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Exploring Justice Tensions in the Barnahus Model

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Introduction

Justice is a prominent concept in Barnahus. One common reason for children and families to visit Barnahus is because the child has experienced abuse or violence, and one of the aims of Barnahus is to help children and their families through the justice and recovery process. The hope is that through the services and procedures within Barnahus, the children and their families will have enhanced access to safety, justice, and recovery and that their distress will be minimised. Inherent to this

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approach is the concept of justice. There is no one way to view justice, given the multiple people and perspectives involved. Importantly, justice is not limited to a question about a conviction for the person who has committed the abuse. Rather, justice could be a matter of the child and the family feeling they are better placed to move forward with their lives after the justice and recovery process in Barnahus than they did before Barnahus. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss some of the different facets of justice from multiple viewpoints, nested in ecological systems theory, to identify possible tensions and the potential for Barnahus to address such issues.

Barnahus is underpinned by children's rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including, but not limited to, the best interests of the child, the right to participation, and the right to recovery (UNCRC, 1989). Barnahus aims to include children and their family members in the process of justice and recovery and to reduce any difficulties in accessing the justice system as well as welfare and recovery services. Turning to the concept of justice, Barnahus has several embedded tensions between differing systems (e.g. justice and welfare) that carry competing mandates and formalised structures that may seem to be working against each other and hindering the flow of collaboration between the four "rooms" of Barnahus: child protection, criminal justice, physical well-being, and mental well-being (Johansson, 2017). Some evidence shows that the foundation of child rights and the design of Barnahus (including the co-location of services and multi-disciplinary working) have advanced and improved children's and families' experiences of justice, safety, and recovery after abuse has occurred, but the aforementioned unresolved tensions may limit the progress that the Barnahus model can make in this regard (Johansson, 2017). In this chapter, we discuss the perspectives of the different stakeholders involved with Barnahus, and we outline the justice-related tensions that can arise between the different systems in Barnahus and in the child's own experiences of justice, safety, and recovery as an early starting point to work toward resolutions to these tensions.

Our discussion of Barnahus in this chapter refers to the Barnahus model as outlined by the European PROMISE network—that is, as a

co-located, one-door approach that coordinates the investigative, therapeutic, forensic/medical, and child welfare and protection responses after a child has disclosed or experienced abuse. Our discussion of justice-related tensions is a broad reflection of tensions that can be experienced within Barnahus, which may be displayed differently in different country legislative contexts. Specific national contexts may either exacerbate or reduce some of the tensions we discuss.

Portions of the analysis presented in this chapter stem from learning that has been acquired through members of the authorship team's research and analysis (Lavoie et al., 2021a, b; Mitchell et al., 2023) on the current justice and recovery models for children in the United Kingdom (particularly Scotland and Northern Ireland), as well as the early considerations for system change through the introduction of a Barnahus model. The justice system in the United Kingdom is sometimes referred to as an adversarial system (Rab, 2022), in which the onus is on the prosecution to prove the guilt of the defendant. This system may affect (though not necessarily so) the implementation of the procedural justice aspect of Barnahus, though that has yet to be formally established. In our chapter, we discuss different perspectives of justice using the theoretical frameworks of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1967), and McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018) construct of "kaleidoscopic justice"; we also reference the findings from our own research analysis throughout.

Theoretical Analysis of Justice for Children Through Barnahus

To begin to consider the multi-faceted aspect of justice, we must first identify the key stakeholders whose perspectives must be considered. We first situate key stakeholders within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2005) to highlight the number of stakeholders and the diversity of their needs, which is one challenge of delivering such a complex service. We then turn to systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1967) to provide a framework for understanding how tensions are held between systems.

Ecological Systems Theory

Children at the Core Level. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) provides a helpful framework to locate and understand some of the tensions, from the perspective of a child, on the journey of justice and recovery through Barnahus. At the core of this theoretical framework, the micro-level, are individuals and their specific characteristics. For children using Barnahus, one element that is nested in this core level is child development. Children accessing Barnahus have specific cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs related to their developmental maturation. For example, children are still developing their self-regulation (Blair, 2010; Posner & Rothbart, 2000), their ability to see and hold multiple perspectives (Dumontheil et al., 2010), and their reasoning and decision-making (Reyna et al., 2012). These cognitive skills influence their communication ability, which is particularly relevant when they are recalling narratives and specifically their experience of abuse, not to negate the importance of the skill of the investigative interviewing team.

