

Putting the Child at the Centre

Barnahus, a one door approach to supporting children who have been sexually abused in NI




Thursday 24th February 2022 – roundtable event - [#BarnahusNI](#)

Putting the Child at the Centre

Welcome and Introduction

Mairéad McCafferty
Chief Executive - NICCY




PUTTING THE CHILD AT THE CENTRE


Barnahus (Children's House) - a one door approach to supporting children who have been sexually abused in Northern Ireland


Dr. Jennifer Lavoie;
Prof John Devaney;
Dr. Mary Mitchell
University of Edinburgh


Dr. Lisa Bunting;
Dr. Annemarie Millar
Queen's University Belfast

Dr. Louise Hill
Children 1st

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PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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Opening Remarks

Koulla Yiasouma
Commissioner - NICCY

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The Barnahus Model

Bragi Guðbrandsson

Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and founder of Barnahus

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The Gillen Review and Barnahus

The Right Honourable Sir John Gillen

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Presentation of Research

Dr Jennifer Lavoie and Prof John Devaney
University of Edinburgh




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Dr. Jennifer Lavoie

University of Edinburgh

Children's perceptions of justice; child-friendly justice; forensic disclosures



Prof. John Devaney

University of Edinburgh

Child welfare; child maltreatment; domestic abuse; outcome evaluations



Dr. Lisa Bunting

Queen's University Belfast

Experiences of child victims/witnesses within criminal justice system; child protection



Dr. Annemarie Millar

Queen's University Belfast

Children's experiences of domestic abuse; police responses to domestic abuse



Dr. Mary Mitchell

University of Edinburgh

Child welfare; family support; children's participation; outcome evaluation; social work theory



