



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Region:

Northern Ireland

Date:

January 2022

**Application for registration as a
Voluntary Adoption Agency**

Registration Body:

RQIA

Registration Number:

020764



Believe in
children
 Barnardo's

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Principles	Pages 3-5
Objectives, Aims & Outcomes	Page 5
Service Registration Details	Pages 6-8
Staffing Structure	Pages 9-12
Monitoring and Evaluation	Pages 13-16
Adoption Services Provided	Pages 17-24
Complaints and Representation	Pages 25-27
Registration Authority Details	Page 28

Introduction

It is a requirement of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 that all voluntary adoption agencies provide a Statement of Purpose.

This Statement of Purpose has been compiled in accordance with.

- The Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989
- The Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1996
- The Adoption Allowance Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996
- The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- The Adoption Regional Policy and Procedures Health and Social Care Board 2010 (amended 2017)
- The Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) (England and Wales)
- The Marriage (Same-sex Couples) and Civil Partnership (Opposite-sex Couples) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2019

A copy of this Statement of Purpose has been provided to RQIA and is accessible from the Barnardo's Family Placement and NI websites and made available on request. This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually or more often if required.

Principles

- We believe that a child's future should not be defined by their past and that every child deserves the chance to fulfil their potential.
- We recognise the effects of early life and pre-birth trauma for children referred to our service and its long-term impact both on children and those who seek to re-parent them.

- We have a strong belief in the value of family life for children who cannot live with their families of birth. We are strongly committed to providing these children with an alternative family experience with dedicated parents who can emotionally and legally claim children, enabling them to grow up with full family membership.
- We have a strong commitment to finding adoptive families for children with complex health, development, emotional and physical needs who may not otherwise have the opportunity to achieve legal permanence through adoption.
- We are dedicated to supporting Looked-after children to achieve continuity and permanence in relationships. Where it is assessed as being in the child's best interests and they wish to do so, we work to support and enable Barnardo's foster carers to adopt a child placed in their care.
- We recognise the life-long importance of maintaining sibling relationships and where possible; we are committed to finding families who can adopt siblings together and where this is not possible or appropriate, those who can support sibling contact.
- We understand that the children we aim to place for adoption are among the most vulnerable in our community. Children's views, wishes and feelings are sought and unless contrary to their interests, acted upon where possible.
- Barnardo's believes that good parents come from many different backgrounds and are as varied as the children who require placement. We believe it is the connection that adoptive parents make with their child that promotes healing and repair rather than family structure.
- Barnardo's understands the importance of ethnic and cultural identity and aims, where possible, to achieve matched placements with adopters who reflect and/or promote the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, and language of the children being placed.

- Adoption is a lifelong commitment and Barnardo's is committed to remaining responsive and supportive to families at all stages.

Objectives, Aims and Outcomes

1. To provide children with safe, secure and lasting adoptive families. Our policies and services are directed towards achieving this outcome for children referred to us whose care plan is adoption.
2. To increase placement choice for children waiting to be matched for adoption and to reduce delay for them in the adoption process.
3. To provide children who cannot be placed for adoption by their responsible Trust the opportunity to be matched with a family who can meet their needs through adoption. This will include children who require placement with siblings, who are of school-age or have additional needs arising from learning or physical disabilities and children with emotional and behavioural difficulties because of early-life trauma.
4. To recruit, prepare, assess and support prospective adoptive families to meet the complex needs of children requiring adoption. Potential adoptive families will be considered based on their capability to meet the needs of the identified children.
5. 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 to ensure adoptive families receive a range of support to address their child's specific needs

Service Registration Details

Barnardo's is a company 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. It is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee (registered in England under number 61625) and a registered charity in England and Scotland (numbers 216250 and SC037605).

Barnardo's Board of Trustees, by way of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, governs Barnardo's Adoption Agency in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland where the organisation is registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency. This committee meets every four months and receives reports from the registered Responsible Individuals in each nation.

An annual report which provides an overview of Barnardo's adoption activity is presented to Barnardo's Board of Trustees. The Commercial Director coordinates the work of the Agency between Corporate Management and the Family Placement Business Line. Barnardo's Fostering and Adoption NI is registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency with the Registration Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

Helen Browne, Assistant Head of Business, Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland (BFNI) is the Responsible Individual. Helen also acts as Agency Decision Maker.