To add to the understanding of the child's cognitive development, we must also consider children's experience of trauma, which has further implications for their thinking and language abilities (Glaser, 2014) as well as their capacity to manage potentially threatening and stressful situations, such as being interviewed by police and social workers or being questioned by legal personnel (Glaser, 2014; Teicher et al., 2002).

Parents and the Micro-system. Moving immediately outward from the individual level, we next reach the micro-system, which includes the people who interact directly with the child, specifically parents and caregivers, teachers, coaches, and others who have had contact with the child. In terms of Barnahus, children's non-offending parents or caregivers are situated within this level, and they have their own particular set of inter-related needs and desires from the justice and recovery journey, which will in turn affect the children. Parents and caregivers/guardians are often both vital supporters (and legal guardians) of their children and can even be secondary victims or witnesses to their children's experience of abuse. The needs of parents who access justice and recovery services with their child include being informed of the process to be able to support their

child, receiving recovery services themselves, and feeling assured in their ability to care for their child once the justice and recovery journey at Barnahus is complete (Elliot & Carnes, 2001).

Parents' needs also influence their children's own experiences at Barnahus. For example, non-offending parents often desire to be able to support their children through each of the steps required (Elliott & Carnes, 2001), but at the same time, they express their own need for support as they mentally and emotionally process, for example, their own pain (or shock or disappointment) that their child has experienced abuse. The way that parents express their own emotions affects their children. Children whose parents believe their statements when they tell them they have been abused are more likely to proceed with the justice and recovery journey, whereas disbelief or lack of support from the parent is typically associated with higher rates of children recanting their testimony, for instance saying it did not really happen or that they made it up (Malloy et al., 2007, 2016).

Barnahus Professionals and the Meso-system. Progressing outward from the micro-system is the meso-system, which consists of the interactions between individuals in the micro-systems (e.g. parents and teachers or parents and social workers). For Barnahus, such relationships can include those with officers of the criminal justice system, medical and social work professionals within the health and social care sector, and professionals working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The relationships between such professionals and the child are important because they can create a sense of safety and trust for the child and facilitate information sharing and assessment procedures, as well as help to manage expectations and ensure that children's needs and desires inform decision-making processes.

Professionals within Barnahus have differing roles and responsibilities. For example, several roles should be considered within the criminal justice sector: law enforcement and, if a criminal case is proceeding, the prosecution and defence. From the viewpoint of law enforcement (police), public safety is paramount, and their mandate includes enforcing laws so that any individual who has violated a law will be held to account for the greater good of society. The prosecution must ensure that satisfactory evidence exists to meet the threshold standards for a

conviction, and that any conviction will be in the public's best interest. The defence considers the needs of their defendants and ensures that their interests and rights are upheld throughout the court process, which is also in the public's interest.

In terms of health and social care and child protection, professionals working in these domains support the needs of the child and family to ensure that the child is safe, their best interests are served, and that the child and non-abusing family or caregivers are supported in their recovery journey. The emphasis is on the safety and welfare of the family.

Society and the Exosystem. Continuing outward is the exosystem, which primarily exerts influence on children indirectly by affecting their micro-system. For children who are involved with Barnahus, this system can include their parents' workplace (and resulting ability to take time off to accompany the child), the neighbourhood (and whether they have wider support or face stigma), and the media (for example, whether any case information becomes publicised). The exosystem can also include the other systems that affect the child in Barnahus, for example, the justice system and the education, recovery, and health systems, all of which affect how children experience justice and recovery.

Culture and the Macrosystem. Further outward from the exosystem is the macrosystem, which consists of cultural elements such as how socioeconomic status, ethnicity, disability, and gender influence a child's experiences. Although Barnahus has its own culture of inclusion (Haldorsson, 2019), children continue to be affected by how the culture around them treats them based on the characteristics listed above, which informs whether abuse is recognised and whose needs come to the attention of services.

The Chronosystem. Finally, at the outermost level is the chronosystem, which relates to time and how the passing of time influences children's development, as well as how major life events and milestones influence the child. The chronosystem is highly relevant for children who are being seen at a Barnahus, as the judicial process, historically, has been very long—greater than a year in the United Kingdom (Gillen, 2019)—and children mature considerably within that time.

