

RIGHT AND CERTAIN

from young people subjected to domestic violence or abuse
about police reports, questionings in Barnabus and trials



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To you

For those of you who fight to prevent children from experiencing violence and abuse
To you who will decide whether we should be questioned
To you who will speak to us in the questioning
To you who will secure the evidence
To those of you who are going to watch the film of the questioning, while we talk about the hurt
To you who will decide what happens next in our lives
To you who are going to court to argue conviction
To you who will protect and decide which help we will receive afterwards
And to you who will make a judgement in the end

We are in normal school classes and where other children are. We have all experienced violence or abuse in the family or network. Adults see us, but they don't see what we experience. We know what happens, but maybe not that what we experience is wrong. Maybe we hear that strange men can be scary, but maybe not that bad things can happen at home, with someone we know well. Many of us don't even know where we can tell about violence or abuse.

You may have met us at the Barnahus or the courtroom. Perhaps we have told for the first time about the worst thing that has happened in our lives. On the outside we may have looked safe and perhaps you believed that we told everything. Almost none of us were asked how we felt inside. At the end of the questioning, when we were asked if there was anything else we wondered or wanted to say, many of us said it was fine.

Some of us who have told, have been met safely and taken seriously. Others have experienced the systems as unsafe and not respecting the rule of law. The fact that we suddenly had to talk to a stranger and into a camera, was for many of us very scary. Afterwards we didn't know if we were going to be believed. We could end up with thinking we had done something wrong or being ashamed. We could think that it is our fault or that we were to blame.

We have felt the systems on our body. Several of us have met warm adults who have made it feel safe. We know a lot about how important feeling safe is to the body and what made us feel it. We know what made us able to speak safely and tell something important. We know what it takes for Norway to feel right and certain for children.

This is advice from the bottom of our hearts. The advice points to how the entire foundation of the legal system have to be, so that it will be right and certain for us. We are the ones who have to pay the price for those choices that are taken on our behalf. The hope is that the legal system will get better, for children who come after us. We therefore ask you who read this to open your hearts and receive this knowledge, in order to be able to meet children as wisely as possible, after they have told about violence or abuse.

From young people who have experienced violence and abuse

CHANGEFACTORY KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

Children and young people present

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.

Selected publications



Not mean

Advice from 103 children on how concern conversations, interrogations punishment can be done in a safe and helpful way



Talking safely in the child protection system

Advice from 110 children about what needs to be done for children to be able to talk safely



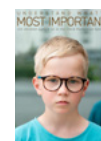
If I was your child

Advice from 63 children about coercion in mental health care



If I was your child

Advice from 55 children about coercion in the Child Protection System



Understand what's most important

Advice from 110 children on what the Child Protection System has to do so children can tell what's most important



It's about us

Advice from 100 children on how contact sessions has to be decided for it to feel safe

About the qualitative survey

In 2016, work began on the qualitative survey RIGHT AND CERTAIN. The idea was that young people's experiences from meeting the help- and legal systems and their advice to these systems should contribute to more children being met in a way that feels safe, helpful and collaborative for them. The goal is increased legal certainty for children, and that collaboration and coordination between the services are conducted with the child as the most important actor in the collaboration.

130 children and young people have participated, from across the country

130 children and young people who have been questioned after experiencing violence or abuse have participated in the qualitative survey. The vast majority have experienced violence or abuse from family, relatives or networks. A few were in the Barnahus ("Barnahus Model" is a government-run offer for children and young people who may have been subjected to, or a witness of, violence or sexual abuse, and a police report is filed) after violence or abuse from someone other than family, relatives or networks. The young people come from different parts of the country and are aged 12-19. The answers have mainly been collected through sessions around the country. Some answers were also collected via telephone or text messages. This was done to ensure enough safety and trust, and to get in-depth answers.

The participants have all shared experiences about the meeting with the police and the Barnahus. 20 of them also have experience from trial and court. Many have shared their thoughts on reporting to the police and punishment after violence or abuse in close relationships. They have shared their experiences and given advice on what to do which contributes to safety and security after telling about violence and abuse. What can the police and Barnahus do when they meet the child or the young person? What can employees in the judicial and court systems do so that it will be right and certain for children?

The questions asked

The participants in the qualitative survey have been given the questions below. In-depth questions on topics that were important to one/some of the participants were asked.

About telling about violence and/or abuse

- ♥ What does it take to tell about violence and/or abuse?
- ♥ What did you experience as safe and unsafe when you had told?
- ♥ What is important that happens after you have told?

About reporting

- ♥ How did you experience the question about whether you wanted to report?
- ♥ What do children need to know about reporting?
- ♥ What is your most important advice if adults want to report?

About questioning in the Barnahus

- ♥ What was good and useful, and what was not useful related to questioning in the Barnahus?
- ♥ Did you get to talk about what was most important to you in the questioning?
- ♥ What is your most important advice to the interviewer?
- ♥ How did you experience the follow-up after the questioning?
- ♥ What is your most important advice for follow-up after a questioning?

About lawyer and discontinuations

- ♥ How did you experience the lawyer?
- ♥ What is your most important advice to lawyers?
- ♥ How did you experience the case being discontinued?
- ♥ What advice do you have for when cases are discontinued?

About trial, court and appeal

- ♥ How did you experience the courtroom?
- ♥ What is your advice for making courtrooms feel safe for children?
- ♥ What kind of information do children need about the trial?
- ♥ How should the child best express their opinion in trials?
- ♥ How did you experience the case being appealed?
- ♥ What advice do you have for when cases are appealed?

The answers are summarised

The experiences and advice from the 130 children were, in their verbatim form, systematised. This is done by adult factory workers. The answers and advice are reproduced as directly as possible in this report. No analysis or comments are added. Answers that are repeated across the country, are summarised as the main answer. This is a qualitative analysis - without statistics and percentage estimates. It is very important to point out and highlight the experiences and advice that most often were repeated and became extra clear.

Representativeness

The choice to conduct several sessions or talks with each participant, means that many of the answers from the young people are in-depth answers. They get plenty of time to think and the opportunity to answer again or more elaborately in the next talk or session. This has led to the survey highlighting some fundamental challenges for the Norwegian police and legal system. Although the survey does not represent all children's experiences and advice for the police, Barnahus and the legal system, it provides answers and advice from 130 children and young people who have recently met and known these systems, a broad and important contribution to what many view as legal safeguarding for them.

Good experiences and challenges

The report focuses on good experiences, safe adults they have met and good follow-up from Barnahus - at the same time as it clearly shows challenges in the legal system.

Thank you

To all of you young people who have shared experiences and given advice. Thank you so much for your courage, strength, wisdom and vital knowledge to Norway.

Without you, this survey would not be possible.

Thank you for sharing from your hearts and giving advice with strong desires to affect change and make it better for those who come after.

Thank you to all of you professionals who have helped us conduct the survey. A big thank you to the Ministry of Justice, which has supported and followed the work.

PART 1

REASONS WHY CHILDREN DON'T TELL ABOUT VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

A main answer from children is that far too many do not know what adults or other children are NOT allowed to do to children. Many do not know what sexual abuse, mental or physical violence is and who could do it against them. Many had lived in violence and abuse for many years, and carried painful feelings inside of them without being able to speak up.

Many children in the survey say that when they tried to talk about painful things to an adult, the information was shared quickly without an agreement being made with the child. In that way, they lost trust in adults, not only to the one adult, but to adults in general. That made them stop talking, say more superficial things, change or take back what they had told. They say that children do this to protect themselves, and that this can happen without adults noticing. One of the consequences for children may be that they tell less in the questioning.

Information about violence and abuse

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children do not know what family and networks are not allowed to do

In the survey, many children say that they did not know that adults or other children and young people in the family or network are not allowed to use violence or commit abuse against them. Most people have known that strangers are not allowed to hit or do something sexual to them. They heard this in the news or learned it at school. But they rarely have learned that it can be done by someone they love, someone they live with, or know - and that it is not allowed. Several people say that they think it is strange that fire services and the police came to school and told about things that they would rarely or never have use for, but they got none or little information about what adults are not allowed to do.

Children do not know what violence and abuse is

Many say that they never received concrete and honest explanations of what sexual abuse, psychological and physical violence is, what it looks like or feels like, and who can do it. Many therefore carried many painful feelings inside, without being able to put into words what they had experienced. They also didn't know where they could get help, or what kind of help it was possible to get. Many were frightened that both the Child Protection System and the police could do bad things with them, that children could end up in residential childcare institutions, and that they would never see their parents again. Children did not know what types of help the Child Protection System could provide, neither to children nor for their whole family.

Many do not tell until they are young adults

Children say that when they lacked information about what family and networks are not allowed to do, where they could speak up or what help they could get, they had no opportunity to tell. They can have pain in the stomach and head without being able to understand why. Many were frightened or threatened by the ones who did bad things. Many were young adults before they understood that what they experienced was not allowed and that it was from there that the nausea, the "pain" in the body or the bad feelings came from.

QUOTES

I should have known that adults were not allowed to threaten me into silence. When an adult said that if I didn't keep the secret, bad things are going to happen, I wasn't able to tell.

I would have spoken up if I had known what violence and abuse is, where on the body others are not allowed to touch, and that it is not allowed to say things to children that make them sick to their stomachs.

We need to get information that violence and abuse can also be done by someone in the family and someone we know well. By a mother, grandparents, cousins and siblings.

All children and young people need to know what psychological and physical violence is, in a language that we understand. What it can do to us, and that it can happen within the family!

