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**Exploratory interviews**  
**Evaluation of services in establishment Center Dardedze**  
**Pilot period: April – October 2019**

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## 1. Barnahus model in Latvia

For more than 10 years Center Dardedze has been providing high qualitative therapeutic services for child victims of abuse and their families, specializing mainly in work with victims of sexual abuse. Clients turn to center for help themselves or are referred through Riga Social service and in some cases also through Social services in other municipalities. The psychological assistance provided in Center Dardedze can be divided into 2 directions:

1. Psychological assessment to identify possible violence;
2. Psychological counseling for victims of abuse and their families (rehabilitation service).

Since 2014 Dardedze has been actively involved in advocating for necessary changes in law and practice to reduce child victim of sexual abuse secondary victimization and improve cooperation between different sectors and implement Barnahus model in Latvia.

Sexual violence is a phenomenon that requires an integrated approach. Effective mechanisms are needed to detect, report, investigate and provide the victim with the necessary assistance in cases of sexual abuse. As in other countries also in Latvia the difficulty in establishing a comprehensive approach is that each of the institutions involved has its own functions. Moreover, unlike many other countries, Latvia does not have a single child welfare institution that would take responsibility for the child victim throughout the entire investigation and social rehabilitation process from the beginning and until the end.

The Lanzarote Committee has recommended the BarnaHus model, which operates in most of the Nordic countries as well as in neighbor countries Lithuania and Estonia, as an effective way to improve inter-institutional cooperation in dealing with child victims of sexual abuse.

Barnahus model as a method in close collaboration with police and Ministries of Welfare and Justice was piloted in Center Dardedze in 6 month period in 2017, reaching 22 cases. Due to the lack of regulatory framework and difficulties in agreeing on further cooperation on necessary improvements to the Barnahus service, which would strive to meet the Barnahus 10 standards between key players State Police, Ministry on Welfare, Riga Social service and Dardedze, after the pilot project ended in December 2017, Barnahus operation in Center Dardedze was not continued. According to the Ministry of Welfare, the full functionality of the Barnahus model in Latvia cannot be ensured only by a cooperation agreement between the involved institutions. The Barnahus initiative in Latvia is intended to be continued with financial support from the European Economic Area (EEA) within the framework of the program "International Police Cooperation and Fight against Crime" co-financed by the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. Therefore, in 2020, work is underway to improve the legal framework and resume Barnahus work in the autumn of 2020.

Meanwhile within 2 EC funded projects Promise II and BadevDardedze continued to develop and implement child-friendly methods in assessing and investigating cases of sexual abuse against children.



## 2. Unclear or “grey” cases of sexual abuse against children

Possible child sexual abuse is difficult to identify because the child does not always show any obvious signs or tell anybody about what happened. However, child's behavior may indicate that there may have been sexual abuse or sexual exploitation. For example, a child displays inappropriate knowledge or interest in sexual activity, strikingly often depicts sexual activity in drawings, or complains of genital pain. Suspicion may also arise if the child's mood and / or behavior change significantly and if the child exhibits sexual behavior that is not appropriate for his or her age. In practice situations where there is only suspicion of possible violence, but no specific facts, the identity of the alleged offender is unknown, or the child is suspected of having sex with another child below the age of criminal responsibility these are identified as **unclear** or so called **“grey” cases of sexual abuse**. Usually these are not reported to the police due to the lack of any concrete facts or child's disclosure and therefore are referred to social service (in other countries Child Protection Service).

Depending on the amount and content of the information initially received about the alleged sexual abuse of a child, the social worker would make a decision for intervention and further action. Usually these cases are referred to psychologists for psychological assessment and written opinion. This process is time consuming (8-10 weeks), as usually there are 4-6 individual consultations with a child once a week, using several techniques and methods. Besides the written opinion of the psychologist may be subject to various interpretations, as the child's narrative is also included. If criminal proceedings are subsequently instituted, there is a risk that the child's testimony will no longer be valid because the child has already told his/her story to the psychologist.

Therefore there was an urgent need for effective mechanisms to assess unclear child sexual abuse cases which was clearly identified in the document “Mapping results after pilot year”.