Systems Theory

Regarding the question of what justice looks like, we have opted to use systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1967) as a framework for holding the tensions between the different stakeholders in Barnahus. According to systems theory, it is not possible to understand an issue by examining one element of the issue alone. Rather, each of the elements, or systems, influences and affects the others. When applied to justice within Barnahus, systems theory allows us to hold each of the stakeholder viewpoints in tension, and to recognise that the question of justice is greater than the sum of each of the stakeholder viewpoints. For example, one of the systems is the formal criminal justice system, which differs by jurisdiction. The formal criminal justice system has a defined perspective of justice: specifically, the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence on behalf of the defendant until proved otherwise, the right to face one's accusers in court, and the right to legal counsel or representation, among others (Council of Europe, 1970; Human Rights Act, 1998). (Notably, the right to face one's accusers in court is not applied in Nordic Barnahus models.) Thus, justice has both a process and a defined outcome and endpoint in the criminal justice system.

At the same time, justice can have different perspectives and meanings for the child, family, and greater society. Justice for children can mean being part of the process, being heard, and being able to move on with their lives while feeling they have the support they need to do so (Hayes & Bunting, 2013; Hill et al., 2022; Lavoie et al., 2021a; Warrington et al., 2017). This multi-faceted aspect of justice can be likened to McGlynn and Westmarland's (2018) construct of kaleidoscopic justice, in which justice is a dynamic concept that can shift and change with time and new experiences or understandings. In this way, justice cannot be fully understood from only one stakeholder perspective, and the differing viewpoints must be held in tension to navigate the process and outcomes in a way that will benefit the various parties involved. And that is perhaps what creates the complexities and tensions among the needs of the individuals and service providers within Barnahus.

With these theoretical perspectives outlined, we turn next to discuss three of the prominent tensions that can arise within Barnahus, the first two of which are situated at the systems level, and the third at the child level.

Analysis of Justice-related Tensions

Systems Level: Tensions Between Victim and Defendant Needs

Barnahus has a key role in supporting children to recover and thrive following an experience of abuse or maltreatment. One substantial tension in Barnahus is that at various stages and within different processes, children are both victims of abuse and witnesses of abuse; in the case of sexual abuse in particular, children's testimonies are typically considered one of the most important pieces of evidence (Lyon et al., 2012) and hold great weight in court proceedings (Myers et al., 1999), especially in an adversarial court system such as the UK's. For this reason, courts may seek to assess, firsthand, children's credibility, for example, through hearing the child's testimony firsthand in court (Lavoie et al., 2021a). This debate has played out clearly through implementations of the Barnahus model in traditionally adversarial systems, given that the Icelandic model and the Nordic model, as well as the PROMISE network guidelines (Haldorsson, 2019), support a child *not* having to give testimony in court, whether live (in person) or through a closed-circuit television route. This tension is particularly important for children and families because when they feel as though their own needs are not being met through their involvement in the criminal justice system, they may halt their engagement entirely and withdraw from the formal element of justice procedures (Lavoie et al., 2021a). When this occurs, justice, from any perspective, is halted, and there is little benefit to either the professional legal services or the child and family, or greater society.

At the same time, the right to a fair trial is part of the fabric of society (Council of Europe, 1970; Human Rights Act, 1998). No one who is

accused of wrongdoing wishes to be treated unfairly or to have inaccurate accusations levelled against them. The purpose of the court proceedings is to establish beyond reasonable doubt (not just on the balance of probabilities) whether a person accused of a crime has indeed committed that crime. The intent is to uphold the rights of the defendant and the rights of the victim through due process. The nature of the system may therefore tend to skew the perception of fairness of court proceedings against the child (victim), who may feel that the wrongness of their experience is not being acknowledged by the authorities (Stefansen et al., 2017). In fact, the formality of the proceedings contrasts with the warmth and validation from recovery services, which can be confusing for the child because it can convey a lack of belief and questioning of the child's credibility. At the same time, supporting children through the welfare element of recovery can help to support them through the justice process, which may result in a better experience overall.

One important factor to note in analysing this tension is that the individual who has made the allegation of wrongdoing equally desires a fair trial in which their perspective will be heard. To disclose abuse, regardless of age, requires a great amount of courage. For a child or young person, there can be a power imbalance between an adult who has committed wrongdoing against a child and a child who discloses this wrongdoing. This power imbalance, in combination with the impartiality of the court proceedings, can lead to a sense that the child's (victim's) perspective is of less importance than the defendant's perspective. Barnahus, in some respects, aims to provide the child with all the necessary "tools" (e.g. support services and flexibility) to level the power imbalance between the child (victim) and adult (defendant) so that the justice process feels, and becomes, fairer.

