

Bairns' Hoose – Children and Young People Participation and Engagement Plan



Bairns' Hoose

June 2023

Ministerial Foreword



Bairns' Hoose is fundamentally about putting the child at the centre of decisions that affect them. It is crucial, then, that the way we design and implement the model in Scotland must also put children and young people at the centre.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines children and young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them. Through this participation and engagement plan, we are committed to upholding this right and ensuring that children and their families with lived experience of the current system help shape the Bairns' Hoose.

This plan sets out our approach to participation and engagement, and the actions we will take. Through this, we will make sure that Bairns' Hoose services best reflect the lived experience and views of those who matter most - the children and young people, and families of the children, who have experienced trauma.

I'm extremely grateful to the children and young people who have engaged so far and those who will be involved in taking this work forward – I am committed to ensuring your voices are heard in designing a system that reflects your hugely valuable contributions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Don'.

Natalie Don MSP
Minister for Children and Young People and Keeping the Promise

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1. Introduction

Children and young people have a right to be heard in relation to decisions that affect them. This is recognised in standard 1.2 of the international Barnahus PROMISE Standards. This aims to ensure that children's rights to express their views and to receive information are respected and fulfilled.

We are committed to recognising, respecting and promoting children's rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and to ensuring that the voices of children and young people play a central role in shaping our approach to the implementation of a Scottish Bairns' Hoose Model. One of the actions in our Bairns' Hoose Project Plan is to:

- Develop and publish a participation and engagement plan for children and young people with lived experience.

The Bairns' Hoose model will be aligned with the Scottish Government's policy programmes of Keeping The Promise and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), which recognise that all children must receive the right help at the right time in the right place.

The commitment to establish Bairns' Hoose is included in Keeping The Promise to all our children, young people, adults and families.

This Plan sets out our approach to the participation and engagement of children and young people in our approach to Bairns' Hoose in Scotland, including; the engagement that has taken place, the learning and rationale for this approach and the actions we will take to ensure Bairns' Hoose best reflects the lived experience of children and young people, and their families, who access its services.

2. Scottish Government Approach to Participation and Engagement in Bairns' Hoose

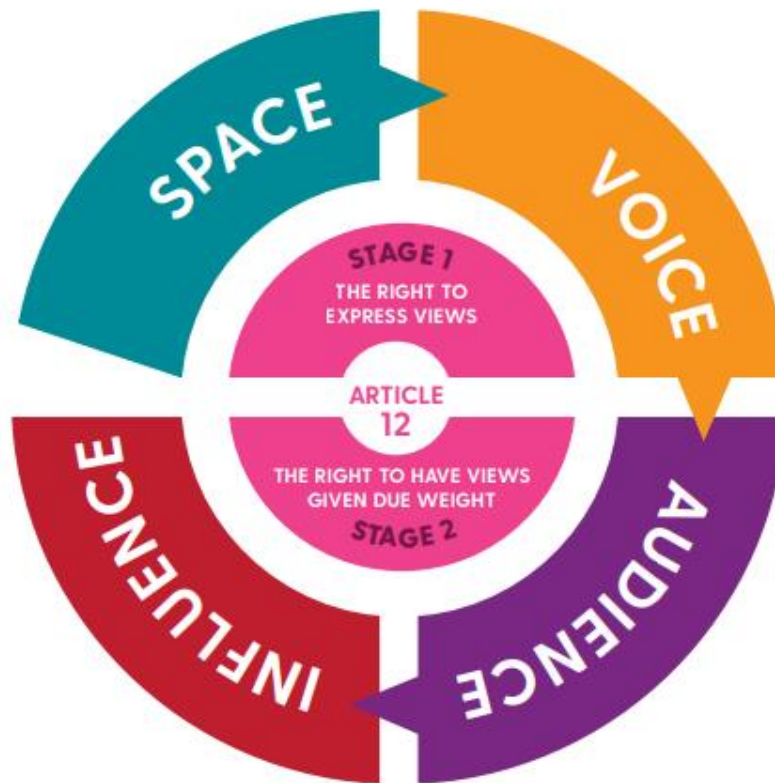
We will ensure alignment with the Scottish Government's approach to participation. This approach is described in the Scottish Government's 2021 [Decision-making: children and young people's participation](#).