To address this need in Promise II 6 experts collaboration group based on Barnahus pilot 2017 results and Barnahus 10 Standards developed **“Recommendations for Barnahus model in Latvia”** for work with unclear (or so called “grey”) cases of child sexual abuse. Barnahus in Iceland and Estonia are working with these cases and based on their experience and in the framework of national law, **Recommendations** introduce exploratory interview as a method for Social services to work with “grey” cases of sexual abuse thus extending the services provided under Barnahus concept. A number of supporting materials for social workers, including an evaluation questionnaire, to identify gray sexual abuse cases were also developed and attached to the recommendations.

Under BADEV project funding **Recommendations** and **exploratory interview** method in collaboration with Riga Social service was piloted in Center Dardedze for 6 month period reaching 32 cases.



### 3. Exploratory interview

**Definition.** Exploratory interview is a structured conversation with a child to determine if the child has been sexually abused, in cases where the information available is inconsistent and / or inadequate, there is no more specific evidence of abuse and the child has not told anybody about what happened.

**Who can request the exploratory interview?** The exploratory interview is carried out on the request of the Social service.

**How to prepare a request?** According to procedure a social worker completes a referral for psychological assessment to a service provider, and in the case “unclear”, or grey cases of child sexual abuse attachesthe filled Sexual Abuse Questionnaire to the referral.

After receiving the referral, pilot service team meeting, reviewing the initial information and psychologist's meeting with the child's parent (s) or guardian and, one of these possible interactions can be carried out:

- 1) Exploratory interview
- 2) Psychologicassessment
- 3)Other (report to the police, no interactions with the child and only consultations for parents etc)

**Who conducts an exploratory interview?** The interview is conducted by a specially trained psychologist.

**Where does the exploratory interview take place?** The interview is conducted with in specially adapted child-friendly interrogation rooms (In pilot period - in Dardedze). The facilities has a child-friendly interview room and technical equipment to record the research interview video and stream it to the observation room.

**How is the exploratory interview conducted?** During the interview, the psychologist talks to the child using evidence-based conversation techniques (NICHD protocol). The interview is recorded on video, and the social worker (case manager) and other specialists if necessary observes the interview in another room by technical means.

**What documents are prepared during the exploratory interview?** The interview is recorded on video (disk) using technologies that prevent the recording from being modified. During the exploratory interview, the social worker prepares the minutes of the interview (not deciphering the child's narrative but specifying the date, place, time and persons present and decision made).

**What happens after exploratory interview?**

- 1) If, during the interview, the child begins to disclose facts that enough to report to the police (for example, mention the name of the alleged abuser, begin to detail the circumstances of the alleged sexual abuse, etc.), the conversation is gradually terminated (telling the child one more interview will be needed as soon as possible) and after the interview, the social service, along with the pilot team, immediately prepares and submits a written report to the police. In this case, the psychologist prepares written opinion on the research results for the social service based on the information form initial meeting with the parent (guardian) and the research interview.



2) If in the interview the child does not disclose any facts that warrant the initiation of the investigation, usually the psychologist continues to work with the child providing psychological assessment (ie 5-6 consultations), prepares written opinion on the results of the assessment and together with case manager from social service decides on further support to the child and family (psychological counseling, legal help etc).

3) If in the interview the child does not disclose any facts that warrant the initiation of the investigation and pilot team is convinced that the child has not suffered from any unlawful activities and/or abuse, together with the social service educational and support measures for the child and the family are planned and provided, if necessary.

## 4. Pilot group team

All Grey cases of sexual abuse referred to Dardedze from social service during the pilot period were analyzed and assessed in a pilot group of professionals. The pilot group consisted of a lawyer, social worker, psychologist, interviewer and therapist (support person). Pilot group in different configurations met twice a week for meetings to assess cases and plan further activities.