Priscilla McLoughlin, Operations Manager, is the registered as the Adoption Agency Manager. Priscilla also acts as the Adoption Panel Adviser.

The Responsible Individual and Registered Manager can be contacted via:

Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland
230B Belmont Road
Belfast
BT4 2AW
028 9065 88

In England the main registered office for Barnardo's Adoption and for UK management purposes is:

Barnardo's - North East
1 Lumley Court
Drum Industrial Estate
Chester Le Street
County Durham
DH2 1AN

The Ofsted registration number is SC048403.

The Adoption Branches in England

There are four branches that place children for adoption and adoption support services. An Operations Manager manages each branch.

Adoption Branches England:

- Barnardo's Adoption Service South East -Ofsted Registration SC051838
54 Head Street, Colchester Essex CO1 1PB.
This branch also provides an adoption support services via LINK and the CAFIS service at 10 Jubilee Way, Faversham, Kent ME13 8GD.
- Barnardo's Adoption Yorkshire – Ofsted Registration SC051836
Unit 6, Pavilion Business Park, Royds Hall Road, Leeds, LS12 6AJ.
This branch also has an office base at 222 Eccles Old Road, Salford, Manchester, M6 8AL

- Barnardo's Adoption Midlands and South West, Ofsted
Registration SC434885
Fulford Centre, Gatehouse Avenue, Withywood, Bristol BS13
9AQ
- Barnardo's Adoption North East- Ofsted Registration SC051835
1 Lumley Court, Drum Industrial Estate, Chester le Street,
Durham DH2 1AN.

Adoption Support Branch England:

- Making Connections Ofsted Registration SC051840
Barnardo's Making Connections, 140 Balaam St, London, E13
8RD

Adoption Branch Wales:

- Barnardo's Cymru Adoption CIW Registration_CS2005095655
Barnardo's Cymru, Britannia House, Van Road Caerphilly, CF38
3GG

Adoption Branch Scotland:

- Barnardo's Scotland Adoption Service (incorporating both the
Adoption Placement Service and Adoption Support Service). CIS
Registration CS2005095655

Academy Park, Building 10,000, Gower St, Glasgow G51 1PR

Staffing Structure

The Responsible Individual

Helen Browne, Assistant Head of Business for Family Placement is the Responsible Individual for Barnardo's Fostering and Adoption NI. Helen holds the role of Agency Decision-maker in relation to both adoption and fostering for the service. Helen has worked in Family Placement since 1998 in both statutory and independent fields. She contributed to training, development and policy matters in the Regional Adoption and Fostering Service from 2008 – 2016 before taking up her current post with Barnardo's NI in 2016. Helen qualified as a social worker in 1994 and obtained a Post Qualifying Certificate in Social Work in 2004. In 2014, Helen achieved a Level 5 Coaching and Mentoring qualification with the Institute of Leadership and Management. Helen is registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council; her registration number is 1096598.

The Registered Manager

The Registered Manager, Priscilla McLoughlin is the Operations Manager for the service. Priscilla has worked in family placement for over 30 years as a practitioner and manager, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors in NI. Priscilla qualified as a social worker in 1986 and obtained a post graduate qualification in the Application of Research Methods in Social Work from University of Ulster in 2012. In addition to obtaining a Certificate in Supervisory Management in 1994, Priscilla has completed a range of training relevant to her role as Adoption Manager including on recruiting and assessing adopters for harder-to-place children. Priscilla has delivered a range of adoption-related training including induction training for panel members, BAAF Form F assessment training for adoption social workers and training for statutory social workers on compiling and presenting children's reports to panel for Best Interest recommendations. Priscilla was employed as Adoption Services Manager in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust from 2005-2012 and in that role, was the agency adviser to the Adoption Panel. When employed as Director of BAAF (NI) from 2012-15 she held line management responsibility for the Adoption Registration and Information Service (ARIS), the adoption register for NI and was the independent chair of two statutory adoption panels. In her subsequent employment as Director of

Adoption UK from 2015-17 she supported the development of adoption support services in NI through the establishment of Therapeutic Education Support Services in Adoption (TESSA), a joint project with a voluntary adoption agency.

