

P R O M I S E

## **STANDARD 2**

**Multidisciplinary &  
Interagency Collaboration:**

# **Interagency Agreement**

**Template and guidance**



**The PROMISE Project series** [www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise](http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise)

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# Introduction

This document offers inspiration and guidance for drafting an interagency agreement which formalises multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) team collaboration between agencies involved in Barnahus. It is based on the Barnahus Quality Standards and is inspired by interagency agreements from Barnahus in Europe and Child Advocacy Centers in the US.

Interagency agreements are shaped by law, policy, procedures and the way that the participating agencies function in a specific country, region or local community. In some cases, financial and human resources determine the scope and function of the Barnahus.

The formulation of the interagency agreement should therefore always be done on the basis of a careful analysis of the national situation, including law, policy and resources that might shape the different elements covered by the agreement.

This guidance will help you navigate different elements that are helpful to include in an interagency agreement, pointing to important issues to consider and examples of what others have done. The different elements, and the order in which they appear in this template is flexible and should be adapted to what suits a particular context best.

## Barnahus Quality Standard 2. Multidisciplinary and Interagency Collaboration in the Barnahus

**2.1 Formal status:** The Barnahus is formally embedded in the national or local social or child protection services, law enforcement/judicial system or national health system. The Barnahus can operate as an independent service if it enjoys a statutory role, recognised by the national or local authorities, including a formal mandate to collaborate with relevant public agencies.

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

**2.3 Process and practice of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The multidisciplinary/interagency intervention begins at the initial report and is guided by a process for collaborative interventions across the continuum of the case.

### Key indicators:

- A formal interagency foundational agreement signed by authorised representatives commit the respective agencies to multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration and service delivery in the Barnahus;
- The formal foundational agreement covers elements such as purpose, goals, commitments, roles and responsibilities, organisation, finance, privacy, time period and conflict management;
- The formal foundational agreement ensures that all agencies contribute on equal terms so that the collaboration addresses the child's best interests from all perspectives including health, child protection, legal, and mental health;
- The formal foundational agreement is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation and the respective agencies' procedures and structures;
- A steering committee, including representatives from the different agencies, oversees and governs the implementation of the formal foundational agreement;
- Staff are aware of formal foundational agreement and have received training in its application.

## Why an Interagency Agreement?

The key purpose of the interagency agreement is to formalise the interagency collaboration in Barnahus, by committing the signatory parties to support and practice to jointly agreed principles and procedures. The interagency agreement provides clarity for leadership and staff of the core function of Barnahus and the respective agencies' roles, tasks and commitments.

Experience from Barnahus in Europe and key lessons learnt from Child Advocacy Centers in the US show that a written, formal commitment can contribute to credibility, accountability and continuity of Barnahus. A formal agreement that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each party helps ensure clarity and a common commitment and understanding of the role and mission of the service. It furthermore provides a basis for conflict resolution and potential reform<sup>1</sup>. This contributes to consensus, mutual respect and team cohesion, which is crucial to ensure effective interagency collaboration and multidisciplinary response.

Interagency agreements often vary in length and detail. It is important to carefully consider how much detail needs go into the agreement to establish a clear common understanding of the joint commitments, functions and principles that the agencies have agreed to. Where agreements are short, there are often complementary procedures and guidelines that govern the function, set-up and practice of Barnahus.

A formal interagency agreement is an important indicator that the Barnahus Quality Standard 2 on Multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration is fulfilled (see box 1 above).<sup>2</sup> In the US, a written interagency agreement is an essential criterion for accreditation as a Child Advocacy Center. The Child Advocacy Centers must have a current written interagency agreement or memorandum of understanding, signed by the authorised representatives of each agency on the Center's team.<sup>3</sup>



### Inspiration & Examples

- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), Standard 2. Multidisciplinary and Interagency collaboration in the Barnahus, pages 44-51
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, page 21
- Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse
- Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US (English)
- Child Advocacy Center inter-agency agreement, (Declaration of intent) North Carolina, US (English)
- Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US (English)
- COLLABORATION AND PRIVACY AGREEMENT MULTIDISCIPLINARY CENTRE FOR CHILD ABUSE KENNERLAND (MDCK), the Netherlands (English)
- Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams (Guidance) & Model Protocol (Template), Kentucky, US

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, Shelly L: 15 Lessons Learned from Child Advocacy Centers, page 4 and The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), Standard 2. Multidisciplinary and Interagency collaboration in the Barnahus, page 44

<sup>2</sup> Lind Haldorsson, Olivia: The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), Standard 2. Multidisciplinary and Interagency collaboration in the Barnahus, page 44-45. (CBSS/Child Circle 2017)

<sup>3</sup>: "The CAC/MDT has a written interagency agreement signed by authorized representatives of all MDT components that clearly commits the signed parties to the CAC/MDT model for its multidisciplinary child abuse intervention response. The interagency agreement includes: 1. Law Enforcement 2. Child Protective Services 3. Prosecution 4. Mental Health 5. Medical 6. Victim Advocacy 7. Children's Advocacy Center" (Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members (2017 Edition), page 21)

## Law, Policy & Standards

The template interagency agreement in this document promotes good practice and an organisation that enables Barnahus teams to fulfil national and international legal provisions, policy and procedures. It draws heavily on the Barnahus Quality Standards and is inspired by interagency agreements from Europe and the US.

The Barnahus Quality Standards embody a model to fulfil legal obligations set out in international, including UN, EU and Council of Europe law. The Barnahus standards are developed to promote good practice which supports implementation of this law through the Barnahus' day to day activities and core functions.

Reiterating that the Barnahus and the interagency agreement draw on international and national legal obligations and seek to implement children's rights is a powerful statement that legitimises the practice and the agreement. In order to provide clarity on the legal basis for Barnahus,

It is good practice to mention the law and regulations that underpin and govern the practice and principles in the interagency agreement. This provides clarity around the legal basis for Barnahus and contributes to legitimising the interagency collaboration and practice in Barnahus.

References to law can be made in an introductory statement or in the declaration (discussed below) to the interagency agreement or in a separate section called, for example, "Legal Basis". It is also helpful to refer to relevant laws and procedures throughout the interagency agreement.

Relevant law may for example include criminal law, criminal procedure, including specific procedural rights for victims (children) and defendants, social service provision, multidisciplinary cooperation in cases of violence against children/domestic violence, health/mental health service provision, data protection, confidentiality etc.

The interagency agreement clearly cannot supersede law or the rules and regulations that govern the participating agencies. It is therefore good practice to clearly acknowledge in the interagency agreement that the Barnahus and its staff are bound by national law and that the interagency agreement is in line with, and does not supersede the agencies' rules and regulations, including mandates, policies and professional standards.



### To Think About

- What law and policy underpins and governs the organisation and practice of Barnahus and its respective agencies? How can the practice in Barnahus set out in the interagency agreement support implementation of these legal obligations?
- How does national law, policies and standards shape the Barnahus organisation and practice? What impact does it have on the content and scope of the inter-agency agreement and the participating agencies possibility to sign a formal agreement?
- How can potential constraints in law, policy and standards be addressed? Can they be addressed by establishing mutually agreed protocols and procedures? Is reform of law, policies or organisational procedures required? Is there a need for awareness-raising and competence building and/or advocacy?