As a starting point for our approach, we have engaged with a range of relevant stakeholders and colleagues with experience, skills and expertise in the participation of children and young people.

The organisations we engaged with represent groups of children and young people with different priorities and lived experiences. A key message from this engagement was that a "one size fits all" approach should not be adopted for participation work. We heard about a range of experiences of engagement which have had varying levels of success.

A further common theme which emerged from these discussions was the use of the [Lundy model of participation](#), which allows UNCRC Article 12, "the right to have views given due weight," to be understood and realised. The four elements of the model have a rational chronological order:

This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC. It focuses on four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. The four elements have a rational chronological order.



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This engagement has given a strong basis for our approach to participation. Fundamentally, this is to be led by the children and young people involved who will shape not only the policy as it will affect them, but also the ways that we engage, so that they can make their voices heard and know that these are being considered.

The Scottish Government is now an associate member of the European PROMISE Barnahus network. Membership will allow further learning from international examples of good practice in relation to participation and engagement and the ability to draw on recent international research such as:

- Mapping child participation in Barnahus in Europe and;
- Building a Culture of Participation in Barnahus Implementing Children’s Right to Participate in Decision-Making.

¹ [5587-Child-Participation-Framework report LR FINAL Rev.pdf \(hubnanog.ie\)](#)

3. Participation and Engagement to Date

3.1 Rights and Participation Project

From 2019 – 2022 the Scottish Government funded Children 1st to carry out rights and participation project work with children and families with lived experience of child protection and justice processes. The [Sharing Stories for Change | Children 1st Report](#) produced key learning points including:

- Children have a right to be heard when they have been a victim or witness of violence. The right place, the right people and the right support are all needed to create the space for children to communicate what has happened.
- Children and families should have opportunities to participate in the design and development of services when they have been the victim or witness of violence.

3.2 The Changemakers

[The Changemakers](#) group of young people, between the ages of 13 and 19, was formed in February 2022, to support the shaping, design, development and influencing of the North Strathclyde Bairns' Hoose.

This builds on the “Sharing Stories for Change” learning, which was gathered through the delivery of the child’s rights and participation project above, with a focus on participation work for the development of the Bairns' Hoose. The project enables children and young people, and their families, to have a significant role in the design and development of a Bairns' Hoose model that is right for Scotland. The project is:

- Engaging with and amplifying the voices of children and young people who have experience of child protection and justice processes, to be part of transformational change, which enables recovery from the point of disclosure.
- Creating safe and empowering spaces for children and young people and parents/carers to participate in the design and development of the Bairns' Hoose. This may include, but is not limited to, the establishment of advisory groups, creative projects, recruitment and training of staff, influencing people in power and communicating key messages.

The Changemakers group has been important in upholding the rights of children to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them (UNCRC: Article 12). The group has also had involvement in influencing work nationally in the design of a national Bairns' Hoose model, by contributing their views to the draft National Bairns' Hoose Standards; and sharing their voices at the Delivering the Vision strategic group and the European Barnahus Forum in Stockholm (via a film created), as well as writing letters to ["To My School"](#) and ["To My Recovery Worker"](#).

3.3 Creative workshops

Children 1st committed to facilitate participatory workshops across Scotland, which would help explore what matters to children, young people and their families in response to the design and development of the North Strathclyde Bairns' Hoose. The sessions invited families to share their ideas, views, and wishes on what a

Bairns' Hoose should look like, feel like, who would work there, and how all children's rights should be upheld in Bairns' Hoose. The workshops were built around a 3D cardboard house, which symbolised the Bairns' Hoose. A total of 8 workshops were facilitated across Scotland, which consisted of 79 participants.

