

Making Sense of Bairns Hoose: Conversations about systems and practice innovation.

Briefing Note of Knowledge Exchange Event, 22 May, 2024

This briefing summarises the early evaluation learning and insights shared at the **Making Sense of Bairns Hoose: Conversations about systems and practice innovation** knowledge exchange event held on May 22, at the Trades Hall of Glasgow. Sixty delegates from local and international organisations and research settings discussed research, practice and system change and identified areas for possible further attention and action.

A [Phase 2 Research Report](#), released in mid-September 2024, provides a full discussion on key findings and analysis. This briefing helps us understand our progress and learning to date as we work to become more trauma-informed and child-centred across all of the systems and supports working together through the Bairns Hoose. This briefing is set out in the following way:



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Setting the Scene

1. Background

In April 2020, [Children 1st](#), a national voluntary organisation, led a partnership with [Victim Support Scotland](#), Children England and the University of Edinburgh to secure three years’ funding from [People’s Postcode Lottery](#)’s Dream Fund to establish Scotland’s first Barnahus, now known as North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose. The University of Edinburgh agreed to complete an independent formative evaluation whose overarching aim was to consider: How does the Children 1st Bairns’ Hoose contribute to the safety, justice, recovery and recognition of children (and their families) who use the service in North Strathclyde?



2. Partners, structure, and goals of the day

Making Sense of Bairns' Hoose was a collaborative knowledge exchange event organised by the University of Edinburgh in partnership with Children 1st and the University of Toronto. It was funded by People's Postcode Lottery, Children 1st and the University of Edinburgh.

The purpose of the event was to stimulate creative conversations about systems and practice innovation in the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose and beyond by:

- hearing from international visitors about including the voices of children and young people who have been affected by abuse in service development in the UK, Canada and Albania.
- sharing early learning from what children, young people and family members have said to us about their experiences or services in North Strathclyde after a disclosure or identification of abuse.
- considering what differences the early implementation of North Strathclyde Bairns' Hoose is making through multidisciplinary working and the use of a dedicated child friendly space.
- Deepening our understanding of the complex contexts and mechanisms that are enabling professionals in the Bairns Hoose to make a difference.

A Scottish-based visual artist, [Cassandra Harrison](#), illustrated key themes and discussion points from throughout the day.

Section A. Understanding children's experiences after abuse and maltreatment

3. International perspectives

Three leading researchers in child protection, Dr Ramona Alaggia (University of Toronto) Dr Silvie Bovarnick (University of Hildesheim) and Dr Camille Warrington (University of Bedfordshire), shared their insights on a panel facilitated by Dr Mary Mitchell (University of Edinburgh).



What do young people say they need most after abuse or maltreatment?

Feeling safe and validated

Drawing on her research in Canada, Dr Ramona Alaggia highlighted the importance of professionals giving the young person the time and space to tell their own story. Based on her interviews with over 50 young people who had experienced sexual abuse within their family network, Dr Camille Warrington concurred that feeling validated and believed were crucial. This resonated with Dr Silvie Bovarnick findings from her research with trafficked young people in Albania who wanted to feel safe and cared for by the adults they were talking to. She added it is especially upsetting for these young people when their disclosures are simply ignored and sometimes, they are even blamed for the abuse happening.



Consistent and trusting relationships

Another area in common across these studies was the wish expressed by young people for consistent and trusting relationships with professionals, but that these are often rare. In Dr Camille Warrington's work the young people valued having therapeutic support to make sense of their experiences, their feelings and responses.

Not just a victim

Furthermore, Dr Camille Warrington argued it was especially important to these young people's feelings of self-respect and dignity, that they were seen by adults as more than just 'victims'. This meant being treated as 'whole human beings' with rich and complex lives rather than being defined solely by something negative that had been done to them.

What stops children getting what they need from the systems around them?

Fears and lack of trust in professionals

Turning to explore some of these challenges in more depth, Dr Ramona Alaggia shared that fears about being taken into public care can deter some young people from reporting abuse to



professionals. This lack of trust in the people whose job it was to protect and support them was also an issue amongst the young researchers Dr Silvie Bovarnick worked alongside in Albania. This, she suggested, was unsurprising given that many ended up experiencing further maltreatment by some law enforcement officials. This has created a situation in the country, she added, where mistrust and suspicion are the norm, and the protection of children is seriously compromised.