As minors affected by abuse and maltreatment according to the UNCRC (1989), and to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the Lanzarote Convention (Council of Europe, 2014), children have rights to protection, participation, and provision and can expect their welfare to be the paramount concern. As child witnesses, children's primary role in the various legal processes is to provide evidence to establish the guilt or otherwise of the person alleged to have caused

them harm. At the same time, many cases of abuse concern an allegation against a family member or someone close to the child. Subsequently, children may be particularly reticent to disclose any information because of the anticipated consequences, such as those threatened by the perpetrator as a means of maintaining the child's silence, and separation from or creating a rift within the family (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). Children have often reported that as witnesses, the court process may be even more traumatising than the initial injustice they have experienced (Warrington et al., 2017; Streich & Spreadbury, 2017).

Regarding children's rights as victims, victims' rights codes in the United Kingdom and the European Union largely overlap with child rights as outlined in the UNCRC (1989): for example, the right to be heard, the right to access information about the case and their involvement (both aligned to participation rights), the right to protection (EU, UNCRC), and the right to access victim recovery services. Given that Barnahus is predicated on children's rights, victims' rights codes are largely upheld through the model, and in fact, the Council of Europe recommends the Barnahus model as an appropriate recourse to justice and recovery for children who have experienced violence and abuse (2018). But for Barnahus models that are less aligned to court proceedings (for example, the child may still need to appear in court or via a live link), external justice processes should work to uphold children's and victims' rights to the same degree as the Barnahus model, in particular by recognising and responding to the particular needs of the children involved and ensuring that processes are responsive and the trauma informed. Victims' rights should be upheld throughout the justice process and proceedings.

Barnahus also aims to extend beyond victims' codes in simplifying and shortening the criminal justice proceedings for children, so that children can avoid being "stuck" in justice proceedings that will require them to live and re-live their experiences by actively bringing them to mind for recall purposes to officers of the court. Under Barnahus, children should ideally be able to speak about their experiences with trained forensic interviewers and to have such conversations video recorded, and for such material to serve as "evidence-in-chief" for any court proceedings (Haldorsson, 2019), as is the case in the Nordic model (Myklebust,

2017). This situation means that the child's video-recorded forensic interview will be used as evidence in court, and the child is not generally required to appear in court to testify in person.

One challenge that has arisen in stakeholder discussions (as outlined in Lavoie et al., 2021a) is the question of how new disclosures or evidence that come to light after the child's testimony has been recorded should be treated within the criminal justice system if the court proceedings have not closed. At the root of this question is the concern for a fair trial for the defendant, but the nature of the question highlights the tensions that are continually being navigated between the defendant's rights and a victim's rights in procedural discussions. In Norway, legal regulations in the criminal procedure outline that if a child discloses new evidence, the police will conduct a supplementary child forensic interview, which is a possible solution for other jurisdictions as well.

Systems Level: Tensions Between Justice and Welfare

Another system-level tension is that between justice and welfare. "Justice" in this case refers to the services and procedures related to the criminal investigation (e.g. the forensic interview, any court proceedings, and forensic medical examinations), whereas "welfare" refers to the recovery support and services (e.g. victim support services, medical examination when not for forensic purposes, child protection assessment, mental health assessment and services, and therapeutic services). The two systems have competing mandates—a fair trial for justice, and therapeutic support, safety, and well-being for welfare—which influence the tensions between these two systems (Johansson, 2017). Within Barnahus, both systems are important for the child and for the family, and the aim is a co-located structure where both can operate collaboratively to support the child.

At the same time, each system has its own internal structure, which includes procedural structures and a particular way of thinking. Such structures might include case management, data gathering, and information sharing. In addition, each of the multiple disciplines involved

has a particular way of thinking—that is, they have accepted viewpoints and values, or “external regimes of governance” (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). For example, in the case of Barnahus, the best interests of the child can represent safety and recovery or can represent formal acknowledgement of wrongdoing from the defendant through the court system.

