

# Child perspective on being summoned to, visiting and exiting Barnahus

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## **Aim**

This study forms an essential part in informing effective prevention and interventions with children exposed to or at risk of domestic violence and sexual abuse, focusing on children becoming summoned, visiting and exiting Barnahus with a child perspective.

## **Background**

In Sweden when custodians are under suspicion, the child becomes summoned to Barnahus without the custodians' knowledge or consent. In purpose to provide safety for the child, a well-known person (e.g teacher or schoolnurse), becomes a so called safety person accompanying the child. The commission of the child's welfare worker is to offer and provide early interventions securing the best interest of the child.

## **Methods**

We have interviewed children, parents, safety persons and welfare case workers, and observed at a Barnahus. This research was conducted in collaboration with the involved Barnahus including a consultative panel given and giving regular feedback contributing to further orientation.

## **Findings**

The children were scarcely informed when summoned to Barnahus, not given information about what was going on or why. In the transitions between place and time, the expectations on the child, the accompanying safety person as well as their relation varied. For example, in the upcoming police interview children were expected to perform, act and take responsibility.

When a child was assessed not in need of immediate protection, the child returned to preschool or school with the safety person. Both returns to their ordinary roles. Not having a dialogue with their child welfare worker, the children were risking exiting Barnahus without enough information nor having continuing support secured.

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

Children have legal rights to become addressed as acting subjects and involved in concerns of their own. In providing safety for the children, safety persons need information about their role and the Barnahus concept.