

BARNARDO'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES MAKING CONNECTIONS SERVICE

Statement of Purpose for Making Connections

Introduction

Making Connections is a unique service within Barnardo's; its core purpose is twofold: firstly to manage the collection, indexing and storage of Barnardo's child care records in its archive, and secondly to provide an access to records service to adults who were either in Barnardo's care or adopted through Barnardo's as children.

Making Connections is managed by Barnardo's Head Office Children's Services. It is also a branch of the National Barnardo's Adoption Agency and as such provides an adoption support service specifically to Adopted Adults in whose adoptions Barnardo's was involved.

Services Provided

- Access to records and related support service to adults who were in Barnardo's care as children.
- Access to information and related support service to adults who were placed for adoption as children through Barnardo's Adoption Agency.
- Advice and support service to birth relatives of adopted adults who were placed for adoption as children through Barnardo's; information and support service to relatives (as prescribed by legislation) of deceased adults who were placed for adoption as children through Barnardo's.
- A fee-based Family History Service providing written records to direct descendants of people who spent time in Barnardo's care as children.
- A national archiving service for all personal records of children who have used Barnardo's residential and family placement services in the past.
- An archiving service for documents and artefacts relating to the history of the organisation.
- A hub for various activities to facilitate networking between former service users – e.g. running a membership guild, producing a twice-yearly magazine, coordinating reunions etc

Context

- Barnardo's has cared for over 350,000 children since its work began in the 1860s, and archived records date back to the 1870s. Adults in the UK and overseas have grown up unaware of their history; childcare practice in the past emphasised the 'fresh start'. Barnardo's honours its obligations to 'children' who were told they were part of 'the largest family in the world' by providing free access to personal records for individuals on request. This work falls under the statutory framework of the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Barnardo's became an Adoption Agency in 1946; records of adoptions since that time are stored in a discrete system, and adopted adults may access these on request. Records may be sent to other adoption support agencies at the request of the adopted adult, to be shared there. This is statutory work, governed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002, and associated Regulation and Guidance; the service is therefore subject to Ofsted inspection. Making Connections is inspected as a Voluntary Adoption Agency, part of the wider Barnardo's Voluntary Adoption Agency. As such, this sector of the Making Connections service is part of Barnardo's Family Placements pan-regional service.
- The service receives over 1,100 enquiries a year from the descendants of people once in Barnardo's care. Growth of national interest in genealogy has consolidated a level of interest from descendants in Barnardo's records archive. The 'Barnardo's Family History Service' is part of the wider Making Connections service, and is a self-funding service.
- Making Connections receives over 2,000 children's files each year from Barnardo's Regions and Nations. These are sent for scanning, and are then indexed and archived on behalf of the organisation. The archive contains the over 400,000 individual children's records; its Main Card Index system contains over a million cards. Records are stored in various media – hard copy (card index, hand-written ledgers), microfilm and CD.
- The 'Guild of Barnardo's Old Boys and Girls' has been in existence since Dr. Barnardo's day, formed to maintain links and encourage former charges to give back to the organisation once they were established in life. The 'Guild Messenger' magazine

has been sent to all Guild members since 1914; still published twice a year, it is distributed to over 1,000 members.

- Making Connections supports reunions of people who spent time together as children, often by facilitating contact, sometimes by giving administrative support to well-established reunions.

Ethos

Making Connections works to Barnardo's Values as laid out in its Basis and Values statement:

- Respecting the unique worth of every person
- Encouraging people to fulfil their potential
- Working with hope
- Exercising responsible stewardship

In the provision of Access to Records, Intermediary services and related activities to former care adults and adopted adults, we recognise that childhood experiences have a life-long impact, creating issues and feelings for all concerned.

We recognise that societal attitudes to the care of children have changed greatly, resulting in present day recognition of the significance of birth history and family links.

We believe that by reflecting on past decisions and outcomes, we can inform today's practice in adoption and care of children.

We believe that adopted adults, former care adults and their relatives have a right to learn about or revisit their history, and to be assisted to make contact with each other, if they wish.

We aim to provide a culturally-aware service that is sensitive to the needs of the individual.

We provide a service which actively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion.

We regularly review and evaluate the service provided. All users are provided with a feedback form to complete.

Allegations of Historic (non-recent) Abuse

Historic (or non-recent) abuse is defined in Barnardo's as "the actual or likely abuse reported by an adult that she/he, or another person, was abused as a child or young person." This covers allegations about residential, foster care or adoption or any childcare service provided by Barnardo's or another organisation. It includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and also neglect. It does not include a standard of care that was accepted at the time but would not be accepted now.

Making Connections works to Barnardo's current policies, procedures and practices in response to allegations of historical abuse:

- Barnardo's listens to, takes seriously and acts in relation to allegations of historic abuse
- Barnardo's promotes the welfare of former service users who allege historic abuse
- Barnardo's safeguards children who may currently be at risk from alleged perpetrators
- Barnardo's shares information carefully and makes decisions based on legal and best practice requirements
- Barnardo's provides information to ex staff members and carers about the process of investigation

Financial Management

Making Connections is funded largely by Barnardo's Voluntary Funds. It has no statutory income, though some income is generated via tracing services and the Family History Service.

Making Connections' budget is monitored and audited annually by Head Office Financial Services Team.

Service Structure

Making Connections is managed by the children's services manager, the archive manager and the research and administration manager. The service is line-managed by the Head of Safeguarding at Barnardo's Head Office children's services team. The volunteer coordinator is the fourth member of the management team, and reports to the service manager.

The research and administration manager is responsible for a team of archive and administration officers.

The archive manager is responsible for any archive staff and volunteers who work in the service.

The service manager is responsible for a team of project workers and social work senior practitioners.

All staff have regular supervision. Managers, social workers and project workers receive supervision every 4-6 weeks, pro-rata with their working hours. Archive and administration staff receive bi-monthly supervision.

All staff and volunteers undertake Barnardo's e-learning courses in safeguarding, health and safety, and equality, diversity and inclusion; these are updated every 2-3 years.

All staff are encouraged and enabled to seek learning and development opportunities to meet their ongoing learning needs. Internal practice seminars take place bi-monthly, to share new learning, promote excellence and ensure consistency in service provision.

All staff at Barnardo's are expected to commit to a minimum of three days' learning and development activity; this is monitored and recorded as part of each employee's annual Performance and Development Review.

All staff have IT skills and regular opportunities to upgrade these.