Justice isn't always just

Dr Ramona Alaggia highlighted that another reason for young people having such little faith in the Police and courts was a perception that the justice system was not 'just'. This was because so few perpetrators are charged and even less prosecuted. This leaves victims feeling even more powerless and angry – and reluctant to report abuse again in the future. Agreeing, Dr Camille Warrington noted that in her research many of the young people she worked with had little faith that the justice system was there to represent their interests.

Unequal access to services

The accessibility of therapeutic support was also an issue highlighted by Dr Camille Warrington. Young people from marginalised populations, such as disabled children or children from minoritised communities, were less visible to professionals.

Systemic issues impacting services supporting children and young people

This was not helped, she added, by a general lack of professional curiosity about the prevalence of abuse, precarious funding for specialist therapeutic support in the third sector, and systems which will default to established ways of doing things because change is seen as too hard, letting down young people who want and deserve better.

4. Promising early results from the newly emerging Bairns Hoose

What are children, young people and families telling us?

A selection of quotes from young people (n=9) and family members (n=8) interviewed by the research team (October 2023- March 2024) were then distributed to every group. Each quote provided an insight into a child or non-abusing parent's experience of systems and practices after identification of

abuse in North Strathclyde. Participants were asked to read the quotes on their table and write a message on Post-its to the child or parent who had shared their experiences. This generated over one hundred responses which acknowledged the bravery of these young people and thanked them for helping us better understand what was making a difference and what still needed to change. The research team have committed to ensuring the children and family remembers receive the feedback provided by professionals at the event.

Participants were then asked to reflect on what the statements can tell us about children, young people and their families experiences in the current system (the emerging Bairn Hoose model) in relation to **safety, justice, recovery, and recognition**. To aid this discussion the research team circulated descriptions of these core concepts.

Key concepts explained

Safety relates to one's physical, emotional, psychological, relational and spiritual self. It is an experience free from harm, or anticipation of harm, promoted through emotional and social support, psychological freedom, including circumstances for freedom of expression. Feeling safe is influenced by an individual's sense of trust and having a sense of control – including through having information and agency to act.

Justice is the idea that people are treated impartially, fairly, properly and reasonably. In the context of trauma, it must be felt by victims, and involves addressing harm done, validating survivors' experiences, and working towards a more equitable and safe society. It involves ensuring that victim/survivors have access to legal and social support systems and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Recovery (from trauma) is understood as the ability to live in the present without being overwhelmed by thoughts and feelings of the past – and feeling able to make choices about how to live life fully without constraints that stem from an experience of trauma.

Recognition relates to how we treat one another as human beings and involves activities which facilitate caring and positive relationships. Recognition promotes rights and acknowledges the existence, validity or legality of someone. It requires effective communication, reciprocity (mutual exchange) and self-reflection. Feelings of misrecognition occur where a person is not fully seen or understood.

In the example below a young person spoke to the research team about valuing the nurturing and supportive space provided by the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose. Participants picked up on the significant difference this had made to their sense of safety and recognition.

You should completely feel like that – this is your space.

I think I've probably been in three times now... to me, this is, kind of, like a wee safe spot, because of, like, nothing... I know nothing bad will ever happen in here, to anybody, because it's, like, you're completely safe, because, like, you're with your workers and, like nothing bad can ever happen.

And it's, like, it's a space where, like, you feel more relaxed, because you know you're with somebody you know, and it's not, like, filled with strangers. And it's, like, quiet as well, so that helps too.

We will help other people, professionals and 'places' in Scotland understand that the environment and space you meet a child in matters, because it can help them relax and feel safe.

You felt at ease in the space; in a safe place where you can relax and reflect in peace + be confident nothing bad will happen.

Thank you for telling us how important it is for a space to be quiet, calm, to help you feel safe to share.

We want you to always have access to spaces that make you feel calm.

One group contrasted this positive experience with what it had been like for children, young people and their parents and carers to come to the Police station for their investigative interview previously. The building was described as austere and forbidding, with security gates and little parking available. They reflected that even professionals felt uncomfortable entering such spaces.