Priscilla is registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, registration No 1101085.

Service Staff

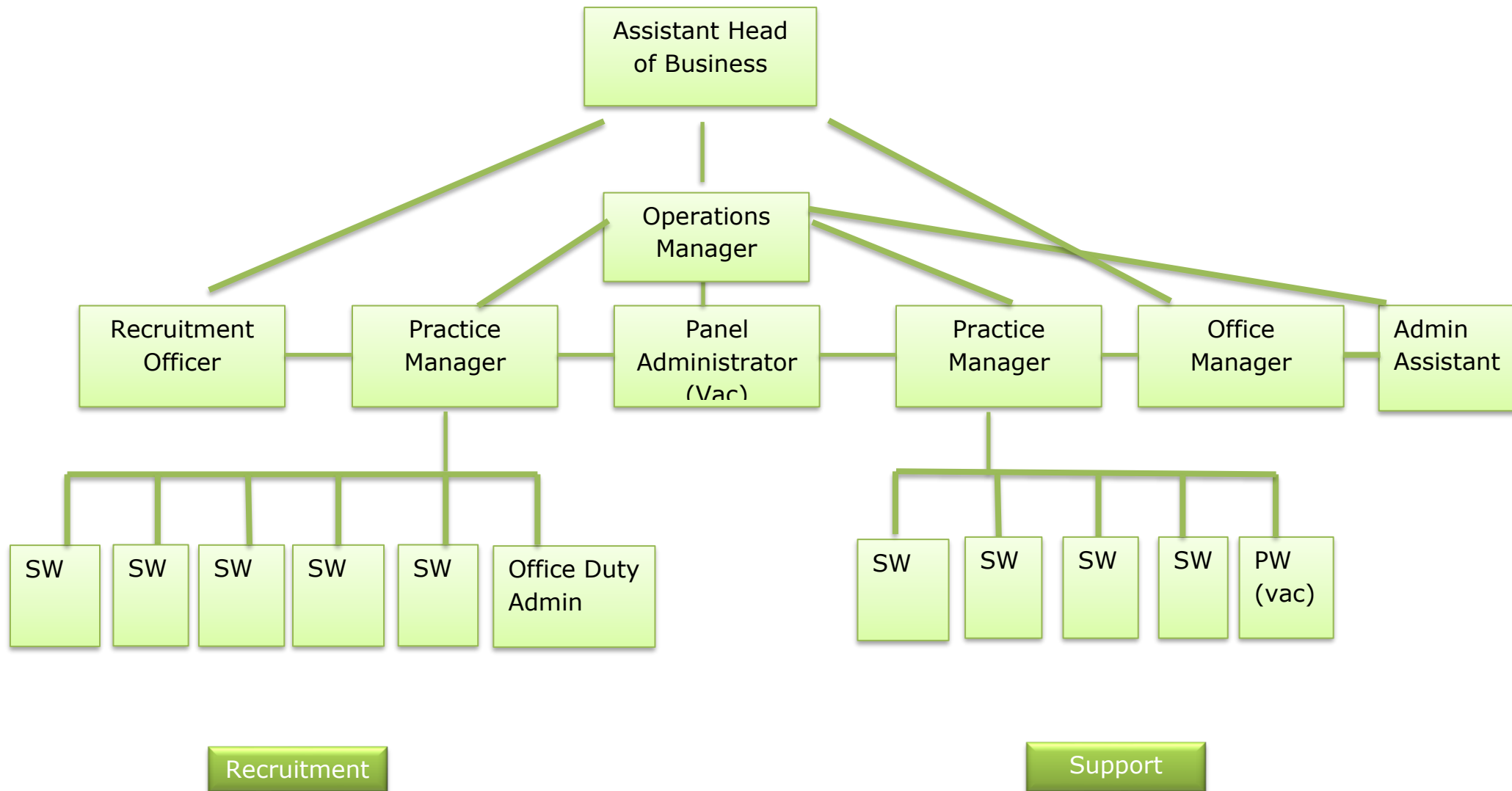
Including two Practice Managers, eleven social workers are employed within the service, in addition to the Assistant Head of Business and Operations Manager. There also three administrators and a recruitment officer. All social workers hold registration with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC). Certificates of social work qualification and NISCC registration are verified on appointment and monitoring processes are in place to ensure social workers maintain their NISCC registration throughout their employment with the service. The Operations Manager is responsible for the effective functioning of the service and, with the Assistant Head of Business, for strategic development. Each Practice Manager line manages a team of social workers, and each has a distinct lead role within the service for the oversight and development of recruitment and support, respectively. All social workers employed have post-qualifying childcare and family placement experience, verified during the shortlisting process. The teams comprise a mix of fulltime and part time social workers with a range of family placement experience, for some staff, extending to over 30 years.