The tasks of the group were the following:

- Analyze the information available and evaluate if there is enough for further steps of intervention. If not – gather the additional information/ involve more professionals when necessary;
- Plan and organize interinstitutional meetings;
- Plan and organize meetings with parents or caregivers;
- Report to police immediately in cases where information is sufficient;
- Decide whether to organize exploratory interview or to provide psychological assessment;
- Plan and provide psychological support for the victim;
- Plan and organize support for the victim's family or non-violent parent;
- Provide legal help for the family or caregivers and prepare legal documents when necessary;
- Provide consultations (in person or by phone) for the professionals involved in the case;
- Gather opinions from children, caregivers, parents and professionals on received services;

Evaluate the provided services and make any necessary changes to the process descriptions in the Recommendations

### 4.1. Pilot group tasks specified/divided between team members

Team member	Tasks
<b>Lawyer</b> Laura Celmale	Participate as a lawyer in the process of conducting and piloting an exploratory interview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide legal consultations to parents and caregivers</li> <li>• Prepare legal documents</li> <li>• Prepare applications to the police, the Custody Court and court</li> </ul>



Team member	Tasks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide legal support to the pilot project team</li> <li>• Attend interinstitutional meetings</li> <li>• Participate in inter-institutional meetings;</li> <li>• Participate in project meetings</li> <li>• participate in the observation of the research interview, if necessary</li> <li>• Analyse laws and regulations and give opinions on their application in the current situation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychologist (assessment and consultations)</b> 2 persons 1. Marina Sokol Nazarenko 2. Inese Sadauska</p>	<p>Participate as a psychologist in the process of conducting and piloting a research interview in cooperation with the Riga Social Service, dealing with obscure cases of sexual violence.</p> <p>Description of the Contractor's obligations under the Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct psychological research;</li> <li>• provide psychological counselling to children / adults;</li> <li>• prepare opinions on the results of psychological research;</li> <li>• Participate in inter-institutional meetings;</li> <li>• participate in project meetings;</li> <li>• participate in the observation of the research interview, if necessary;</li> <li>• participate in the planning and improvement of pilot project activities;</li> <li>• Collaborate with the pilot project team and other professionals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Therapist</b> Dace Bogdanova</p>	<p>Conduct the role of victim support person in the exploratory interview process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct the role of the child's parent or guardian support person in the exploratory interview process</li> <li>• When it is possible, question parents and children about the quality of service and fill in the questionnaire</li> <li>• Attend interinstitutional meetings</li> <li>• Participate in the observation of the exploratory interview</li> <li>• Participate in project meetings</li> <li>• Participate in the planning and improvement of pilot project activities</li> <li>• Collaborate with the pilot project team and other professionals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social worker</b> Laila Balode</p>	<p>Manage an exploratory interview case and perform the duties of a social worker in the process of implementing the exploratory interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate communication and exchange of documents with social services and other institutions</li> <li>• collect information on the number of exploratory interviews</li> <li>• Evaluate the quality of service</li> </ul>



Team member	Tasks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participate in the observation of the exploratory interview</li> <li>• ensure data protection and confidentiality are respected in the exploratory interview and evaluation process</li> <li>• attend interinstitutional meetings</li> <li>• participate in project meetings</li> <li>• to participate in the planning and improvement of pilot project activities</li> <li>• collaborate with the pilot project team and other professionals</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychologist (Interviewer)</b> Anastasija Pušnakova</p>	<p>Conduct exploratory interviews with children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan interviews, prepare necessary documents</li> <li>• conduct research and psychological counselling</li> <li>• advise on the conduct of the research interview</li> <li>• attend interinstitutional meetings</li> <li>• participate in project meetings</li> <li>• to participate in the planning and improvement of pilot project activities</li> <li>• collaborate with the pilot project team and other professionals</li> </ul>

## 2.1.

### 4.2. Organization of pilot group work

Pilot team in different configurations met in project meetings on average twice a week and altogether 61 project meeting took place during the pilot period (signed monthly presence lists). According to experience from Barnahus Iceland and Sweeden in weekly meetings the information about the cases is updated and shared, the next steps are decided, and divided responsibilities. In meetings usually participate those, who fill further be involved it the case, but during the pilot often all members participated for the purposes of learning and improvement of quality. Project meetings where led and organized by social worker.

Part of pilot team members participated also in exploratory interviews as an observers.

## 5. Quantitative evaluation (children assessed during the pilot)

In total 32 «grey» cases of sexual abuse where assessed during the pilot period. In all cases social service was involved. In 4 cases parents or caregivers referred to Center Dardedze themselves with the





suspicion of child sexual abuse. In these cases Dardedze informed the Social service and the case manager was appointed.