These different viewpoints require effort on behalf of all staff to navigate meaning and power dynamics, both seen and unseen (Johansson, 2017), all of which can affect the child’s experience within Barnahus. As Johansson (2017) explains, there can be a tendency for all systems within Barnahus to be skewed towards the justice system in a process called “juridification”, given the nature of collaboration and co-location within Barnahus. Further, the formality of the justice proceedings and the rigidity of the internal systemic structure convey a high level of decision-making power, which can influence the decision-making of professionals in child protection and recovery (Johansson, 2017). In discussions with professional stakeholders in Northern Ireland about the challenges and opportunities of a Barnahus model, one key theme that arose was to keep in mind the needs of children and families and to involve them in the process of developing the specifics of a Barnahus model (Lavoie et al., 2021a). Such an approach could help to reduce some of the systemic challenges involved by bringing the focal point to children’s and families’ needs.

Navigating power dynamics is also possible through open communication and learning about the functioning (e.g. the professional practices as well as regulated mandates that incorporate structural and regulatory issues) of each of the disciplinary teams to support a greater understanding and empathy of the background processes and ways of thinking (Herbert & Bromfield, 2019). Other methods for effective team working include establishing clear goals and having a shared team identity, as well as having clear roles and responsibilities (Reeves et al., 2010). Of particular importance for inter-professional working is inter-professional education, reflection of daily practices, and evaluation to ensure that joint goals are being met (Broukhim et al., 2019).

Child Level: Tensions Between Child Protection and Participation

Children are the primary service users of Barnahus and are those who have experienced the greatest injustice in the form of abuse and violence. We have some knowledge about what children's needs are through the justice and recovery process. For example, children seek to be heard (Hayes & Bunting, 2013), to be included and participate in the process (Hill et al., 2022), and to have their experiences acknowledged in some way (Lavoie et al., 2021a).

Among the tensions that can arise with children's involvement in Barnahus is the tension that exists between children's protection and their participation rights. Although seemingly peripheral to justice tensions, children's experiences with the justice and recovery process can contribute to whether they feel that they have experienced justice, however that looks to them. Their experiences also contribute to whether they will continue with any criminal justice proceedings or withdraw entirely (Lavoie et al., 2021a). Their participation is key to this feeling. Thus, navigating a balance between the two is important.

With Barnahus being premised on children's rights through the UNCRC and the Lanzarote Convention, participation is a key element that is built into the Barnahus model. That is, Barnahus creates space for children to express their views (and be heard) through the justice and recovery processes, to the extent that they would like to be involved. Participation rights also include the child having access to meaningful information and being aware of what they can expect throughout the process, including the timing. At the same time, participation in any one process should never be construed as obligatory; children are invited to participate in the Barnahus processes as much as they are interested and able, given their age and maturity. At the same time, some jurisdictions will have legal regulations regarding participation in the penal track (including any potential court proceedings) that will work against this normative principle. With these elements of participation in mind, a tension can sometimes arise between children's participation and child protection.

The child protection element of Barnahus is concerned with ensuring that children are in a safe environment, free from abuse and violence, and that any abuse or violence that has occurred will not recur in the future. This element can, at times, mean that decisions are made without giving due weight to children's views, which is one of the practical challenges involved in upholding participation and protection rights simultaneously. This situation highlights, in a sense, a perceived tension between participation and protection that often influences practice and results in professionals prioritising protection. It is possible for the two to exist harmoniously together, however, such that children have space to speak their views, are heard by the professionals supporting them, and that they are provided with up-to-date information through the child protection process.

Recognising the tension is helpful for being aware of the inherent power dynamics in participation and protection, and professionals in Barnahus are consequently able to be cognizant of how these dynamics play out in practice. Recognition of the inter-dependencies between children's rights to protection and participation should also support the recognition that children's involvement in the process, according to their increasing capacity, is also likely to strengthen protection because it will help to enable informed decisions and children's engagement with the process (Mitchell et al., 2023).

Discussion: Advancing Child-friendly Justice

We have now outlined our analysis of the theoretical frameworks for situating three justice-related tensions. Together, these frameworks can help to situate different perspectives of justice: victim needs versus defendant needs, justice versus welfare, and participation versus protection. With these in mind, a helpful way to move forward is to consider perspectives from the broader body of knowledge of multi-disciplinary working and child participation that can help us to situate how a Barnahus model could support moving towards a conceptualisation of justice that supports the multiple perspectives we have outlined in this chapter.