Responsibility for the management of administrative staff is split between the Assistant Head of Business the Operations Manager and one Practice Manager who line manages the Recruitment Administrator. The Panel Administrator (currently vacant) and the Administration Assistant are managed by the Operations Manager. The Office Manager and Recruitment Officer are managed by the Assistant Head of Business.

The Office Manager, who joined the service in 1999, holds a qualification as an Accounting Technician and has responsibility for a range of finance tasks including assisting the Head of Business and Operations Manager in budget-setting and management.

The Recruitment Officer took up employment with the service in 2018 following a 20-year media career in television development. The Office Duty Administrator, who has personal experience as a foster carer and adoption, has responsibility for taking referrals and responding to enquiries.

Organisational Structure



Monitoring and evaluation

The following systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of services delivered and adherence to policy and procedures and legislative requirements.

Staff

- All Social Workers are registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Counsel (NISCC). Registration certificates are viewed during the recruitment process and continued registration with NISCC is verified by line managers annually and copies of registration certificates are retained on file.
- All staff are subject to Access NI checks and monitoring processes in place ensure updated checks are completed on a 3-yearly basis. All staff members are aware of their responsibility to inform their line manager immediately if they receive a criminal conviction, caution, reprimand, or warning or have any other involvement with the police.
- Employment references covering the previous 5 years are taken up on appointment. Referees are interviewed to confirm identity and to provide an opportunity for them to share any additional information they may have felt unable to record on the written reference report.
- A 6 monthly probationary period is required for all staff joining the service. This is used to set objectives for the first 6 months of employment and to identify any potential concerns in respect of competency or capability for the role to which they have been appointed. A review of how the probationary objectives are being achieved is undertaken at 3 months and at the end of the 6-month period, a further review will contribute to the decision on whether the staff member is confirmed in post. If concerns are identified, it may be necessary to extend the probation period or to terminate the employment contract.
- All staff employed by the service are required to complete compulsory online induction training within their first two weeks of employment, alongside participation in a service-specific induction programme. The online induction training includes courses on safeguarding and child protection, data protection

and confidentiality, recording and health and safety. Additionally, all newly appointed staff are required to undertake a 1 day taught training course on safeguarding before they can be confirmed in post.

- All staff receive regular monthly formal supervision from their line manager and a supervision template ensures this covers all necessary areas including health and wellbeing, professional development, safeguarding issues, absenteeism alongside case discussion.
- Performance and Development Reviews (PDR's) are undertaken by managers with each staff member annually, and a mid-year review is completed to monitor progress in achieving the objectives agreed. Staff members' training needs are identified during the PDR and a training needs analysis is undertaken by the Operations Manager to enable service training needs to be addressed during the next 12-month period.
- Barnardo's has a commitment to providing all staff with a minimum of 3 days training annually.
- Where concerns have arisen in relation to a staff member's competence to undertake their role, a Performance Improvement Plan may be implemented and agreed with the staff member that highlights areas for improvement and objectives that will enable improvements in practice to be monitored.
- An annual audit of staff files by the Operations Manager ensures all required processes are in place and the enables the frequency and quality of staff supervision to be reviewed.

Adoption and Fostering Panel

- Independent panel members are recruited through advertisement and a Job Description and Specification for the role is used in the recruitment process. Applicants are interviewed and Access NI checks and references are taken up prior to appointment. Access NI checks are updated on a 3-yearly basis and all panel members are required to notify the service if they receive a criminal conviction or police caution.
- Annual appraisals of all panel members are undertaken by the chair and Operations Manager enabling panel members' training and development needs to be identified. The process also provides an opportunity to seek feedback from panel members

in relation to agency practice. The Assistant Head of Business and Operations Manager undertake an annual appraisal with the Panel Chair.