In the Recommendations the scheme mechanism and questionnaire for social services was prepared for social services workers on what are the signs of possible sexual abuse, how to recognize “gray” cases and how to prepare a referral to Dardedze.

After receiving the case, it was the task of the pilot group to assess the case and decide on further steps for intervention. ;

- Youngest child: 3,5 years, oldest: 17 years;
- From 32 cases: 21 children (under 12 years);
- Cases most often reported to social services from schools/kindergartens
- Also cases were parents are in high conflict divorce (and a parent reporting sexual abuse)

Gender balance among children involved in the pilot project is different - 11 boys and 21 girls (Table 1). However, it is not possible to draw conclusions from this data on possible sexual abuse gray cases and their prevalence among genders, as only a small proportion reported cases to social services were further referred to Dardedze. The children reached during the pilot project are of age between 3,5 to 17 years. The most widely represented age group is from 5 to 7 years old - 11 children in total (Table 2).

Table 1

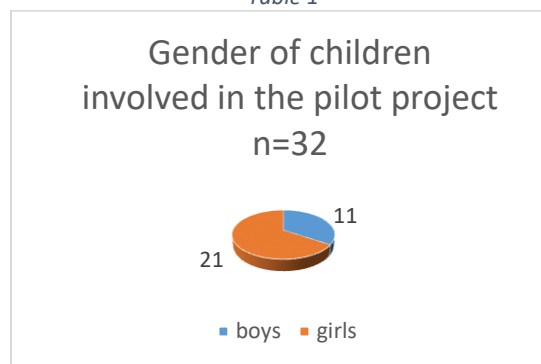
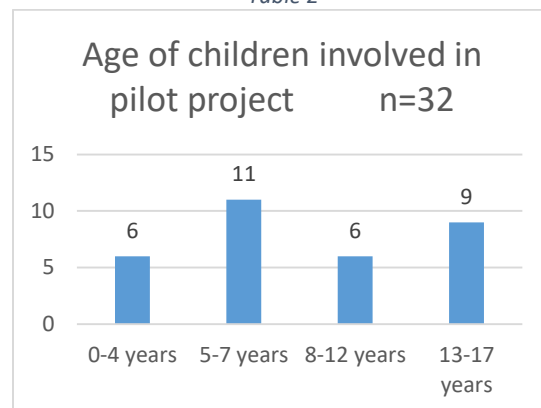


Table 2

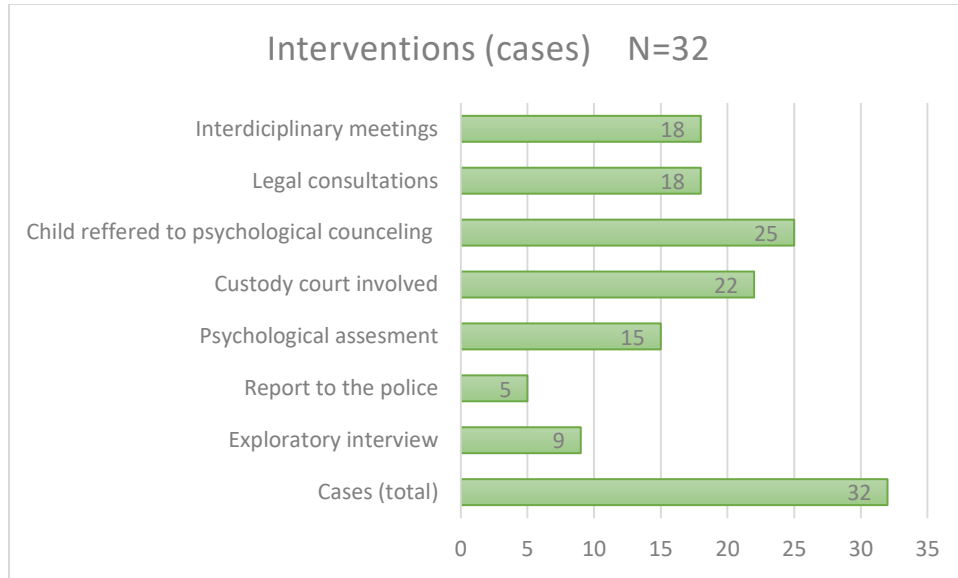


The pilot project results show that the possible scenarios and interventions in these cases can be very different. Table 3 shows that in 9 cases an exploratory interview was conducted, in 15 cases the child



