



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

**Family Placement Service
Barnardo's Fostering NI**

Region: Northern Ireland

Date: January 2021

Registered: N/A

Registration Body: N/A

Registration Number: N/A



**Believe in
children**



Barnardo's
Northern Ireland

Contents

Section 1: Introduction	03
- Legal framework	03
- Barnardo's status and constitution	03
- Aims, objectives and outcomes	04
Section 2: Service registration details	06
Section 3: Service staff structure	07
- Job roles and qualifications	08
- Summary of current staffing	09
Section 4: Services provided	11
Section 5: Recruitment, approval, review and support for foster carers	13
Section 6: Monitoring and evaluation	19
Section 7: Complaints, allegations and whistleblowing	20
Section 8: Regulation and inspection of services	22

Introduction

Legal Framework

This Statement of Purpose has been developed in accordance with regulations, statutory guidance and National Minimum Standards as applying to fostering providers, including:

- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Guidance for Health and Social Care professionals in NI on foster care is set out within;
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 – Guidance and Regulations – Volume 3 – Family Placements and Private Fostering 1996
- The regulations and guidance builds upon the legislative framework of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Barnardo's status and constitution

Barnardo's is a company limited by guarantee (registered in England under number 61625) and a registered charity (numbers 216250 and SC037605). It was also registered as a trust corporation on 16 December 1926. Its governing instrument is the Memorandum and Articles of Association, most recently amended by special resolution passed on 17 July 2001.

Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland (BFNI) is part of the Barnardo's Family Placement Business Service.

The Head of Service is Brenda Farrell

Head Office Address:

Barnardo's
Tanners Lane
Ilford, Essex
IG6 1QG

Telephone: 0191 2404800

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Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Barnardo's Fostering NI

Aims:

Barnardo's Fostering Service is a leading national Independent Fostering Agency, providing fostering and short break services across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We aim to achieve high quality, stable placements for children and young people by ensuring that foster carers are appropriately recruited, assessed, trained and supported within the required regulations and national minimum standards.

Objectives and outcomes

To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect and where abuse and neglect are part of a child's pre-placement experiences, to provide a nurturing environment which supports the child's recovery from such trauma.

To recruit, assess, support and train carers to provide a range of fostering placements for children who are unable to live with their families of birth.

To ensure that foster carer recruitment strategies and initiatives are targeted appropriately so that children and young people have the opportunity of living within a family which values, recognises and supports their ethnic origin, cultural heritage and religion.

To provide continuing support for adoptive parents aimed at enhancing parents' understanding of their child's emotional and therapeutic needs. We will strongly advocate with other agencies including health and education services in order to ensure adoptive families receive a range of support to address their child's specific needs

To provide short break care for children and young people with a learning and / or physical disability or complex health needs living with their birth families in addition to short break care that supports the child's full time placement either in foster care or with family members

To ensure that all regulatory and minimum standard requirements are met in relation to the approval, review and supervision of carers and the placement of children, and that quality assurance processes are in place to monitor all aspects of service provision. To provide an out of hours Helpline for foster carers.

To promote secure attachments, placement stability and the development permanent relationships between foster families and young people placed to achieve better outcomes for

children's health, education, employment and future independence
To prepare young people adequately for when they leave their foster family so they are able to live independently with support.
To maintain and promote positive contact between children and their families and significant others, supported by their foster carers.

To promote positive working relationships / partnerships between Barnardo's fostering, adoption and short break services and local authorities and trusts to facilitate effective communication and promote good practice for the benefit of children and young people who are placed by the service.

To ensure that the Fostering Panel operates according to guidelines laid down by legislation and regulations in relation to carer approvals, annual reviews and in its consideration of placement disruptions and allegations and complaints

To ensure that the way in which the Service develops takes into account the views and wishes of its carers, the foster children in placement and staff by encouraging staff feedback and participation and feedback from foster carers, looked after children and birth children.

To ensure good governance through continual reporting and monitoring to commissioning services.

To ensure continuous improvement and development of the fostering services through regular training for staff which highlights changes in legislation, regulations and policy and which promotes practice initiatives which increase opportunities to place children waiting and placement stability and the potential for children to recover from past traumas.

