

A FAIRER AND JUST SCOTLAND



Policy 5:

The 'Barnahus'* or 'Bairns' Hoose'* model should be implemented to support all children and young people through the justice system, giving them a person-centred environment in which to give evidence, and receive medical examinations, counselling and therapy.

*The 'Bairns' Hoose' is Scotland's approach to the Icelandic 'Barnahus' model that provides support to children and young people who have been harmed by and/or witnessed abuse, and for children below the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused harm to others. It brings together child protection, health, justice and recovery services in one setting.

Endorsed by:



What's this all about?

Young people told us that implementing a child-friendly approach to the criminal justice system is integral to reducing stress, anxiety and long-term psychological impacts experienced by young people. To get this right and be able to offer a variety of critical support services, the Barnahus model must be properly funded and consistently offered to all young people who need it across Scotland.

“Young people need help, going through legal systems are stressful enough as an adult but as a young person, who's brain hasn't fully developed it will cause more stress, impacting mental and physical health.”

– Young woman aged 14-17, West Lothian

“Everyone involved with the justice system should have somewhere safe and caring where interviews can happen.”

– Young woman aged 22-26, Falkirk

What are young people in Scotland calling for?

- **Young people call for the Scottish Government to prioritise implementing the Bairns’ Hoose model across Scotland, to ensure all young people who need it have access to integrated healthcare, mental health supports, and police investigations in one place.**

“Everyone involved with the justice system should have somewhere safe and caring where interviews can happen. I know a bit about Bairns Hoose and it is a house, where lots of things can happen safely.”

– Young woman aged 22-26, Falkirk

- **Decision makers should meaningfully involve children and young people, particularly those with experience of the justice system and those most at risk, in developing the Bairns’ Hoose model in a way that best suits what they want and need the most.**
- **Decision makers must ensure adults who work with children and young people are aware of and understand the Bairns’ Hoose model so that all children and young people experiencing the justice system know what support is available to them.**

“I know what this is but most people won’t – give resources on what this actually is and what it looks like”

– Young woman aged 18-21, North Ayrshire

Evidence and Support

- In 2024 [Bairns Hoose services](#) across Scotland supported a total of 185 families - 303 children and 221 adults.
 - The young people in [Children First’s Changemakers group](#) shared about the importance of being listened to and of getting the right support in the right place from the right people.
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What has SYP done?

Previous consultations includes: [A report from SYP’s consultation workshop on the Scottish Government’s Community Mental Health Supports and Services Framework \(2024\)](#) and [SYP’s response to the Scottish Parliament’s call for views on the Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#)

(2023). The [SYP Policy Log](#) includes policies on the implementation of the 'Barnahus' model in supporting all children and young people through the justice system; awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); supports for young offenders; mental health supports; measures to address anti-social behaviour.