It is important to learn about the different bodily reactions children may have to abuse. Children need to know that the body can react in different ways, and what we can do when this happens.

An adult told me that it is possible to fall in love with the person who abuses you, and that it is nothing to be ashamed of. Only then could I finally let out the story of the abuse I was subjected to.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to receive specific explanations

All children in all municipalities in Norway have to receive information about what adults and other children are not allowed to do to children. They need to get concrete explanations of where the boundaries are. They must also receive information about where children can contact for help.

Adults cannot know which children experience violence or abuse. Therefore, ALL children have to receive this information, not just those children who adults think are most "vulnerable" or "exposed". Adults in all childhood services in the municipalities and in the Child and Adolescents' Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP), have to remember that one can never know which children experience violence and/or abuse at home. Many children have experienced that parents and other guardians have covered up that bad things happen. Adults must therefore listen carefully to children, and fundamentally believe what the child tells. They must clearly signal to the child that they believe what the child is saying is how the child experiences the situation. This has to be done no matter how the person abusing them may act or appear.

Children need to know that violence and abuse can be done by someone they know

All children in all municipalities in Norway need to receive information about how violence and abuse is often done by someone the child knows and that it is not just adults who can do it. They need to know that it can be done by a mum, dad, aunt, uncle, grandparents, siblings, cousins, friend of the family or a neighbour. It can be done by young people, adults and old people. Children also need information about how some children may experience abuse as something good, and that they can fall in love with

the abuser. Children learn that they should not feel ashamed or that there is something wrong with them, even if they feel this way. There are no "typical" people that abuse children, although many children have learned that it is done by men who are strangers. Children need to know this from an early age. It gives children the opportunity to be able to speak up.

In kindergarten

Kindergarten employees have to be trained to be able to provide groups of children information about what adults and other children are not allowed to do to children, who they can speak to, and what kind of help they can get. At the same time all staff have to be able to check what children know or give them information in one-on-one conversations. They need to be given knowledge about how they can preserve the child's trust, after it has come forth that the child is experiencing violence or abuse.

In school

The Child Protection System, in collaboration with the schools, have to give pupils information about what adults and other children are not allowed to do to children. It is also important to tell that violence and abuse happens to other children in Norway, so that no child thinks they are completely alone in experiencing this. This can be done in classes or with whole grades, in collaboration with a public health nurse or others at the school who can look after the pupils afterwards. The pupils also have to get information about what the Child Protection System is, what they can help with and how children can get hold of the Child Protection System if something is difficult or painful at home. The Child Protection System has to say that they can move children if the child is treated badly at home and wants to be moved. They must also tell that most children receive help at home. Those who come from the Child Protection System have to be someone who can "melt" children with warmth, and tell about the different forms of help that the Child Protection System can provide.

Take children seriously

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

In the survey, most of the children say that they felt that what they experienced was not right and that they wanted it to stop. They wanted someone to help them to feel better. At the same time many express that they were afraid that it could get worse if they told. They were afraid that adults would not do the right things and that this could affect the child. Most children have been looking, or are still looking, for an adult who takes what they say very seriously. One who can bear to listen, that they can trust and confide in.

Many children have tried to tell. Some have told a little, some more and some have told everything. Adults have met them differently, but common to many is the experience that the adults did not take what they said completely seriously.

For many children, this was about the adults not reacting in a way that made them feel that what they had experienced was not okay. The adults showed little reaction, and therefore many had thought that what they had experienced was normal. Many tell of adults who were serious in the face and showed little emotion. For most, this was very unsafe and contributed to them becoming uncertain and stopped telling.

QUOTES

My teacher noticed that I was often quiet, arrived late and that I could flinch when someone touched me. She didn't give up, and finally I told her. She clearly explained that what I had experienced was not okay. I felt that she cared. She reacted when I talked.

I was interrupted when I tried to tell. They didn't need to hear anything from me, that's how it felt. Before they talked to me, they had read what had happened.

I would have answered if someone had asked me a direct question.

How adults should connect with me? They have to believe me. No matter what my parents say, it's my words that have to be believed in. Don't question whether it happened or not. It is another part of the truth, and the adult has to dig deep and find out.

Don't hold back when we tell you - we know adults feel something too. Cry with us, not after we've left. If I am met without feelings, I may never tell again. It feels like what I told wasn't bad enough.

It's okay if the adult cries, or says they can feel it in their stomach. It feels good when adults can explain what he or she is feeling.

I can't talk without the person I'm talking to showing a lot of warmth. It doesn't work.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Adults have to believe children

Adults have to believe what children tell them. Even if children say something that sounds unlikely, the adults have to wonder and continue to ask. Adults always have to take children seriously and remember that there are usually good reasons why children say what they say.

Adults have to meet children with reactions and human warmth

Children who tell about violence and abuse have to be met with a lot of reactions, emotions and human warmth. If the adult cries a little, he or she has to explain why. The adult has to explain that what the child has experienced is not okay, and that no child should feel that way. The tears are not about bearing to listen, but that no child should experience what the child has told. This will reassure children that it is right to speak up. It is absolutely fundamental to ensure safety so that children will be able to tell.

Sharing information safely

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children test adults

In the survey, most of the children who had told about violence or abuse themselves, said that when they first told, they had waited a long time. They wanted something to happen, but it had to happen in a way that felt safe for them. The unsafety or the fear that it wouldn't happen safely, has made many people not tell earlier. Many children say that they first

"tested" adults, by saying less serious things. They paid attention to what the adults did with what they had told them. Many experienced that the information was shared with other professionals or to guardians, without them knowing. This was often done without making an agreement with the child on what was to be shared, or to whom.

Many children have bad experiences from an early age with adults sharing information. Kindergarten teachers have told parents or other guardians about what the child has done or said. The same can have happened at school, with a public health nurse or in the Child Protection System. For children, this can feel as if the adults are going behind their backs. Children ask about whether it is right that adults can do this with what the child says.

Information that is shared can make children feel unsafe

Children in the survey say that they quickly noticed that an adult had shared information. Another adult could bring up what the child had said with the child, or it is felt in the atmosphere or mood of adults. Guardians could be perceived as disappointed, or adults could scold or punish the child.

Children say they feel unsafe when adults share information without making an agreement with them. This causes many to lose trust in adults. Children learn that "adults are like that". For some, it becomes a feeling of "the adults against me". The next time, many told about less important things to adults instead. Others stopped telling or denied some of what they initially told. It may take several years before they tell again. In the meantime, children can continue to live in violence or abuse.

Many children tell little during questioning, in Barnahus or to the police. Some change their story, in conversations with adults in kindergarten, school, the Child Protection System or the police. Adults have often concluded that children have been talked with too much, or are threatened into silence. Most children say that one main reason why they stop telling, tell less or change what they have told, is that they discover that adults share the information. Then it becomes too unsafe for children to tell any more.

QUOTES

I didn't trust the adults to keep close. I didn't dare tell and then I was left walking there with everything still inside me.

I lost confidence because the teacher spoke to the Child Protection System about something I had told only her, even though she said she had the duty of confidentiality.

I would rather carry what hurt inside me than that what I said could be shared without me knowing where. I never got information about what could actually happen if I told.

I started telling about the abuse when I was sure that what I told did not go home automatically. I hadn't told anyone before and just didn't manage that my mother would know.

The school told my father and stepmother what I had said right away. They also said I had said I didn't like my stepmother. Then I got beaten up at home.

Children have to get information if something is to be shared, so the child and the adults together can figure out how to do it. It has to happen in a way that is good for the child.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

What the child tells has to be treated humbly

For several of the children who have told about violence or abuse in the family or network, this is something they have lived with for a long time. It is therefore not always the case that they want something to be done right that second. To other children, things are urgent. When a child tells, the adult have to be clear and in a safe way show the child that he/she understands that he/she has now heard something which has to be treated with great humility. Adults can't promise children that they will never share the information, but the adult can promise that what a child tells will be shared in collaboration with the child.

It has to be shared in collaboration with the child

When some of what a child has told is to be shared, this has to be done in collaboration with the child. The adult has to make an agreement with the child on what, to whom, how and when something will be shared. If children do not want something to be told right away, the adult has assessed in collaboration with the child how this can be done.

Collaborate with children also when there is danger to life or health

When the adult is afraid about life or health and assesses that what the child has told has to be reported immediately, this has to be done in close collaboration with, and in the safest possible way for, the child. If the adult is concerned, he or she has to talk in total openness and honesty to the child about why the adult is worried. The adult has to make a plan together with the child about who the child can contact if anything should happen. Children clearly say that this must also be done with young children. They own the information about their own lives, even if they are younger. Young children also live with this, and know a lot about what is safe for them.

Keep talking

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Not random which adult gets to know

In the survey, almost everyone who has told about violence or abuse, say that it was not random which adult they chose to tell. For most, it was a person they, in one way or another, felt safe with and trusted. Most say that they would have wanted to talk a lot more with that person about what had happened. Children need time to feel safe in being able to tell. They wanted to practise telling and hearing themselves talk about it. The adult should be there to listen, welcome emotions and dare to ask questions.

Many children say it is absolutely essential to continue talking to the same person. Many had experienced being referred to someone who was a leader or who they had been told that knew more. This had caused a lot of trust to be lost. For some, this was experienced as a rejection, and made it so that they did not want to tell more or that it took a very long time before they told again. Many experienced that the adults started talking in a strange way or with pity to them after they had told. Some then felt that they were seen as a victim.