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## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- Promise Compendium of Law and Guidance: European and International Instruments concerning Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence
- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version) ties each standard to international legal obligations and instruments
- Forthcoming Judicial Briefing (to be completed and inserted once ready)



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## Examples (Law, Policy and Standards)

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*“Whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all decisions that affect children (article 3), that all children have the right to life, health and development (articles 6, 24), the right to be heard (article 12) and to be protected from violence (art 19) ..., the undersigned agencies agree to...”*

*“Whereas we, the undersigned parties, are committed to the fulfilment of the rights of children to be protected from violence, to receive support and assistance and to be heard, including through child-friendly interventions and rapid access to justice and care.” (Based on the Promise Vision)*

*“The interagency agreement is governed by the following laws [list of relevant laws e.g. criminal code, criminal procedure code, social service provision, multidisciplinary cooperation in cases of violence against children/domestic violence, health/mental health service provision, specific procedural rights of children, data protection, confidentiality etc.”*

*“This interagency agreement does not interfere or impinge on existing national legal obligations.”*

*“All collaboration between the parties shall fall within the boundaries of current legislation that governs the respective parties’ area of responsibility.” (Barnahus Interagency Agreement, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden)*

*“Nothing in this document shall be construed to erode the respective responsibilities of each participating agency. They shall be applied to the extent practical in each case. It is understood that there will be circumstances which demand deviation from this protocol.” (Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US)*

*“All agency professionals will work within their departmental mandates and policies. Nothing contained herein supersedes the statutes or rules and regulations governing each agency.” (Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US)*

## Examples of important issues to explore in law and procedures that shape the organisation and operation of Barnahus:

**Multidisciplinarity:** Procedures for collaboration between police and social services in cases of violence against children/domestic violence

**Multidisciplinarity:** Data protection, confidentiality in relation to multidisciplinary information exchange/case management and storage of data

**Referral & procedure:** Who can refer a child to Barnahus for a forensic interview and assistance?

**Forensic Interview:** Who can interview the child (criminal investigation & judicial procedures) – police, judge, clinical psychologist

**Forensic Interview:** Who leads the interview from the observation room – a judge, prosecutor? Who can be present during a hearing of the child (restrictions in presence of multidisciplinary team members). Who can ask questions to the child during the interview?

**Forensic Interview:** Right of defence – presence of defendant in Barnahus, equality of arms. How are the rights of the defendant protected during the interview if the defendant and/or the defence lawyer isn't present?

**Forensic Interview:** Requirements on the quality, format, transmission, accessibility and storage of recordings of interviews to protect validity as evidence in Court

**Children's procedural and victims' rights:** right to representation and assistance; right to be heard in child friendly environment, recording, right to privacy, protection from revictimisation etc

**Forensic Medical Examination:** Who can order that a forensic examination of the child can take place in Barnahus? Also, location and competence, i.e. where can a forensic medical examination take place, what procedures must be respected, who can carry out a forensic medical examination, training etc

**Medical examination and treatment:** Location and competence, i.e. where can a medical examination take place, what procedures must be respected, training etc

**Mental health assessment and treatment:** Location & competence, i.e. where can a medical examination take place, what procedures must be respected, training etc



# Declaration of Intent & Parties to the Agreement

The declaration of intent is a statement that displays the signatories' commitment to collaborate and practice in Barnahus according to the details set out in the interagency agreement. The declaration of intent includes a list of the signatory parties and is signed by authorised representatives of the agencies that practice in Barnahus.

The signatory parties to the agreement include the agencies that will practice in Barnahus in the multidisciplinary team. Agencies involved in Barnahus can vary, but typically include social welfare/child protection, police, prosecutor, physical, including dental health services and mental health. Depending on the set up of Barnahus, the interagency agreement often includes other actors such as regional/local government.

It is good practice to clearly commit to practice that implements law and that meets high professional standards, for example, the Barnahus Quality Standards. The declaration of intent can, as discussed above, also include references to law.

The declaration of intent can also establish the agreement period and the circumstances under which the parties can renegotiate or leave the agreement. If this is not covered in this part, it should be included as a separate section of the interagency agreement.

The declaration can be expressed in simple terms or be more elaborate (see examples below).



## To Think About

- **Declaration of intent:** What is the scope and focus of the declaration of intent? Does it relate to the establishment, development and/or implementation of Barnahus? Does it relate to support to Barnahus and a commitment to practice according to the interagency agreement? Does the declaration of intent commit the signatory parties to law and high professional standards, for example the Barnahus Quality Standards? Is this the place to refer to law and other important rules, regulations and policy that underpins and governs the practice set out in the interagency agreement?
- **Signatory agencies:** There are a number of different factors that can shape the composition of the multidisciplinary team and the involvement of different agencies. The agencies that form a multidisciplinary and interagency response in cases of violence against children may already be defined by law. There may already be agencies that work in an informal, but systematic, way as a multidisciplinary team. The signatory parties can also be defined by the focus of Barnahus and existing resources.
- What shapes the composition of multidisciplinary teams and governs interagency collaboration in cases of violence against children in your country? Which agencies in your country play a role in protecting, assisting and hearing the child in cases of suspected violence? Is there national law, procedures and policy that define the roles and ways of working together across agencies in cases of violence against children? Who is the child likely to meet during its journey from report of suspected abuse to trial, to follow up? Who do you need to involve to a comprehensive, coordinated response? Who do you need to involve to minimise the interviews and interviewers that the child must encounter, thereby minimising potential risk of trauma to the child? Who do you need to involve to get political commitment and financial resources?



## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- [Promise Vision, www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/vision](http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/vision)
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, Page 18-27
- Child Advocacy Center template inter-agency agreement, North Carolina, US



## Examples

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*“We, the undersigned representatives of the agencies who have adopted this protocol, pledge to support the multidisciplinary child advocacy center model and to incorporate this protocol into our own practices and policies.” (Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US)*

*This agreement applies during the period [...] and is extended by 2 years unless terminated by either party 6 months before the termination of the agreement. If the circumstances that this agreement are based on change substantially, a party may, during the contract period, request a renegotiation or request withdrawal from the agreement. The notice period for withdrawal from the agreement is 12 months. (Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping <http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se>)*

### **Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US:**

*“We, the undersigned agencies participating in a multi-disciplinary team, by and through our directors/administrators and through our designated representatives, do hereby agree to the following guidelines concerning the Children’s Advocacy Centers serving North Dakota [...]*

*We have established a cooperative effort between the undersigned agencies, wherein a multi-disciplinary team approach may be utilized in the investigation, assessment, referral for prosecution, medical and therapeutic treatment involving child victims of abuse.*

*Each of the undersigned agencies has specific responsibilities with regard to the investigation, assessment, medical/therapeutic treatment, and prosecution of cases of child abuse. We agree to support the concept and adhere to the guidelines as outlined. We understand that on occasion exceptions to these guidelines will be necessary.*

*We, the undersigned, do hereby acknowledge that the multi-disciplinary team approach, through the institutions of the Children’s Advocacy Centers serving North Dakota will unify our community in the daily struggle to ensure the protection of our children.”*

### Template Declaration of Intent

Whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all decisions that affect children (article 3), that all children have the right to life, health and development (articles 6, 24), the right to be heard (article 12) and to be protected from violence (art 19),

Whereas we, the undersigned parties, [are bound by], [committed to] the fulfilment of the rights of child victims and witnesses of violence set out in EU and Council of Europe law to be protected from violence, to receive support and assistance and to be heard, including through child-friendly interventions and rapid access to justice and care,

Whereas we, the undersigned parties are committed to a multidisciplinary, coordinated, comprehensive and child-friendly criminal investigation, child protection assessment, medical and therapeutic treatment of child victims and witnesses of violence,

We, the undersigned parties agree to establish and operate a multidisciplinary team approach in the form of a Barnahus that respects the rights of child victims and witnesses of violence to protection, assistance and to be heard, which meets the Barnahus key criteria and which [progressively] meets the Barnahus Quality Standards.

We, the undersigned parties, hereby agree to the following interagency agreement concerning the organisation, operation and practice of Barnahus and fully commit to our respective responsibilities set out therein.

All collaboration between the parties shall fall within the boundaries of current legislation that governs the respective parties' area of responsibility. This interagency agreement does not supersede or impinge on existing national legal obligations that rule, regulates or governs the respective parties."

[Date]

# Template Interagency Agreement

## 1. Mission Statement/Purpose/Goals

This part of the interagency agreement contains a formal summary of the aims and values of the Barnahus.

The mission statement is the reference point for the rest of the interagency agreement. It clearly communicates an overall picture of what the Barnahus wants to achieve, its guiding principles and the services it provides. It gives the reader a clear, accurate and concrete understanding of the mission, purpose and objectives of the Barnahus. While this part of the agreement presents a concept, the rest of the agreement is practical and concrete in terms of setting out the details of how this concept will be implemented.

### Barnahus Quality Standard 1. Key principles and cross-cutting activities

**1.1 Best interests of the Child:** The best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the child and the non-offending family/caregivers/support persons.

**1.2 Right to be heard and receive information:** Children's rights to express their views and to receive information are respected and fulfilled.

**1.3 Avoiding Undue Delay:** Measures are taken to avoid undue delay, ensuring that forensic interviews, child protection assessments and mental health and medical examinations take place within a stipulated time period and that children benefit from timely information.