- The agency produces an annual report on the activity and performance of panel including statistics, membership, training delivered to panel and plans for future development.
- The Assistant Head of Business, in her role as Agency Decision-maker, observes a minimum of 1 panel meeting each year and provides feedback on the Panel's performance and any areas for development.
- Panel receives a half yearly update from the agency on the progress of approved adopters in family-finding and placements made.
- Panel members provide feedback on the quality of reports presented to the agency. Any concerns noted are addressed with the presenting social workers by the Operations Manager.
- All panel attendees and social workers are asked to provide written feedback following attendance at panel. Feedback is shared with the Panel chair and any concerns noted addressed.

Service Practice

- All notifiable events that occur within the service are recorded, ensuring that reporting and reviewing processes and timescales are adhered to.
- Allegations against adopters and foster carers are reported to, reviewed, and closed when appropriate, by the Barnardo's UK Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. The service is required to consider and report lessons learnt prior to closure.
- An annual audit is undertaken on all adopters', foster carers' and children's files to ensure all required processes and checks have been implemented and updated, to monitor the frequency of social work contact and to assess the quality of the service reports on file including carer/ adopters' logs. Actions noted are followed up in supervision by the Practice Managers with the relevant social worker. Where necessary, additional file audits are undertaken.
- Independent social workers who are commissioned by the service to undertake assessments of adoption and fostering applicants are interviewed, and references and Access NI checks taken up and NISCC registration verified. Access NI checks are

updated 3-yearly as required and checks are undertaken to ensure that each independent social worker retains their registration with NISCC during their period of work with the service. All independent social workers are supervised by experienced social workers in the service in undertaking assessments of applicants and a minimum of 2 joint meetings take place with the applicants and the assessing social worker and the supervising social worker. This provides an opportunity for the applicants to share their views on the assessment process and for the agency to address any concerns raised.

- Applicants are asked by the panel to provide feedback on their experience of the assessment process, and they have an opportunity to provide written comments on their assessment report, which is shared with the panel.
- Disruption meetings are held in respect of adoption placements which end prematurely involving the prospective adopters, the child's social worker and the adopter's supervising social worker. These meetings aim to explore learning from the disruption for the service, the prospective adopters, and the Trust responsible for the child. The panel considers reports on placement disruptions and, with the presenting social workers, advises on the lessons to be learned.
- All approved prospective adopters who do not have a placement are reviewed by the Panel.
- Quarterly Performance reviews of the activity of the service are carried out by the Operations Manager and overseen by the Assistant Head of Business.
- Twice-yearly focus groups chaired by the Operations Manager, or the Assistant Head of Business provide an opportunity for approved adopters to provide feedback on the service and make suggestions for future development.
- A national report on the adoption service is presented a minimum of three times a year to the board of trustees.
- The adoption service is inspected by RQIA.

Services Provided

Recruitment, approval, review, and support for adoptive parents

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

Recruitment of adoptive parents

Barnardo's uses local media, social media, links with other community groups and word of mouth to recruit adoptive parents. Recruitment campaigns provide an honest and realistic portrayal of adoption highlighting the rewards and the challenges as well as the complex needs of children waiting for placement. Where we are unable to identify an adoptive placement for a child referred, consideration is given to a child-specific recruitment campaign with the consent of the responsible Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT). Careful consideration is given to protecting children's confidentiality and safety when recruiting adopters for a specific child.

Initial enquiry

All initial enquiries are responded to as soon as possible by the office duty administrator who has both personal and professional experience of adoption. She answers questions enquirers have about the adoption process and sends them an information pack which includes further information about adopting through Barnardo's and the processes involved.

Information meeting

On receipt of the information pack, if the enquirer wishes to proceed, they will be invited to an office-based information session where they will be given further information about adoption, including the preparation, assessment, and legal processes of adoption. The requirement for adopters to be dual approved as foster carers and as adopters to facilitate the placement of a child for whom an application for a Freeing Order is planned, is also be outlined. Details of the challenges children referred to the service for adoption are likely to have experienced are be shared. All enquirers will be made aware, from an early stage in their contact with the service that children placed for adoption through Barnardo's are likely to have a range of complex needs. Enquirers will also be advised that the agency prioritizes the recruitment of adopters who have capacity to meet a high level of need.