QUOTES

If the person I tell it to disappears or tells it to others, then I lose trust and will not tell again. Then I think that I deserved it and that what happened was okay.

Talk with me for a while before I'm sent to someone else, otherwise I don't dare to trust adults anymore. It takes a lot to tell about violence. Wait before sending me to someone else.

We have to talk several times about what has happened. The person you trust should have the opportunity to join next time you talk about it with someone else.

If we tell an adult, then that person is chosen. Then the person must not run to BUP, the Child Protection System, the police or other adults. Then the person has the competence to talk to us, because we know very well which competence works and which doesn't. We do not need what adults consider to be specialist skills.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to be allowed to talk enough with the person they have told

Children have to get the opportunity to talk more about the painful things, with the adult the child told first, until they agree together that it can be shared. Children have to be allowed to talk about their feelings, how it was experienced and felt, not the details of the violence or abuse.

Everyone who works with children have to dare

Everyone who works with children have to be taught to ask questions about how experiencing violence or abuse feels. They have to dare to talk to children about what it does to their thoughts and feelings. The adults do not need to ask detailed questions about what happened, about who did what and where. Children who have told need lots of strength and words which explains to them how brave and strong they are. They do not want to be seen as a victim. All adults in services for children should have knowledge that this is very important in order to take care of the trust the child has shown, when they have told.

Hurry in collaboration with the child

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Often more urgent for the adults than for the child

In the survey, several children say that they experienced being moved quickly after they told for the first time. This was very scary to many. Although it was urgent for the adults to do something about the situation after the child had told, it was not always as urgent for the child. Many explained that they had lived with violence for a long time. If moving came too fast and was decided over their heads, it could quickly cause more pain.

Some children would move quickly once they finally had told. They didn't know that moving away from home was a possibility or they had continued living at home because they wanted to look after siblings, parents or others in the family. When they got a safe opportunity to move, they wanted it.

QUOTES

The Child Protection System decided on moving, but they let me join in deciding when it should happen. Then I had time to get ready to move. It was urgent for me too, but not on the day. They did it in a good way. I got information about where I was going to move, that was important for me. It could have been traumatic if it had felt like things had happened over my head. I was in control. That made it safer.

When moving urgently, the adult always has to talk to the child. The child has to get to prepare for the move. Maybe there are some people we will not be able to see for a long time.

It can be scary to sit in a car with strangers, on the way to a place you don't know where is.

If a child wants to move immediately, there is a reason. The child may have gained hope of finally getting help and can't take any more pain. Then they have to be allowed to move.

I think that you always have to talk thoroughly with the child. If the child refuses to move, you have to figure out what it is about. You have to explain what moving means, many think that you never get to see your parents again, but it's not like that. Then you have to get enough information.

I think that little me as a five-year-old could have been involved in the decision-making. I knew a lot about what it felt like to be me. Those who would decide, needed that information.

We have lived in the situation for a long time, so one or two more weeks doesn't matter. Put simply, don't be in such a hurry to move, if the child does not want that.

Always let the child know that they are not responsible for the move and that there's no need to feel ashamed or guilty.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Urgent moving has to be decided together with the child

When it is decided whether there will be a move and how soon the child will be moved, the child's description of the situation and the child's wishes for what will happen next, has to be fundamental. Everything has to be based on this. When urgent relocation is decided, the child has to get enough and honest information and be allowed to help decide how the move should be done. Children have to, as far as possible, get time with those they love before the move, if they wish.

If adults are concerned for the child, but the child does not want to move, the adults have to try to figure out why. The adults have to be honest about how worried they are and explain in a calm and warm voice to the child what this is about. Adults and children have to think of solutions together. As far as possible, adults have to try to follow what the child describes as best for themselves.

PART 2

REPORTS

In the survey, many children answered that they did not want the violence or the abuses they had experienced to be reported. Adults had most often determined that it should be reported, without collaborating closely with them. Most children felt that they had no control over who reported, when or why the reporting happened.

The vast majority answered that the most important thing for them was that the bad things they were experiencing would stop. Making a report to the police and punishment are not most important. Almost all the children were given too little information about what was going to happen when the police were involved, and that led to a lot of unsafety. An answer that was repeated is that it didn't feel like the adults wanted to collaborate with the child.

Better information about making a report to the police

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children receive too little information about reporting

In the survey, several children say that they received far too little information about reporting to the police. They lacked information about what a report is and why the adults considered it. They say that to be able to assess at all, children need a lot of information. Reports that were done without them knowing that it would be reported and what would happen afterwards, made many unsafe or afraid of losing control over their lives. That made many stop telling, or change what they had told to get away.

Many children say that if they had received good and honest information about reports, they would actually be able to be a part of assessing it. They had then learned that few cases go to court and that very few end in conviction. At the same time, they wanted the opportunity to ask questions to adults and also seriously understand what could be good about making a report to the police.

QUOTES

It is not safe to report when we do not know what happens next. We have to get information about what happens, how it is happening and how many cases go through. This has to be explained in words children understand. Then it becomes safe, and when it is safe we speak the truth.

I knew far too little about what reporting meant. I'm not saying that if I had known more I would have wanted to report, but everything would've become less alien and scary.

Tell us what it means to report and who will be involved. For me it would be very scary if my parents would find out, because I was afraid of how they would look at me afterwards.

It is important to give the child good enough information, for the situation to be as safe as possible. The situation is difficult, it is important that the child feels safe. The child must not sit with unanswered questions. It can make someone regret reporting and stop talking.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Information about reports provides protection

Protecting children means giving children enough and useful information. Adults may believe that children should not know too much about making a report to the police because it can become burdensome and make children afraid, but this is not true. The moment the adult considers that the police have to be involved, children have to get information about reporting. They need to know what making a report entails, who gets to know about the report and the consequences of reporting.

Children have to be given information that many cases are discontinued

Children also have to be informed that most cases are discontinued when reported and why. The adults have to tell what can happen if the case goes through to the court, and that the case may lead to media coverage. Children should get the same amount of information as they would if they were over 18 years old. It is important that all children get information, not just the children who dare to ask. Adults cannot withhold information about the child's life.

Thoughts on reporting

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Many children do not want to report

In the survey, many children say that they did not want to report. Only a few wanted the person who had used violence or committed abuse, to be punished. They still cared about them and would rather they get proper help. Almost all the children describe that getting better was more important than punishing parents or others who had done hurtful things to them.

Many express that it was painful enough to live for so long in violence and abuse, which had not been discovered. To go through a legal process felt useless to many. A criminal case can divide families, hinder contact with siblings, create guilt and put children's lives on hold. For some it felt dangerous when the person who was reported found out that the child had told. Children ask that their needs for safety and protection outweigh society's need to punish.

For more than half, it was the Child Protection System that made the report to the police. A lot was done quickly. Reports created unsafety, restlessness and fear in many, and they lost trust in adults. When reports were done over their heads, many closed themselves off and said little or nothing in questioning. Several had experienced pressure from adults to report, and from those who reported almost all had experienced their case being discontinued. The few who wanted to report themselves, explained that this was because what had happened had to be stopped and that they did not want others to experience the same.

Few children in the survey had experienced that their descriptions and requests for a report had been clearly brought forth. The adults took control, and this became very unsafe for many. A few are grateful because some adults made a report on their behalf because then they didn't have to choose. But most describe that it did not feel good that adults made the choice for them.

QUOTES

I had heard that many cases are discontinued, so I thought that there was no point. The consequences were too big.

I finally got to live with a family where it was safe and where I could live normally. Then I couldn't bear to report and go through a legal process and get hurt again.

I told my foster mother about what had happened. Then I got the question if I wanted to report. I wanted to. I didn't want it to happen to others.

It is more important to get our parents back than to punish them.

I understood that the Child Protection System had to report, but it was done behind my back. The way they did it was completely wrong.

If the adult says that what has happened is serious and wrong and that they will report to prevent the same from happening to other children, it takes that responsibility away from me. This can make us understand why they report.

When you are subjected to violence, it feels like someone is taking over part of you, and takes power over you. The fact that some adults decided to report, has destroyed the possibility for me to report it myself.

We have to be involved in all decisions that concern us. If we don't want to report, it has to be taken into account and if we want to, we have to be allowed to tell why. I think you can listen to children from a very young age.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Adults have to explain their thoughts on reporting

The adults have to explain very carefully and properly why they think that what has happened should be reported to the police and punished. Knowing why adults mean and think as they do gives children an understanding of why it is necessary. They get an explanation. Then they don't have to create their own version that may be worse than reality.

Children's opinions and wishes have to be emphasised

Children can answer honestly about making a report to the police when they understand what it entails. This also applies to small children. Children's wishes and opinions have to be listened to and taken seriously when it is considered making a report. Without collaboration with children on reporting, trust can disappear.

Reporting has to be done safely

In order for reporting to be done safely, the adults have to clearly state that what has happened was not the child's fault, and that the adults have an important responsibility to report to the police. Reports must never be done too quickly or over the child's head. Children have to be given enough time after they have told, to remember more and become more sure of what they have experienced. Children have to be allowed to talk enough about what has happened. Adults need to know that it will better ensure that children tell more.

Prison sentences of children's close relatives

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Prison did not change people

In the survey, many children say that they did not want to punish their closest with prison sentences. It wouldn't help them feel better in itself. Instead, many children wanted adults who had hurt them, to get help not to continue doing bad or hurtful things against children. Prison only became detention for a short period, they weren't locked up for the rest of their lives. Children who had experienced that the adults returned after a prison sentence, had little experience of the adults having changed.

