

**Barnardo's Scotland
Response to Consultation**

The Adoption Support Services and Allowances Regulations 2008

Introduction

Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation. Barnardo's Scotland manages over 60 services, including the Scottish Adoption Advice Service (SAAS). This offers a range of services in more than half the local authorities in Scotland, to children, families and adults affected by adoption and permanency. The comments offered in the response are informed by our practice and policy experience.

General Comments

- Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the recognition for the need for an extensive and wide range of services for adopted children and their families, both adoptive and birth, following their adoption and through their lifetime
- Barnardo's Scotland welcomes the fact that an assessment can be asked for at any time during the child's childhood. It is not always possible to identify need at the time of placement and there will be changing circumstances to take into account
- Barnardo's Scotland believes there are still service gaps in terms of post adoption support in general and access to independent support in particular. This approach has been endorsed by the Adoption Policy Law Review Group and Barnardo's Scotland will continue to press the case for resources in this area.

Specific comments

Regulations 2 and 3

5. How far should "outside the authority's area extend", within Scotland, the UK or wider?

This point has previously been discussed with stakeholders and it was agreed that any adopted child and their family, living in Scotland, should be afforded the opportunity to receive a post adoption support service in line with supporting the best interests of the child. Meeting the needs of the child irrespective of where the child was adopted from should be made explicit in the regulations.

Regulations 4-10

8. Is the approach suggested, to provide for allowances in circumstances where there are unusual costs, correct?

9. *Are the circumstances set out in the Regulation sufficiently comprehensive?*

Barnardo's Scotland agrees with both of the above. We believe it is appropriate not to legislate for a minimum adoption allowance but there should be guidance as to the likely monies involved in certain circumstances.

11. *Should remuneration for former foster or kinship carers be allowed?*

Barnardo's Scotland believes the flexibility of how and when an adoption allowance can be paid would be helpful and in line with the changing needs of adopted children and their families.

19. *When considering full-time education, should an age limit, such as 21, be indicated in the legislation, or is it appropriate to leave this undefined?*

Barnardo's Scotland proposes that it would be preferable to have no age limit as this would allow funding until the period of education ends, which could be beyond 21 years.

22. *Are the arrangements for the periodic review of adoption allowances suitable?*

The system for annual reviews is sufficiently robust, although we suggest that the forms need to be amended to form a fuller assessment of the adopted family's circumstances.

Regulations 14-16

28. *Should children under the age of 12 who are considered by the adoption agency to have sufficient understanding, be given notices under this regulation?*

Barnardo's Scotland believes this is a contentious issue. On the one hand it acknowledges children's rights to information about themselves, however, on the other it could include detailed information that, on a practice level, may present some difficulties.

Barnardo's Scotland SAAS service advocates that children are told about their adoption from an early age. This may encourage their parents to tell them they are adopted even before the age of 12. It is a positive move to inform children that their parents receive an allowance and it also ensures that children of 12 or above are informed that they are adopted. However, we question whether it is appropriate to share specific details about how the sum of monies was calculated or what the amount is. Barnardo's Scotland is not aware of many children who have detailed information about their parents' financial circumstances, such as how much child benefit their parents receive or how much fostering allowance is paid.

The Scottish Adoption Advice Service is increasingly seeing adoptive families with adolescent children who are struggling with issues of identity and sense of belonging. These issues could be exacerbated by adoption allowances details.