### Standard 2 & 10. Child Safeguarding



## To Think About

- How does law, policy, procedures and resources shape the mandate, mission, scope and focus of the Barnahus? What can and must the Barnahus do and what can't it do?
- Is the mission statement tied to the day-to-day work and practice of the participating agencies?
- Check mission, purpose and objectives against for example procedures for criminal investigation, judicial procedures including e.g. the role of the judge, procedural rights of children and the defendant and the mandate, procedures and professional standards of the national/local child protection & health systems.



## Inspiration & Knowledge

- Barnahus Criteria and guiding principles (see The Promise Vision)
- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), Standard 1. Key principles and Cross-cutting Services, pages 12-19
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, page 7



## Examples (Mission Statement/Purpose/Objectives)

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*“The purpose of the Barnahus is to facilitate the parallel criminal investigation and child welfare/protection investigations.”* (Barnahus Iceland, Barnahus Stockholm Sweden and Barnahus Linköping Sweden)

*“The key role of the Center is to provide effective and systematic support to traumatized children and their families”* (Child and Youth Protection Center, Zagreb, Croatia)

*“The key role of the MDCK is to coordinate the child welfare and criminal investigations and the planning for long term safety, risk driven care and recovery”* (The Multidisciplinary Centre for Child Abuse, Haarlem, the Netherlands)

*“The purpose of the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is to provide a safe environment that promotes prevention, education, and intervention services to abused and neglected children and families.”* (Interagency agreement, template CAC Kansas, US)

*“The overall goal of the Barnahus is to offer a timely, child friendly, comprehensive and effective response to each child, bringing together all relevant services under one roof, including criminal investigation (forensic interview), child welfare/protection, medical evaluation and forensic intervention and therapeutic support.”* (Statement based on the Barnahus criteria and Barnahus Quality Standards)

*“A core fundamental principle and goal of Barnahus is to ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the child and the non-offending family/caregivers/support persons.”* (Statement based on the Barnahus Quality Standard 1.1)

*“The members of the multidisciplinary team will collaborate to ensure that the best interest and protection of children will be served.”* (Interagency agreement, template CAC Kansas, US)

*“A core fundamental principle and goal of Barnahus is to ensure that the children’s rights to information and to express their views are central to the purpose, goals and practice in Barnahus.”* (Statement based on the Barnahus Quality Standard 1.2)

*“A core fundamental principle and goal of Barnahus is to ensure that undue delay is avoided in carrying out forensic interviews and child protection assessments, mental health and medical examinations and that children and their family/caregivers benefit from timely information.”* (Statement based on the Barnahus criteria and Barnahus Quality Standard 1.3)

*“The Barnahus is committed to safeguarding all children from abuse.”* (Statement based on the Barnahus Quality Standard 2 & 10)

### **Barnahus Criteria and Principles** ([Promise Barnahus Vision](#))

**The Barnahus model refers to multi-disciplinary and interagency interventions organized in a child-friendly setting fulfilling the following criteria:**

- The forensic interview is carried out according to an evidence based protocol;
- The evidentiary validity of the child's statement respects 'due process', whilst avoiding a need for the child to repeat her/his statement during court proceedings if an indictment is made;
- A medical evaluation is carried out for forensic investigative purposes and to ensure the child's physical well-being and recovery;
- Psychological support is available, including short and long term therapeutic services addressing the trauma of the child and non-offending family members and caretakers;
- An assessment of protection needs is carried out and followed up, concerning the child victim and siblings in the family.

**The following principles & practice guide the Barnahus:**

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

### **Children Advocacy Centers – Primary Goals** ([Putting Standards Into Practice](#))

The primary goal of all CACs is to ensure that children are not further victimized by the intervention systems designed to protect them. Program objectives include the development and provision of:

- A comprehensive multidisciplinary, developmentally and culturally appropriate, evidence-based response to the needs of children and their families in a specific community;
- A neutral, child-friendly facility where forensic interviews and coordinated case planning can be conducted;
- Trauma-focused, evidence-supported medical and mental health treatment and a wide array of victim services;
- Effective and coordinated case-management efforts based on open communication, information sharing, and collaborative decision making;
- Comprehensive case tracking that monitors investigative, prosecutorial, child protection, medical, mental health, and victim advocacy services so that cases do not "fall through the cracks";
- More effective prosecutions of child abuse cases; and
- Cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural training as well as discipline-specific continuing education that enhances professional practice.

## 2. Target Group

This part of the interagency establishes the primary Barnahus target group, including for example age group, the type of cases that will be dealt with in Barnahus and the type criminal offences against children. It can also include a description of secondary target groups, such as non-offending caregivers and services offered to them. If young suspected offenders are part of the Barnahus target group, it is also established here. This part of the interagency agreement can also define the uptake area for the Barnahus.

It is good practice to note that the multidisciplinary and interagency response is offered to all<sup>4</sup> children who are referred to the Barnahus in the Inter-agency agreement. The Inter-agency agreement can also take note of special measures that are taken to ensure sensitivity to diversity and disability.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**3.1 Inclusive/broad definition of target group:** The Barnahus target group includes all children who are victims and/or witnesses of crime involving all forms of violence. Non-offending family/care-givers are included as a secondary target group.

**3.2 Non-discrimination:** Special effort is made to reach all child victims and witnesses regardless of form of violence.



## To Think About

- How does law, policy, procedures and resources shape the scope of the target group in Barnahus? Is it necessary to take a step-by-step approach and progressively expand the target group? Where the target group is defined in legislation or national guidelines, such as for example in Denmark and Sweden, access should at a minimum be guaranteed for the groups covered by law and policy.
- **Age Group:** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child define children as a human being below the age of 18. The Barnahus Quality Standards refer to the UNCRC definition of children. Domestic law and judicial procedures may influence the scope of the age group that can be heard in Barnahus.
- **Criminal Offences:** The Barnahus Quality Standards recommend that all forms of violence, as defined in the UNCRC are included in the Barnahus target group. This might include, without being limited to, physical and mental abuse, domestic violence, sexual violence, online violence, commercial exploitation, trafficking, genital mutilation and crime with honour motives. Some Barnahus started by only covering sexual violence but have progressively expanded the forms of violence and criminal offences they deal with.
- **Type of cases:** Barnahus typically deal with cases that are reported to the relevant authorities, such as the social/child protection services or the police. In Norway the Barnahus only deal with police reported cases. In Sweden, Barnahus facilitate the parallel investigation by child welfare and the police and prosecutors. Some Barnahus, such as Barnahus Iceland, also carry out exploratory interviews, in so-called "grey cases" where there is a suspicion of violence but the child has not disclosed or given an ambiguous disclosure.<sup>5</sup>
- **Uptake Area:** The Barnahus should be accessible to children regardless of where they live in the uptake area. This may be a challenge if the uptake area is too large, both in terms of inhabitants and terms in of

<sup>4</sup> Possible grounds of discrimination include, but are not limited to, national or ethnic origin, race, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability and refugee status. Special efforts may be needed to reach particularly vulnerable children.

<sup>5</sup> You can learn more about exploratory interviews and grey cases in Lind Haldorsson, Olivia: [The Barnahus Quality Standards](#), page 79-80. (CBSS/Child Circle 2017)



geographical area. Mobile resources, satellite offices, streaming and local hearing rooms are potential solutions in some places, especially for the initial investigation, the continuous crisis intervention and treatment and for follow up.

- **Family/care-givers:** Barnahus typically provides services such as continuous information, counselling and crisis support to non-offending care-givers who, because of their close relationship with the child, may be directly affected. The primary goal of the counselling and crisis support to parents/care-givers is to enable them to provide the child, and potential siblings, with adequate support and assistance throughout the judicial procedure and beyond.
- **Young suspects of violence against children:** Some Barnahus include children under the age of criminal responsibility who are suspects or accused of violence against children in their target group. The Barnahus ensure that these children are heard in a child-friendly manner and offered adequate assistance. The EU Directive on children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings<sup>6</sup>, obliges Member States to adopt procedural safeguards to protect children in criminal proceedings. This includes interventions by trained professionals, protecting the best interests of the child, an individual assessment, a medical examination, right to information and preventing undue delay. It is also in line with the Council of Europe Child Friendly Justice Guidelines. It is important to carefully consider this option together with requirements on the safety and privacy of the child victims and witnesses and their families who come to Barnahus and the special competence required by staff.
- **Diversity and Special needs:** All Barnahus must make special efforts to ensure that all children of all backgrounds can gain access to Barnahus and that they feel welcome, respected and valued. For example, children with special needs and disabilities should receive equitable access to information, guidance and opportunities to express their views and disclose in interviews. Interpretation should be offered to children and non-offending caregivers when needed, ensuring equitable access to information, guidance and opportunities to express their views and disclose in interviews.



## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), page 8, reference to age of target group and form of violence (UNCRC) and Standard 3. Target Group pages 53-56.
- Progress report regarding a government mission to establish common national guidelines for multiagency collaboration in inquiries relating children who may be exposed to crime and standards for national Children's Advocacy Centres, para 4.3 – Extract regarding target group available on page 56 of The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version)
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 29-33

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<sup>6</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/800 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons in criminal proceedings





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## Examples

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**Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping [www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se)**

### **4 Target group**

- *Children 0-18 years suspected of having been subjected to violent crime in a close relationship or in a relationship that affects the daily life of the child.*
- *Children 0-18 years suspected of having been subjected to sexual abuse in close relationship or in a relationship that affects the daily life of the child.*
- *Children 0-18 years suspected of having been subjected to gross violent crime regardless of relation to the perpetrator.*
- *Children 0-18 years suspected of having been subjected to sexual abuse regardless of the relationship with the perpetrator.*
- *Children 0-18 who have been exploited for sexual posing/performance.*
- *Children who act out sexually and/or expose other children to sexual acts.*
- *Children 0-18 years who are subject to honor-related threats, violence and / or sexual assault.*
- *Children 0-18 years who witnessed violence.*

### **5 Uptake area**

*Children living in the municipalities: ...*

*“The Dallas Children's Advocacy Center maintains a policy of non-discrimination. All children and adults with disabilities whose case fits the criteria listed below shall be granted services provided by the Dallas Children's Advocacy Center without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, citizenship status, age, or disability status.” Dallas Child Advocacy Center Investigative Protocol (Dec 2014 – Dec 2017) [www.dcac.org](http://www.dcac.org)*

### 3. Organisation & Governance

This part of the interagency agreement describes the organisation and governance of the Barnahus, including the Barnahus' legal status and its formal connection with the national and local child protection systems.

As noted earlier, it is good practice to clearly display that the Barnahus is recognised and regulated by the national or local social or child protection, law enforcement/judicial system or national health system through law or formal agreement. This can be done by, for example, including a statement that the Barnahus enjoys a formal mandate from relevant authorities to coordinate the interagency collaboration and to provide multidisciplinary services.

This section also includes details regarding the lead agency and its role as well as the interagency mechanisms and bodies for governance of the Barnahus. This may, for example involve setting up a Steering Group composed of senior members of staff from the respective agencies and the Barnahus, which regularly meet to oversee the implementation of Barnahus and adopt financial reports and budgets. Regardless of the form of governance, it is important to clarify the role, mandate and procedures of the lead agency and governing agencies.

This section also provides an opportunity to clarify the coordination mechanisms in Barnahus, including describing the role of the Barnahus coordinator, a potential Barnahus interagency liaison/working group. It can also make reference to important staff policies, for example around privacy, code of conducts and child safeguarding.

#### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**2.1 Formal status:** The Barnahus is formally embedded in the national or local social or child protection services, law enforcement/judicial system or national health system. The Barnahus can operate as an independent service if it enjoys a statutory role, recognised by the national or local authorities, including a formal mandate to collaborate with relevant public agencies.

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

**2.3 Process and practice of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The multidisciplinary/interagency intervention begins at the initial report and is guided by a process for collaborative interventions across the continuum of the case.

#### Key indicators

- The formal foundational agreement ensures that all agencies contribute on equal terms so that the collaboration addresses the child's best interests from all perspectives including health, child protection, legal, and mental health.
- A steering committee, including representatives from the different agencies, oversees and governs the implementation of the formal foundational agreement.
- One or more staff members are mandated to act as the Barnahus coordinators of the interagency collaboration.
- A Barnahus interagency liaison group meets regularly to discuss practical aspects related to the daily interagency collaboration, including routines and protocols, in Barnahus.



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## To Think About

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- Are there laws and procedures on establishing, provision and funding of social/child protection services? Depending on the formal status and lead agency, there may be different rules that need to be taken into account. For example, if the service is run by a non-State actor, there may be rules on procurement of State funds, tenders and reporting that need to be taken into account.
- Are there specific laws or policies that govern multidisciplinary collaboration in cases of violence against children? Are there already initiatives in place that support multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration? Can these be applied to the collaboration in Barnahus or do you need to review existing, or put in place new law, policy or procedures to facilitate the organisation and governance of Barnahus?
- **Lead agency:** Which State authority is best placed to take the lead and to provide central coordination? This may for example be the Ministry of Justice, social welfare authorities, public health authorities or local government.
- **Governance mechanisms:** What are the most effective ways of structuring governance and liaison between the founding agencies and the Barnahus?
- **Barnahus Coordination:** What is the best way of ensuring smooth interagency collaboration and coordination in the Barnahus? Which roles and bodies need to be put in place? What policies will guide the daily work in the Barnahus?



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## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), pages 15-19 (Overview of different Barnahus Models), pages 44-51 (Standard 2) and pages 66-73 (Standard 5)
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 8p-91, in particular 9 G.
- Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse
- 15 Lessons Learned from Child Advocacy Centers



## Examples

### Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping

#### **8 Organisation**

*The county council in Östergötland is the legal person for Barnahus, governed by the County Council's regulations.*

#### **Steering committee**

*The steering committee shall consist of representatives from each authority involved in Barnahus and the Barnahus coordinator. The municipalities together nominate 2-3 representatives who represent all 9 municipalities. The role of the steering group is to ensure that the activities [in Barnahus] are conducted in accordance with the current agreement. The steering group shall monitor and keep up to date with the activities and the goals [of Barnahus]. Each member of the steering group only has authority to make decisions on behalf of its employer, taking into account its organization's decision-making process.*

*The steering committee meets 4-5 times per year and more frequently if necessary. Replacements with similar qualifications shall be appointed for each representative, to attend if the regular representative is absent.*

#### **Coordinator**

*The coordinator shall be responsible for the financial management. [...]*

*The coordinator will provide financial reports, together with other statistical information, at each steering group meeting. The coordinator will act as a liaison between the working group and the steering group. The coordinator is furthermore:*

- *Responsible for coordinating the Barnahus team's duties;*
- *Responsible for the coordination of the interagency collaboration and work;*
- *Responsible for the development of the activities and services in Barnahus;*
- *Responsible for guidelines and routines;*
- *Secretary in the steering group;*
- *Chairman of the working group;*
- *Responsible for the design of business plan and business report;*
- *Responsible for study visits and information about Barnahus's activities;*
- *Responsible for the availability of relevant and requested statistics;*
- *Participant to the investigation work carried out at Barnahus;*
- *Responsible for participation the relevant [professional] networks.*
- *Responsible for continuously informing the steering committee about the activities [in Barnahus].*

#### **Working group**

*The working group shall consist of representatives from all agencies involved and the Barnahus permanent staff group. The different municipalities agree on 4-5 joint representatives. The role of the working group is to discuss and develop the multidisciplinary and interagency work of the collaborating parties [in Barnahus]. The coordinator is the chairman of the working group.*

*The working group meets every month. Replacements shall be appointed for each representative, to attend if a regular member is absent.*

## 4. The Multidisciplinary & Interagency Team: Tasks and Commitments

This part of the interagency agreement describes the individual and common roles, tasks and commitments the multidisciplinary & interagency (MDIA) team. It commits the respective agencies to practicing in Barnahus and helps create an understanding of the agencies' roles and responsibilities.

There are different approaches to describing the roles, tasks and commitments of the respective agencies; some are very detailed, while others make short statement about the overall role. The key purpose is to provide adequate clarity of the individual and common tasks and commitments and to ensure that these are in line with existing laws and regulations.

As noted above, the members of the MDIA team may vary from country to country and Barnahus to Barnahus, but typically include law enforcement, child protection, child and adolescent health and psychology and prosecution together with the Barnahus team.

