

Health In Bairns Hoose



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Why Health Must Be at the Heart of Bairns' Hoose

When we talk about the Bairns' Hoose model, most people immediately think about justice, social work, protecting children, and creating a child-friendly environment. All of that is true — but health is not simply a supporting partner in Bairns' Hoose.

Health is central.

Health is foundational.

Health is non-negotiable.



Why Health Matters

Children who come through a Bairns' Hoose have often experienced abuse, trauma, violence, neglect, or exploitation. Whether they are victims or witnesses, many arrive carrying emotional wounds *and* physical ones that may not have been identified or treated.

A trauma-informed response isn't only about emotional safety. It's also about **meeting health needs quickly, compassionately, and holistically**, in a way that prevents children from being retraumatised.

The Standards Rely on Health

Out of the national Bairns' Hoose Standards, at least **22 sub-standards are heavily dependent on health services to deliver** — from medical examinations, mental health assessment, therapy and recovery support, information sharing, and onward referrals.

Without health, the model simply cannot function as intended.

It Takes More Than One Type of 'Health'

The health contribution isn't just a single role — it's a whole ecosystem. Just some of the disciplines involved may include:

- ✓ Paediatrics
- ✓ Sexual health clinicians
- ✓ Forensic medical examiners
- ✓ Nurses
- ✓ Health visitors
- ✓ CAMHS and mental health services
- ✓ Speech and language therapy
- ✓ Occupational therapy
- ✓ Psychology
- ✓ GPs
- ✓ Physiotherapy
- ✓ Substance misuse specialists
- ✓ Public health teams

And that list still doesn't capture the full picture.

Bairns' Hoose requires **multi-disciplinary health involvement**, each area bringing different expertise to assess, treat, support, reassure, record, and advocate for the child's wellbeing.

The Reality: Health Capacity Is One of the Biggest Challenges

Every country that has implemented Barnahus, including Scotland, faces the same difficulty -

Health capacity is stretched.

Health services are already under pressure. Adding a new model that requires quick access to clinicians, space for examinations, trauma-skilled staff, and specialised equipment is difficult.

Some of the real-world challenges include:

- Finding paediatricians and forensic clinicians able to attend quickly
- Keeping health staff trained in child-centred, trauma-informed approaches
- Providing on-site medical spaces that meet forensic and care standards
- Ensuring rapid mental health assessment and access to therapy
- Recruiting and retaining specialist staff
- Managing rural or geographically dispersed areas



The standard is clear, children should not be travelling long distances, waiting weeks for care, or having to explain traumatic details multiple times. But delivering that consistently takes resources, planning, and strong leadership.

Health Cannot Do it Alone: The Third Sector Is Essential

Another overlooked reality is that recovery doesn't only happen in clinical settings.

Third sector organisations fill the gaps no statutory service can fill:

- Specialist trauma counselling
- Advocacy
- Family support
- Play and creative therapies
- Sexual health education and recovery work
- Long-term therapeutic friendships
- Peer and community support

For many children, their longest and safest recovery relationship will be with a third sector practitioner, not a statutory one. The partnership between health services and the third sector is a critical part of ensuring:

- Continuity of care
- Safe onward referrals
- Wrap-around family support
- Help that lasts beyond the immediate crisis

Bairns' Hoose works only when NHS, social work, police, justice, education and the third sector are aligned. And health is a key bridge between them.

Putting Children First

When health works well inside the Bairns' Hoose model, children experience:

- ✓ One journey, not multiple appointments
- ✓ One safe environment
- ✓ Care that sees the 'whole child' – physical, emotional and psychological
- ✓ Trauma-informed clinicians who explain everything clearly
- ✓ A faster path to recovery

It means fewer “telling's”, less fear, better evidence, earlier intervention, and much better outcomes.



The Bottom Line

Without health, there is no Barnahus.

There may be a building.

There may be social work.

There may be police.

But there won't be a Bairns' Hoose.

Health professionals — in all their specialisms — are vital to protecting children, supporting families, and making recovery possible.

Scotland's success will depend on prioritising health, resourcing it properly, and recognising the critical role that both statutory and third-sector health providers play in children's lives.

Health isn't a “partner” in Bairns' Hoose.

At **Trauma Informed Change Consultancy Services (TICCS)**, we work alongside local authorities, education leaders, and multi-agency partners to make this vision a reality.

From **strategic planning and trauma-informed workforce development** to **data-driven implementation support**, TICCS helps partnerships embed education at the very heart of their Bairns' Hoose journey.

If your partnership is ready to:

- Strengthen links between schools and the Bairns' Hoose model
- Build confidence in trauma-informed teaching and leadership
- Develop integrated pathways that keep children safe, supported, and learning

Then NOW is the time to act.

About the Author

Helen Pasquale is the founder of **Trauma Informed Change Consultancy Services (TICCS Ltd)**. Following a 30-year career with **Police Scotland**, Helen now supports multi-agency partnerships across Scotland to design and deliver **trauma-informed systems change** — including **Bairns' Hoose development**, **UNCRC alignment**, and **multi-agency collaboration**.

If your local authority is planning its own Bairns' Hoose model, TICCS can help you apply these lessons with a trauma-informed, data-driven approach.

Learn more about our implementation support by booking a call.

✉ **Contact:** helen@ticcsLtd.co.uk

🌐 **Website:** www.trauma-informed-change.co.uk

🔗 **Follow on LinkedIn:** [Helen Pasquale Retired Det Insp | LinkedIn](#)



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