psychological assessment was carried out and in 4 cases a report was prepared for the police. However, it could also have been the case in practice that all 3 interventions were carried out one after another. In cases a child did not disclose any facts during the Exploratory interview in most cases it was decided to continue with the psychological assessment to understand the situations around the child and his/her family. In 2 cases a report to the police was prepared immediately after exploratory interview (in one case child disclosed about sexual abuse, in one case about physical abuse. In 2 cases report to the police was made before any intervention, based only on the information received.

Table 3





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Table 4 Table of Interventions

NO	Client No	sex	age	Meeting with parent/caregiver	Interdisciplinary meeting	Exploratory interview	Psychological assessment	Psychological counseling (rehabilitation)	Report to the police or ongoing investigation
1	2-2a/201	girl	6	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2	2-2a/232	girl	6	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
3	2-2/15	boy	13	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
4	2-2/23	boy	12	yes	yes	yes			
5	2-2a/183	girl	17	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
6	2-2a/266	boy	7	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
7	2-2a/185	girl	12	yes			yes	yes	
8	2-2a/186	girl	8	yes	yes			yes	
9	2-4/17	boy	12	yes	yes		yes	yes	
10	2-2a/237	girl	8	yes				yes	
11	2-2a/306	girl	7	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
12	2-2a/308	girl	4	yes					
13	2-2a/316	boy	4	yes				yes	
14	2-2a/317	boy	4	yes					
15	2-2a/326	girl	5	yes			yes	yes	
16	2-2a/327	girl	15	yes	yes			yes	
17	2-2/51	girl	6	yes	yes			yes	
18	2-2/67	girl	5	yes	yes				
19	2-2/56	girl	4	yes				yes	
20	2-2a/248	girl	14	yes	yes			yes	yes
21	2-2/22	girl	15	yes	yes			yes	yes
22	2-2a/340	girl	14	yes			yes	yes	yes
23	2-2/97	girl	15	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	
24	2-2a/356	girl	10	yes	yes	yes			
25	2-2a/358	boy	4	yes				yes	
26	2-2/98	boy	10	yes			yes		



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<b>NO</b>	<b>Client No</b>	<b>sex</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>Meeting with parent/caregiver</b>	<b>Interdisciplinary meeting</b>	<b>Exploratory interview</b>	<b>Psychological assessment</b>	<b>Psychological counseling (rehabilitation)</b>	<b>Report to the police or ongoing investigation</b>
27	2-2/99	girl	13	yes			yes	yes	
28	2-2/100	girl	14	yes			yes	yes	
29	2-2a/362	girl	8	yes				yes	
30	2-2a/363	boy	5	yes	yes		yes		
31	2-2a/364	boy	5	yes	yes			yes	yes
32	2-4/34	boy	4	yes	yes			yes	yes



## 6. Qualitative evaluation (feedback questionnaires)

During the project implementation, questionnaires were developed for persons involved in the service using the questionnaires created during the Recommendations development process. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain the satisfaction of the involved parties with the service received.

All children, parents/caregivers and social workers who participated or observed the exploratory interview were asked to fill the short questionnaire about received services. Special child friendly questionnaires were developed for children. It was explained to children that completing questionnaires is needed to improve the work we do and make the service more child-friendly. Also a child’s emotional state after the exploratory interview were taken into account. For children under 7 years, colors and emoji faces were used to facilitate the child's ability to perceive the question. Usually for this age group support person from the pilot team asked questions and filled the form together with a child. For older children a bit more complicated questionnaire was used and in most cases they filled the form themselves.

As only less than in 1/3 cases exploratory interview took place, feedback questionnaire were filled also by those social workers (cases managers), which referred to Dardedze with a suspicion on “grey” case of sexual abuse, but other forms of intervention were carried out. One of the important things when developing new services is the provision of information, therefore these social workers evaluated the inter-institutional cooperation and expressed their views about exploratory interview service.

