

# Executive Summary

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The National Police Board, the National Board of Forensic Medicine, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish Prosecution Authority were tasked by the government with contributing to the establishment, follow-up and evaluation of a pilot activity in which they would work together “under one roof” on investigations concerning children suspected of being the victims of violence and sexual abuse. The aim of the pilot activity was to adapt the investigations to children and to work together to improve the quality of investigations, to provide a better overall basis for the judicial process and for ongoing work by other public bodies. The task was carried out in close cooperation with the National Council for Crime Prevention, the Crime Victim and Support Authority, Save the Children Sweden and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. The Sociology of Law Department at Lund University was given the job of evaluating the pilot activity.

The pilot activity took place during 2006–2007 and covered the Barnahus (children’s advocacy centre) in Gothenburg, Barnahus Linköping, the Crisis Centre for Children and Young People in Malmö, the Children’s Centre in Stockholm, the Support Centre for Children and Young People in Sundsvall and the Barnahus in Umeå. This report covers the different pilot centres and their objectives, target group, catchment area, staffing, funding, cooperation, and the particular characteristics of each city. The report shows that while there are great similarities between the cities, there are some differences.

The Swedish version of Barnahus can roughly be described as follows: the Barnahus bring together the social services, police, prosecutor, forensic medical experts, paediatric medicine and paediatric psychiatry services, which work together, primarily in the initial stages of the preliminary police investigation and the investigation by the social services. As a rule, the social services have a coordinating role and one or more social workers are stationed in the premises. One of the Barnahus also has police among its permanent staff, and others have ongoing access to child psychiatry expertise. At joint meetings – and in urgent cases, by telephone – the representatives of the different professions consult each other, plan and allocate tasks. If a preliminary investigation is begun, the interviews with the child are carried out in the Barnahus. Those professionals who need to hear the child’s story can listen to the interview by video link in an adjacent room. There are also rooms for medical examinations and for counselling. The ambition is that a forensic scientist and paediatrician will work together on medical examinations requested by the police or a public prosecutor. The social services or psychiatric services are responsible for providing the child with crisis support. The scope of crisis support and treatment, and the extent to which it is made available to parents, too, varies between the pilot centres.

The result of the follow-up of the cooperating agencies, and the evaluation by Lund University, are reported in relation to the objectives set out in the government commission. Appendix 2 summarises the results of the evaluation. Because three of six pilot centres did not start as planned, the basis of the evaluation as a whole was limited to just under a year’s activity. The short time elapsed may explain the lack of unambiguous, measurable effects, for example with respect to the quality of the investigations, greater number of prosecutions and improved psychosocial measures.

The evaluation and follow-up, taken together, invite the conclusion that the experiences of the Barnahus pilot activity are largely positive. There is support for the assertion that the Barnahus lead to improved quality from a child perspective. The environment is adapted to

children, and there has been general improvement in crisis support. More interviews are being held with children, more medical examinations are carried out and the children have a more prominent role in the preliminary investigations. The social services investigations that were studied are of good quality, judged with the established criteria.

Follow-up and evaluation have shown that collaboration has become more effective and more structured. There are obstacles however, including the differing regional organisation of the agencies and uncertainty as to how to apply secrecy regulations. Nor do all actors have a presence in every city. There is also some lack of clarity as to allocation of responsibilities and costs. The conclusion is that more evaluation is needed, which, however, assumes a better and more uniform system for follow-up and documentation. There is also a need of continued national cooperation in issues concerning children and young people who are suspected of being the victims of serious crime.