QUOTES

I don't want to punish my parents. I care about them no matter what they do, but it hurts. I see that they need help, but they need something that can help well.

I would have agreed to report if there were more solutions than prison, for example health care or help to understand what violence does with children.

They should learn how to give a hug, how to show love. Many use violence because that is what they experienced in their own childhood home. They need to learn how to show love.

I should have driven my stepfather to a cabin where he had to listen to recordings of what he has done to me and how I have felt. So that he has to work with his own feelings and understand my feelings.

It really helped to hear that it wasn't my fault, since I felt such guilt afterwards. Just put it straight: This was not your fault. And feel free to say it several times, because at first we don't listen to it.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Measures have to provide safety

Many say they do not want to face the person who has hurt them and they don't want to be afraid of suddenly meeting them on the street. Children ask for measures that can make them feel protected and safe inside and outside their home. The most important thing for children is that the violence and abuse ends, that they are not forced to have contact if they do not want to, and that it does not happen to other children. For the measures to feel safe for those they apply to, they have to be decided in collaboration with children.

Children's alternative to prison sentences

Children want Norway to adopt other forms of consequences, punishment and help for relatives who have used violence or committed abuse, instead of traditional prison sentences. Some think that these adults should be sent to a cabin, a farm or another place where they can get help or treatment. They suggest courses or other types of arrangements for parents, so that they can deeply understand how it feels for children to live in violence and abuse. Adults also have to understand the harm they cause children, when they subject them to violence or abuse. Children want adults who have hurt children, to also learn to care about themselves, apologise properly for what they have done and slowly but surely learn to give their children safe love.

PART 3

QUESTIONINGS

Some children received good information prior to questioning in Barnahus and felt safe enough to tell. Several felt looked after both by the interviewer and by the staff at the Barnahus. A main answer in the survey was nevertheless that questioning was unsafe. Children received none or little information about what happened in the questioning itself. They didn't get to know what could happen to the person who had done the bad things to them, and they did not know who else became involved in the criminal case. Most children also received too little information about the questioning day itself and did not feel prepared when they arrived at the Barnahus.

For the first time, children had told about the difficulties in their lives. Finally they had found someone they felt safe enough with. Some days or weeks later, they were suddenly told that they were going to be questioned in a Barnahus. It was scary that this happened so suddenly. Many children had not talked enough about the bad things that happened to them before they had to be questioned. They had not been able to practise saying the necessary words to explain about the violence or abuse. It therefore became too difficult to answer all the questions they suddenly got in the Barnahus.

During the questioning itself, the camera filming, formal and stiff interviewers, had an unusual and somewhat odd way of speaking, and a formal and cold interrogation room made the questioning feel unsafe for a large part of the children. Many say that they felt so insecure that they were unable to tell everything or enough about the pain they had experienced. Children who received good information, were collaborated with and who were looked after by warm adults, told more about the bad experiences in the questioning.

Talk enough before questionings

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children need to talk about the hurt in order to be able to tell

Many children said in the survey that they wanted to continue to tell whoever they first opened up to. After they first told about violence or abuse, a long time passed without any adults talking with them about what they had told. This became unsafe and scary. For many it felt as if they had to be alone with the hurt. When they were not allowed to talk to an adult they felt safe with, a lot of emotions and chaos stood in the way of the story itself. The explanations in the questioning became poor, because they became unsure of what they would dare to say, and many told less than what they actually remembered.

QUOTES

I had two days to prepare for the questioning. Nobody asked me if I wanted to talk, and it was difficult for me to ask someone. When I came for the questioning, it became extra difficult, it was like one large lump was in my throat.

When almost no one dares to talk to us after we have told about violence, we may become quiet during the questioning. Just because we have talked about events, it cannot effect the evidence in a bad way. Many adults have misunderstood a lot.

During the questioning, I started to cry and felt a lot of emotions I hadn't felt before. The feelings came on a bit sudden, I had barely talked about this before. What I said was very much guided by feelings and by my anger. It got so big when I hadn't talked about it before, and I added a little extra.

Having experienced violence or abuse can cause a lot of shame and guilt. If someone I trusted had talked to me first, I think it would have been easier to tell in the questioning.

When I was allowed to talk a lot about the painful things before the questioning, it became easier to talk to the police. It became easier to trust the woman who did the questioning, when I trusted myself.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to get to tell someone they trust

Before the questioning, children have to be given the opportunity to continue talking about the hurtful things that has happened, with a person the child trusts. Most never talked about this before. They need to get used to using the words and feel the feelings. This talk has to happen with someone in which the child feels safe. Here they can also talk about fear of saying something wrong in the questioning, for many this can be crucial to talk about.

Adults can destroy trust

If many adults ask questions about what has happened, this can feel unsafe and can cause children to close down. This can happen when the teacher notifies the principal, the principal notifies the Child Protection System and/or the public health nurse. When all these, with good intentions, pose some of the same questions, children can become unsure of what all the adults are talking about over the child's head, and this causes children to lose trust in the adults.

Telling a safe adult in advance provides safety during questionings

It is important for children to feel safe in their own feelings, expressions and history. This makes children give more information and details in questioning. All adults who work with children have to learn how to talk to children who have told about violence or abuse, without it being seen as influencing and destroying the child's explanation as evidence in a criminal case. The police has to be responsible for teaching everyone who works with children how the conversations can be documented well enough. When children have told their whole story to a person the child trusts before the questioning, the police and Child Protection System can know much more about everything that has happened.

Information before questionings

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Lacked information upfront

Children in the survey say that if the person who subjected them to violence or abuse were parents or others close to them, adults planned the questioning without the child. The child did not know anything until the day of questioning. Some had heard that adults were afraid it would burden them too much, if they were to know about the questioning in advance. This applied especially when they lived at home with those who had subjected them to violence or abuse. Most thought this was wrong and wanted information about the questioning earlier.

Questionings come sudden

For most, the questioning came without them being collaborated with. They had lived in pain for a long time, suddenly it was as if everything was very urgent. They were picked up, without warning - at the kindergarten, at school or at home. They were taken to the Barnahus without knowing who had spoken to the police. Many say that they didn't get any information about all the other things the police intended to do on the same day. Only later did they find out that other members of the family had also been questioned. To many, this became chaotic and terrifying. Many children had received some information about the Barnahus from the person who accompanied them to the questioning, most of them got it at school on the same day or in the car on the way to the questioning. But many felt that this information was not honest and concrete enough. The car trip to the Barnahus was also uncomfortable for most, especially when strangers were driving or were in the car.

Difficult to tell

Some children turned up for questionings without a thorough enough understanding of what a questioning really was. Some did not know the reason why the police were going to talk to them. Some did not receive information in advance about who could see and hear what was said in the questioning. For many it was very difficult to open up in a questioning, when their heads were full of ideas about what was going on and what could happen. Many had big questions, which they never dared to ask.

Afraid of having done something wrong

Some children had hurtful and painful experiences with the police from before. Others had been told threatening things about the police. It became difficult to build trust in a short time. Several got a feeling that they had done something wrong, and were afraid to say something wrong in the questioning. They thought many of the questions were directed at them, rather than at the person who had hurt them. The unsafety could lead to words and questions being perceived differently than how they were intended. Children longed to hear that what had happened was not their fault.

Some experienced that the police took their phone and computer before the questioning. This was very difficult for several of the children. They say that they knew that the police's job was to put people in prison and that they were allowed to use force. Some children therefore felt like a criminal when they met the police at the Barnahus. They felt they had done something wrong, and that it was their fault when the police took something private such as phone and computer. They didn't quite understand whether they were supposed to get help or be punished, when the police took their things without it being carefully explained why.

QUOTES

I didn't know anything until I was picked up. The car ride to the questioning was the worst. People from the police and Child Protection System were in the car. I was very afraid. It was uncomfortable to sit with strangers for several hours.

Everything happened so fast. In questioning at the Barnahus, I was careful not to say too much and only tell about the least serious. I didn't want there to be a conviction. In retrospect, I think maybe I should have told straight from the heart. But then me and my parents would have to get time to talk about what could happen. I didn't know there could be alternatives to prison.

I should have had a little more time and found out about the questioning 4 weeks in advance. Then I could think it through and prepare myself. It was difficult to come up with things there and then.

The police confiscated my computer before the questioning. I felt that the police did not believe me, and that I was the one targeted - who do they want to catch? Then I lost all trust in the police before the questioning.

In the last questioning, I received an incredible amount of in-depth information. They told me why they took sound recordings, that I was entitled to a support person and what would happen after the questioning. Who was going to review my case and why. I was reassured that everything was correctly done and that what I told was in safe hands. This made it much easier to talk honestly.

It felt like I was the one who was going to get punished when I arrived at the questioning. It was as if I had done something wrong and was going to be caught for it. Who did they want to punish anyway?

The questioning itself was terrible. Felt watched and was afraid to be scolded for having done something wrong.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to be closely collaborated with before questionings

Children ask that the police and the Child Protection System involve them several days before the questioning, in collaboration with a person the child feels safe with. This also applies if the suspect is in a close relation to the child. Most children do not go home and tell their parents that they will be questioned in a few days. Children say they would rather dread the questioning than have no idea what will happen. The police can work closely with the child and explain clearly to the child that the police take responsibility for explaining to the parents that the child was not allowed by the police to tell about the questioning before afterwards.