Another group suggested the benefits of having the Bairns Hoose, designed with children's needs in mind, would help children and young people feel valued and more contained, directly supporting their recovery. They said this was far better than having to travel to multiple places which could cause further confusion and upset. Sharing a physical space was also noted to aid inter-professional working according to another group, who observed that 'co-location helps bridge system gaps'.



In this second example, a young person shares feelings of anger and frustration after disclosing abuse, especially having to repeat their story to different professionals. Participants expressed concern about the detrimental impact this practice had on the young person’s wellbeing and their determination to see it end.

I'm sorry that you have to keep telling your story, no-one should have to do that so many times. I hope we can change this so it's easier for others.

Opening myself up to three people... would make me feel like - this is a really bad way to say it - but even more of, like, an anomaly, than I already felt I was... Because of, like, having speaking, doing all these meetings, can definitely make a child feel like, 'why am I so different to everyone else?'

Obviously, there's going to be times where you have to speak to more than one person. But having to keep that to a minimum, would also be really beneficial... the way I explain it is, every single time that I talk to someone about what happened, I'm giving, like, a part of me to them. And like, a part, because I'm not a person that's very loud about it, and not many people know, and that's how I like it.

So, whenever I do talk about it, I treat it as this really big thing. And even though it is support adults who are just trying to help me... it can be difficult having to say the same story, like six times in a row.

You are just amazing.

Having to share with too many people. Fewer people and fewer times are better.

That sounds really hard. It's not particularly trauma-informed to have to keep re-telling your story to multiple people.

In one’s group feedback, the need for police and social work to achieve ‘best evidence’ for courts was cited as one of a range of possible reason for repeating interviews. This was also apparent in how

some participants made sense of another young person’s quote which described being forensically interviewed on Christmas Eve. It seemed clear that these decisions may not be consistent with a child’s wishes. Another group highlighted that perhaps professionals should be more honest and direct with young people about what they cannot control, including their potential need to give evidence again during a trial, or that an alleged perpetrator might not be charged. The continuing impact of delays and adjournments in the court system were also noted to be adding to young people’s feelings of frustration and confusion. Reducing yet further children’s sense of safety, justice and recognition. One group’s feedback concluded with this message: ‘we must do better’.



The last example in this briefing speaks to another central theme arising from this exercise: the positive difference that participants felt that stable, responsive, trauma-informed relationships were making to young people’s experience of the system in North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose.

I really hear how important it is for you to have support and connection and a consistent relationship with someone – without time limits.

I want to make sure we prioritise that for you for as long as you need.

The things that were the best was that, like, Children 1st was like flexible with support. Like, it didn't just happen in school, it could be anywhere. And also, the amount of times I saw 'Tricia' was flexible. Like, if I wanted to see her three times a week, I was allowed to, or once a week or twice a week, or every second week... It was all able to happen, which was good because it meant if there were times of more stress, you could have more support... And if there were times where you didn't need support and you thought you could do it on your own, you had that space, which was good.

I'm so glad you feel this is going at your pace and you feel in control, listened to and supported.

It's so important that all children get the support they need when they need it, like you did.

And as well as that, the actual, like, set, like the way that you speak to, like, a Children 1st worker most of the time, like, it's more casual. But also, it still does target important issues. And there is space for that. But there's also space for, if you don't want to talk about everything straight away, you have time to wean [sic] into it.

It's good to hear that the worker within Children 1st starts with what's important to you. We need to do it more often.

Participants highlighted how this statement showed that support which is timely and on the young person’s terms was so valuable. This, they suggested, connected to the theme of recognition, seeing the young person as a whole person - not just a victim, and giving them information, and as much choice and control as possible over what happens to them.



The theme of recovery was also relevant, as this type of specialist support helps the young person make sense and process the harm that had been done to them by others, at their own pace. One group also noted the importance of recognition for the staff undertaking this line of work, as sometimes they feel marginalised within bigger systems. Addressing another statement from a young person which related to the help their father had received from Children 1st, prompted one group to reflect on how the need for recognition and recovery goes beyond the individual directly harmed but can extend to multiple family members. This, they said, is a definite strength of the Bairns Hoose ethos and model but has implications for resourcing.