Dr. Louise Hill

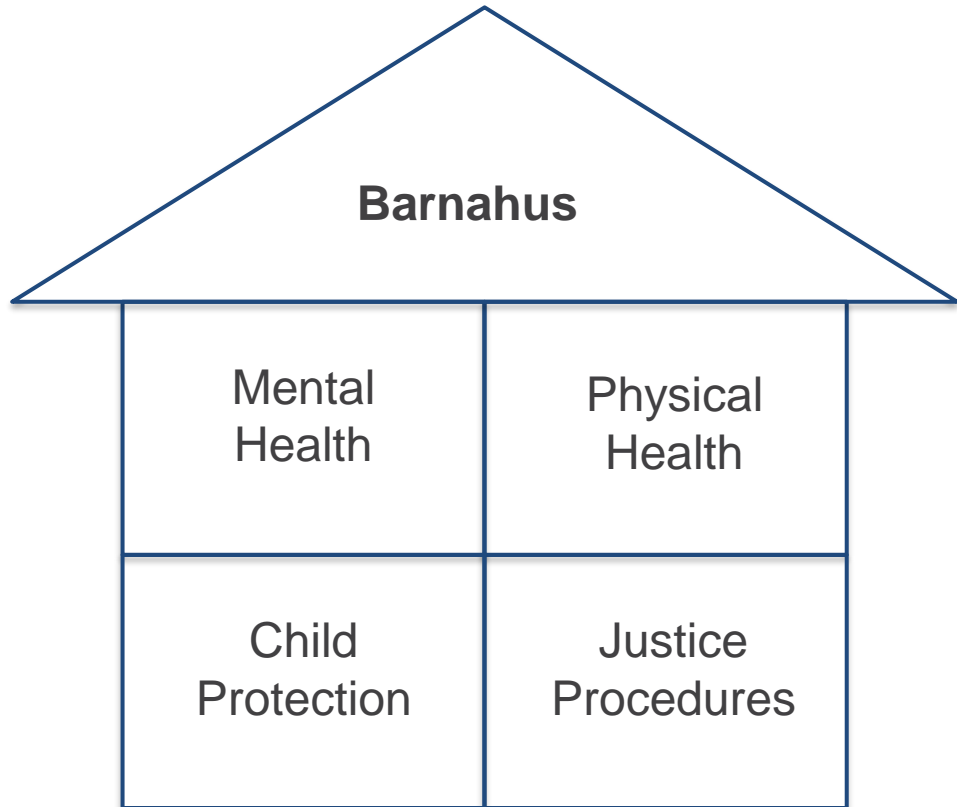
Children 1st

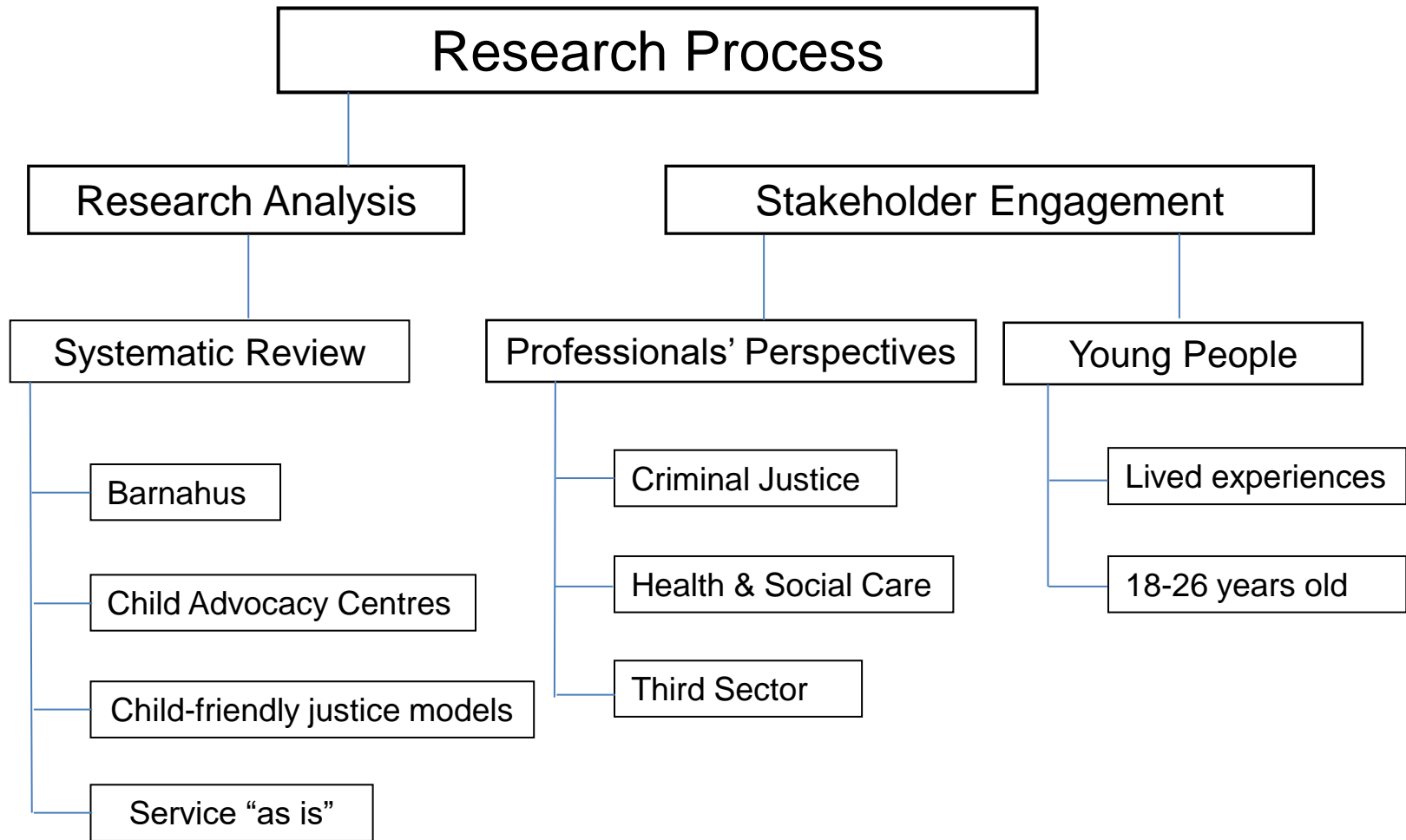
Children's rights; child & youth participation; child welfare; social policy; implementation

- What are the current arrangements in cases of sexual offences against children in Northern Ireland?
- What are the opportunities and challenges to the introduction and application of the Barnahus model?



- Colocation
- <18 years old
- Child witnesses/victims





EVIDENCE BASE FOR BARNAHUS

- Child-rights based approach
- Reduces re-traumatization
- Associated with justice and recovery