Competence and professionalism are at the core of the work in Barnahus. This part of the interagency agreement should therefore include a commitment from the respective agencies to provide competent and specialised staff. It is also important to make it clear that all agencies that practice in Barnahus commit to core principles and activities, such as the best interests of the child, adapting to the child, child participation and safeguarding children from harm.

The Barnahus' role goes beyond service provision; it is also an important coordination mechanism. It is therefore good practice to define shared tasks that contribute to the coordinated and multidisciplinary response. This includes for example attending planning meetings and interviews, taking responsibility for effective collaboration, ensuring that information, guidelines, routines and checklists are understood and used, supporting competence and capacity building and collaborating with other services. It may also include participation and constructive contribution in the working group if there is one.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**Best interests of the child:** The best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the child and the non-offending family/caregivers/support persons.

**1.2 Right to be heard and to receive information:** Children's rights to express their views and to receive information are respected and fulfilled.

Key indicators:

- Staff are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities in assessing and determining the best interests of the individual child.
- Staff are aware of and have received training on how to apply procedures and tools for this purpose, for example check-lists, protocols and processes to assess and determine the best interests of the individual child.
- Staff receive training on how to communicate, listen and share information with children, adapted to their age and development.

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

#### Child Safeguarding and other internal policies

- 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.

- Staff are supported and guided by key internal policies such as a child safeguarding policy and procedures, staff code of conduct, a whistle-blowing policy, safety procedures and an emergency protocol.

**6.2 Specialised Staff:** Forensic interviews are carried out by specialised staff members who receive regular training in conducting forensic interviewing.

**7.3 Staff:** The medical examination is carried out by specialised staff who are trained on recognizing indicators of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as child neglect.

**8.2 Staff:** Mental health services and treatment are provided by professionals with specialised training and expertise.

**9.1 Training of professionals:** The members of the Barnahus team and involved agencies are provided regular training in their specific areas of expertise and are offered joint training in cross-cutting issues.



## To Think About

- Which laws and procedures govern the respective agencies? How do these regulations define the role and tasks that the respective agencies can provide in Barnahus?
- Are there laws or procedures that prevent the respective agencies to practice in Barnahus? Do any of these regulations prevent that certain agencies are involved in the activities in Barnahus, such as interagency planning meeting or observation of the interview?
- Are there specific laws or policies that govern multidisciplinary collaboration in cases of violence against children? Do these have an impact on how the common tasks and commitments are defined?
- Also see chapter 3 on multidisciplinary collaboration (page 13) and Declaration of intent on signatory agencies (page 5).



## Inspiration & Knowledge

- The Barnahus Quality Standards (Full version), pages 15-19 (Overview of different Barnahus Models), pages 44-51 (Standard 2) and pages 66-73 (Standard 5)
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 89-93, in particular 9 E and G.
- Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse
- Keeping Children Safe, <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/>
- Dallas Child Advocacy Center Investigative Protocol (Dec 2014 – Dec 2017) [www.dcac.org](http://www.dcac.org)
- Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams (Guidance) & Model Protocol (Template), Kentucky, US



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## Examples

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**Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping (<http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se>)**

### **6 Commitments**

*Each collaborating authority shall ensure that they allocate staff to the interagency collaboration who have the opportunity to commit as follows:*

#### **Municipality / Social Services**

- *Attend interagency planning meetings/consultation.*
- *Participate in the observation room during interviews.*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Responsible for the investigation/assessment under the Social Services Act, including the child protection/safety assessment made in connection with childcare.*
- *Ensure that all staff have the necessary competence.*
- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*
- *Contribute to statistics collection, evaluation and follow-up.*
- *Through representatives participate in work and steering group meetings.*

#### **County Council, child and adolescent psychiatry**

- *Attend interagency planning meetings/consultation.*
- *If necessary, participate in the observation room during interviews.*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Offer crisis support and treatment.*
- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*
- *Contribute to statistics collection, evaluation and follow-up.*
- *Through representatives participate in work and steering group meetings.*

#### **The county council, the children's and youth hospital**

- *Attend interagency planning meetings/consultation.*
- *Carry out medical examinations in Barnahus. [...]*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*
- *Contribute to statistics collection, evaluation and follow-up.*
- *Through representatives participate in work and steering group meetings.*
- *Responsible for the necessary medical equipment in the examination room.*

#### **County Council, the women's clinic**

- *Should be represented by a representative at a working group meeting.*
- *Participate in consultations on sexual abuse cases, when the child has reached puberty.*
- *Perform gynecological examinations in Barnahus, when the child has reached puberty.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*
- *Contribute to statistics collection, evaluation and follow-up.*



- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Responsible for the necessary medical equipment in the examination room.*

### **Police Authority**

- *Attend interagency planning meetings/consultation.*
- *Carry out interviews with children in Barnahus.*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Responsible for their part in the criminal investigation.*
- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*
- *Contribute to statistics collection, evaluation and follow-up.*
- *Through representatives participate in work and steering group meetings.*
- *Responsible for the necessary technical equipment in the interview room and in the observation room.*

### **Prosecution**

- *Attend interagency planning meetings/consultation.*
- *Participate in the observation room during interviews.*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Responsible for the criminal investigation.*
- *Contribute to spreading information and knowledge about Barnahus activities.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*
- *Participate in competence development related to the Barnahus target group, within the own authority.*

### **Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US:**

*1. All agencies participating with the CAC agree to provide specially trained professionals with skills in interviewing, assessment, and investigation to handle child abuse cases. They will carry out their individual responsibilities as defined below:*

- a. Law enforcement will investigate and determine whether or not a crime has been committed and present information to the proper authorities for prosecution.*
- b. Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) social workers will provide protection of children from harm by parents or other caretakers. SRS will conduct a civil investigation to determine the degree of risk to children, to ensure safety and to inform of rehabilitation services for the family.*
- c. The district attorneys will assess the legal aspects of the case in accordance with their prosecutorial role.*
- d. Medical professionals affiliated with the CAC will provide expert medical evaluations and consultations.*
- e. Mental health professionals affiliated with the CAC will offer specialized mental health services to child abuse victims and their families.*
- f. Victim advocates will assist in reducing trauma and secondary victimization for children by providing support and needed services during an investigation and ensuing prosecution.*
- g. CAC staff will conduct child sensitive, legally defensible interviews, assist families in securing needed services, and coordinate case-related communications among agency professionals.*
- h. CAC staff will facilitate access to specialized medical evaluations.*

*2. All reasonable efforts will be made to encourage joint interviews at the CAC when appropriate and, whenever possible, to eliminate unnecessary duplicative interviews that may result in trauma to the child;*

*3. All agency professionals whose cases are scheduled for case review team meeting are expected to attend.*

*4. All agency professionals will be invited and encouraged to attend trainings sponsored by the CAC*



**Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US:**

- 1) *The members of the multidisciplinary teams will collaborate to ensure that the best interest and protection of children will be served.*
- 2) *Each collaborating agency agrees to utilize a multidisciplinary team approach which includes:*
  - a) *Initial interviews of children will be conducted at a CAC whenever possible. Reasonable efforts will be made by each agency to coordinate each step of the investigation/assessment process in order to minimize the number of interviews and interviewers to which the child is subjected, thus reducing the potential trauma to the child.*
  - ...
  - e) *Agencies participating in current investigations are expected to attend Case Review meetings as scheduled.*
- 3) *The role of law enforcement agency is to investigate and determine whether or not a crime has been committed, and to present information to the proper authorities for prosecution.*
- 4) *The role of children's protective services is for the protection of children from harm by their parents or others responsible for their care. CPS is responsible for conducting an assessment to determine the degree of risk to the children, to make efforts to ensure their safety, and to provide services for rehabilitation to the family.*
- 5) *The role of the prosecutor is to assess the legal aspects of the case in accordance with his/her prosecutorial role.*
- 6) *All agencies will be invited and encouraged to attend CAC sponsored training.*
- ...
- 8) *Collaborating agencies/organizations agree to provide trained professionals with skills in interviewing, assessment, and investigation to handle cases of child abuse.*

## 5. Barnahus Team

This part of the interagency agreement describes the specific role and tasks of the Barnahus team. It can furthermore make reference to, or specify, staff policies, procedures and codes of conduct that the staff are bound by, including the child safeguarding policy and procedure.