Section B:

Making sense of complex change and practice innovation

5. Making sense of complex change and practice innovation

What can we learn from successes and failures in other areas?

Cathy Vine, Canadian social work practitioner, trainer and consultant, provided a keynote on the important topic of how we plan and deliver 'big projects' in any sector. Drawing on the writings of Danish economic geographer Bent Flyvbjerg (2023), Cathy described how, regardless of scale, to those involved in any project it will feel big. She added that Flyvbjerg's insights based on his analysis of hundreds of projects which were successful – and many more that ended up late and overbudget – could be applied to the North Strathclyde Bairn Hoose implementation. These included a warning not to rush into action however tempting this may be; to be vigilant about adopting tunnel vision which fixates on one option excluding all others regardless of the evidence; and over estimating the impact of creativity versus good planning.



Projects that deliver can be seen to: learn from the experience of others; pay attention to the communication between leaders and different groups of staff; address disagreements early and effectively to avoid any negative norms and practices taking hold; and ensure the purpose of the project - what Cathy called 'the why' - is maintained as a focus for all.

This set the scene for the afternoons activities focusing on understanding the initial Bairn Hoose programme theory and the contexts and mechanisms which impact on systems and practice innovation.

6. What is the evaluation telling us about how we're working together for families?






Background on the evaluation approach

Presenting some early Phase 2 findings from their work evaluating the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose, Dr Mary Mitchell and Dr Camille Warrington presented an initial North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose programme theory (see also [Phase Two Evaluation Findings Report](#)). Influenced by realist evaluation thinking, they explained the initial programme theory is a way of demonstrating and testing assumptions about how we expect Bairns' Hoose to work and for whom. It helps us to understand what is influencing change and delivering specific outcomes. The theory is, in short, a tool to help review and test what is happening in Bairns Hoose implementation and provides a strong basis for learning and development.

Key elements of North Strathclyde Programme Theory

Dr Mary Mitchell and Dr Camille Warrington outlined seven core assumptions underpinning the Bairns Hoose in North Strathclyde that make up the architecture of the programme being delivered. These are summarised in the table below:

Key elements of Bairns Hoose programme architecture

	1. Single Point of Contact for children and families	Every child & family has offer of access to an allocated named individual ('single point of contact') from their initial engagement with Bairns Hoose through all related child protection and criminal justice processes
	2. Inclusive, timely access to recovery support	Provision of holistic, integrated recovery support offered to all children (and families) from first contact with Bairns Hoose to beyond court
	3. Purpose built 'child friendly' space	Provision of purpose built space designed to enhance children and families comfort and sense of safety and to best meet needs of health, recovery, child protection and justice processes
	4. Coordinated interagency work including co-location of multi-agency professionals	Staff from police, recovery, social care, health and court work with and alongside each other in a coordinated way - supported by use of a shared work space, a shared team identity and joint meetings and training opportunities (& integrated data system)
	5. Optimised forensic interviews	Child Interview Team utilise Scottish Child Interview Model within Bairns Hoose with optimised interview facilities (<i>*an evidence based joint forensic interview model</i>)
In development		
	6. Integrated health assessment	Health staff available on site in Bairns Hoose to provide children and young people with holistic health check – including physical and sexual health
	7. Remote court link option integrated with local courts	Child friendly court suite with technology integrated for links to local courts and use for 'evidence by commissioner' (pre trial cross examination)

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Table 1: Key elements of the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose programme architecture, May 2024

It was recognised that these core components are all significantly shaped by various interconnecting contexts relating to the organisational culture, funding model, policy landscape and nexus of interpersonal relationships.

Key Contexts that inform Bairns Hoose development

In the context of a realist evaluation approach contexts are considered broadly and may include: *institutional settings; infrastructure; values and culture; interpersonal relationships and individual skills and capacities*. Identifying key contexts within the Bairns Hoose provides us with a starting point for thinking about the assumptions people hold and how these contexts and mechanisms together help bring about change for children.