To provide continuing support and supervision for foster carers aimed at enhancing their understanding of children's emotional and therapeutic needs. We strongly advocate with other agencies including health and education services in order to ensure foster carers and children placed receive a range of support to address the child's specific needs

Service registration details

Not currently registered due to no fostering standards being in place in Northern Ireland

Name and address of the Registered Provider
Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
9th Floor Riverside Tower
Lanyon Place
Belfast
BT1 3BT

Name and address of the Responsible Individual
Helen Browne
Assistant Head of Business, BFNI

Any conditions of registration on the Registered Provider
N/A

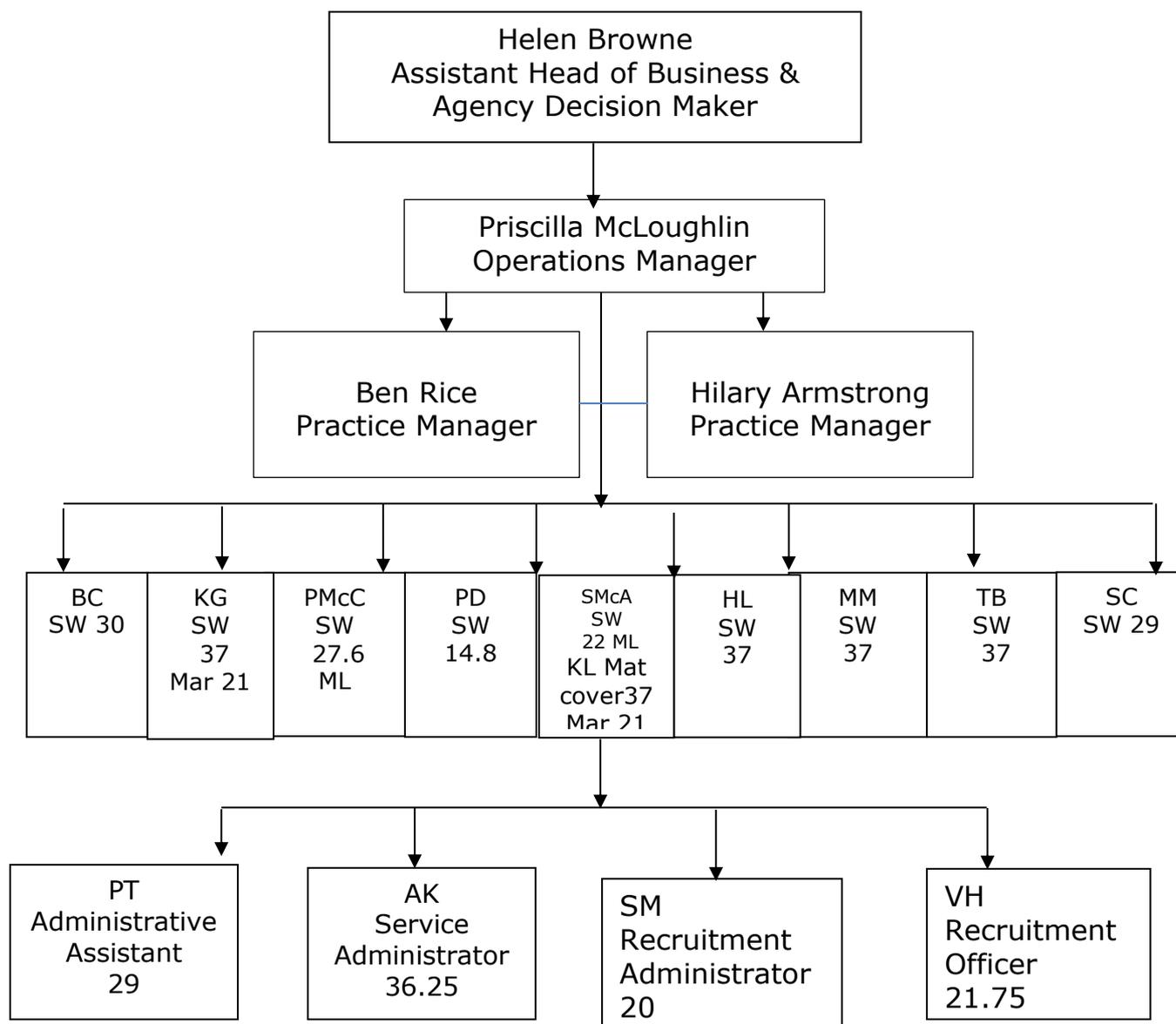
The relevant qualifications and experience of the Registered Manager

Qualified Social Worker – Dip SW
Institute of Leadership and Management – Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring

Service staff structure

This section details the number, relevant qualifications and experience of the staff working for the purposes of the agency.