It is important to note here that the *Barnahus team* includes only the staff that works on a permanent basis in Barnahus. This means that it doesn't include the different staff members in the broader multi-disciplinary team, which consists of both the Barnahus permanent staff members and the professionals who come to Barnahus to practice.

Some countries specify the Barnahus team roles in their agreements. This creates clarity and agreement on the staff roles on the (minimum) work force in Barnahus, which, among other things is crucial to ensure sustainability and continuity in funding.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

*“One or more staff members are mandated to act as the Barnahus coordinators of the interagency collaboration.” “The role of the coordinator is clearly defined in a job function description.”*

**5.4 Support Person:** A designated, trained individual member of the Barnahus team monitors the multidisciplinary response to ensure that there is continuous support and follow up with the child and non-offending family/care-givers.

#### Child Safeguarding and other internal policies

- 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.
- Staff are supported and guided by key internal policies such as a child safeguarding policy and procedures, staff code of conduct, a whistle-blowing policy, safety procedures and an emergency protocol.



## To Think About

- What is the most cost effective and sustainable set up of the Barnahus team? What composition of the team will guarantee effectiveness, professionalism, coordination and adequate support to the MDIA team? What qualifications does the team need to have?
- Are there requirements in law or guidelines/policy regarding the education and competence of staff in this area of service delivery that need to be taken into account?
- Is the article formulated in a way that ensures sustainable funding for the Barnahus? Does this article allow for an expansion of the team in terms of additional staff or new roles if necessary?
- Who employs and line manages the permanent team in Barnahus? Are the existing staff policies of the employer adequate or do you need to develop new ones for the team members in Barnahus? This might include policies on child safeguarding including vetting, training, disciplinary measures, whistle blowing, performance review, etc.

- How detailed should the interagency agreement be on staff roles and requirements? Is this the place for describing competence requirements or are detailed descriptions laid down elsewhere? For example, in Norway, the national guidelines provide guidance on the overall requirements for competence in the Barnahus, as well as for each role (see example below).



## Inspiration & Knowledge

- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 89-98, in particular 9 C, E and F



## Examples

### Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping ([www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se))

#### 6 Commitments

*Barnahus Team:*

- *Responsible for coordination.*
- *Responsible for the coordination of interagency planning meetings and interviews and to call for working group and steering group meetings.*
- *Attend steering group meetings.*
- *Facilitate interagency planning meetings.*
- *Participate in the observation room during interviews. (...)*
- *Help ensure that children who visit Barnahus are well cared for.*
- *Spread information and knowledge about Barnahus operations.*
- *Ensure that up-to-date information, guidelines, routines and checklists regarding the Barnahus collaboration are available and are easily accessible for collaboration partners.*
- *Responsible for compiling statistics and evaluations made at Barnahus.*
- *Support methodology and competence development, gather and convey knowledge about the target group.*
- *Collaborate with other authorities and organizations that work to safeguard Barnahus interests, but who are not involved in Barnahus.*
- *Participate in the Barnahus network work.*
- *Offer crisis support and provide adequate assistance.*
- *Together with staff from the service child and adolescent psychiatry offer treatment ...*
- *Assess the child's possible symptoms of trauma.*
- *Participate in competence development within Barnahus.*

#### 7 Staff

*Barnahus shall have permanent staffing, which is estimated to have the following composition at the entry into force of this agreement:*

*Coordinator 1000%, Social Worker 100%, Social Worker 80%, Psychologist 1005%, Team Assistant 75%*

*In the case of recruitment, the respective employer is responsible for the employment procedure, together with the coordinator. When recruiting the coordinator, the steering group participates in the recruitment process. Barnahus' permanent staffing shall have access to external supervision.*

*Felles Retningslinjer for Statens Barnehus, Guidelines for Barnehus in Norway (page 12)*

### **3 Requirements for competence**

*The Barnahus shall have the skills necessary to fulfil the tasks of the Barnahus in a competent manner.*

*The Barnahus must have special knowledge of sexual abuse and violence in close relationships. The Barnahus shall have clinical expertise and experience in first and second line service delivery, competence within the field of trauma, childcare in normal development and developmental disabilities, competence in developmental impairment in adults and children, impaired functioning, abnormalities and pathology, as well as competence and experience from multicultural work. [...]*

*Overall, employees at the National Barnahus should reflect the competence requirements as mentioned above. In order to meet the different needs of the target group and their caregivers, it is necessary to have an interdisciplinary team of professionals. The teams will have experience in interdisciplinary work and networking, system work, social and health work and child welfare work.*

#### **3.1 Client-oriented, health and child-welfare skills**

*The Barnahus shall have employees with experience and professional background within health and social care or other childcare areas. [...]*

#### **3.2 Psychology competence**

*The Barnahus must have a psychologist [...] and experience from working with children, young people or other particularly vulnerable persons. [...]*

#### **3.3 Leader**

*The head of the Barnahus must have a minimum of 3 years of education at university or university level relevant to the core tasks of Barnahus. In addition, he or she must have solid management experience within personnel, financial and performance monitoring.*

#### **3.4 Other skills**

*In addition, Barnahus should acquire the skills necessary to perform the Barnahus' tasks effectively and with high quality. This could for example be technical, administrative or commercial competence.*

## 6. Finance & Budget

This part of the interagency agreement describes how the Barnahus is financed. It can also provide an overview of the Barnahus budget and details of the financial transactions.

The financing of Barnahus can set up in many different ways. In some countries, the operational and Barnahus staff costs are shared between the involved agencies and the municipalities in the uptake area. The agencies that come to practice in Barnahus have the responsibility of providing appropriate equipment for their service and pay for their own staffs' time and training. In some countries, the budget for operational costs, staff, equipment and training is fully covered by Government or local authorities' funds. Some Barnahus have acquired corporate or private funding.

Whatever the set up, it is important to clearly set out the resources and principles for funding the Barnahus. This provides commitment and sustainability and allows the respective agencies to plan their budgets and allocate adequate resources.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

**Key indicator:**

- The participating agencies commit, through a formal agreement, to contribute to the budget for the Barnahus running costs and the Barnahus staff.



### To Think About

- How can you best create a system for sustainable and continuous funding for Barnahus? Is it better to have a joint Barnahus budget that the respective agencies contribute to according to, for example, a pro rata system? Or is it better that one Ministry takes responsibility for the full operational budget and Barnahus staff? Should the signatory agencies contribute with their own equipment, staff time and training of staff?
- Consider putting in place a contingency plan, based on a risk analysis, including on financial considerations. In the US, it is a criterion for accreditation to have a written succession plan, including at a minimum temporary staffing strategies, long-term and/or permanent leadership replacement procedures, cross-training plan, financial considerations and a communication plan.
- How can you raise alternative and complementary funds? Donations? Corporate and private funding?



### Inspiration & Knowledge

- The Barnahus Quality Standards ([Full version](#)), Standard 2. Multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus, pages 44, in particular pages 49-50
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, page 95



## Examples

Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping [www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se)

### 9 Finance and Cost Sharing

*The costs for the permanent team in Barnahus, rent and other operational costs will be shared between ...*

*The police is responsible for ensuring that the necessary technical equipment is available in the interview and observation rooms. The local health system is responsible for ensuring that the necessary medical equipment is available in the medical examination rooms.*

*Each member of the interagency team covers costs for its staff, including their training. Each agency is covers costs incurred as a consequence of the work carried out by its staff in Barnahus.*

*The total budget for the Barnahus Year XXXX is estimated to XXX. The Ministry of XXX covers X % of the costs, the Ministry of XXX covers X % of the costs, and the municipalities in the uptake areas cover X % of the costs.*

*The municipalities' share is divided on a pro rata basis taking the total population of the municipality at the signature of this agreement.*

*1/12 of the respective municipalities' costs is paid the 30<sup>th</sup> every month to an account held by XXX.*

## 7. Venue

This part of the interagency agreement states the key guiding principles for access, exterior and interior environment of the venue. The purpose is to ensure that the Barnahus guarantees a child-friendly, safe and accessible environment for children of all ages and that the venue meets national requirements on venues for delivery of the respective services and indoor/outdoor accessibility.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**4.1 Place and Accessibility:** The Barnahus premises are preferably situated in a detached building located in an environment familiar to children, for example, a residential area. The premises should be accessible by public transport. The premises are accessible, including for children with disabilities and/or special needs.