3.4 Individual participation

Individual participation offers an opportunity for children and young people to share their stories, ideas, feedback and experiences in a personalised way. For some children and young people, the process of sharing their story is a supportive and empowering aspect of their recovery journey. Children 1st have two examples of individual participation – Sophie's song and Anya's poem. These have been facilitated in a way that both young people have been able to express their experiences and voices, based on their own strengths and interests.

3.5 Bairns' Hoose Standards

The Scottish Government commissioned Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and the Care Inspectorate to develop Scotland-specific standards for Bairns' Hoose based on the European PROMISE Quality Barnahus Standards, which are in turn based on best practice from the Nordic countries. Engagement with children and young people has been a key feature of the development of these Standards.

The Bairns' Hoose Standards Development Group was established to develop standards according to the agreed scope, timelines and other quality criteria. Its membership comprised representation across justice, health, children's services, and third sector. The Group had two co-chairs representing the health and social care sectors respectively and has now concluded with the publication of the Standards.

From February 2022, participation and rights workers from six organisations supported children to play an active role throughout the Standards development period. Through creative sessions, play, videos, group work and one-on-one sessions, children inputted their ideas into the draft Standards and fed back on their experiences to the Standards Development Group at every meeting. Each organisation nominated a 'link worker' (usually a rights or participation worker) to act as the go-between between the children and the Standards Development Group.

Link workers:

- undertook sessions, workshops or one-on-one participation work with children, young people or non-offending families to ask for input on four themes related to the Bairns' Hoose Standards: *the principles, the place, the process and the platform*
- following each review cycle, collated feedback from all sessions and presented the outputs of the sessions to the Standards Development Group. This included:
 - written or verbal reports of sessions
 - pictures, images or art materials
 - videos or multimedia, or
 - any other form of output that session attendees wished to share

- provided support to children and young people who wished to attend Standards Development Group meetings or otherwise present their work themselves
- attended all Standards Development Group meetings in the role of 'link worker' to advocate for session attendees and gain the knowledge, context and materials to plan other sessions, and
- attended a weekly huddle to report on progress and ask for support as required.

3.6 Applying the European Barnahus Quality Standards to the Link Worker Model

The European Barnahus Quality Standards² are well supported internationally. They cover key themes which are core to developing a Barnahus. In recognition that they should equally apply to developing standards for a Barnahus in Scotland, they were used to underpin the engagement approach used to develop the Bairns' Hoose Standards. The European Standards were translated into a set of engagement principles which directed the Barnahus Standards Development Group's approach. In addition, this has provided a framework of accountability for the approach.

For example, Barnahus quality standard 3 stresses that all children have equal access to the service and are offered a multi-disciplinary response. This principle has been applied to the development of the Bairns' Hoose Standards as all children have equal access to influence and shape the development of the Standards, regardless of what has happened to them. Recruitment of link workers and decision panels include equality and diversity considerations as well as children in remote or rural areas.

Applying the Barnahus Quality Standards in the development of the Scottish Standards has ensured that the process is rights based, informed and responsive to the needs of children and young people.

3.7 Success and Key Learnings from this Phase

Children and young people's feedback about the implementation of the Standards has been shared, including how children and young people should be involved. The aims of the link workers throughout the Standards development were to ensure that:

- Children are supported and given meaningful opportunities to express themselves and their views, needs and concerns
- Children and young people's rights to express their views and to receive information are respected and fulfilled
- The process is designed to ensure that children's needs are met and feedback is fully implemented where possible.
- The project team communicates with children and young people involved in the project in a way that is right for them.

² Haldorsson OL, Child Circle. Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence 2017 [cited 7th Jul 2022]; Available from: <http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/04/PROMISE-Barnahus-Quality-Standards.pdf>

- There is space for link workers to collaborate, share learning and develop practice

The HIS project team sought feedback from the link workers on the process and approach. Their feedback has indicated key areas of success:

- The children and young people involved were very proud to say that they built the children's version of the Standards.
- A number of organisations involved now have a group of young people that they consult with on a regular basis on issues affecting young people.
- This work has provided a useful model for developing meaningful and sustainable engagement.
- Young people with lived experience of the current system have felt some positivity in being able to use their experiences to make the future better for others.