Following this meeting, enquirers will be invited to complete a Expression of Interest form if they wish to proceed further in the adoption process with the agency.

Initial home visit

On receipt of the completed Expression of Interest form, a social worker from the service will arrange to complete an initial home visit. This is an opportunity both for the enquirer to find out more about adopting through Barnardo's and for the social worker to ask questions about the enquirer's personal circumstances, in the privacy of their home. The visit will also be used to enable the enquirer and social worker together to consider whether adoption at this time is right for the enquirer. If the enquirer wishes to move to the next stage, they will be required to formally complete the Registration of Interest form.

Registration of Interest form and preliminary checks

The Registration of Interest form seeks consent from an enquirer for the service to make the following checks:

- Access NI checks to obtain information about criminal behaviour and convictions. Not all offences will be regarded as a contra-indicator to adoption, but it is essential that any disclosures are

fully discussed both with the enquirer and with service managers when the Registration of Interest form is received.

- References from other agencies including the Health and Social Services Trust (HSCT) in which the applicant resides and Trusts in whose area the applicant formerly resided.
- References from the enquirer's mortgage provider or landlord.
- A minimum of 3 personal references will be requested, one of whom is required to be a family member.
- References will also be requested from the enquirer's employer and any organisation with which they are/ have been a volunteer.
- We will also request consent for a full medical check to be completed by the applicant's GP.

We will respond within five working days of receipt of the completed Registration of Interest form. In consultation with the relevant Practice Manager, a decision will then be made about whether to invite the enquirer to commence the Stage One of the preparation process.

Stage One – The Pre-Assessment process

It is expected that Stage One will normally be completed within two months. Stage One will focus on initial training and preparation, and on ascertaining, through prescribed checks and references, whether there is any absolute reason why the enquirer should not proceed further.

Part of this stage will require the enquirer to complete tasks such as providing written information about themselves, their family history, and current circumstances. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate any enquirer has difficulty in providing written information. We recognise that people come to adoption from many different circumstances and life experiences. We will guide the enquirer so that they can begin to consider the strengths and vulnerabilities they may bring to the task of adoptive parenting.

A Stage One agreement is drawn up which clearly sets out what needs to be done in a way that feels right for the enquirer.

Preparation training

During this stage we will invite the prospective adopter to start a preparation course. This involves a series of training sessions co-led by an experienced adopter and social worker that may include input from other adopters or specialist workers. The purpose of this training is to provide the enquirer with information and opportunities to thoroughly explore their expectations of adopting. They will meet other enquirers at the same stage of the process and will be given a chance to think more about the children in need of adoption in NI.

During Stage One, formal checks will be completed, and the enquirer asked to attend their GP for a medical check. Personal referees and employers, where the enquirer works with or has previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, will be interviewed, where possible. We will keep in touch with the enquirer throughout Stage One and towards its completion, will review progress with them and highlight any concerns or need for further enquiries.

At the end of Stage One the agency will decide whether the prospective adopter is suitable to proceed to Stage Two. If so, and they also wish to continue in the process, the prospective adopters will be asked to confirm their acceptance and availability to engage in Stage Two.

Application to Stage Two

When we receive an enquirer's acceptance of the invitation proceed to Stage Two, a social worker will meet them and together they will complete a Stage Two Assessment Agreement. This will outline the timeline for undertaking the prospective adopter's assessment and the anticipated date for presentation to the adoption panel. This stage will normally be completed within four months.

Adoption assessment process

During the assessment process the prospective adopter's assessing social worker will spend time with them, getting to know them and exploring their life story and family history. If the applicant has children living at home, the social worker will also need to get to know them as part of the family unit. Children living elsewhere, including adult children, will be interviewed by the social worker.

The assessing social worker will complete the Adoption Assessment Report (AAR) for presentation to the Adoption Panel. This report is scrutinized both by the relevant Practice Manager and Operations Manager as part of our quality assurance process and the prospective adopter will have an opportunity to read and comment on their assessment report before it is presented to the panel.

