



BARNAVERNDARSTOFA

Multi-agency and interdisciplinary cooperation in cases of unaccompanied children and possible victims of trafficking

– Child-friendly model of intervention

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Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director General

The Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland



Introduction

- ✓ The case for the “Barnahus-model“ or One Shop Stop response – to avoid re-traumatisation by multiple interviews and elicit narratives for identifying child victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse
- ✓ What requirements are stipulated by international law with regard to children on the move who are at risk of being victims of exploitation, trafficking and abuse?



Barnahus, evolving approach

- ✓ Barnahus has assumed a key role in the Justice as well as Child Protection System of the Nordic Countries
- ✓ Allowing for difficulties of definitions, Barnahus can be found in 50 locations in Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark
- ✓ Recommended by international and professional bodies *inter alia*:
 - ✓ Council of Europe: the Lanzarote Committee and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Guidelines of Child-friendly justice (2010) etc.
 - ✓ ISPCAN, the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect: The multidisciplinary award 2006



Child sexual abuse and exploitation

Uniqueness of Crimes against Children

- ✓ The vulnerability of the child victim
 - ✓ Child victims do not normally bring charges against their offenders
 - ✓ The “silent” crime, secrecy of the abuse
 - ✓ Child victims difficulties in disclosures
- ✓ Lack or absence of evidence other than the child’s disclosure
 - ✓ Medical evidence in less than 10% of cases and only conclusive in less than 5% of all cases
 - ✓ Other hard evidence or witnesses other than the child victim’s rarely exist



The Child's narrative:

Uniqueness of the Intervention

- ✓ Addressing child abuse and exploitation is not only a judicial issue but requires **multiagency intervention**
- ✓ The child's victim's **disclosure** is the key for:
 - ✓ Ensuring the safety of the child – **the child protection agencies**
 - ✓ Providing assistance to the child victim with the aim of physical and psychological recovery – **the health services**
 - ✓ Uncovering the crime in terms of criminal investigation, prosecution and sentencing – **the judicial system**
 - ✓ Preventing the perpetrator from reoffending



Multiple interviews – Harmful to the Child Victim

- ✓ All the different agencies: the Child Protection Service, the Medical Profession, the Police etc. need to have the child's account
- ✓ Repetitive interviews by many professionals in different locations can have very harmful effect for the child victim
- ✓ Re-victimisation – re-traumatisation
 - ✓ Refers to painful/stressful re-experiencing of trauma as a consequence of sexual violence



Violation of the “best interest of the child”

✓ *Retraumatization!*





Multiple interviews – Harmful for the Criminal Investigation

- ✓ Repetitive and unstructured interviews can distort the child's account
 - ✓ Suggestibility and leading and misleading questions
 - ✓ The child's disclosure becomes contaminated
 - ✓ Discrepancies in the child's story
 - ✓ The evidential value of the narrative diminishes
- ✓ Additional harmful experience: the Absence of a child-friendly facilities
 - ✓ High level of stress precludes optimal expression
 - ✓ Police stations or Hospitals: Wrong messages!



Multiagency collaboration

- ✓ The Gov. Agency for Child Protection
- ✓ The State Police
- ✓ The State Prosecution
- ✓ The Police Dep. in Reykjavik
- ✓ The University Hospital – Dep. of Paediatric and Dep. of child Psychiatry
- ✓ Association of the Directors of Local Social Services
- ✓ The Child Protection Services in Reykjavik





Barnahus

Medical Exams and Evaluation	Joint Invest. Interviews: court statements/ CPS interviews	Victim Therapy
Family Counselling/ Support	Consultation and advice to local CPS	Education, training and research



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The Barnahus in Reykjavik





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On arrival at Barnahus





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Interviewing room





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The monitoring room





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The medical room





Facts that must not be forgotten

- ✓ Children moving across borders, unaccompanied children and asylum-seeking children are (probably) **already traumatized**
- ✓ Significant number of children on the move are **trafficked, sexually exploited and/or victims of abuse**
- ✓ A prerequisite for discovering and identifying child trafficking, exploitation and abuse is to **listen to the child**
- ✓ **Danger of re-traumatization** derives from multi-sectorial response if interventions are not co-ordinated in a child-friendly or sensitive manner



CRC General principle of Non-discrimination

- Unaccompanied children and children at risk who are possible victims of trafficking should
 - Enjoy the same protective and participatory rights as all other children; Art 22
 - Access to the child protection services
 - The child should be listened to
 - Be ensured suitable alternative care as appropriate (prevalence given to foster placement/family setting) Art 20; **recruiting foster families**
 - Needs assessment
 - **Trust and disclosure**



Avoiding re-traumatization: international law

- ✓ The CRC, the principle of the “best interest of the child”
- ✓ The UN Guidelines on Justice
in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (2005)
- ✓ The CoE Convention against Trafficking (2005)
- ✓ The CoE Lanzarote Convention (2010)
- ✓ EU Directive on Trafficking (2011)
- ✓ EU Directive on victims (2012)



Barnahus and unaccompanied children

- In Iceland a formal collaboration since 2016 between the relevant agencies:
 - The Directorate of Immigration
 - Government Agency for Child Protection and the relevant local child protection services
 - The Legal Guardian appointed by the RC
 - Others as appropriate, e.g. police
- The child's narrative provides basis for
 - The asylum application
 - Individual assessment, e.g. age, mental health
 - Protective measures, including accommodation
 - Collaboration between agencies and rapport building with unaccompanied children