Figure 4: key contexts for development of North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose

Value-based leadership

Phase one of the evaluation found the importance of strong value-based leadership within the multi-disciplinary partnership was critical– supporting a shared vision, ownership and commitment at

strategic levels and supporting a partnership that felt equitable. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose standards 2).

Partnership working

It is recognised that the multi-disciplinary nature of the model alongside its complexity and ambition is only feasible to deliver through effective partnership working. In North Strathclyde the basis of this is the four local authorities, two police divisions and third sector organisation who came together to develop the model. Health and Justice partners are also key and linked in to strategic and operational groups. (Aligns with **Scottish Bairns Hoose standard 2,5,10,11**)

Funding model

Resources will always be key to delivering and sustaining a Bairns Hoose model. Implementation and sustainability of all other contexts require proper resourcing to meet needs. Leadership and staff require clarity that resources to sustain the service model are in place for both the short and medium term. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose Standard 2).

Culture of children's rights and participation

A central value in the development and implementation of the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose has been the implementation of rights-based practice and a particular focus on upholding children's participation rights. The model aims to be part of Scotland's active implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose standards 1 and 11).

Scottish legislation and policy framework (wider systems change)

It is recognised that delivery of the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose model is closely tied to the wider national policy context – particularly in relation to policy innovations which focus on child victims in criminal justice processes and child protection. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose standard 7).

Secure and supported workforce

There is recognition that the sustainability and success of the Bairns Hoose will rely on a consistent staff team who feel properly supported and valued with access to relevant ongoing supervision, professional development, and secure contracts. It is recognised that this is dependent on resourcing and may vary across different partners. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose Standard 10).

Commitment to a reflective learning culture

The Children 1st leadership of the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose have described their aim to embed a 'test, learn, develop' approach to the model from the start – recognising that as a new and ambitious mode of system change it will be important to learn and respond to early learning about the model. However other mechanisms will also be critical to this such as reflective working culture and routes for all stakeholders to inform continuous service development. (Aligns with Scottish Bairns Hoose Standard 11).

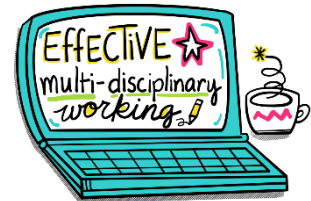
As well as these contexts it is recognised that interpersonal relationships and personal attitudes can also influence the effective implementation of the Bairns Hoose. Early findings suggest a number of enabler and barriers related to these complexities, outlined in the section below.

Enablers / Challengers in implementation

To explore the strengths of this initial Programme Theory, the eight groups were each tasked with considering a different area of the Programme Theory. Discussions were guided by facilitators and supported by visual illustrations.

Effective Multidisciplinary working

In respect of effective multi-disciplinary working, it was acknowledged that this is at the heart of Bairns Hoose but was probably the most challenging area of work to get right. Returning to a key message from Cathy Vine's presentation, they suggested clarifying and articulating the shared 'why' would help clarify and cement the purpose for connections. The contribution of the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) team was provided as an exemplar of how police and social work currently cooperate to ensure young people's interests are best served. However, in the current national context, they argued, many professions and institutions remained 'silos', out of kilter and out of touch with one another. The group highlighted that even at this high-profile event, partners from health and education were absent, reflecting gaps at the local level. This group suggested mapping the vision for a child's journey within the 'new' improved system as one means of helping identify areas where multidisciplinary working could be enhanced.



Timely and inclusive recovery support

The group looking at timely and inclusive recovery support for young people felt that this component was generally in place and was one of the main achievements of the Bairns Hoose pilot so far. That said, steps to help Children 1st practitioners feel more valued and respected by colleagues in partner agencies would help further embed recovery across all stages in the young person's justice and recovery journey. Ideas included: clearer information sharing protocols between statutory services and Children 1st' and involving Children 1st staff in Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) meetings. Consideration was also required to identify when and how young people might transition away from recovery support that is currently delivered by the Children 1st Bairns Hoose team. An identified gap in current plans for children was the long-term therapeutic input some children may require.



