteers or interns inadequately or not at all trained in safeguarding
- Consultants or visiting professionals not briefed on Barnahus safeguarding policy
- Power imbalances between staff and children
- Staff burnout leading to lapses in judgment or care

4. Environmental and Facility related Risks

- Unsupervised or poorly secured areas
- Insufficient privacy during sensitive procedures
- Exposure to other children's distress or trauma

5. Procedural and Systemic Risks

These risks relate to how procedures are designed, documented, and implemented within Barnahus.

- Lack of a formalised safeguarding framework
- No clear protocols for managing allegations against staff or agency partners

- Inadequate risk assessment and safety planning for individual children

6. Risks Related to Data Protection and Confidentiality

These relate to handling, sharing, and storing sensitive information about children.

- Improper storage of confidential files (physical or digital)
- Sharing of sensitive data without child's or caregiver's informed consent
- Professionals from different agencies accessing data without clear purpose or justification
- Children inadvertently overhearing or seeing sensitive information

Templates

Please note that the templates are generic templates that should be adapted to the Barnahus role, mandate and context. They should only be used as a guide and starting point for discussion and development of tailor-made policies, codes of conduct, implementation plans and mapping frameworks.

Child Safeguarding Policy Template

1. Introduction

Introduce your activities and explain what you do. You can adapt your mission statement and insert it here. Then write a brief introduction to the policy, why it has been developed and how it will benefit the Barnahus and the children the Barnahus supports.

We believe that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. We accept that steps must be taken to protect children we come into contact with through our work. The possibility of staff, partners and associates abusing children is one which we take seriously and are committed to working to prevent.

Child Safeguarding is an organisational and individual responsibility. All staff will be made familiar with the need for Child Safeguarding concern in all that we do. Associations with anyone found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children will be broken.

- Principles
- Definitions and Terms

2. Prevention

i) Risk Assessment and Risk management

State how you will assess risk to children from all organisational functions and develop strategies to minimise those risks.

A risk assessment of all collaboration, interventions, operations, programmes and project activities will be conducted. Risk mitigation strategies will be developed, which minimise the risk to children, and incorporated into the design, delivery and evaluation of collaboration, interventions, programmes, operations and activities which involve or impact upon children.

ii) Safe Recruitment

- Staff, consultants and volunteers will be recruited to clear job or role descriptions, including a statement on the position or role's responsibilities to meet the requirements of this Child Safeguarding policy.

- All prospective employees, volunteers, partners and associates will be informed of this Child Safeguarding policy. They will be asked to sign a declaration of criminal convictions as part of the application process.
- All applicants will be subject to police checks.
- For all applicants a reliable character reference will be obtained, and particular attention will be given to any area of concern relating to child protection. During the interview process applicants will be asked about previous work with children.
- All staff, volunteers, partners and associates will receive training in the Child Safeguarding Policy. They will be given a copy of the policy and will be required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.
- Individuals who are hired as independent contractors will be given a copy of the Policy and required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.
- Volunteers will be monitored by those to whom they are assigned to ensure that confidential information concerning children is not misused.
- Given the multidisciplinary model of Barnahus, where professionals from different agencies and sectors (e.g. police, social services, medical staff, therapists) work under one roof but may be employed by different institutions with their own safeguarding procedures, Barnahus will facilitate a shared understanding and consistent safeguarding measures. All external professionals practicing at Barnahus will be required to commit in writing to adhere to the Barnahus Child Safeguarding Policy while operating on-site, and joint procedures will be developed to ensure clarity of roles, responsibilities, and expectations across all agencies.

iii) Code of Conduct

A code of conduct is a clear and concise guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour or practice when employed, engaged by, or practicing the Barnahus. It should include acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with regards to children. All staff and associates, including volunteers who practice in Barnahus, should agree to the code of conduct when they start their job in Barnahus. It should also be made clear what action the Barnahus will take if the code is broken or not followed correctly.

These are rules which are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect adults from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour or abuse.

Staff need to follow that code within and outside the workplace. This means adopting appropriate behaviour themselves and reporting on concerns they have about a child whether in work or outside.

iv) Education and Training

State how staff and associates, children and families will be receiving information, education and training on Child Safeguarding.

It is essential that all those employed or engaged or who practice in Barnahus have access to regular training on Child Safeguarding that is appropriate for their role and responsibilities in Barnahus, at the beginning of induction/orientation stage and that they are made aware of, and understand the reporting mechanism.

Information on Child Safeguarding should be available in the appropriate format and language to be accessible by all staff, children and carers.

v) Safe Operation and Interventions Design

State your commitment to design and deliver operations, collaboration and interventions which are safe for children. Include in this section that all operation, collaboration and interventions will be risk assessed for safety and safety strategies developed.

vi) Communication

State your commitment to undertake all communications in a safe manner, including reference to a communications policy if appropriate. Principles and guidelines for communications

In our use of information and visual images, both photographic stills and video, our overriding principle is to maintain respect and dignity in our portrayal of children, families and communities. Our communications policy/guidelines detail our procedures.

vii) Roles and Responsibilities

- Defined roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder/sector.
- Protocols for interagency collaboration and information sharing (with data protection safeguards).
- Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or cooperation agreements between agencies.
- Statement that the policy has been approved by the leadership and how management will ensure the policy is being implemented.

3. Partners

Agreements with partners will include a statement that partners who do not have a Child Safeguarding policy will abide by this policy and develop their own as a condition of the partnership.

4. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

State that any report will be treated seriously and with confidentiality. The priority will always be the safety and best interests of the child.

A Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) or Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSFP) must be appointed. This person is responsible for receiving and managing all reports of safeguarding

concerns. Their role and contact details should be clearly communicated to all staff, associates, and children in age-appropriate and gender-sensitive formats.

State your obligation that all staff and associates need to report on all concerns they have about a child in the context of Barnahus operations, collaboration and interventions. Include the reporting flowchart with clearly designated staff who should receive the report. It is also recommended to have child-friendly versions of such documents to inform children how to report that are accessible to children of different ages, genders, and abilities.

Reporting and responding mechanisms must be safe, confidential, inclusive, and effective, while also being aligned with international Child Safeguarding standards and the principles of gender equality and child participation

5. Monitoring and Review

State on how the policy and procedures will be monitored and reviewed. Regular monitoring of risks, risk mitigation and the effectiveness of the Child Safeguarding measures need to be incorporated into all normal monitoring processes and activities. The policy should be reviewed at least every 3 years.

Child Safeguarding is incorporated into the Barnahus risk register and quarterly and annual reporting processes. Senior management and the Board/Steering Group/lead agency will regularly review the risk register and Barnahus reports to ensure that Child Safeguarding measures are in place and effective.

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum of every 3 years or when it is shown necessary that additional issues need to be identified and addressed.

Implementation Plan Template

Area of action	Indicators of success	Means of Verification	Responsibility chart	Implementation deadline
POLICIES/GUIDELINES				
PROCESSES/ SYSTEMS				
ROLES AND RESPONSABILITIES				
INDUCTION/TRAINING				

Resource Mapping Template

Resource Mapping provides important information to support reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns, by gathering information on contact points for safeguarding complemented by mapping exercises at the local level. Resource mapping aids identification of partner staff trained to work with victims and survivors and/or carry out investigations as needed. Due to the dynamic nature of stakeholders, it is crucial to ensure regularly updated information, at least once a year. This practice is essential as stakeholders' roles can evolve, necessitating accurate and current information to effectively address needs and expectations. This example shows how to organize information.

The template below makes generic suggestions about actors that can be included – make sure that you take an open approach to identifying national stakeholders – some of these may not be relevant to you, and there may be others that are not listed here!

Other Barnahus	
Country:	
Address:	
Responsible Person:	
Contact Person:	
Date of Last Update:	
(Child) Safeguarding Focal Point of collaborating agencies/partner organisations	
Partner Agency/Organisation 1:	
(Child) Safeguarding Focal Point:	
Address:	
Telephone / Fax:	
Email:	
Partner Agency/Organisation 2:	
(Child) Safeguarding Focal Point:	
Address:	
Telephone / Fax:	
Email:	
Police	
(National) Emergency Telephone Number:	
The Nearest Police Station:	

Contact Person:	
Address:	
Telephone / Fax of Nearest Police Station:	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	
Legal Support / Advice	
Name of Contact Person / Agency / Institution Supporting the organisation in Legal Matters:	
Address:	
Telephone / Fax	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	
Health	
(National) Health Emergency Number:	
The Nearest Hospital / Medical Clinic:	
Contact Person:	
Address:	
Telephone / Fax of Nearest Hospital / Medical Clinic:	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	
Social Services	
Agency:	
Address:	
Contact Person:	
Telephone / Fax:	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	

Family Counseling	
Agency:	
Address:	
Contact Person:	
Telephone / Fax:	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	
Reception Centre for Child Victims of Abuse	
Agency:	
Address:	
Contact Person:	
Contact Person:	
Telephone / Fax:	
Email:	
References / Links:	
How to Access the Service:	

Additional resources

[Barnahus](#) – This is the website of Barnahus Network, which provides comprehensive information on the model.

[The Barnahus Quality Standards](#) – A summary and a full version of the Standards translated in 21 languages

[Barnahus Quality Standard on Child Protection](#) and the [Implementation Guidance](#)

[The ICS Standards](#) - The International Child Safeguarding Standards (ICS Standards) represent a commitment by organisations to “do no harm” when they come into contact with children, and that they meet the responsibilities set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

[Protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse - Child-friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency response inspired by the Barnahus model \(2018\)](#) - Barnahus is a child friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency response model to child sexual abuse and provision of services for child victims and witnesses of violence. The Barnahus model puts the best interest of the child at the heart of investigative procedures, while taking into account that the child’s disclosure is key to identify and investigate child abuse both for criminal and for protective and therapeutic purposes.

[Creating child-friendly versions of written documents: A guide](#) - This guide was written by Professor Laura Lundy of the Centre for Children’s Rights at Queen’s University Belfast and includes examples of child-friendly documents produced in collaboration with Dr Bronagh Byrne, Dr Michelle Templeton and children and young people.

[The Convention of the rights of the child: the child-friendly version](#)

[Child-friendly and simplified articles of the Convention of the rights of the child](#)

Implementing the Barnahus Quality Standards throughout Europe

Projects under the umbrella of PROMISE have been 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 multidisciplinary 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 projects provide 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.

In the early years, we established European standards, formalised the Barnahus Network, and expanded into University training and case management tools. We further laid the groundwork to establish a European Competence Centre for Barnahus and an accreditation system for Barnahus. Our current focus is on addressing gaps and specific needs identified by Barnahus in Europe. This includes strengthening inclusive and resilient child protection systems particularly in times of crisis, improving national systems' ability to effectively handle transnational cases, and enhancing the role of Barnahus within broader child protection systems.

Access the PROMISE tools and learn more at www.barnahus.eu



**Children
at Risk**



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