Together with the child, a plan has to be made for what will make it safe for the child if bad things happen or are about to happen. The plan also has to contain concrete points about how adults can meet the child if the child gets afraid or feels unsafe. Children are well trained in holding on to secrets.

Children receive good information about the Barnahus

A person the child feels safe with has to inform the child about what will happen at the Barnahus, who is there and what is likely to happen after the questioning. Children have to get to see pictures of the Barnahus and the interviewer in advance, and children receive a separate letter stating the day of the questioning itself, in a simple and kind way. Some children have experienced meeting the interviewer in advance, and they said that this was absolutely necessary for them to be able to speak in the questioning.

Adults need to figure out why

If a child who was due for questioning changes their mind and still does not want to be questioned, adults need to spend more time figuring out why. The adults have to be honest and show their feelings about what is happening, and say that they think it is right that the police hear what the child has experienced, because what's happened is serious and not allowed to be done to a child. If the cause of the child not wanting to be questioned is that they feel unsafe, adults have to go to great lengths to ensure that things can be made safer for the child.

Children's support person

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Unsafe when the wrong person accompanied them

Many children in the survey experienced that adults around them had decided who would accompany them to the questioning. Very few got to choose this person themselves. For many, this made it unsafe. It could seem like this person didn't quite know what would happen at the Barnahus. Several had questions inside that they did not dare to ask. Some children were accompanied by their parents to the Barnahus, without this being a good and safe solution. Many wanted to protect their parents who also often felt unsafe and became more concerned with that than what was happening with them. For some, parents became more of a disturbance than a safety net.

Weren't allowed to bring someone they feel safe with to the questioning

Very few in the survey had experienced being able to bring a person they felt safe with to the interrogation room. They were also unaware that this was a right they had and no one had dared to ask about this. Many say it would have made a big difference in the interrogation room if a safe person could come in and sit there with them while they testified.

QUOTES

It was pretty bad that they decided who would accompany me to the Barnahus. Then it became the teacher I didn't feel safe with, but who they thought I was safe with.

If I had been allowed to bring a support person with me into the questioning, it would be much easier to talk. A support person would see that I was nervous and that it hurt to talk about what happened. It would have been good to have a hand on the shoulder.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to be allowed to choose a support person

Children have to, as far as possible, be allowed to choose who will accompany them to the Barnahus. It is very important that they get to bring someone they feel safe with. This person does not have to be a parent and most often not a sibling either. Each and every child has to be allowed to choose the person themselves. It is the child themselves that knows who feels the most safe for them, and therefore the child should be asked about who the best person to bring to a questioning is.

A support person has to be allowed to be in the questioning

Children also have to be given the opportunity to bring a person they feel safe with into the interrogation room. For many children, it will be the person they told, for others it may be someone else. The person the child chooses and that the child feels safe with is very important. Arrangements have to be made so that this particular person can support the child throughout the whole process, also in the questioning. The person has to be well informed about everything that happens, to be able to support the child as best as possible. If the person is a key witness in the criminal case, the police has to find solutions that enable the person to still be able to participate in the questioning with the child.

Cameras and those watching

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Cameras and microphones create unsafety

In the survey, children say that they lacked information about who was to see and hear what they told in the questioning. Most didn't get to know that the person who had hurt them has a right to see the questioning shortly afterwards. Nor were they told that the recording could be used as evidence in the criminal case and then played in court. It became difficult to tell everything in the questioning. Both cameras and microphones were unsafe for many, they wished recordings were not needed. Few of those who participated had said anything about how difficult this felt when they were in the questioning or after. They therefore thought adults might think that this was no problem for the child.

Few knew about the adults watching

A number of children had been explained that "some adults" were watching the questioning, without knowing who these were. They were not allowed to greet them and were not explained why they were there. Children who had asked to greet the adults, had been allowed to do so and experienced that it became less scary when they knew more. Many did not dare to ask, because they did not know that this was allowed. Some only found out after the questioning that the Child Protection System was also watching while the child explained to the police. This felt to some children like the adults once again went behind the child's back.

QUOTES

I remember thinking a lot about this during the questioning, who was sitting in the next room and how many there were. Had I known what they looked like and who they were, it might have calmed me down and helped me to focus on what I had to explain.

I didn't dare to tell the truth because I didn't know what the film was going to be used for or who could see it.

Cameras and microphones create a lot of insecurity. The adults have to spend plenty of time explaining and showing.

Being able to say hello to those watching the film helped a lot, then I felt safe about who I was talking to and that it wasn't those whom I absolutely didn't want to hear.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to carefully be explained what the camera is used for

Children have to be given good information about why there has to be a camera and microphone in the interrogation room. They need to know why the questioning is being filmed, who is watching, and what the film will be used for later. Children have to get to know where the camera is and get the opportunity to make it a little less noticeable, to get rid of the feeling that it points right towards them.

Children have to be given information about the observation room

Children have to be explained which adults are in the observation room and why the adults are there. Children must always be asked if they want to greet them. If there are empty chairs in the observation room, it is also explained who will possibly sit there later, so that the child doesn't get scared and think that those they are afraid of are going to sit there. The adults in the observation room have to meet children with kindness and a smile when they come to greet them. It is agreed carefully in advance how much and what the adults will say so that unnecessary insecurity in the room is not created.

The way of speaking in questionings

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Unnatural ways of speaking in questionings

Most children in the survey reacted to the interviewer talking to them differently than what children were used to. Many did not know why it was like that and wondered if something was wrong. They got a feeling that the interviewer did not believe what they were telling. Children experienced that the same questions were asked in different ways. It felt to many as if they were not believed by the interviewer, or that they did not answer well enough. Sometimes children did not understand what the interviewer was looking for - the questions were very diffuse. Other times, the interviewer wanted to know details that were very painful and difficult to talk about. It was difficult to understand the purpose of such detailed questions about the pain. Sometimes this brought out a lot of emotions in questionings, without the room feeling safe enough for this.

Afraid of saying something wrong

Children say they knew they had to tell the truth when they were with the police. Some had been told they could be punished if they lied. Some experienced that this was said in a strict way, and became afraid. Many refrained from saying things, because they weren't sure if they would be believed and because they had not told this to an adult before. Some children said that they had decided in advance that they would not tell everything. To hold back parts of what happened created difficult feelings. It was a great seriousness around telling the truth.

QUOTES

Inside the questioning where I told how I felt, she asked if I was sure that what I said was true, and that there could be consequences if I didn't tell the truth. It really made me unsure of what I could say and not say. I don't remember much of it the rest of the questioning, but exactly what the interviewer said about me having to tell the truth made everything very scary.

I felt afraid of what to say. Was nervous and knew that I had to tell the truth, and if you lied to the police that was punishable. I was also afraid that I wouldn't give enough evidence. I thought a lot about punishment. So I forgot a lot of what I was going to say, because I was very stressed.

Those who spoke to me asked me questions in strange and repetitive ways. They sounded like they weren't pleased so I felt like I was the one accused.

They had a scary and formal way of talking. The interviewer asked me the same question in every possible way. I think he wanted to see if what I said was true. I didn't dare speak anymore because I felt I wasn't believed.

The interviewer said that she was going to ask a number of similar questions. Then I understood why.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to receive thorough explanations about the method

Children have to receive a good explanation of why the questioning is the way it is and why they speak differently in questioning than in an ordinary conversation. The questions sometimes need to be less concrete than what children are used to. Children have to get information about the purpose of them having to tell their own story without too many questions from the interviewer. They also have to be explained why the interviewer is going to ask almost the same questions about the same topics, and that this does not mean that the interviewer does not believe the child. The interviewer has to explain that they sometimes have to ask detailed questions about things that children don't usually talk about so much, but that this is important for the police to find out exactly what happened. This makes children feel safer, and the questions create less insecurity and guilt. If children get more information it may feel safer to tell more in the questioning. Children also need to know that it will be used as evidence in court.

The interviewer

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Was not met by the interviewer

Many children in the survey say that they were met by an employee at the Barnahus, who met them at the door and showed them around. Many got something good to eat and drink. Many experienced this as a safe meeting with the Barnahus and with warm, friendly adults. Some thought it was this person they should talk to further on. The interviewer often came a little later and showed them the interrogation room itself. The feeling of safety that they first got when they got to the Barnahus disappeared for several of the children, when another adult was to talk to them during the questioning itself. The children needed time to feel safe with the interviewer too.

Cold and warm interviewers

A number of children tell of interviewers who started the questioning shortly after they met for the first time. They told little about themselves. This made it difficult for children to open up about the painful things. The interviewers could seem cold and distant. Some children had met interviewers that in different ways had shown warmth and understanding. Children received good information and it has created trust. They managed to make the child feel safe, so they were able to tell about all the painful things.

Many interviewers showed little emotion when the child told about painful things. Children say they didn't understand why they couldn't get a hug if they cried in the questioning or why the interviewer did not say anything about the fact that what the child had experienced was terrible. All of this made it unsafe. For many children, it felt as if what they told was not serious enough and that they kind of overreacted. They did not understand why the interviewer behaved like that. This made them close themselves off from telling or they told very little.

QUOTES

The woman who questioned me was wearing high heels. She felt like she had a higher status. She was like a "walking robot".

I have just been in one questioning. It was a positive experience. The interviewer was understanding and listened. I noticed it in the look and the body language.

The interviewer I met rarely showed emotion. It felt like she didn't understand. Just nodded and was there. She used technical terms I didn't know. I became unsure if there was something wrong with me when I had to ask.