Service, management and staffing structure



Job roles and qualifications

Operations Manager

The Operations Manager is a qualified social worker with management experience who is responsible for budgetary control and involved in the development and implementation of the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation. The Operations Manager has line management responsibility for the Practice Managers, acts as Advisor to the foster care panel, ensures all policies and procedures are up to date, completes audits of the service to ensure high standards of practice, and monitors and advises on serious complaints and allegations, ensuring appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

Practice Managers

Professionally qualified Social Workers who are registered with the NISCC, and responsible for the supervision and management of a team of Social Workers. The Practice Managers are responsible for developing and co-ordinating training and other support services for foster carers. They also manage the recruitment and assessment and review of foster carers.

Supervising Social Workers (SSW)

Are qualified Social Workers registered with the NISCC who undertake the assessment, support and annual reviews of foster carers. SSWs work in partnership with the looked after child's Social Workers to promote good outcomes for each child in placement. SSWs also support training, coordinate support groups and together with the Practice Managers, cover the out-of-hours helpline for foster carers.

Recruitment Officer/Administrator

Has an emphasis on driving our recruitment and marketing strategy into the future. The RA has a marketing understanding, including knowledge and experience of fostering or adoption services throughout NI and has experience in the voluntary sector.

Service Administrator

Service Administrator undertakes financial duties in the

fostering service including invoicing, carer payments, credit control and accounts payable. The service administrator who is the service named First Aid officer has responsible for health and safety and ensures that the office remains a safe working environment with appropriate risk assessments completed by staff.

Admin Assistant

Undertakes a wide range of admin tasks to support the work of the service such as inputting and monitoring of statistical data, coordinating training, ensuring all checks and repeat checks are completed. The Administrative assistance also provides administrative support for the foster care panel ensuring that reports are available for panel members to access and taking a record of panel meetings and ADM decisions.

Summary of current staffing

This section details the number of staff, hours worked, range of numbers of years' experience in each job role.

Within BFNI there are 9 qualified Social Workers registered with the NISCC which equates to 7.7 full time equivalent posts.

There is a range of experience in the team, including experience in statutory family, residential and family placement.

The Operations Manager and AHOB have over 30 years' social work experience each, primarily in family placement and both hold a range of management qualifications. Both have also worked in statutory and voluntary child care services.

There are 4 administration staff equating to 2.8 full time equivalent posts.

Services provided

Placement types provided

Standard

Most referrals will be considered as standard allowing for emergency, short and long term placements. Many of our carers are able to offer care for siblings groups to allow brothers and sisters to stay together.

Solo

We understand that some children and young people have complex needs stemming from multiple traumas and disrupted attachments. Our experience is that many of these children benefit from being the only Looked After Child in placement so there are no competing needs for the carers to balance and the children can benefit from intensive support. All carers undertaking solo placements will have specific attachment-focused training designed to enhance their skills and confidence in responding to complex behaviour and to build nurturing and secure relationships with the young person into the future.

The need for a solo placement may be identified at the point of referral to BFNI or become apparent following placement. Where it is subsequently assessed by the Trust that the child's needs are such that it would not be in their interests for the carer to have a second child placed, this placement will be ring-fenced as a solo placement.

Special Health Needs

We provide specialist placements for children and young people who have a severe learning difficulty, a physical disability or who need complex medical care. The team has extensive experience in making successful long-term placements as well as supporting children with special health needs on short breaks.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Our carers also provide placements for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, trafficking, and / or display harmful

sexualised behaviours. These carers are provided with additional support and training through Barnardo's Safe Choices.

Parent and Child

We are able to provide placements for parents who are under 18 years old, so that they can receive support in developing parenting skills. Foster carers can also assist Health & Social Care Trusts with their assessments by providing information relating to parenting capacity and capabilities.

Short Breaks

We have carers who provide short break placements either on a regular basis or one off basis. These can be for children living at home with birth parents, kinship foster carers, residential units or other Trust foster placements.