Improved justice experience

Improved justice experience was looked at by two groups. Discussions allowed participants to revisit the rationale of some longstanding practices such as how citations are framed and delivered to children and young people, including via uniformed police attending their sometimes at inappropriate times. This was something those representing the justice sector acknowledged was clearly at odds with a child-centred ethos. Ensuring young people have access to trauma-informed legal services was seen as crucial component of an improved justice journey. It was suggested that this may mean specialist training of Judges, Sheriffs, solicitors and lawyers in court settings. The group recognised it





was unrealistic (in the short term) to suggest children and young people need not testify in court proceedings as this departs from established justice processes. However recognising that this remains at odds with many people’s original vision for Bairns Hoose was also important. A further significant challenge highlighted within the current justice

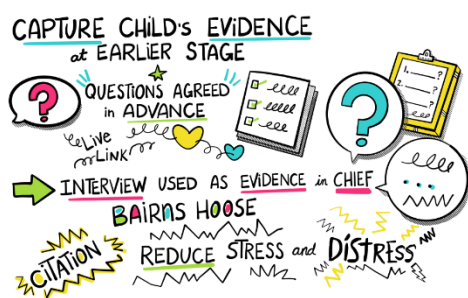
system was the Sheriff Courts processing of multiple summary cases to prioritise those involving vulnerable witnesses. One participant suggested Scotland look to other systems to consider new approaches to minimising children’s contact with the courts – for example through the use of interrogatories.

One further practical change to mechanisms which could lead to improved outcomes in this area were Children’s Reporters having the authority to use Evidence on Commission recordings when drafting and defending grounds of referral in proof hearings. Though it was pointed out that Evidence on Commission hearings are currently only used in High Court cases, their availability was likely to be limited. Extending their use in summary cases heard by Sheriffs would, one participant argued, cause an already overburdened system to ‘implode’. Seeing the live link technology in situ at Bairns Hoose was also put forward as another important mechanism to deliver the outcomes set out in the Programme Theory.

It was highlighted that these issues made them think that ultimately what was required was a change to culture in the justice system that ‘sits behind Bairns Hoose’ and greatly impacts on its effectiveness.

Joint Investigative interviews

The optimised investigative interviewing component, through the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) was recognised as an area of major progress in North Strathclyde: embedding an evidence informed model for trauma informed and child-centred practice to deliver ‘best evidence’. Participants involved in the SCIM suggested the Evaluation Team’s Initial Programme



Theory needed to better align with some of the principles and processes set out in their own theory of change. Examples included using the term ‘best evidence’ rather than ‘quality evidence’, and moving away from the phrase ‘successful prosecutions’ - seeing the outcome as not necessarily contingent on the interview itself. Consent was raised as an area for consideration, especially how it is first explained. This was especially important given the

possibility of pressure from other adults in the child’s world. The issue of ‘continuation interviews’ was also raised. Although these were recognised to be useful in terms of gathering more information - especially in complex cases - there were recognised ethical considerations around the impact of asking a young person to repeat and revisit painful experiences. It was also fed back that current outcome identified in the programme theory focused too much on criminal justice processes, when in fact these interviews could and should play a far greater role in informing all aspects of child planning. This, the group suggested, means thinking about ‘justice’ as something larger than simply the effective functioning of the justice system.

Purpose built child friendly space

Providing a 'child-friendly' space was seen as an important but under-utilised component of the Bairn Hoose. It was recognised that the space was valued and trusted by children family members and professionals alike. The interview team and recovery team favoured the space to undertake their core tasks. However the size of the building prohibited the number of activities that are able to take place in the space. it was also noted that the multidisciplinary team are not able to be co -located in the Bairns Hoose.



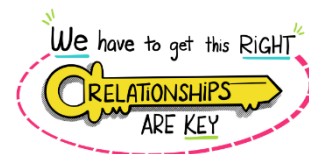
There was a suggestion that the term 'child-friendly' was substituted with 'child-centred' within the programme theory, to better reflect the underpinning function and ethos of the space. Articulating a shared responsibility regarding the resourcing and maintenance of this specialist space across partner agencies was noted to support security and stability to the project.