It was incredibly nice because we talked a little beforehand to get to know each other. Then the good became mixed with the serious. It worked very well.

The woman who questioned me started easy. She said she had two children and how long she had worked with questioning children. Then it became safer. It wasn't just me sharing things.

The interviewer was smiling and was nice, he gave me information and understood that this was not easy for me. He also understood that I laughed because I was insecure and that it was difficult to tell something that hurt so much. This much understanding made it very safe.

I met an interviewer who said I believe you, I take you seriously and I'm asking because I care.

It was nice when she said that violence is one of the worst things a human can experience.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Warm and personal interviewers are wanted

Children want to meet interviewers who create safety. They can do that by telling a little about themselves, being open, smiling and having a warm and welcoming body language. They can also create safety by showing the child that they take them very seriously and show natural reactions to what that child says. They have to show that they genuinely care about children and confirm that what the child has experienced is painful and wrong. This can be done in one way that does not destroy the child's explanation as an important piece of evidence in the criminal case.

The child has to get to know the interviewer a little

Children have to get the opportunity to meet the interviewer and visit the Barnahus in advance, if the child wants it and it is necessary for the questioning to feel safe enough. It is nice if the interviewer welcomes children when they come to the Barnahus and that a period of time is set aside to get to know each other before the questioning itself will begin.

The interviewer that takes the child seriously

The interviewers have to provide a lot of information and therefore show that they are taking the child very seriously. The questioning has to be conducted at the child's pace, so that the child does not feel that there is pressure to tell in the questioning. The interviewer has to show with their body language and way of being that what the child says is important to listen to. If difficult things come up during the questioning, the interviewer has to check this out with the child to avoid misunderstandings and unsafety.

The interrogation room

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

The interrogation room is too unsafe

Many children think the interrogation room was impersonal, not cosy and "cold". Although the room was new and modern, this did not help the feeling of safety. It reminded them of some kind of institution or hospital. Several felt that it was cramped and had little light. This led to some unpleasant feelings that affected the questioning. Many children have clear opinions about how the room could look in order for it to be felt better to be there.

QUOTES

The room wasn't homely and I didn't feel welcome. There were only two windows and a chair. There was also a camera in the middle of the wall. It wasn't exactly something I would like to experience again.

The room should have been more open and cosy. You become more safe if it's cosy than if it's anonymous and a little sad. The very best would have been if it was like a homely living room.

A questioning car would have been smart and safe. So many children and young people talk more in a car than when they are sitting directly across from an adult. Then I could just turn up the music when I needed a break, because then the interviewer realises that now we can take a short break. The car must of course be anonymous on the outside.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

The interrogation room has to be made more cosy

The interrogation room has to be made as safe as possible. Then it has to be homely, suitable for both toddlers and young people. To sit in two chairs, with a table between them, is an unusual way for children to sit with an adult. Some suggest that sofas become what's normal to sit in. The Barnahus should involve children and young people to be sure that the houses are perceived as cosy for them.

Questioning cars

The questionings have to be possible to conduct in "questioning cars". Many children say that taking a ride in a questioning car will be a safer and more relaxing place to tell. Eye contact can be uncomfortable. Questioning cars are also more flexible than Barnahus which can be located far away.

Follow-up and coming home

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Varied follow-up after the questioning

After questionings, children tell about different feelings. Some felt insecure and unsafe, others were relieved, others had a guilty conscience, some felt that the future was chaotic and they had no idea what was going to happen further. Many of the children who had received follow-up from the Barnahus were content. Many of those who lived in a residential childcare institution or went to conversations in a mental health service, heard nothing more from the Barnahus.

Most wanted follow-up

A clear majority wanted an adult to follow them up. They needed information about what was going to happen next, what happened to what they told and who was going to get access to that information. Several said they wanted someone from the Barnahus to call the same evening or the day after just to check how the child was doing. For some children, it wasn't necessary with a lot of follow-up, but it was important that no one felt forgotten.

Unsafe to go home after questionings

Some children say that it felt very unsafe to go home after questioning, regardless of whether they had told about the painful things that had happened or not. It became difficult for many that they weren't told what the others in the family knew. Coming home without knowing what was going to happen next and without a safe person to talk to was difficult.

Wanted to be asked again

Several had not been able to tell about the painful things that had happened to them, and they missed someone properly asking them about this for a while after the questioning. This has to be a safe person for the child, who clearly gives the child the opportunity to tell more about what has happened. Some children told that they were unable to tell about the most serious things in questioning. This meant that they went home to more violence and abuse after the questioning and for quite a few of them it took several years before they were able to tell again so that they received protection.

QUOTES

I have heard that it is possible to get follow-up from the Barnahus afterwards. But with me it didn't happen. It was probably because I was admitted and follow-up was to be arranged there. But they did not follow up there, so then there was very little follow-up on me.

The only thing they did as a follow-up was to talk to my parents. For a long time afterwards I was afraid that they would come and bring me to the Barnahus suddenly again.

I was also quite scared when they showed the questioning to my parents. I ended up running away and using drugs. It was because I wasn't able to meet them. I wish I was more included when it applies to my life. I wanted to know what was going to happen next, what happened to the guy I reported and the reasoning for things.

It is very nice to have a phone call from the Barnahus afterwards to say that they have not forgotten me and actually cares. And that they can tell us that we can call again if we need to talk to them more.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to be followed up safely after questionings

After questionings, children have to be allowed to talk to an adult who they feel safe talking to. This can be the defender, a police officer, a counsellor from the Barnahus or an employee in one of the services in the municipality. This has to be a person the child feels is safe and with whom they can talk openly with. Children have to be invited to help decide what kind of follow-up they want after the questioning. The Barnahus always have to investigate when children go to someone to talk or live at places that are supposed to provide follow-up, whether the child really gets the follow-up feel they need.

Children have to receive information about what will happen to other people involved in the investigation, what information others will receive from the explanation given to the child and when this is going to happen. Children have to be kept up to date throughout the process, although time passes. The police are responsible for this happening, and they have to examine whether the child's legal council provides sufficient information to the child.

A safety plan has to be made in collaboration with the child

For many children, it is very important to create a safety plan before the child goes home. Children need to know that the adults care about the child feeling safe. After the questioning, some adults have to talk openly with the child about this and make good safety-plans together with the child.

The plan has to be made together with the child and someone the child feels safe with, if the child wants this. The plan has to be exempt from access by parents or the one who has hurt them. The child has to be asked if the plan feels safe enough. The police are responsible for making a concrete and clear safety plan together with the child.

The plan can state how the child can show with different signs, how safe they are feeling. This could for example be that the child uses a jumper with a special colour or give signs in other simple ways to their support person. This is an easy way to speak up, without having to say it in words, and the child doesn't have to be afraid that others can overhear what the child says. This makes it easier for more children to be able to speak up. The safety plan can be between the child and an adult with whom the child is near on a daily basis, for example in the kindergarten or at school. The child has to be talked to about which follow-up they want. It has to be written down what the child thinks about this. If anything is documented, this has to be excluded from view by the parents or for the one who hurt the child.

Discontinuation

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Discontinuation can feel meaningless to many children

Many children talk about painful feelings when they get the information that the case was discontinued after they had been through questioning and therefore often had a long waiting time. The challenges concerned, among other things, how the discontinuation was communicated and by whom. Many thought that the case was discontinued because they were not believed by the police. This could be hurtful and painful. For many it felt extra painful if they found out about the discontinuation through a letter. Some children felt that they were never given an explanation as to why the criminal case was discontinued. Few children have had the opportunity to see the documents in the case themselves.

QUOTES

We have to live with the burden. Norway says that we have to be taken care of after we have told about violence or abuse. But we are let down when the case is discontinued. And Norway does not say what we should do afterwards - or how we should live our lives.

I finally dared to say something, but afterwards it didn't go so well. Actually, I have no idea if anything at all happened afterwards. I got a lot of thoughts in my head: what happens next, and what was the point of all this when the case was simply discontinued.

When a child is told that a case has been discontinued, I think that it is important that a support person is present when the information is given, so that the child is not alone. But it has to be a person the child trusts. DO NOT give children information in text messages or in letters. The information has to be given in person for the child to be able to ask questions.

A discontinuation should not be sent home by letter, then someone is left alone to read that the rapes have been discontinued. Many believe that discontinuation is about not being believed. I should have been explained that it was because they did not have enough evidence, not that they didn't believe me.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

The discontinuation has to be thoroughly explained to children

Most of the children in the survey want an adult they feel safe with to be present when the child finds out about the discontinuation. Such important information cannot be given to the child by text message or letter. It's nice if the child also gets to know about the discontinuation from the person in the police who has made the decision, face to face so that if the child wants it, they can ask questions and get thorough explanations as to why the case is discontinued. The police or the child's legal council has to take responsibility for the child receiving information about the discontinuation.

Discontinuation is about lack of evidence

It is important that discontinuation is explained in a good way. The child also needs to know the reason why the case is discontinued, it has to be made clear that it is about the amount of evidence, and not that the child's story has not been believed. How this is said and what kind of explanation the discontinuation has, means a lot for children. The adults have to be warm and understanding when this is said in such a way that the child really feels believed.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

20 of the 130 children in the survey have experience of their case going all the way to court. Some have been present in the courtroom while film from their questioning from the Barnahus was played, some have testified then and there in the court, and some have not physically participated in the courtroom. Many tell of little safety in meeting with the judicial system. A majority knew little about what was going to happen in the trial, and many think that the courtroom was scary. Most say that child's legal counsel and judges are essential to make the trial safer. Legal safeguarding for children means that their experiences and wishes become the starting point for the assessment of their best interests and the decisions in itself. One of the clearest responses from children is that trials where the media have been present has made it extremely unsafe. For many it has felt as if society's need for transparency came at the expense of their lives.