### 6.1. Social workers (participated/observed exploratory interview)

9 social workers and 1 representative from Custody court filled the evaluation questionnaires (n=10)

Categories	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I do not agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Exploratory interview can be used for getting the information from the child in the gentle manner in cases where sexual abuse is suspected but no specific facts exist	0	0	0	3	7
Co-operation with the Center Dardedze was constructive and I was clear about my role and responsibilities as a specialist	0	0	0	0	10



Interdisciplinary meetings before and after the exploratory interview facilitated interinstitutional cooperation	0	0	0	1	9
This experience and face-to-face meetings in Dardedze will help me deal with similar cases in the future when I come across with unclear cases of sexual abuse against children	0	0	0	1	9

Comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploratory interview can be provided successfully if the child is ready to disclose.</li> <li>- It is definitely the child friendly and not harmful way to get the information from a child.</li> <li>- It was helpful I could participate as an observer;</li> <li>- The success of the process depends on the child's age, emotional state and ability to hold attention during the conversation. Therefore interviewer 's professional background is very important;</li> <li>- the interviewer at the beginning clarifies what is the child's understanding and knowledge about body and intimate parts - this helped to build the conversation with the child about what happened.</li> </ul>
Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide training for social workers, on how to recognize signs of sexual abuse and gray case of sexual abuse against children</li> <li>- Provide service of exploratory interview in other municipalities of Latvia</li> </ul>

## 6.2. Social workers (participated in the interdisciplinary meetings and collaboration)

13 social workers from Riga Social service (cases managers), who participated in collaboration in the pilot project period, but in whose cases other interventions than exploratory interview were carried out.

(n=13)

**Where did you first heard about exploratory interview? (Mark one or several)**



- From colleague 3
- From from the management of the social service 2
- In the informative seminar on April 2,2019 6
- Through a concrete case 3

Categories	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I do not agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Exploratory interview can be used for getting the information from the child in the gentle manner in cases where sexual abuse is suspected but no specific facts exist	0	0	0	3	7
I see exploratory interview as a tool which I can use in my everyday work with grey cases	0	0	0	0	13
Co-operation with the Center Dardedze was constructive and I was clear about my role and responsibilities as a specialist	0	0	0	0	13

Comments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- it is very good that new services are being developed</li> <li>- good way to ensure best interests of the child are respected</li> <li>- child friendly approach, very good service</li> <li>- a structured conversation, child does not have to tell many times</li> <li>- very good cooperation with Dardedze</li> <li>- experts in Dardedze are very knowledgeable in the techniques and always provide professional advice when needed</li> <li>- Child friendly facilities and attitude-</li> <li>- Exploratory interview is caring and gentle towards child's feelings and emotional state</li> </ul>
Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- include exploratory in the regular service contract between Dardedze and Social service</li> <li>- It would be necessary have an exploratory interview service in all social services</li> </ul>



### 6.3. Parents/caregivers

10 parents and caregivers of child victims, who participated in exploratory interviews, after receiving services in Center Dardedze filled questionnaires and gave their feedback on received services. (n=10)

In 6 cases the representative was victim’s mother, in 2 cases father, in one case grandmother and in 1 case other caregiver.

When analyzing the answers received from the parents of child victims, it should be noted that the parent completes the questionnaire immediately after the exploratory interview. Therefore it might be a situation when parent first learns some details about what has happened or how the child feels; he or she has just encountered very unpleasant and disturbing information about their child. It is possible that another family member or acquaintance is involved in the offense, and accordingly the emotional state of the parent at the time of filling in the questionnaire can be very different. Nevertheless, when describing their feelings, most parents and guardians expressed a positive opinion of how they felt in

Categories	Strongly disagree	Disagree	I do not agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Do you find services received in Dardedze Child friendly	0	0	0	8	2
Were the facilities suitable for children?	0	0	1	5	4
The attitude of employees towards me and my child was nice and professional	0	0	0	3	7
I felt good in Dardedze	0	0	0	5	5
I received enough information about further steps, my rights and what actions are planned	0	0	2	0	8

In Recommendations for Barnahus model in Latvia special guidelines were included on necessary support of the non-violent parent or caregiver. In order to fully support the family where the child or children have been victims of sexual abuse, it is important to remember that not only the victims themselves, but also non-abusive parents, need support and assistance to stabilize the situation.