All applicants attending panel will be provided with advance written information on the panel process and membership. The Adoption Panel is independently chaired by an experienced social work manager who has worked in adoption. The panel is made up of people from a range of professions working with children and includes individuals who have personal experience of adoption, either as an adoptive parent or as an adoptee. The panel will consider the information provided and will meet with the applicant and assessing social worker in making a recommendation on the applicant's suitability to be approved to adopt. The final decision on approval is then made by the Adoption Decision Maker who will write to the prospective adopter to confirm this decision within 28 days of the panel meeting.

Family finding/matching

Towards the end of Stage 2, if a positive recommendation on approval is to be made; early potential family finding may start with the applicant's agreement. This helps to minimize delay for children waiting for adoption.

On approval by the service, the prospective adopters will be asked to complete a Matching and Family Finding Plan Agreement which outlines the process in identifying a child/ren who may be a suitable adoption match. The prospective adopter will also be asked to provide

written consent for their details to be forwarded to the Adoption Regional Information Service (ARIS) enabling them to go "live" on the ARIS register as soon as approval is confirmed, so they can be considered by Trusts for children waiting for placement. They will also be asked to provide consent for their assessment report to be shared with HSCTs to enable matching decisions to be made in respect of children waiting for adoption.

The approved prospective adopter will be assisted to compile a brief personal profile to be used in family-finding. All approved prospective adoptive families are asked to prepare a book and/or DVD about themselves to share with the child who may eventually join their family.

The prospective adopter will be invited to attend ARIS Adoption Exchange meetings which provide an opportunity to view information about children waiting to be placed for adoption, including photographs, personal possessions, artwork, school/ nursery reports. They will have the chance to speak to the children's social workers and to hear more about the children profiled and their needs. Prospective adopters attending Adoption Exchange meetings will be asked to notify social workers profiling any child about whom they are interested in hearing more information and encouraged to provide a copy of their own profile for consideration by the child's social worker.

Children needing adoption may also be referred directly to the service and social workers support prospective adopters in looking at profiles of children and in expressing an interest in children whose needs they feel they can meet. Access to the approved adopter's completed assessment report will be provided by the service via the secure online filing system. If the child's social worker feels that the approved adopter may be the right match for a child a series of meetings to discuss the child in more detail will take place, allowing the prospective adopter to get as much information as possible.

If the placing HSCT and the prospective adopter agree the potential match, the HSCT adoption panel will consider the proposed placement and make a recommendation on the suitability of the proposed match. Depending on whether the child is already the subject of a Freeing Order (Article 18 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1997) or if

parental consent for adoption has been provided, the child may be formally placed for adoption or an informal match may be agreed, if the child is to be placed on a fostering basis and an application to free the child for adoption is planned.

Following the granting of a Freeing Order, the placing Trust's adoption panel will make a recommendation on the formal placement of the child for adoption with the prospective adopters. Final decisions on any recommendation made by a HSCT adoption panel are made by the HSCT Agency Decision Maker. Prospective adopters are usually required to attend HSCT panels when matching is being considered. This panel will also consider any additional support the prospective adopter may require.

When a placement match is agreed, a meeting will take place with the prospective adopter to plan the child's transition and a schedule of introductory dates. This meeting will also consider the child and family's post placement support needs and any specific services required to ensure these are available following the placement move. Barnardo's social workers work closely with adopters throughout these processes and support them in settling the children into their family.

Post – Placement Support

Once a child is placed with prospective adopters, the child's social worker and the adopter's social worker will continue to visit the family regularly to monitor the placement and ensure this is progressing well. Where the child is subject to an application to free them for adoption, prospective adopters will be supported to manage the uncertainty of the legal process and throughout the placement through to the granting of an Adoption Order (Article 12 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1997). Regular review meetings will take place during this time which will consider the stability of the placement, the progress made by the child, the adopter's adjustment to parenting the child, contact with birth family members and consider when it is appropriate for the prospective adopter to lodge a legal application to adopt the child. The adopter will also have the opportunity to attend further training, adopter support groups and social events for adoptive families.

Post-adoption support

Barnardo's recognises that adoption is a lifelong commitment and that adopted children and their families may require additional support at any stage. We will work closely with HSC Trust post adoption support services to ensure specialist support is provided, in addition to support which the service offers. This includes access to further training, ongoing support from specialist adoption social workers and consultation with psychology and sensory OT services. We will also sign-post families to other services including counselling and therapeutic services available through other Barnardo's services across Northern Ireland.