Information about the trial

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children know little about what happens in court

In the survey, many children say that they received little or no information about what was going to happen in the trial. Few of the children got good enough information in advance of, and during, the trial. This applied to the information they received from the child's legal counsel, family or other adults. Many say that the little information they received was stated in technical terms that were difficult and incomprehensible to them. Some say that they got some information after the trial, but very few say they got enough for them to understand what had really happened, and could feel calm.

QUOTES

In the courtroom, I didn't feel prepared at all. I had met my lawyer a few times and we had made a superficial agreement about what to say and not to say. I think the lawyer forgot that children know little to begin with.

I didn't know if something was going to happen and what was going to happen because it took so long between each trial. It was like tearing up old wounds again when I thought I could move on, at the same time as I was angry that I had not been taken seriously.

After the trial I got little information, until I saw in the media that he had been convicted. I hadn't even been told by my lawyer before I read it in the newspaper.

I was told I was going to trial in two weeks, but I wasn't prepared for what was about to happen. I had no idea why I had to be there, what I should do, if I should say something, who was supposed to be there or who was supposed to speak. I was terrified, because I didn't know anything. I've seen trials on film, no wonder I was scared?

Before the trial, we need to get information. The lawyers have to inform us about when they have to write a note in the case, take the time to go through the papers so you can understand and not just use technical terms, so you don't feel ashamed.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to receive enough information about the trial

Children have to receive as much information as possible before, during and after the trial. They have to be carefully explained what will happen, why and how it will happen. They need to receive information about when the trial will be, who will speak, when they will speak, what it looks like inside the courtroom and where the child is going to sit. It is nice if children get to see a picture of the courtroom or visit it in advance. After the trial, children have to get all the useful information about what has been determined and what will happen next. The information has to be given without technical terms or other difficult words, because that can make the situation more difficult and scary for children.

Different information from lawyers, who is responsible?

The survey shows that children had very different experiences about how much information they got from their child's legal counsel. Other adults involved have to take responsibility and ensure that information about the trial is given and understood by the child. This is crucial for children to be able to feel safe in a trial. A suggestion from children is a person in the courts who is given responsibility for providing children with information after trials.

The courtroom feels unsafe

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

In the survey, most of the children who had been present in the courtroom, say that it was unsafe there. They understood little of what was said, and thought the room itself was scary and impersonal. Several dreaded the courtroom because they knew that the adults there could seem strict and perhaps a bit mean. Some children were afraid of saying something wrong or doing something that made others sad. Some were also afraid of being upset by what was said there.

QUOTES

The feeling of being believed can be taken away from you inside the courtroom, and it is totally horrible. I was very afraid of it, a week went by where I didn't manage to eat. Was so stressed and nervous about what was going to happen.

I felt so incredibly mean having to explain what happened at the same time as the one who had done it sat and wept and a group of adults sat with stern expressions when I shared what hurt most from my heart. The questions from the defence lawyer were so cold that I just cried for a long time afterwards. I would not have reported again if something illegal happened to me, because I have no desire to go through that again.

I was supposed to sit there, not say a word, and watch the film from the questioning and afterwards listen to what my lawyer said. I felt I had nothing I should have said there and it hurt incredibly that I then had to sit and watch, where he was also present.

The courtroom should look more friendly and cosy. The room should be open, not so closed. Preferably let the child help decide small things like drinks and food in the courtroom to make it a little safer. If it's cosy and nice, it will be easier to talk in court.

It wouldn't have been so bad if the courtroom had been warmer and safer. As it is now, we go straight into defence mode. The adults must not raise their voice, and not shout or argue. With another vibe it would be safer. The judge may be there to take action, but it shouldn't feel as strict as in a courtroom. It should be in a completely different room.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

The courtrooms has to be safe and less formal

The courtroom has to be made as cosy as possible, to ensure safety. It must preferably be no hard chairs there and people must not be placed too far away from each other, because that can create unnecessary distance and make it unsafe for children to tell. The judge has to take responsibility that the adults do not shout and speak badly to each other. It is nice if there is something to drink and eat in the courtroom, preferably something that the child can choose themselves.

To testify

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Trial gives the feeling of being at war

In the survey, several of the children who have been involved in the trial say they thought it was unsafe to speak or testify there. Some describe the trial as a feeling of being in a war. Sitting alone in the witness box in the middle of the courtroom was especially scary. For many, the insecurity was also about which people were present in the courtroom. Many thought it was very unsafe that the person who had hurt them (the accused) was there. Some felt a lot of unease when there were many other adults they didn't know there. Some became unsafe from not having been allowed to talk about the bad things that had happened, for a long time. Not knowing how long it took for everything to be settled also contributed to making it unsafe.

QUOTES

It was so uncomfortable to sit close to him and have to tell him what had happened. I had to tell in detail. Memories came back which I didn't want and I had to cry and felt really vulnerable.

When you have to testify, it's very scary to sit in the middle of the courtroom between the judges and the lawyers. It felt like standing in the middle of a war. I didn't know where to look and it felt so scary.

During the trial I should have had a person that I can feel safe with. We need warmth from another person. Either professional or not, the child can choose that. We have to be able to have the same person all the time, that's important.

If the child does not want people in the courtroom to watch, take that into account. It can be very unsafe to have family at the back of the hall crying to "psych" you out. It is not safe.

It was very scary both to speak in the courtroom and to meet he who was accused. You should plan so that when the trial starts, we can arrive a little earlier and not have to meet. Or we should be allowed to arrive at different entrances.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to be allowed to not having to meet the accused

Children have to get to choose who will be present when they are going to testify. They get to be involved in deciding whether they themselves will participate in the trial or not. Children are listened to and their opinions are taken seriously and followed as far as possible.

One solution is for the accused to see the child's explanation on video transmission from another room or that the child testifies in another room on video. Children do not have to face the person who has done something bad to them for example in the hallway, on the way to the toilet or during breaks. They may go in peace in areas shielded from the accused.

The child's legal council

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children longed for safety from the child's legal council

Many children in the survey highlighted the lawyer as important to their legal safety when they had to appear in the courtroom. Some of the children had a child's legal council they experienced as accessible, kind and safe. They said that this was important to get through the trial. But many felt that the child's legal council made the trial extra unsafe by, for example, rarely answering the phone. Those children who had bad experiences with lawyers, told about minimal information, contact or that they experienced little effort by the lawyer to understand and really take their descriptions seriously.

QUOTES

The lawyer should talk to the child during almost every break, because we are often scared. Mine didn't and then it wasn't that easy.

The lawyers have to look a little "friendlier" towards the child. We already feel like a criminal and that they look at us with serious, strange looks can be very uncomfortable.

My lawyer was good at safety. He met me many times before the trial and we got to know each other quite well. We have to feel safe that the lawyer helps us to get out what we have to say in court and get proper preparation.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

The child's legal council has to make it safe to tell

The child's legal council who are supposed to help children has to show human warmth and safety. Then he or she is a real professional from a child's perspective. They have to set aside enough time ahead of the trial to get to know each other a little and to give children enough information. It has to be given in an easy and understandable way, without technical terms. Good lawyers are those who listen carefully to children to understand fundamentally what the child wants to convey and describe about their situation.

Good lawyers talk to the child alone without adults present. To keep the child's trust, they collaborate and make an agreement with the child as to what information has to be shared with parents or other adults. Children want it to be easy to get in touch with a child's legal counsel, for example by text message, and that they have to try to answer even if it is in the evening.

Child's legal counsel has to talk to children regularly about what is needed for the child to feel safe when the child is to testify. They have to make sure the child understands what is happening and what is being said in the courtroom and how to make the breaks feel safe. It is important to talk about the breaks in advance, so that children do not have to meet the person who has done something hurtful to them for example in the hallway, on the way to the toilet or in the waiting room.

Many children say that they do not know that they have the right to switch child's legal counsel. The police has to be responsible for giving all children information about this.

The judge

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

The judge's behaviour is important

A recurring answer was that many judges gave looks that were a little too strict, while showing little emotion or body language. Then they looked a bit scary. This made many of the children very insecure, and did not dare to tell everything about the difficult and painful things in court. Some children weren't able to say anything.

Children also became insecure when the judge did not stop hurtful questions from the defender. Some children got the feeling that they had already lost. Several say that they were unable to be in the room because it felt as if the judge took the other's side when painful questions or comments were not stopped by the judge right away.

If children are not safe enough in the courtroom, several say that not all important information about what has happened will be revealed. In the worst case, decisions are made on incomplete and incorrect grounds. This cannot be called legal safeguarding, neither for children nor adults.

QUOTES

It is legal safeguarding for us to speak directly, face to face, to the one who has to make decisions. The decision will have an impact in our everyday life and the life we have to live every single day. The judge has to say that they need our voice to make a good decision.

Even if the child has told most in a questioning, new information can come up. Then it is important that the judge does not push it away, because that means we try to open up more and tell more and it should not be pushed away. Don't take it as a lie because we add things to the story, examine it and ask and be interested instead.