7. What comes next?

Across the event different inputs and activities, a number of key themes emerged about the difference the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose is making in improving experiences and outcomes for young people, their families and professionals involved in child protection services. There were also a number of ideas about how to further drive forward practice and system innovation:

Children value relationships vs systems value processes

Child protection often operates according to specific system-generated priorities, such as completing a Joint Investigative Interview with a victim promptly to then apprehend an alleged perpetrator. What the early findings from the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose evaluation strongly suggest is that to a child or young people who disclose abuse, what they value most was the human connection and feeling cared for. This is consistent with perspectives of children and young people from around the world who tell us that they want a caring and just system rather than simply procedural justice. Elevating recognition and recovery, alongside safety and justice, as equal functions of the child protection system may go some way to delivering this.



Remembering the 'why'

The creation of the North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose is, to borrow Cathy Vine's phrase, certainly a 'big project'. It involved designing, negotiating, planning and delivering a radical revision to one of the most complicated and charged areas of contemporary public policy, the protection of our children and young people. And with every 'big project' it is important to go back to the 'why'. Why did multiple agencies believe that the current system needed to change? Why is simply doing the same no longer good enough? ...And what does this mean in practical terms?

Challenging ways of working requires trust and respectful relationship

Changing longstanding ways of working can feel uncomfortable and even threatening for practitioners. It is a process that requires trusting and respectful relationships within and across organisations. Context can make a difference, and there are potential threats and opportunities looming as political events impact on policy priorities and funding



streams. Learning from other 'big projects' is important. Participants cited the example of the introduction of the Scottish Child Interview Model as a success story, where concerns about the scale and complexity of change was managed, leading to improvements in practice and better outcomes for young people.

Value of reflection and learning loops for all involved

This event illustrated the value of bringing together both operational and strategic staff to reflect and review on the journey of the Bairns Hoose. This is especially important given the pace of change and some rotation in key leadership positions.

Bairn Hoose Space is important for nurturing and safety

Early findings from Bairns Hoose indicate that even at this early stage it is making a difference. Children, young people and their families value the safe and nurturing space provided by the Bairns Hoose space, they feel listened to and supported by their recovery workers, and experiences around forensic interviewing are improving. Professionals too identify benefits of working within the Bairns Hoose for their own wellbeing and practice.



Focus on improving multi-disciplinary working opportunities

Professionals also cite a need for more effective multi-agency working and better continuation of care for young people as they move through justice system. The potential for recovery workers to be more involved in Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD)'s was welcomed.

Court delays remain an important focus

Some problems persist around court timings, delays and adjournments, impacting on staff morale and crucially children and young people's wellbeing. Unless Bairns Hoose can act as a catalyst for change in the wider system then harmful practices will persist and progress will be limited.

Leadership and clarity of purpose

Strong leadership and vision have played a vital role in the early Bairns Hoose journey, but it was noted that what is required now is more clarity about the next phase of practical implementation.

Prioritised Recommendations:

1. Developing a new child's pathway to help provide clarity to the roles and responsibilities of different partner agencies at different stages of the child or young person's journey into, through and beyond Bairns Hoose
2. Inclusion of the recovery team early in the child or young person's contact with child protection system such as in the IRD or children's planning processes
3. Introduction of information sharing protocols which allow relevant case material (with children and families consent) to be made available to Children 1st to allow their staff to plan

and provide effective support, and vice versa (information from Children 1st made available to other professionals)

4. Development of an offer of integrated health assessments for children and young people following a joint investigative interview
5. Establish regular review meetings between operational and strategic staff to support ongoing discussion loops about strategic and operational issues.
6. Barnahus Evaluation Team to consider Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) Theory of Change to ensure alignment of values and language as part of evolving the national conversation around system change
7. Focused exploration with justice colleagues about clarifying and navigating various legal and practical issues involved in facilitating provision of advance (Evidence on Commission) and/or remote testimonies at the Bairns Hoose.

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Informed Consent to participate in research:

This event was considered part of the Phase 2 evaluation. As such, all participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form prior to attending and participating in the event. You can find more information regarding phase 2 findings on the Bairns Hoose evaluation web site.

Thank you

Thank you to the young people and family members who participated in the evaluation and whose testimonies helped deepen our knowledge of the systems they are experiencing on a day to day bases. Thanks also to all the participants at the event, your engagement in the content and activities helped deepen our understanding of North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose.

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