Added value of BFNI placements

Outcomes Measurement Tool

Outcomes assessments completed by experienced Barnardo's fostering social workers are evidence of good practice as well as measure of the child's journey and progress in a Barnardo's placement, and the work carried out by our foster carers.

There are 56 outcomes options to score for each child, however not all are relevant for every child in placement. In conjunction with the child's Trust social worker, Barnardo's supervising social workers are asked to identify and score the Outcomes that are particularly pertinent to each child in line with their care plan.

Workers are asked to score at least 1 outcome against each of the 8 areas underlined below:

1. Being Healthy & Active
2. Staying Safe & Nurtured
3. Enjoying, Included & Achieving
4. Making a positive contribution & Respected
5. Economic Wellbeing & Responsible

Outcome measurements are available on request for children's LAC reviews and other professional discussions.

Permanence

BFNI has a proven track record in low disruption rates and achieving permanence for children. This is evidenced in our commitment to young people post 18 through the Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Scheme and those who have achieved permanence through long term fostering and adoption by their existing carers. Children's welfare is at the centre of our work with carers and we support and encourage our carers to make those life decisions.

Additionally, through our integrated model with Children's House, BFNI has demonstrated expertise in achieving permanence for harder to place children. We can accept a referral of a child with a permanence plan for whom the Trust has been unable to identify a suitable placement for child-specific family finding.

Narrative Work

All our supervising social workers are trained in Dyadic Development Psychotherapy (DDP) and they work closely with carers to support their understanding of the impact of trauma for children placed and in taking a therapeutic care- giving approach to aid recovery. We recognise the also the crucial importance for children in foster care of being supported and enabled to talk openly about their past experiences and families of birth so some of our DDP Level 2 social workers have been trained to undertake narrative work with children in placement alongside their carers and placing social workers.

Recruitment, approval, review and support for foster carers

This section provides information on the procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective foster carers.

Barnardo's policies, procedures and standards for the recruitment and assessment of foster carers are in line with required regulations and standards for fostering services.

Responsible authorities are required by regulation 4 of the Foster Placement (Children) Regulations to review the approval of foster parents /carers at least once a year. Changes of circumstances such as change of address, death of a spouse or remarriage or change in health will normally call for an early review.

Enquiries

On receiving an enquiry from a prospective foster carer the Service requests basic information and sends out an information pack containing material about Barnardo's, the Service and fostering generally. An office interview or fostering information meeting may then be offered to provide enquirers with further information on foster care and fostering with Barnardo's. An initial home visit is then arranged by a fostering social worker from the Service to discuss in more detail the work of the Service and to answer any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. This provides an opportunity for the enquirer to discuss their own circumstances and motivation to foster in the privacy of their own home.

A brief written report is completed by the social worker and a decision, in conjunction with a Practice Manager, will be reached as to whether the prospective foster carer is suitable to proceed, should they wish to become registered as a foster carer with the service

Assessment and Approval

If a prospective foster carer is deemed suitable and wishes to proceed, they will be asked to complete an application to be assessed, referred to as a Registration of Interest form, and provide written consent to enable checks to be undertaken by the Fostering Service to ascertain their suitability to foster. Barnardo's process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. This is referred to as **Stage 1** and **Stage 2**.

These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information for **Stage 1** must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received by the fostering agency.

Stage 1

The information gathered in Stage 1 includes:

- Full details of the applicant(s) and all household members as well as any children of the applicants living elsewhere.
- Checks undertaken with the police via the DBS / Police Checks/ Access NI on all household members 10 years and over years, as well as with the Department of Health, Social Services and any other relevant agency, for example Health, Education, NSPCC, Ofsted, previous fostering and adoption agencies.
- DBS checks may also be undertaken on any other regular visitor to the household who may have care of foster children when placed. Some checks are repeated every three years.
- The applicant is required to have a medical examination which is completed by their GP. The completed Medical Report is forwarded electronically to Barnardo's Regional Medical Adviser for comments about the applicant(s)' health.
- The applicant is also asked to name three to six personal referees from which a minimum of three will be selected to provide written references and who will also be interviewed as part of the assessment process. Where appropriate we also ask for permission to approach the applicant's current or past

employer. Adult children and previous partners will also be contacted.

Stage 1 of the assessment process is intended to provide the Service with basic information about the applicant's suitability (or not) to proceed to Stage 2 of the assessment in which more detailed information is collected.