When someone starts to tell, it is important that the judge shows that they understand and show that they want to hear how it was for us. We must not become uncertain about what we can and cannot say. The judge has to assure us that we can speak freely and not say anything "wrong". Many of us become afraid of saying something wrong.

The judges must not ask us to say our address out loud in the trial, because then the accused also hears the address. I kept walking around and was scared of the accused coming to where I lived. It really settles in the body, it becomes difficult to sleep and I don't even dare to have the window open. If the judges need to know where I live, they can ask later.

It is natural that children change explanations to different adults. Many times we have to adjust who we are explaining to. Then it's hard to stay confronted in court with the fact that the explanation on the video is different.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

The judge has to be clear but warm

In cases where children are present, the judge has to take responsibility for the atmosphere in the courtroom and so that it does not become unpleasant for the child. The judge has to say that mean looks or negative body language are not okay when someone is talking. The judge has to say that he or she understands it can be a difficult situation for the child to be in, and tries not to look strict so that it becomes easier for children to speak. According to children, good judges have to also make room for some laughter and smiles in the courtroom. It makes the room as safe as possible for the child. Many say they don't understand why the judge has to read their address aloud. They fear that someone they are afraid of, and who sits in the courtroom, gets to know where they live. It is best that this does not happen.

Children have to be allowed to speak directly to the judge

To ensure due process for children, children have to be allowed to speak directly with the person or persons who will make the decision. All children have to be invited to do this, and it is clearly explained that this is because the judge wishes and wants to hear from the child directly. The question of whether children want to talk to the judge alone, has to be asked in a private room, without parents or other adults present. Exceptions can be the support person, if this is someone the child has chosen themselves, and wish to be present.

When the judge and the child meet for the first time, the judge has to tell a little bit about themselves so that they first get to know each other a little. The judge does not tell their whole "life story", but only a little about what the judge likes to do. A main answer from children is that this is essential for it to be safe enough to tell the most important things. The judge has to do other "little things" so that it will be safe, for example tells about why he or she wants to meet the child and says that the child is important to the decision.

Many children ask the judge to listen to them with humility and curiosity, regardless of whether they repeat themselves or if they say something completely new. When the judge has to ask questions, the questions have to be asked in a warm, friendly and curious way, with simple words and with little technical emphasis.

Thoughts on appeals of trials

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Appeal prevents children from moving forward

Several of the children in the survey who have been through an appeal process experienced it as heavy, and as if their lives had been controlled by the legal system. It felt like sore wounds in their lives weren't allowed to heal. Some got angry, others got sad. For it to feel safer, they ask for more information and explanations as to why a trial is appealed. They also want to be part of the assessment of appeals and that their opinion has to be emphasised in the assessment.

QUOTES

From the beginning, the child has to get good enough information that the case may not finish. Just being told that the case can be appealed can do wonders, instead of walking around and then suddenly getting punched in the face.

When the case was appealed, I got angry. I wanted to be done with that chapter of my life.

When the case gets appealed, please tell the child about it, and why. Don't wait several months, give information on the day the case is appealed.

I should have known what appeal meant, what would happen, what would happen in the meantime, why it is taking the time it is taking and what I should do in the meantime. Should have known if the accused was followed up or not, and about a restraining order - what does that really mean? What happens if you meet the accused. Should have gotten better info about what a restraining order is, what is wise. Just seeing the interpreter from the case again on the train was scary.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Children have to receive good information about appeals

Children have to learn early on that both parties in a trial have the right to appeal, and children are explained that it is quite common for cases to be appealed. Children have to get information about what an appeal means, how long it is likely to take before the case is brought up again in

a new trial, what can happen in the meantime, and how the waiting time can be. Children have to get to know what happens to the accused during this waiting period, and receive good information about opportunities for restraining orders and other ways to be a little safer.

Children have to be listened to about appeals

Children have to be most important when deciding if the criminal case should be appealed. They can say what they think about appealing. If a case is appealed from the child's side, the child has to receive a thorough explanation that this does not necessarily mean that the case will end well. The belief that everything will be okay, but then it is not, can be like getting a punch in the face for children. When the case is appealed from the accused, the child has to get information about it right away and get a thorough explanation.

Media in the courtroom

SUMMARISED KNOWLEDGE

Children's lives are exposed and they are recognised in the media. A clear majority of the children in the survey who have experience from trials clearly state that it is very unsafe for the trial to have open doors and that the media is present. Children say that if they told about violence or abuse, they initially told one chosen person they felt safe with. They describe the feeling of losing all control over their lives by the fact that they have told, and that personal details are exposed in the trial. If the media covers the case, all of Norway will also know about it. In the media, what happened to them or other close family members or friends is described in detail. This can leave painful marks in their lives.

Many experienced being recognised, even if the media reports were anonymised. This did not only apply in small towns, but also in larger cities. Children say that being recognised in the media did not feel right and certain. Closed doors with no media present is most important to their legal certainty. Open doors in the courtroom can do great harm in children's lives. They ask for caution and less transparency when their lives are being discussed.

QUOTES

I didn't want others to hear what I was telling. There could be people whom I knew before that came, and who would listen while they roll their eyes. Scary to know that the media might come. I read about my case online, where things were wrong in my opinion. I don't understand how the media can comment on the matter when they listened so little, and without having spoken to me or the accused.

Although what has happened is not my fault, it is not like I want everyone to know about it.

It's personal, why should everyone know? It is often talked about the child's best interests, but is it the child's best interests that everything that is read out from their life, is for the media?

Adults are otherwise so strict about who the information about us is handed over to, why doesn't the same apply in a trial?

It doesn't just affect me, it also affects the person I really care about. You also have younger siblings who this also affects.

The media cannot enter the courtroom. If it is a small society, you will be able to easily recognise the content. It is not legally safeguarding for the child at all.

ADVICE FROM CHILDREN

Trials involving children up to the age of 18 have to be kept closed

Children say very clearly that trials have to be kept closed, no matter what. They are the ones who have to live with the decision. If children are to experience legal certainty, the media has to be kept away from the courtroom where some of the hardest things from their lives are to be decided. Therefore, the justice system has to show caution and over transparency when their lives are to be dealt with there.

The judge, child's legal counsel, prosecutor and defence lawyer have to be conscious to the fact that the media in trials can be directly harmful to children, and that the child's right to protection takes precedence over society's right to information. It has to be routine for the judge to propose a preliminary hearing together with the child, the child's legal counsel, defence counsel and prosecutor to clarify whether the trial should be closed. As a starting point, the judge should recommend that the trial is excluded from the media in cases involving children up to 18 years of age.

CHILDREN'S MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF RIGHTS

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Everyone who meets children must remember that the Convention on the Rights of the Child takes precedence in Norwegian law, including the Criminal Code and other Norwegian laws that guarantee legal security of children and adults. Adults in the legal system, such as police, prosecutors, Barnahus, lawyers and judges must work according to the best interests of the child as the overarching principle.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child gives guidance about how the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be understood. Although the comments from the Committee on the Rights of the Child are not legally binding, the comments are important guidelines for interpretation of the convention. The answers to what is important for children's legal certainty, seen from children, can be done with clear support of several of the articles in The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the comments from the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Some important articles concerning children's legal certainty in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Art. 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration

Art. 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law

Art. 16

1. No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.

2. The child has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks

Art. 19

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child

Important comments from the UN Children's Committee

General comment no. 12. The right of the child to be heard

28. The views of the child must be "given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". This clause refers to the capacity of the child, which has to be assessed in order to give due weight to her or his views, or to communicate to the child the way in which those views have influenced the outcome of the process. Article 12 stipulates that simply listening to the child is insufficient; the views of the child have to be seriously considered when the child is capable of forming her or his own views.

34. A child cannot be heard effectively where the environment is intimidating, hostile, insensitive or inappropriate for her or his age. Proceedings must be both accessible and child-appropriate. Particular attention needs to be paid to the provision and delivery of child-friendly information, adequate support for self-advocacy, appropriately trained staff, design of court rooms, clothing of judges and lawyers, sight screens, and separate waiting rooms.

General comment no. 14. The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration

37. The expression "primary consideration" means that the child's best interests may not be considered on the same level as all other considerations. This strong position is justified by the special situation of the child: dependency, maturity, legal status and, often, voicelessness. Children have less possibility than adults to make a strong case for their own interests and those involved in decisions affecting them must be explicitly aware of their interests. If the interests of children are not highlighted, they tend to be overlooked.

40. Implementation of the two paragraphs of article 12 requires five steps to be taken in order to effectively realize the right of the child to be heard whenever a matter affects a child or when the child is invited to give her or his views in a formal proceeding as well as in other settings. These requirements have to be applied in a way which is appropriate for the given context.

General comment no. 8. The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment

40. (...) all reports of violence against children should be appropriately investigated and their protection from significant harm assured, the aim should be to stop parents from using violent or other cruel or degrading punishments through supportive and educational, not punitive, interventions.

41. Children's dependent status and the unique intimacy of family relations demand that decisions to prosecute parents, or to formally intervene in the family in other ways, should be taken with very great care. Prosecuting parents is in most cases unlikely to be in their children's best interests. It is the Committee's view that prosecution and other formal interventions (for example, to remove the child or remove the perpetrator) should only proceed when they are regarded both as necessary to protect the child from significant harm and as being in the best interests of the affected child. The affected child's views should be given due weight, according to his or her age and maturity.

RIGHT AND CERTAIN

from young people subjected to domestic violence or abuse about police reports, questionings in Barnahus and trials