Available research mainly talks about non-violent mothers raising children who are victims of sexual abuse. Much less attention is paid to fathers. In any case, every family and every member of a child who has been exposed to child sexual abuse is subjected to significant emotional and social shocks as the child's behavior changes and the family is involved in procedural activities. Relationships between adults





can be affected, which can lead to family breakdown. This is a crisis of family life, which requires support to help the family regain its lost balance and be able to focus its resources on supporting the child affected.

During the pilot period parents and caregivers received psychological support, consultations with social worker and legal consultations, when it was necessary.

## 6.4. Children

When analyzing the suitability of a service, the opinion of professionals and parents about the quality and suitability of the service is undeniably important. However, it is equally important to obtain information from the children, who are the actual recipients/users of the service.

9 children who participated in exploratory interview filled questionnaire after receiving the service. 4 children under the age of 7 were questioned by a support person (therapist) who filled the questionnaire based on child’s answers. Children 8 years old and older filled questionnaire themselves

Children were generally positive about the time, facilities and attitudes of staff in the Dardedze.




### 1. Do you think children would feel good in a place like this?

yes	maybe	no	Don`t know
1	7	1	0

In response to the question "Do you think children would feel good in a place like this", one respondent answered “no” and the others answered “maybe”. However, when analyzing these data, it should be taken into account that the question is formulated in such a way that the child should answer according to their feelings. The child answers the questions right after the exploratory interview, so the negative, anxious feelings experienced by the child should be taken into account.



### 2. Children under 7

Please tell us how was your day in Dardedze?

Facilities	Liked a lot 	liked 	Didnotlike 
How did you like the facilities in Dardedze?	1	3	0




Employees	yes 	no 
Were you satisfied with the attitude of the staff?	4	0









Employees & information	yes 	partly 	no 
Did you receive enough information and did you understand where you are and what will happen?	3	1	0

### 3. Children 7+ and adolescents

Please provide feedback about the time you spent in Dardedze

Telpas	Very good 	good 	bad 	Very bad 	I can't answer
How did you like the waiting room?	2	3	0	0	0
How did you like the exploratory interview room?	1	2	0	0	2
How did you like the therapy room?	2	1	0	0	2

Employees	Yes 	Average 	No 	I can't answer
Were you satisfied with the attitude of the staff?	4	1	0	0

Employees & information	Yes 	Partly 	No 	I can't answer
Did you receive enough information and did you understand where you are and what will happen?	5	0	0	0

8 children indicate being in Dardedze for the first time.



## 7. Final conclusions

In general, the exploratory interview service implementation has been positively evaluated. Exploratory interviews should be considered and continued to be used in unclear or “grey” cases of sexual abuse, as one of the psychological assessment methods. However in implementation priority must be given to interinstitutional cooperation, to assess which intervention is more appropriate to the actual situation and the best interests of the child. Exploratory interview will be recommended as a new method for social services which should be available nationwide. After the project period Dardedze will continue to provide exploratory interview service in 2020 under the contract with Riga Social service.

The implementation of the exploratory interview will be recommended to the Expert Group, which started work in December 2019. The Expert's Group under the Ministry of Welfare will be responsible for further implementation of the Barnahus model in Latvia with a help Norwegian financial instrument and it's sustainability.



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## Evaluation of narrative therapy sessions

### 1. A comprehensive description of the service and the methods used for evaluation

**Psychologist who provided service:** Liene Nikolajeva, Center Dardedze

**Experience:** 10+ years in psychologic assessment and counseling for children, who are victims of abuse and their families.