We aim to provide continued open access to all families who adopt through Barnardo's to ensure they feel accepted, understood and at all times respected by the agency.

Complaints and Representation

Children placed with Barnardo's have access to a complaints procedure and will be encouraged and supported to raise any concerns and make a complaint when they wish to do so. An advocate, either their Social Worker, adoptive parent or a children's rights worker, or a friend will help and support them in being heard. Children's personal wishes are taken into account, where appropriate, as are their age, ability and understanding.

The aims:

- To ensure redress for children and young people and adoptive parents through an open and fair processes.
- To promote the participation of children, young people, and their families.
- To safeguard and protect children, young people and vulnerable adults by providing a process for them to raise concerns about the service they are receiving
- To improve service delivery through learning from complaints and representations

All prospective and approved adopters have access to the Barnardo's complaints procedure and will be given information on how to contact /complain including a complaint to the relevant inspectorate body through written information provided from enquiry and beyond. Barnardos has a designated lead manager/advisor for complaints to ensure that all concerns are fully supported and managed in a way that is helpful and complies with the complaints procedure and policy.

Summary of Complaints and Representation Policy*

(*The full policy is available on request)

The aim of Barnardo's complaints process is to resolve a complaint at the most informal level possible. Complainants and staff subject to complaints are kept informed of the progress of the investigation and any associated procedures subject to normal staff confidentiality.

Who is the Complaints Policy for?

- Prospective adopters before consideration by panel.
- Approved adopters post panel.
- Adopters at any time within 12 months after formal contact with Barnardo's has ceased.
- Children and young people who have been placed through Barnardo's and are unhappy with the way they have been treated by Barnardo's.
- Other adult service users.

Who are complaints made to?

- To a social worker or manager in the service – verbally or in writing.
- To a senior manager – verbally or in writing.
- To the complaints officer at the national headquarters – in writing.
- To the support relations team via the Barnardo's website- verbally or in writing

What happens next?

Stage 1 – local resolution of the complaint:

- The complainant is contacted to clarify the complaint.
- The complaint is investigated by an appropriate person within the service or another worker from the service.
- The investigator and complainant meet to discuss the conclusion and any recommendations that may be advised to put things right.
- The investigation standard is to complete the investigation within:
 - 10 working days from receipt of the complaint by the responsible manager.
- If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, they have the right to have their complaint re-examined under Stage 2 of the Procedure.
- The complainant has 20 days after being informed of the outcome of Stage 1 to request a Stage 2 investigation.

Stage 2 - resolution, using someone independent of the service to investigate the complaint:

- A senior manager from Barnardo's independent of the service and the Stage 1 is identified to undertake the Stage 2 investigation.
- An independent person not employed by Barnardo's is appointed to work alongside the investigating senior from Barnardo's ensuring due process is followed according to the procedure and policy and is fair to the complainants.
- They re-examine the complaint after speaking to the complainant.
- They produce reports for the Head of Business for Barnardo's Family Placement services who after considering them will contact the complainant to inform them of his/her decision concerning the outcome and any action if needed.
- A stage 2 investigation is completed within 25 working days

Stage 3 - review

- If a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome a request to progress to a Stage 3 can be made and this must be made within 20 working days of receipt of the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation.
- A stage 3 is a review of the complaints process and can make recommendations for resolutions.
- A Stage 3 review is undertaken at director level independent of the Barnardo's Adoption Agency and will normally be completed within:
 - 45 working days of the request being made and agreed.

Other routes of complaint

Barnardo's Complaints Officer
Barnardo's Youth Village
Hudson St.
North Shields
NE30 1DL
Email: cs.complaints@barnardos.org.uk

Registration Authority Details

Complainants may directly approach the relevant regulatory body, RQIA at any stage. RQIA has the power to investigate the complaint itself or require Barnardo's or the relevant Health and Social Care Trust to do so

The Registration and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is located at:

RQIA
7th Floor
Victoria House
15-27 Gloucester Street
Belfast
BT1 4LS

Telephone: 0289536 1111

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman,
Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast
BT1 6HN

Freephone 0800 34 34 24