

The cross-border impact of BARNAHUS

Practice and ideology

The Nordic Network of Barnahus Research

Johansson, Stefansen, Bakketeig & Kaldal (ed.), Collaborating against Child Abuse: exploring the Nordic Barnahus model (<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-58388-4?page=1#toc>)

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What is Barnahus?

- **Two Pillars:**

Pillar I:

- Child friendly environment
- Investigative interview

Pillar II:

- Multidisciplinary collaboration under one roof
 - Police agency, Child protection, Healthcare

- **Barnahus met a need in the Nordic countries from:**

- Justice system
- Child welfare system

What is Barnahus?

- **Barnahus as a practice:**
 - A one-door Child friendly environment
 - Evidence based model for investigative interviews
 - Multidisciplinary collaboration model
- **Barnahus as an ideology?**
 - Strengthening children´s rights
 - Access to justice
 - Protection from abuse
 - » Challenges when travelling cross borders?

The development of Barnahus in the Nordic countries

- **Inspired from the United States**
- **In a time of international influences**
 - Child friendly justice – impact on the justice system
 - Child as a carrier of individual rights - impact in the child welfare system
- **Common ground of values**
 - Common core
 - Multiple variations

Established: Iceland 1998, Sweden 2006, Norway 2007, Denmark 2013, Finland 2014, The Åland Islands 2007, Greenland 2011 and The Faroe Islands 2014

The Nordic Barnahus

- **Iceland** (one Barnahus, 1998)
 - Coordinate the responsibility and functions of the child welfare services, law enforcement agencies and medical services
 - Core activities:
 - investigative interviews,
 - medical examination,
 - therapeutic services and
 - multidisciplinary consultation meetings
- **Sweden** (around 30 Barnahus, 2006)
 - Coordinate the responsibility and functions of the child welfare services, law enforcement
 - Core activities:
 - investigative interviews,
 - multidisciplinary consultation meetings
 - Large variation
 - psychological- or trauma treatment
 - medical examination

The Nordic Barnahus

- **Norway** (eleven Barnahus, 2007)
 - Associated with the police investigation
 - investigative interviews in a supportive environment
 - Healthcare oriented by offering treatment by trained therapists.
 - Child welfare services are more peripheral and are not formally a part of the collaborative model.
 - since child welfare plays an important part in child protection they often participate
- **Denmark** (five Barnahus, 2013)
 - Child abuse cases involving child welfare agencies and either the police or healthcare services.
 - Core activities:
 - multidisciplinary consultation meetings
 - short-term crisis interventions and consultations
 - investigative interviews in polis reported cases
 - Variation
 - medical examinations

The cross-border influence in the Nordic region

- **Variations between and within countries**
 - Can the child's need of trauma treatment be assessed and met in Barnahus?
 - Is the child medically examined at Barnahus?
- **A common core**
 - Investigative interview, multidisciplinary collaboration, Child friendly environment, one door-concept
- **Icelandic initiative, interpreted by the other Nordic countries, inspired the Icelandic development**
 - **Harmonization**
 - The activities (strengthening the role of child welfare)
 - The target group (sexually abused children and victims of violence)

The target group of Barnahus

- **Harmonization of the target group – a strengthening of children's rights**
- **Is the target group important for the Barnahus concept?**
 - What children come to Barnahus?
 - What is defined as child abuse?
- **The Target group in the Nordic countries is closely linked to the criminal investigation**

The target group of Barnahus

- **Children exposed to family violence**
 - Included in the target group of most Nordic countries
 - A crime against the child in Norway
 - A witness in Sweden
 - Rarely seen in Barnahus in Sweden
- **Children victims of corporal punishment**
 - Covered by the criminal law through the ban (stated in civil law)
 - A rather large group in Swedish Barnahus
 - Several Swedish Barnahus provides effective treatment for these children and their families
 - Successful part of the Barnahus activities in Sweden

Is the target group important?

- **Countries implementing Barnahus where corporal punishment is accepted**
 - The child will not be a subject of a criminal investigation
 - A large group of children (and their families) risk not to get to Barnahus
- **Is criminalization necessary?**
 - If the aim is to protect, support and rehabilitate children
 - Access to Barnahus
- **Definition matters**
 - The Swedish ban on corporal punishment and the status of children exposed to domestic violence are examples

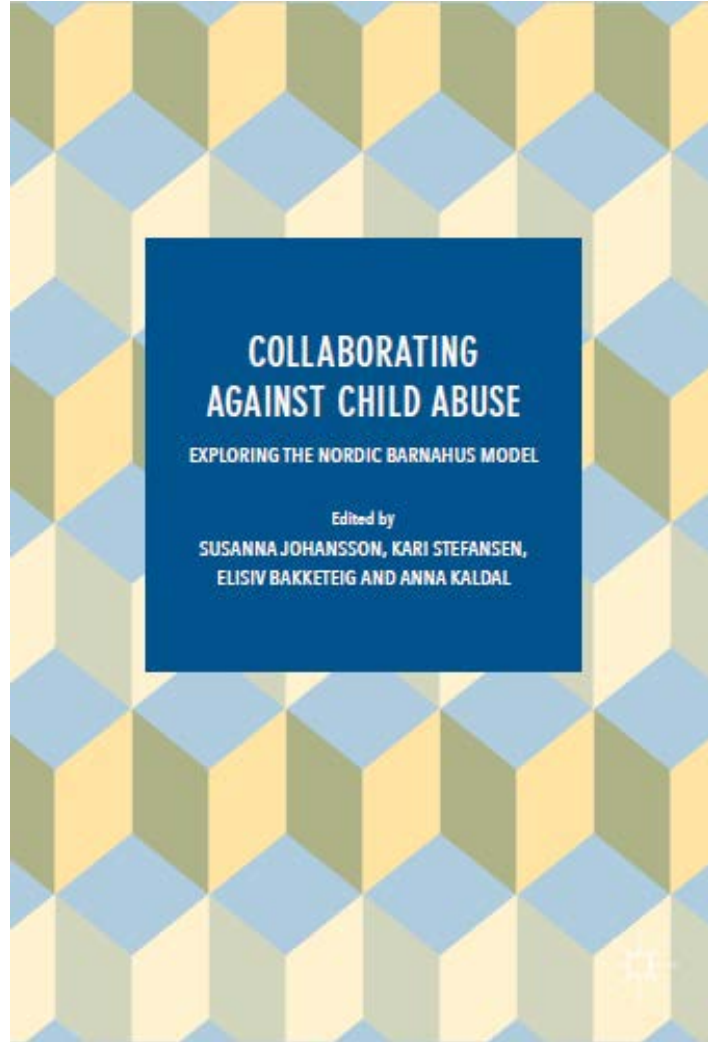


Barnahus advocating children's rights

- **Harmonization of the target group in the Nordic region**
 - A ideological step in strengthening children´s rights through the Barnahus practice
 - A result of Barnahus as both practice and ideology
- **Promoting Barnahus - important step in children access to justice and combating child abuse**
- **Challenges**
 - Implementing practice is not the same thing as implementing the idea
 - Implementing the practice is one thing
 - What children get access to Barnahus is another

Final words

- **Is the definition of the target group and child abuse important?**
 - Is a one-door concept with the core activities of Barnahus a Barnahus if it does not include children who are victims of corporal punishment or exposed to family violence?
- **Nordic Barnahus Ideology**
 - giving children access to child friendly justice and
 - combating child abuse
- **The process of changing is complex**
 - Dynamic and ongoing process
 - influences from local practice and international policies
- **Bear in mind the *ideological aspect of Barnahus*:** being access to child friendly justice and combating child abuse



**Thank
you**