Stage 2

Stage 2 of the assessment requires the fostering service to obtain information about the applicant in relation to the following areas:

- Details of personality and life experiences.
- Religious persuasion and capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion.
- Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from any particular racial origin or cultural or religious background.
- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activities and interests.
- Previous experience (if any) of caring for their own and other children.
- Skills and competence relevance to their capacity to care effectively for a looked after child placed with them and their potential to care for a child.

A qualified and experienced social worker will carry out the assessment by visiting the applicant(s)' home and meeting with all members of the family and collating information about the applicant(s)' experience and skills. The information from the social worker's interviews will be collated and forms the basis of an assessment report using the BAAF Form F framework). The final report is shared and discussed with the applicants who have an opportunity to provide written feedback.

During stage 1 of the assessment process, preparation training based on the Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" course is delivered by a social worker and experienced foster carer

within the Service. This training includes the role and responsibilities of foster carers, working with different agencies, child development and promoting family contact. All applicants are required to attend.

The completed assessment report is presented to Barnardo's Fostering NI Foster Panel. Applicants are expected to attend the Panel.

The Panel, which is undependably chaired made up of individuals with a range of personal and professional experience of fostering, will then make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. These will be passed to the Assistant Head of Business, who is nominated as the organisation's 'Agency Decision Maker', and who has the final decision about approval on behalf of Barnardo's.

Applicants are informed verbally and in writing of the Agency Decision Maker's final decision.

Foster Carer Reviews

Foster care reviews are undertaken by Barnardo's Fostering Service, in line with regulatory requirements outlined in Regulation 4 Foster Placement (Children) Regulations.

A first review must take place within 12 months after approval and subsequent reviews take place every 12 months thereafter. First annual reviews are presented to the foster care panel for consideration and thereafter, 3 yearly. Interim reviews are undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officer, an experienced social worker who works independently from the agency. Barnardo's must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required standards as set out in Regulation 4.

Reviews may also take place at other times for example as a result of a request to change the terms of approval; following a serious complaint, allegation of abuse, placement disruption or other matters of serious / safeguarding concern; in response to a significant change of circumstances, such as a carer's adult child

returning home, relationship problems or separations, significant health issues, pregnancy, etc.

Foster carer support

Barnardo's Fostering Service values the work that foster carers do and the contribution they make to the lives of children and young people in their care. The key to a successful placement is the quality of support that foster carers receive. Barnardo's Fostering Service offers the following support to all our carers:

- Supervision and support from a named qualified and experienced Social Worker Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm.
- Frequent visits, (minimum of once per month), negotiated with the carer and regular telephone contact from the supervising social worker. This includes at least two unannounced visits per year.
- Regular support group meetings.
 - Emergency helpline staffed by social workers employed within the service
 - Foster care handbook which is regularly updated events for children in placement, carers children and carers.
- Support/activity groups for carers children.
- Where appropriate, and where in line with the child's care plan, a short break service to provide alternative experiences / respite for the child and a short break for the main carer.
- Good quality liaison and working arrangements with local authorities/ Trust including attendance at relevant meetings such as Education (PEP) and Looked After Child reviews.
- A level of financial support that values and recognises carer's skills, achievements and time including a foster care fee and fostering allowance.
- A mentoring system for carers to share experiences and receive advice and support from experienced carers within the service.
- Twice yearly focus groups which enable foster carers to share their views and influence service development
- Regular e-newsletters that keep foster carers up-to-date and enable good news stories to be shared to provide encouragement

Foster carer training

Barnardo's Fostering Service recognises that fostering is an extremely complex and demanding job and we are committed to providing high quality training that is accessible and relevant to all our foster carers.

Training is provided to help foster carers develop their fostering role, to improve knowledge and to define and refine the skills they already have. The training is delivered within an explicit value base which promotes equality of opportunity and recognises and celebrates diversity. It seeks to ensure that all carers are competent and confident in providing safe care and in protecting children from harm.

As outlined in Regulations and Guidance Vol 3, 1996, opportunities for training are provided at three levels:

- Support, discussion and evaluation in the home
- Participation in foster parent / carer groups
- Participation in formal training events with other foster parents / carers and social workers.

