



10 Key Reasons Why Education Must Be at the Heart of Bairns' Hoose

Children who come through a Bairns' Hoose have experienced trauma, abuse, or violence. While health, justice, and social work professionals are central to the Barnahus model, schools and educators play an equally vital role. They are uniquely positioned to help children rebuild trust, maintain normalcy, and thrive academically and they must be part of the solution.

What Is Bairns' Hoose?

Bairns' Hoose is Scotland's adaptation of the European **Barnahus model**, which is a transformational, whole-system approach that brings child protection, health, recovery, and justice services together under one roof.

Its vision: that **every child who has been a victim or witness of abuse or violence can access trauma-informed recovery, support, and justice** in a single, child-centred setting.

The model's values are **child-centred, trauma-informed, rights-based, and holistic** and mirror Scotland's **Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)** framework, ensuring that children receive the right help at the right time, without re-traumatisation.

A Multi-Agency Model: Where Education Fits In

One of the **Bairns' Hoose National Standards** highlights collaborative leadership and governance, calling on all professionals responsible for protecting children to work together to uphold their rights.

While health, justice, and social work are explicitly named, **education must stand alongside them**. Teachers, guidance staff, and school-based psychologists are often the first to notice changes like behavioural shifts, social withdrawal, or academic decline.

Embedding education within the Bairns' Hoose partnership ensures **early identification, sustained recovery, and successful reintegration** into learning and community life.



Why This Is Especially Important in Rural Areas

In rural areas of Scotland, schools often serve as a **lifeline for children affected by trauma**, precisely because alternative support systems are thin or non-existent. Third-sector organisations and specialist mental health services are frequently under-resourced or absent in remote localities, limiting access to counselling, advocacy, and trauma recovery.

Research by *Children in Scotland* (2023) highlights that many rural partnerships report limited capacity or diversity of third-sector involvement in children's services planning.

Meanwhile, children in rural health board areas face **longer waiting times for mental health assessments and interventions**, with some areas, such as Highland and Dumfries & Galloway experiencing extensive waiting times for CAMHS support.

In this context, rural schools become **trusted local anchors**: familiar, accessible, and deeply embedded within their communities. They provide daily contact, early visibility of distress, and opportunities for intervention that other services cannot match.

Schools also help overcome rural barriers such as **distance, transport challenges, and unreliable digital connectivity**, reducing the need for children to travel long distances to access specialist help.

Beyond this, strong rural schooling contributes to **community resilience and sustainability** helping to retain families, reduce isolation, and sustain the very fabric of rural life.

10 Key Reasons Why Education Must Be Involved

1. Continuity of Learning and Routine

Trauma disrupts everything familiar. Keeping education linked to the Bairns' Hoose allows children to maintain daily routines such as class timetables, school friendships, and learning milestones which create an essential anchor in uncertain times.

2. Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

Educators trained in trauma-sensitive approaches can recognise triggers, understand behaviours as communication, and adjust their methods to reduce stress and avoid re-traumatisation.



3. Early Identification and Referral

Schools are often the first to spot signs of harm. When clear referral pathways to Bairns' Hoose exist, concerns about attendance, mood, or unexplained injuries can be escalated quickly for coordinated, multi-agency support.

4. Safe and Predictable Environments

For many children, school is the safest space they know. Integrating Bairns' Hoose principles such as quiet zones, regulatory breaks, and consistent trusted adults, extends that sense of safety into daily learning.



5. Building Trust and Relationships

Educators are long-term figures in a child's life. When schools are part of recovery planning, trusted teachers can act as stabilising relationships, helping rebuild the child's capacity to trust adults again.

6. Supporting Academic and Emotional Resilience

Educational success is a proven protective factor. Tailored tutoring, flexible timetables, and restorative practices can boost confidence and reduce the risk of disengagement or exclusion.

7. Coordinated Planning and Smooth Transitions

When teachers sit at the same table as health and social work colleagues, reintegration plans are paced to the child's readiness thereby aligning therapy goals, attendance plans, and classroom supports.

8. Professional Development and Shared Learning

Cross-agency learning opportunities such as joint debriefs or training help educators understand the impact of trauma while enabling Bairns' Hoose teams to learn from the school's insights into daily functioning and progress.

9. Upholding Children's Rights and Voice

Schools are where children's voices are often most confidently expressed. Educators trained in rights-based practice can amplify children's views in planning and decision-making across the Bairns' Hoose partnership.



10. Sustaining Recovery Beyond the Hoose

Healing does not end when a child leaves the Bairns' Hoose. When education is part of the continuum of care, trauma-informed support extends into every classroom, playground, and peer group, helping children reclaim a sense of normality and hope.

Conclusion

Education should not be an optional extra within the Bairns' Hoose model. If integrated correctly, it could be **the foundation of long-term recovery and resilience**. By embedding schools and educators into the heart of the model, we ensure that support for each child extends beyond the walls of the Hoose and into everyday life.

And that is where true healing, learning, and belonging take root.



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.

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