**Call for input: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material to the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council**

**Response from Ireland**

***November 2022***

**What are the current needs of the child victims and survivors to redress and reparation both in conflict and non-conflict settings?**

Reparations, as defined by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights includes:

* Rehabilitation, which should include medical and psychological care, legal and social services.
* Satisfaction, which should include the cessation of continuing violations, truth-seeking, search for the disappeared person or their remains, recovery, reburial of remains, public apologies, judicial and administrative sanctions, memorials, and commemorations.

In relation to these aspects, in Ireland high profile reports such as the Ferns 4 (2009)[[1]](#footnote-1) and McDonald (2011)[[2]](#footnote-2) reports, identified limitations in the provision of services for children who have experienced sexual abuse and advocated for a national service model. In the Garda Inspectorate Report (2018)[[3]](#footnote-3), the Icelandic Barnahus model and the services provided by the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Northern Ireland were included in an overall consideration of joint services.

The Icelandic Barnahus model is a child-friendly, interdisciplinary and multiagency model of service that brings child protection, policing, medical, therapeutic and forensic services together, under one roof, to provide services for children who experience sexual abuse and their families.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth leads on the national implementation of the Barnahus model of services delivery for child victims of sexual abuse in Ireland. The full implementation of Barnahus principles in an Irish context will improve interagency case management between An Garda Síochána, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Children’s Health Ireland (CHI). Gardaí, social workers, doctors, psychologists and other professionals can work together under one roof to help reduce the re-traumatisation for children reporting sexual abuse by preventing the repetition of their experiences.

**What are the gaps and challenges within the ambit of the international human rights and humanitarian law, in terms of both the existing framework and the implementation status to address to the needs of the child victims and survivors? What measures can be taken to overcome these gaps?**

No input received.

**Who are the duty bearers to define, implement and provide the reparation to child victims and survivors? In what forms should the reparation be provided, how should they be assessed?**

An Interdepartmental Group (IDG) was established in February 2018 by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in conjunction with the Ministers for and Justice and Equality. The purpose of the IDG is to bring together representatives from the key Departments (Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; Health; Justice) and State Agencies (Tusla; An Garda Síochána; the HSE; Children’s Health Ireland) responsible for child protection, policing, medical, health and therapeutic services, to co-ordinate a child centred response to sexual abuse allegations, and to develop an appropriate governance framework for a multiagency service. The IDG is chaired by the Chief Social Worker, from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. The IDG agreed that the Icelandic Barnahus model of service provision was appropriate, with adaptation, in the Irish context.

In Ireland, Barnahus is a crisis and immediate service – it is not intended that it will provide ongoing or long term support for victims and their families. Where possible, referrals are made to local counselling services.

**How do we identify and delineate the roles of state, non-state and individual actors to ensure that reparation reach the child victims and survivors?**

The Barnahus IDG has a policy and advisory role for the overall service, and oversees the development and implementation of the governance structure to support the delivery of services. Progress challenges and supports for the development of the national service are reported through IDG members and the reporting structure in place for the Barnahus National Agency Steering Committee (BNASC).

**What measures are put in place to hear and understand how child victims and survivors would perceive meaningful reparation?**

TheDepartment of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth developed a participation framework for use by Departments, agencies and organisations seeking to consult with children. The framework can be adapted for consultations with all children, on the design of services, policy and legislation affecting their lives.

In the development of the Barnahus West Service, the national child and family agency, Tusla, conducted consultations with children who had been sexually abused and required child protection services. The physical design of the building, the design and content of the information leaflets and the branding for the service was done with the input of children at all stages.

Tusla has a complaints mechanism that is accessible to adults and children using its service.

**What role do civil society organisations and victims’ groups play in devising, consulting and developing various reparation measures and programmes?**

The Ombudsman for Children and the Children's Rights Alliance of Ireland, an umbrella organisation of children's rights and advocacy services in Ireland, have both been invited to participate in consultations on the development of the Barnahus model in Ireland.

DCEDIY were successful in application to the EU Technical Support Innovation Fund (TSIF) and the implementing partners are the Council of Europe. The Council have allocated consultants to work on the co-design and delivery of a project to support the implementation of Barnahus. The project will run for 30 months and began in August 2022. The implementation phase will be informed by the initial consultation, to which stakeholders, including the Ombudsman for Children and Children's Rights Alliance have been invited.

**What are the good practices initiated by the stakeholders, and what remaining areas of intervention need to be introduced and/or improved?**

The IDG identified Galway as the appropriate location for the first Barnahus-model service. The principles of the Barnahus model had effectively been operating in Galway prior to the launch of the service with a cross-agency team holding monthly case review meetings to triage, allocate and discuss cases.

The Galway project was launched in September 2019. Since January 2022 services in Galway are operational in the bespoke centre on the outskirts of Galway city, which allows the three agencies (Tusla, the HSE, An Garda Síochána) to provide services for children under one roof. Key professionals in child protection, health care and An Gardaí Síochána meet regularly to review cases of child sexual abuse and plan the steps that need to be taken.

Barnahus West is co-located with the adult Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) service, with separate entrances and rooms for children /adults and shared facilities for staff, including capacity to hold evidence. It is planned that SATU nurses will undertake further training for working with children. Given the size of the area, it is envisaged that there may be outreach clinics for non-medical engagement.

**How can States and other stakeholders deliver more effectively with respect to amplifying the effective implementation of meaningful reparation to child victims and survivors? Within the purview of international cooperation, what specific measures should be taken based on the existing structures. What is needed for a more coordinated response by the States/other international actors to provide reparation to child victims and survivors?**

Adoption of a model which may be adapted to local contexts, while still maintaining consistent standards for practice, such as the Barnahus model. The Barnahus model focusses on delivering timely access to services and to justice for children. The aim is to reduce the level of re-traumatisation a child may experience when seeking assistance after an experience of sexual abuse. The model has been promoted by the Council of Europe, with member states adopting and adapting the model to comply with national and federal legislation. Promotion at an international level, with access to funding and expertise such as through the TSIF is a core component in successful international responses to children who have been sexually abused.

1. HSE (2009) *Report of the Ferns 4 (Children) Working Group: Assessment, therapy and counselling needs of children who have been sexually abused, and their families.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. HSE (2011) *National Review of Sexual Abuse Services for Children and Young People*. Mott McDonald. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Report of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate (2018) *Responding to Child Sexual Abuse*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)