The first learning point that emerged from our analysis was what is intended by child-friendly justice, and what does it look like in the Barnahus system? This was a key theme to emerge in our research with professional stakeholders in the UK—to determine whose needs for justice were being met in the current system and to be mindful of the different perspectives of justice moving forward (Lavoie et al., 2021a). That is, the intention of the Barnahus is that justice procedures and recovery services should be easily accessible and navigable for children and their families, but part of the adaptations to the justice procedures in making them more purportedly child-friendly can also put children's statements at a disadvantage relative to other pieces of evidence that may be presented in courts. For example, in many European Barnahus, an accepted practice is for the courts to see the child, and hear the child's testimony, at Barnahus, and not at a formal court building. When this occurs, however, the child's statement is given lower evidentiary value. Although not subjecting the child to formal court processes, either by necessity or design, does seem more child-friendly, the fact that the child's statement has lower evidential value enhances the power imbalance between the victim and the defendant. As a result, a relevant future direction that has arisen is to explore how proposed or real (depending on the jurisdiction and accompanying legislation) changes to the justice procedures within Barnahus may contribute to child-friendly justice or perhaps, in some ways, detract from them. If the latter, we must also consider ways to mitigate any detraction from child-friendly justice through the Barnahus model.

Related to this point, in moving forward, it will be important to have a clearer sense of what justice looks like within the family after abuse has occurred. Previous interventions have explored the possibility of restorative justice approaches (Julich, 2006; McGlynn et al., 2012), but perhaps one area of learning to be highlighted first before establishing interventions should be to understand, from a child's and family's perspective, what justice looks like to them, in terms of an outcome or a process toward an outcome. Professional stakeholders in Northern Ireland have indirectly highlighted this element, through ensuring the involvement and co-production of children and families in the development of the

specifics of a Barnahus model (Lavoie et al., 2021a). By coming alongside children and their families to assist them through the justice and recovery process through Barnahus, we may be more likely to disrupt a cycle of violence and victimisation so that children and their families can truly thrive post-abuse. This understanding would also contribute to refining the support provided to children and their families throughout the justice and recovery process via Barnahus. Given the implications for recovery, this should be a priority area moving forward.

Another element highlighted in our analyses is the power dynamics and power imbalance inherent within the justice tensions in Barnahus (Johansson, 2017), and the need to be aware of whose needs for justice are being met through the current systems (Lavoie et al., 2021a). The power imbalance stems from the hierarchy of power within each of the tensions; we have noticed that the more formalised the structure, the higher the perceived power. The tendency towards a hierarchy of power within each of the tensions is not inherently problematic, but it is important that these elements be acknowledged and addressed explicitly as much as possible so that power dynamics can be discussed to achieve a greater balance across systems and perspectives. The multi-disciplinary team members of the Barnahus must also come to a shared understanding of their goals and values, as well as each other's different but inter-dependent roles and responsibilities in achieving those goals (Reeves et al., 2010). Undertaking joint training, reflection, and evaluation of the services would also support such inter-professional working (Broukhim et al., 2019). In this way, the Barnahus model could provide a space (both physical and in terms of human resources) where the different needs and perspectives for justice may be navigated through careful attention to inherent power dynamics and through open communication of the needs of each of the parties involved, whether they are the child and family or professionals working in child justice and recovery.

Finally, we must also highlight that there are ways to navigate justice tensions. Formal mediation is one approach that can help to balance out imbalances in power dynamics and can give each side the chance to contribute to discussions and to be heard (Ashford & Faith, 2004; Hart, 2009). In Barnahus, this balance is possible to achieve through the central coordination system, when that system is not directly housed by

one of the four systems involved. Mediation also helps to ensure that each side has recourse when difficulties arise so that power imbalances can be negotiated through discussion.

Even though we have discussed the benefits of mediation in navigating power imbalances, we should note that Barnahus has no formal element of mediation, and we highlight mediation rather because it can provide learning points for moving forward in addressing tensions within children's justice experiences within Barnahus. In other words, the Barnahus model may support the implementation of formal, or informal, ways to navigate justice tensions so that each perspective is held in balance throughout the procedural elements of the criminal justice process. Assessing the benefits of mediation, as well as other approaches to navigating justice tensions, is one key area for future research and knowledge production.

Conclusion

In sum, the goal of children's experiences in Barnahus is that they will feel that a sense of justice has been achieved and that they will be well established on a recovery journey with their families. Throughout this journey are a child's perspective of justice, a multi-disciplinary perspective, and a system perspective. Tensions can arise between these differing viewpoints, including those between a victim's needs and a defendant's needs, the justice versus welfare approach, and child participation versus child protection. Awareness of these tensions and how they play out in a practical way can help to inform discussions moving forward about how to navigate such tensions as they arise, while always keeping the child at the centre.

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