**4.2 Interior Environment:** Furnishing and material are child and family-friendly and age-appropriate, especially in the waiting rooms. The premises are physically safe for children at all ages and developmental stages, including for children with disabilities and/or special needs.

**4.3 Privacy:** There are separate, soundproof and private areas available to ensure privacy.

**4.4 Preventing contact with the suspected perpetrator:** The Barnahus is set up so that contact between victim and alleged offender is avoided at all times.

**4.5 Interview room:** The Barnahus provides for live observation of interviews in a room other than the interview room for the interagency team.



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## To Think About

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- What is the most practical location of your Barnahus, taking into account uptake area, access and privacy? Are the surroundings child friendly and discreet? Do you need to take into account vicinity to another service, e.g. a hospital?
- What legal and policy requirements do you need to take into account? These typically include outdoor/indoor accessibility, safety (fire, evacuation) as well as specific requirements on the venue/room in which services can be delivered including for example medical examinations, forensic medical examinations, therapy and forensic interviews. There may also be requirements regarding the privacy of victims that are heard in criminal cases that need to be factored into the planning of the venue.
- Some Barnahus include perpetrators in their target group, e.g. forensic interviews with young offenders or combined child-parent therapy. If this is the case, how will you ensure that your venue caters for requirements to prevent contact between suspects/offenders and child victims?
- How much detail do you want to include in the interagency agreement? Is it possible to include an annex which sets out the details or is it preferable to develop separate guidelines which set out national requirements for Barnahus? In Norway, there are specific guidelines for the Barnahus venues, which describe the requirements for each room, including function, placement, plan, safety requirements, light and sound requirements etc. This helps ensure that the same standard is upheld in all Barnahus across the country.



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## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- The Barnahus Quality Standards ([Full version](#)), Standard 4. Child-friendly environment, pages 58-65
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 99-108



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## Examples

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*“The lead agency is responsible for providing adapted premises with necessary inventory and equipment for common areas such as kitchens, waiting rooms, guest rooms and conference rooms. Police are responsible for providing the technical equipment that is required to fulfill the obligations deriving from this agreement [forensic interviews]. The county council responsible for public health (Landstinget) is responsible for the medical equipment required to fulfill the obligations arising from the agreement [medical and forensic medical examination]. Each party is responsible for inventories and equipment such as furniture and computers for their own offices.”* Barnahus Interagency Agreement, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden (Swedish)

*“The physical environment should be especially adapted for children and adolescents. In the premises, only Barnahus' own activities shall occur. The landlord at the conclusion of the agreement is the County Council.”* Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping [www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se)

*“The Dallas Children’s Advocacy Center provides a child-friendly setting where a skilled team of professionals come together under one roof [...]”* Dallas Child Advocacy Center Investigative Protocol (Dec 2014 – Dec 2017) [www.dcac.org](http://www.dcac.org)

*The premises are accessible by public transport. The premises are easily accessible, including for individuals with disabilities and/or special needs. (Barnahus Quality Standards)*

*The location and sign-posting of Barnahus are discreet. The venue will only host the Barnahus and its respective activities. The venue is organised and planned in a way which ensures the privacy of the users and prevents contact with the accused perpetrator. (Based on Barnahus Quality Standards 4)*

*The environment is child-friendly and adapted to the specific needs of children and youth, including children and youth with special needs. (Barnahus Quality Standards)*

*The venue meets national requirements for outdoor/indoor accessibility and fire safety. (Barnahus Quality Standards)*

*The venue conforms with national legal requirements for venues in which [medical examination and treatment are carried out] [forensic medical examinations are carried out] [therapy is offered] [forensic interviews are held] ... (Barnahus Quality Standards)*

*Users and staff are consulted regularly on the accessibility, planning, environment, equipment and material of the venue. (Barnahus Quality Standards)*



## 8. Exchange of Information & Documentation

This part of the interagency agreement describes roles and responsibilities in terms of case specific information sharing and documentation. It also deals with confidentiality, privacy and data protection, including where and how data is stored. It can also include details about the recording and storage of interviews, so that the evidential validity of the recording in Court is preserved.

This section of the interagency agreement can bring important clarity to the respective agencies under which circumstances they can share information and the procedures for doing so. It can also clearly define the respective responsibilities of the participating agencies. It is good practice to clearly state that the agencies only will share information in the best interests of the child.

Most interagency agreements provide fairly short and general statements on the commitment to respect confidentiality and the responsibilities of the respective agencies. The details are often set out in protocols and procedures.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**5.1 Formal procedures and routines:** Interagency case review and planning is integral to the work of the Barnahus team and the respective agencies in the Barnahus and is formalised by mutually agreed upon procedures and routines.

**5.2 Continuous case planning and review:** Case review and planning meetings, involving the relevant agencies in the interagency team, takes place on a regular basis in the Barnahus.

**5.3 Continuous case tracking:** The Barnahus ensures continuous documentation and access to relevant case information to the interagency team members on the progress of the case until case closure.

*"The Barnahus has formal procedures for case management, including for planning meetings, documentation and follow up."*

*"A protocol supporting the interagency team to deal with privacy and data protection is in place."*



### To Think About

- Confidentiality, privacy and data protection laws are often perceived as important obstacles to interagency information exchange and documentation. However, most Barnahus in Europe have found constructive solutions to engage in effective interagency case management in full respect of law and professional codes of conduct. How do national law, policies and standards shape interagency case management and documentation, exchange of information and storage of personal data in your country?
- Are there policy, professional standards, procedures etc., e.g. professional non-disclosure, that enable or hinder professionals to share and document case specific data?
- How much detail do you want to include in the agreement? Can the details and rules governing exchange, documentation, confidentiality, data protection and privacy be detailed in a data protection and privacy protocol or other procedures?
- Are there legal or policy requirements regarding the recording of interviews, including e.g. technical solutions, storage, editing and/or transmission?



## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- The Barnahus Quality Standards ([Full version](#)), Standard 5. Interagency Case Management, pages 66-72, in particular pages 71-72
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 84, 87
- Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams (Guidance), Kentucky, US, pages 18-21
- Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse, pages 10-12
- [15 Lessons Learned from Child Advocacy Centers](#), page 5
- Reference to forthcoming factsheet on documentation, recording etc



## Examples

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### **Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping ([www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se), page 8)**

#### **11 Documentation**

*Each agency is responsible for its own documentation according to its specific requirements for documentation.*

*Information sharing is governed by XXX [e.g. law, protocol, professional standards] and is done in the best interests of the child. The respective agencies are responsible for upholding legal requirements and specific agency requirements in terms of information sharing.*

*Staff in the Barnahus take minutes from interagency meetings and forensic interviews. The documentation should be kept brief.*

*XXX [name of agency] is responsible for archiving the documentation from Barnahus and for data protection and privacy.*

*Staff in the Barnahus takes minutes from steering group meeting and liaison/working group meetings.*

*“All agency professionals and CAC staff, within the bounds allowed by law, agree to maintain confidentiality of all records and information gathered on all child abuse cases as outlined by the Kansas Code for the care of Children [...]. All personnel further agree not to release any records or information on any child abuse case except as it relates to legitimate program operations of their agencies and as otherwise provided by law.” (Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US)*

## 9. Competence and Quality

This part of the agreement reiterates the agencies' commitment to ensure highly professional and competent services. It establishes joint interagency and individual training requirements as well as the details of peer support structures, mentoring and supervision of staff in general terms. Some agreements include specific language regarding the respective professionals training requirements, however, this is often done in relation to the description of their tasks (see sections 4 and 5).

The interagency agreement can also commit Barnahus to playing a role in prevention through competence building and networking with other Barnahus or relevant actors, such as nurseries, schools and hospitals. This includes competence building within the respective agencies with actors that aren't normally involved in Barnahus activities. This part of the interagency agreement can also include an agreement on the evaluation of Barnahus. Regular evaluation of the performance and quality of the Barnahus is essential to establish that the service lives up to the professional standards that the parties have committed to.<sup>7</sup>

The findings of the evaluation should feed into review and adaptation of practice and procedures. The findings of the evaluation may also prompt a review of the interagency agreement (see section 10 below). The evaluation of Barnahus should always be informed by the children and caregivers who have been served by Barnahus. Evaluation can also be dealt with in a separate section of the interagency agreement, or together with the section that deals with review of the interagency agreement.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**6.2 Specialised Staff:** Forensic interviews are carried out by specialised staff members who receive regular training in conducting forensic interviewing.