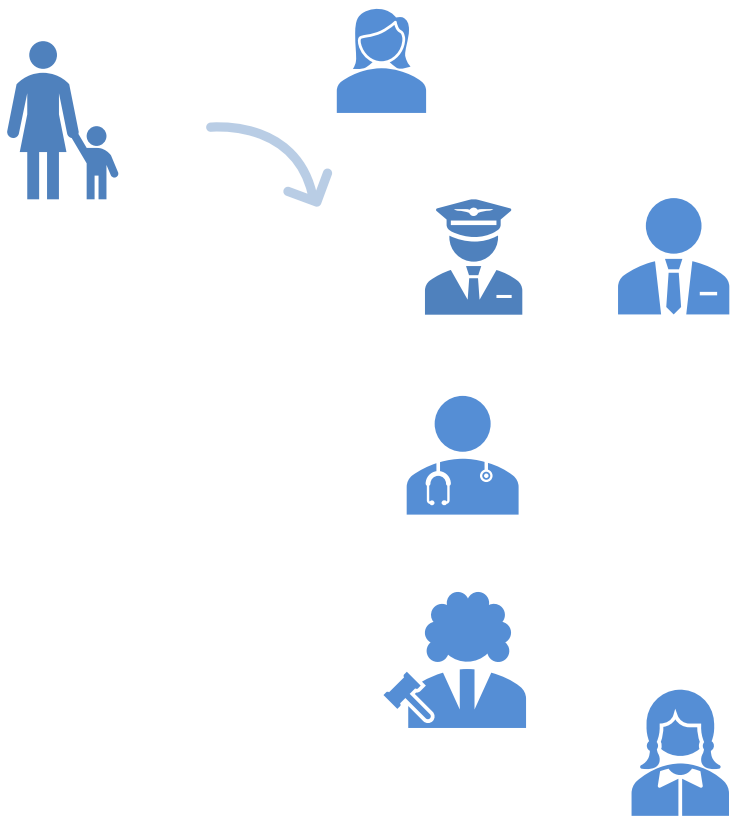
outcomes:

- Higher quality evidence
- Reduction in time delays
- Higher rate of convictions
- Higher child/family satisfaction



CURRENT SYSTEM

JOINT INVESTIGATION



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- Gillen Review (2019)
- DoJ Scoping Study of Barnahus
- Voluntary protocol to expedite serious sexual offences against children <13 (Judge Smyth)
- DoJ New Victim & Witness Strategy (2021)
- Remote Evidence Centres pilots
- DoJ-commissioned cross-sectoral, multiagency Steering Group established

LIVED EXPERIENCES

1 – The need to be believed and validated

2 – The impact of experiencing abuse on all aspects of life

3 – Feeling a loss of identity

4 – Feeling scared telling their stories in the Criminal Justice System

PROFESSIONAL STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS

- NSPCC Young Witness Service
- Victim Support NI
- NEXUS NI
- Barnardos
- NI Police Service
- NI Public Prosecution Service
- NI Bar Library
- NI Law Society
- NI Criminal Justice Inspectorate
- NI Department of Justice
- NI Office of Lord Chief Justice
- Directorate of Social Work for the Health and Social Care Board
- Directorate of Social Work for the Belfast Trust
- Directorate of Social Work for the Northern Trust
- Directorate of Social Work for the South Eastern Trust
- Directorate of Social Work for the Western Trust
- NI Safeguarding Board
- NIGALA
- Rowan Centre
- Royal College of Pediatrics & Health
- The Child Care Centre
- NI Department of Health

PROFESSIONAL STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

1 – The Northern Ireland Barnahus

2 – Leadership: Who is going to take forward establishment of Barnahus?

3 – Lens for justice: Whose needs are being met?

4 – Coproduction and upholding the rights of the child and family

RECOMMENDATIONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF BARNAHUS

1. Ministerial responsibility
2. Project lead and Project Board
3. Representation from those with lived experience on Project Board
4. Clarify remit and commissioning
5. Designed space for children and young people (CYP)
6. Design of NI Barnahus with CYP
7. CYP Commissioner and Victim of Crime Commissioner involved in discussions on remit and governance

RECOMMENDATIONS

OPERATION OF BARNAHUS

1. Designate advocate for each child
2. Contain testimony & cross-examination within Barnahus
3. Legal process for additional disclosures of evidence
4. One roof, child-friendly environment
5. Sustainable public funds
6. Agreement protocols for information sharing

MOVING FORWARD

“The attitude [toward Barnahus] must be a “can do” not “I can't do”. We should be saying what can we do here to do this? Because the concept is absolutely first class. It's worked in Norway, Greenland, Denmark, Finland, and Lithuania, it's working in England. I'm just a bit concerned that you can sit down if you're a civil servant and think of 100 reasons why all the money shouldn't be spent here. You know children are being absolutely devastated by this whole process - that's without price.”

Sir John Gillen

2021 interview with research team

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NICCY Reflections and Recommendations

Koulla Yiasouma
Commissioner - NICCY

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Attendee Responses and Pathway to Moving Forward

Chair:

- **Mairéad McCafferty** – Chief Executive

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Closing Remarks

Koulla Yiasouma

Commissioner - NICCY

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Thank you for attending

#BarnahusNI

You can find out more about our work at:

www.nickey.org/barnahus

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Instagram – niccy_yp