Training is offered throughout a carer's career with Barnardo's Fostering Service and incorporates a range of topics which evolve with changes in practice, legislation and needs, examples of which are:

- child protection
- recording
- first aid
- managing challenging behaviour
- attachment
- bereavement and loss
- health and safety
- relationship and sexual health
- sexual exploitation
- Relational and developmental trauma
-
- resilience building
- self-esteem & identity
- life story work
- managing and promoting contact
- child development
- equal opportunities
- drugs and alcohol awareness
- education and health
- anti-radicalisation
- Therapeutic parenting strategies

Monitoring and evaluation

There is a range of systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of Barnardo's fostering services, to ensure they are effective and high standards of practice are maintained

The following mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the service:

- Carer(s)' Annual Reviews
- Carers' Consultation Forms
- Children's Feedback Forms
- Children's feedback from individual and group participation sessions
- Focus groups with foster carers
- Annual staff appraisals
- Monthly supervision of carer(s)
- Regular supervision of staff
- Reflective Forum facilitated by Consultant Child Psychologist
- Feedback from carers regarding training
- Feedback from carers via annual service satisfaction questionnaire
- Feedback from other professionals
- Feedback from local authority/ trust workers at children's LAC reviews
- Feedback from Trust workers prior to carer(s) reviews
- Evaluation of carers by trainers
- Feedback from panel members
- Panel Attendees Form
- Annual appraisal of panel members
- ADM observation of panel meetings
- Foster care and children's file audits
- Service Quality Assessment, annual assessment undertaken by the Assistant Head of Business
- Quarterly performance reviews by the Assistant Director

- External Monitoring via Trust / Framework monitoring processes
- External monitoring via regulatory body The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) when it comes in to force.

Complaints, allegations and whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the reporting of a concern in the public interest that something is happening within Barnardo's that should not be, or not happening that should be. It is based on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA).

Barnardo's is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, accountability and practice and concerns can be raised via the Whistleblowing process.

For details on where to report a concern see Section 8 – Other Contacts.

Complaints

The aim of Barnardo's complaints process is to resolve a complaint at the most informal level possible.

Complaints can be made in writing or orally to any member of staff up to and including the CEO.

Complainants and staff subject to complaints are kept informed of the progress of the investigation and any associated procedures subject to normal staff confidentiality.

The stages to managing any complaint are:

- Stage 1 Local Resolution
- Stage 2 Independent Investigation
- Stage 3 Review of Process

Stage 1 Local Resolution

This stage will be conducted by the line manager of the person or service being complained about. At the outset the complainant must be asked for their desired outcome.

Stage 1 should normally be completed within 10 working days.

Stage 2 Independent Investigation

The investigation should be completed within 25 work days from the date of agreement that it should take place. Extensions can be given if agreed by the lead manager, the Complaints Officer and complainant and the reasons for delay must be recorded.

Stage 3 Review of Process

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the independent investigation (Stage 2) they or their advocate can request review of how this was undertaken and their representation considered.

For details on where to report a concern see Section 8 – Other Contacts.

Other routes of complaint

If a service is registered with an external body (e.g. Ofsted or RQIA) complainants may directly approach the relevant regulatory body at any stage. The regulatory body has the power to investigate the complaint itself or require Barnardo's or the relevant local authority / trust to do so.

For details on the relevant regulatory body and their contact details see section 9.

Allegations against foster carers/staff

Allegations made by a child (or on behalf of a child) will be followed up via the Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland (SBNI). The role of the SBNI is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Northern Ireland under Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016.

Regulation and inspection of services

RQIA: *when in force:*

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
5 Lanyon Pl,
Belfast
BT1 3BT

Other relevant contact details

Whistleblowing

Contact the whistleblowing hotline run by Barnardo's Independent Corporate Audit and Inspection Unit (CAIU) on:

Telephone: 020 8498 7311

Email: whistleblowing@barnardos.org.uk

Complaints

Barnardo's Head Office

Tanners Lane

Ilford, Essex

IG6 1QG

Telephone: 020 8550 8822

Mobile: 07917 187718 (*for text or voice mail about complaints*)

Email: cs.complaints@barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo's Northern Ireland

542 – 544 Upper Newtownards Road,

Belfast

BT4 3HE

Telephone: 028 9067 2366

Email: cs.complaints@barnardos.org.uk

You could also text or email – see information under Barnardo's Head Office

Children's Commissioners

www.niccy.org