**7.3 Staff:** The medical examination is carried out by specialised staff who are trained on recognizing indicators of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as child neglect.

**8.2 Staff:** Mental health services and treatment are provided by professionals with specialised training and expertise

**9.1 Training of professionals:** The members of the Barnahus team and involved agencies are provided regular training in their specific areas of expertise and are offered joint training in cross-cutting issues.

**9.2 Guidance, supervision, counselling:** The members of the Barnahus team have access to regular guidance, supervision, counselling and peer review both in relation to individual cases and in addressing professional and personal emotional strain, challenges and ethical dilemmas in working with child victims and witnesses of violence.

**10.2 External competence building:** The Barnahus offers targeted action to increase competence and knowledge among professionals working for and with children, by for example organising study visits, information meetings, lectures and producing written material

*"A system is in place to evaluate the impact of the multidisciplinary response to the child."* (Standard 5)

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<sup>7</sup> Reference to tracking tool.



## To Think About

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- Are there requirements in law or guidelines/policy regarding the education and competence of staff that need to be taken into account in formulating common and individual training requirements?
- How much detail regarding training requirements do you want to include in the interagency agreement? Is it possible to include an annex which sets out the details or is it preferable to develop separate guidelines which set out national competence and training requirements for Barnahus?
- Does the Barnahus have capacity and competence to take on the role of a competence centre, including organizing study visits, training and information meetings for other sectors? Is there another actor that already carries out this role? If so, how can Barnahus contribute with its specific knowledge?
- How often should evaluation of the Barnahus take place? What form of evaluation is most feasible and helpful: self-evaluation or external evaluation? What tools and mechanisms are in place for evaluation?
- How will you ensure that the views of children and their caregivers are collected and inform potential review of practice and procedures in Barnahus?



## Inspiration & Knowledge

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- The Barnahus Quality Standards ([Full version](#)), Standard 9 and 10, pages 102-110
- Putting Standards into Practice: A Guide to Implementing the 2017 Standards for Accredited Members, pages 88, 97-98
- Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse, page 13-15
- [15 Lessons Learned from Child Advocacy Centers](#), page 4, 6-7
- Felles Retningslinjer for Statens Barnehus, Guidelines for Barnehus in Norway (page 11 and 12 ff) See section 5 above for text in English regarding competence requirements. See below under Examples for text in English regarding external competence building.
- Evaluation: [Promise Tracking Tool](#)



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## Examples

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### **Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping (www.barnahuslinkoping.se, page 8)**

#### **14 Ensuring competence**

*Exchange of experience shall take place between the interagency parties, between different Barnahus and other actors with similar target groups.*

*The staff from the respective agencies that are involved in the Barnahus should be allowed by their employer to participate in the competence development that is offered within the Barnahus.*

*Collaborating agencies/organizations agree to provide trained professionals with skills in interviewing, assessment, and investigation to handle cases of child abuse (Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US)*

### **Felles Retningslinjer for Statens Barnehus, Guidelines for Barnehus in Norway (page 12)**

*The Barnahus shall carry out professional development, contribute to competence and the development of its own service. The main focus shall nevertheless be the daily work associated with the other tasks referred to in 2.1-2.4.*

*The Barnahus must:*

- *Stay updated on current research, contribute to professional development in the field and facilitate research.*
- *Provide professional advice and guidance to external actors within the public and private sector, as well as private individuals.*
- *Contribute to training at the Police College and relevant educational institutions within the child welfare, health and care services*
- *Contribute to training and guidance internally in the police and to partners*
- *Develop its own services with the purpose of ensuring good professional quality of work, including management, internal routines and procedures and organization of the work.*

*In addition, the kindergarten should contribute to raising competence and sharing experiences with corresponding actors nationally and internationally.*

## 10. Review of the Agreement

This part of the agreement stipulates the terms of regular review of the interagency agreement.

Regular review can help ensure that the agreement conforms with existing and new laws, procedures or regulations. It helps ensure that the organisation and procedures set out in the agreement still provide the best possible terms for effective multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration and response. It can also respond to findings from the regular evaluation to better meet the needs and wishes of the children and caregivers who are served by Barnahus.

Review of the agreement may also be prompted by request or the withdrawal of a party to the agreement. The terms of withdrawal can be set out in the declaration of intent (see above) or be included as a separate section of the interagency agreement.

The agreement should only be modified with the consent of all signatories.

### What's the Barnahus Quality Standard?

**2.2 Organisation of the multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration in the Barnahus:** The collaboration is structured and transparent, including clearly established roles, mandates, coordination mechanisms, budget, measures for monitoring and evaluation, which contribute to efficient processes and ensure continuity and stability.

*“The formal foundational agreement is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation and the respective signatory agencies’ procedures and structures.”*



### To Think About

- How often should the regular review take place?
- Who should be involved in the review?
- How do you solve potential disagreement about changes to the agreement?



### Inspiration & Knowledge

- Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US
- Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US
- Dallas Child Advocacy Center Investigative Protocol (Dec 2014 – Dec 2017) [www.dcac.org](http://www.dcac.org)
- Model Protocol for Multidisciplinary Teams (Guidance) & Model Protocol (Template), Kentucky, US



## Examples

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*This Interagency Agreement shall be reviewed annually by the Multidisciplinary Team. Any desired modifications will be discussed and decided by each CAC's Board. If after notifying all agencies any concerns regarding changes exist, a meeting will be scheduled between those agencies and the respective CAC director to discuss all concerns. The CAC director will work with the agency and CAC Boards to negotiate an agreeable solution. (Single Statewide Interagency Agreement, North Dakota, US)*

*If the circumstances that this agreement are based on change substantially, a party may, during the contract period, request a renegotiation or request withdrawal from the agreement. The notice period for withdrawal from the agreement is 12 months. (Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping [www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se))*

## 11. Conflict Resolution

This part of the interagency agreement establishes mechanisms for solving conflicts between the parties of the agreement. This is an important part of the agreement since it helps prevent that conflict gets in the way of the team's multidisciplinary and interagency collaboration and response. If conflict arises it is important that the parties already have agreed on a procedure for conflict management and potential negotiation/mediation.



### To Think About

- What fora and the mechanisms for conflict resolution are acceptable to all parties?
- Who can act as mediator if need be?



### Inspiration & Knowledge

- [Forming a Multidisciplinary Team to Investigate Child Abuse](#), pages 12-14



### Examples

*Disputes that arise in connection with this agreement shall in the first instance be resolved through consensus between the parties. If consensus is not reached, the dispute shall be resolved through mediation between the parties. ([Barnahus Interagency Agreement](#), Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden)*

*Agencies which are part of this agreement are expected to adhere to the operational protocols. Deviations from the protocols will be addressed through dialogue between representatives from the CAC and the affected agency(s) in an effort to resolve differences. The goal of all agencies will be to resolve disputes in a manner that best serves the interests of children. (Interagency Agreement Template Child Advocacy Center, Kansas, US)*

*Disputes concerning this agreement, including its interpretation and application, are solved primarily through negotiation between the parties. Should disagreement persist, the dispute may be referred to a public court. (Inter-agency agreement/Samverkansavtal, Barnahus Linköping [www.barnahuslinkoping.se](http://www.barnahuslinkoping.se))*





## Implementing the Barnahus Quality Standards throughout Europe

PROMISE is supporting Europe to adopt the Barnahus model as a standard practice for providing child victims and witnesses of violence rapid access to justice and care. We undertake this work to fulfil the PROMISE vision: a Europe where the human rights of children to protection from violence, support and to be heard are fulfilled.

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

The first PROMISE project (2015-2017) set European standards and engaged a broad network of professionals. The second PROMISE project (2017-2019) promoted national level progress towards meeting the standards and formalised the PROMISE Barnahus Network. Future work will expand these activities to include University training, case management tools, and a European accreditation system.

PROMISE is managed by the Children at Risk Unit at the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat in close collaboration with Child Circle.

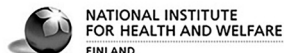
**Access the PROMISE tools and learn more at [www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise](http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise)**



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