**Training:** "Between security and family violence & trauma – attachment narrative approach"( PHD Szymon Chrzastowski, Poland , Arlene Vetere, UK) February 25th – March 1st 2019, Warsaw

**Period of implementation** April-June 2019.

**Place of implementation:** Center Dardedze, Cieceres street 3a, Riga, Latvia

**Dates:** according to signed Time sheets, 100h in total

#### Description of the therapy method

Narrative therapy is based on a principle of building sequential life story. This narrative ("telling one`s own story") might give a meaning to a concrete life situation client is experiencing or going through. During narration, the client together with the psychologist identifies the important people/events in their lives who have influenced and shaped their personality - family traditions, loved ones (genogramming). Difficulties might arise when a client accepts someone else's story as their own. Systemic approach in looking at and understanding the problem, improves clients communication ability. Externalization of the problem through description during client`s conversations with a therapist is the method used during the therapy sessions.

#### Provided service in numbers

Psychological consultations with using narrative therapy approach were provided to 11 clients. 7 of them were children (age 4 to 17), and 4 adults(mothers).

All clients attended consultations with the assignment from Social service. 10 consultations in average were provided to each client, using narrative therapy approach. In the case of children, first and last consultation is always with the parent or caregiver.

Children who attended psychological counselling had been reported to the social service for various reasons: Key Issues Identified:

- addiction and co-dependency problems for parents - 1
- suicidal thoughts, emotional difficulties - 3
- emotional abuse in the family - highly conflicting divorce and related disputes over childcare - 3
- Sexual abuse - 2
- learning difficulties for a child - 1
- peer violence at school - 2
- neglect and physical and emotional abuse of a child - 2



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Adults who attended psychological counselling were sent form social service. Key Issues Identified with adult clients:

- problems in regulation of emotions - 3
- difficulties in communication with the child - 1
- risk of burnout syndrome - 2
- suicidal thoughts, emotional difficulties – 1

### **Methods used for work with clients**

Clients attended consultations at an average intensity of once a week, in exceptional cases twice a week. Trauma symptom surveys were used at the beginning of the consultation. The child-clients have been given psycho-emotional support, discussed conflict situations and socially disturbing situations in which the child finds himself / herself, and methods have been used to promote the regulation of emotions (anger, anxiety). For each client a completed client card and an overview of the counselling process is filled according to Dardedze inhouse regulations and provisions of the Psychologists' Law. According to regulations of GDPR, clients do not sign presence lists in Dardedze, as there is no legal justification for collecting these data. For the needs of BADEV project (signed presence list), psychologist kept and signed a record of each client's visit.

Given the limited number of counselling sessions and the length of time children and adults received counselling (average time – 1,5 month, around 10 consultations each), it was decided not to repeat trauma symptom survey as a form to measure the possible impact, as this method is recommended in cases of longer therapy process (usually it is done after 3 or 6 month period). However changes and improvements in clients' psycho-emotional status were fixed in overview of the counselling process, which is done in each case.

### **Changes and improvements observed by the psychologist during the therapy process** (Summary from client's cards and overview of the counselling process)

#### **Children**

In cases with children the therapy process always starts and end with a consultation with parent or caregiver. During the feedback session, the psychologist also obtains information about the improvements parent or caregiver noticed in the child's emotional state and behaviour.

It most cases it was observed that after therapy sessions emotional state of children has improved, in some cases significantly, the anxiety and depression decreased. Interest in learning, hobbies and relationships with peers emerged. During the feedback session after therapy, parents and caregivers indicated that they had noticed a change in their child's behaviour and that the therapy process had helped to improve their contact with the child. In a number of cases, parents indicated that children were looking for contact themselves and more willing to share. They also indicated that children generally feel better and have shown symptoms of reduction of the problem which led to a need for psychological help. In 3 cases longer therapy was recommended, in one case it was continued right after project



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implementation period. In several cases recommendations for Social service were prepared where further intervention with the family was needed.

### **Adults**

In cases with adults, clients showed that self-regulation of emotions and communication with children have improved. Clients indicated that their emotional state had stabilized, their skills of recognizing and controlling emotions had been developed. Clients stated that they feel more confident and able to look at their life situation from another perspective. In two cases, however, there was a decrease in client motivation during therapy (delayed appointments). Further cooperation with the social service and continuation of psychological support were recommended.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Narrative therapy methods can be used with children who are victims of abuse and adults who experience various difficulties in life. Narrative therapy techniques combined with other methods provide good results and improve clients' psycho-emotional state. Therapy sessions should preferably be provided for at least 3-6 months, which was not possible during the pilot project due to limited budget.