Some key learning points also emerged, namely the need for time and space, flexibility and wisdom in the engagement process. It takes time to recruit and bring together a group of young people to talk about an emotive and complicated subject like Bairns' Hoose. Time and space enabled the children and young people to build trust and become comfortable with each other. As the engagement progressed, the link workers found the young people became more communicative and confident in discussing the Standards.

It was key to let the children and young people work at their own pace and let them explore the subject matter in a way that was right for them. Therefore, it was important that the project team showed flexibility in how the key messages from the Standards Development Group were fed back to them. Throughout the work, feedback was also sought from the link workers on the approach, with revisions and improvements made as a direct response to their comments.

The children and young people with lived experience showed great wisdom in being able to take that experience and verbalise how it could have been made better for them. They have also stated that this project needs to be delivered and there are key messages around accountability and implementation that need to be heard and acted on.

4. Next Steps: Participation and Engagement Plans

We have committed to a number of actions in our [Bairns' Hoose Project Plan Progress Report and Pathfinder Delivery Plan \(2023 – 25\)](#) including to the implementation of this engagement plan.

4.1 Bairns' Hoose Standards

Engagement through link workers has made clear to us that in addition to the children and young person's version of the Standards, children and young people would find visual content a more engaging way of receiving information about the

standards. Posters and postcards have been created and will be made available alongside the written material about the Standards for children and young people.

4.2 Bairns' Hoose Pathfinders

As described in the Scottish Government's [Bairns' Hoose Project Plan Progress Report and Pathfinder Delivery Plan \(2023 – 25\)](#), Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder Partnerships will act as proof of concept for the Bairns' Hoose model in Scotland. The participation and engagement of children and young people has been established as be an essential component for any site wishing to become a Pathfinder.

Children and young people, through link workers, will be involved in the scoring of applications from Pathfinder partnerships. HIS will work with partner agencies to ensure that children and young people are supported and informed to give their views on prospective Pathfinder partnerships. Information that is important to them, such as how the Pathfinders will involve children and young people in their local area, or how staff are trained, will be communicated in a way and format that is right for them.

4.3 National Bairns' Hoose Governance Framework

The role of the [National Bairns' Hoose Governance Group](#) (NBHGG) is to offer collective leadership, scrutiny and strategic oversight, and to generate a vibrant and constructive exchange of views to support the development of the model for Bairns' Hoose in Scotland.

The NBHGG held its inaugural meeting on 12 October 2022 and is independently chaired by Val de Souza, a professional social worker who has worked for more than 30 years in the social justice sector. The NBHGG provides the necessary collective leadership, specialist input and expert challenge to promote and support the development and establishment of an evidence-based, comprehensive, child-friendly national Bairns' Hoose model for Scotland.

A key priority for the Chair of the NBHGG is to ensure that the voices of children, young people and their families are heard and their experiences incorporated into the national Bairns' Hoose model.

The NBHGG has committed to ensuring that all of its meetings will include the voice of children and young people in some form. The NBHGG will feed back to the children and young people involved in the work on their input and how it is being taken on board to ensure communication is two-way and demonstrates clearly the "influence and audience" elements of the Lundy model.

4.4 Further Actions

Through both the link workers and Changemakers, we will also:

- Work with children and young people to develop a children's charter outlining how children and young people will be involved in the implementation of the Standards and the ongoing development of the Bairns' Hoose model.
- Gain children and young people's views on the name "Bairns' Hoose" – if it is meaningful to them and to explore alternatives if not.
- Involve children and young people in the development of the new Scottish Government Bairns' Hoose website <https://www.bairnshoosescotland.com/>
- Hold an event to celebrate the achievements of all the children and young people and their families who have contributed so much to Bairns' Hoose development.

The participation and engagement of children and young people in the development of Bairns' Hoose in Scotland has been invaluable in shaping our understanding of their experiences and how together we can make the services best suit their needs. We will review this plan with input from children and young people.

We look forward to continuing this through the next phases of implementation.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80525-919-0 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, June 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1238322 (06/23)

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