



Statement of Purpose

Northern Ireland Fostering Service

Nov 2025

Registration Number 020764

Our Fostering Service address:
**230B Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW,
028 9065 2288**



Changing childhoods. Changing lives.

Contents

Legal Framework	3
Message from CEO	4
Barnardo's status and constitution	5
Aims, Objectives and Outcomes	6
Service Registration Details	7
Service & Staff Structure	8
Job roles and qualifications	9
Foster Homes we Provide	11
Recruitment & Support for Foster Families	12
Quality Monitoring & Governance	16
Complaints, compliments, allegations, whistleblowing	17
Regulation & Inspection	18

“We have a good relationship and have a laugh, Vanessa is firm but fair which is really good for me and helps me.”

Young person in foster care



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.

A copy of the Statement of Purpose will be placed on Barnardo's website. The document is also available on request to: staff, Trusts, foster carers, prospective foster carers and children/ young people.

This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and at least annually.



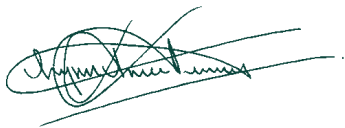
Message from CEO

For more than 150 years, Barnardo's has been changing childhoods and lives, including through our work helping hundreds of thousands of children and young people to live with loving foster families and adoptive parents.

Barnardo's supports around 370,000 children, young people, parents and carers each year through our services and partnerships across the UK.

We believe in all children and young people, and their potential. We support them, stand up for them and bring out the best in each and every child and young person.

We support adoptive parents to welcome children and young people who need a loving and supportive home. We provide over 20 fostering, adoption, and planned break services for families with children and young people of every age, gender, race and ability. Our comprehensive preparation, training and 24/7 support to adoptive parents makes us a trusted choice across the UK.



Lynn Perry MBE
Chief Executive, Barnardo's



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 Northern Ireland Fostering Service is part of Barnardo's Fostering & Adoption Services.

The Director of Fostering & Adoption is Brenda Farrell.

Fostering & Adoption Head Office Address:
Barnardo's - Youth Village
Hudson Street
North Shields
NE30 1DL

Telephone: 0191 296 3355



Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Aims

Barnardo's is a leading national independent fostering agency, providing fostering and planned break fostering across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

We aim to achieve high quality, stable foster homes 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

1. To protect children and young people from abuse and neglect.
2. To recruit, assess, support and train foster carers to provide a range of foster homes for children/ young people who are unable to live with their first families.
3. To provide planned break foster homes for children/ young people living with their first families, and those living with our foster carers.
4. To ensure that foster carer recruitment matches the needs of the children/ young people we aim to look after in our foster homes, so that children/ young people have the opportunity to live within a family which values, recognises and supports their ethnic origin, cultural heritage, religion.
5. To provide support, regular supervision and training opportunities to equip foster carers in meeting the complex needs of children/ young people in our foster homes.
6. To ensure that all legal, regulatory and minimum standard requirements are met in relation to the approval, review and supervision of carers and provision of foster homes to children/ young people, and to monitor that they are being met via quality assurance processes.
7. To provide a 24/7 helpline service for foster carers.
8. To promote secure attachments and stability of foster homes for children and young people in order to achieve better outcomes for their health, education, employment and future independence.
9. To prepare children/ young people adequately for when they leave their foster family and create lifelong attachments with foster carers.
10. To maintain and promote contact between foster children and their first families and or significant others and communicate effectively with parents as appropriate.
11. To promote positive working relationships / partnerships between Barnardo's fostering, adoption and planned break services and local authorities or trusts to facilitate communication and promote good practice for the benefit of children and young people who are fostered by the service.
12. To ensure that the Fostering Panel operates according to legislation and regulations in relation to foster carer approvals, reviews, allegations and complaints.
13. To ensure that the way in which the Service develops, considers the views and wishes of its foster carers, the foster children, and staff by encouraging feedback from everyone in the foster home.
14. To ensure continuous improvement and development of the fostering services through regular training for staff around changes to legislation and regulations and identifying the needs and type of specialist foster homes required.

Service Registration

Name and address of the Registered Provider

Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland, 230B Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW, 028 9065 2288

Name and address of the Responsible Individual

Helen Browne, Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland, 230B Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW, 028 9065 2288

Name and address of the Operations Manager

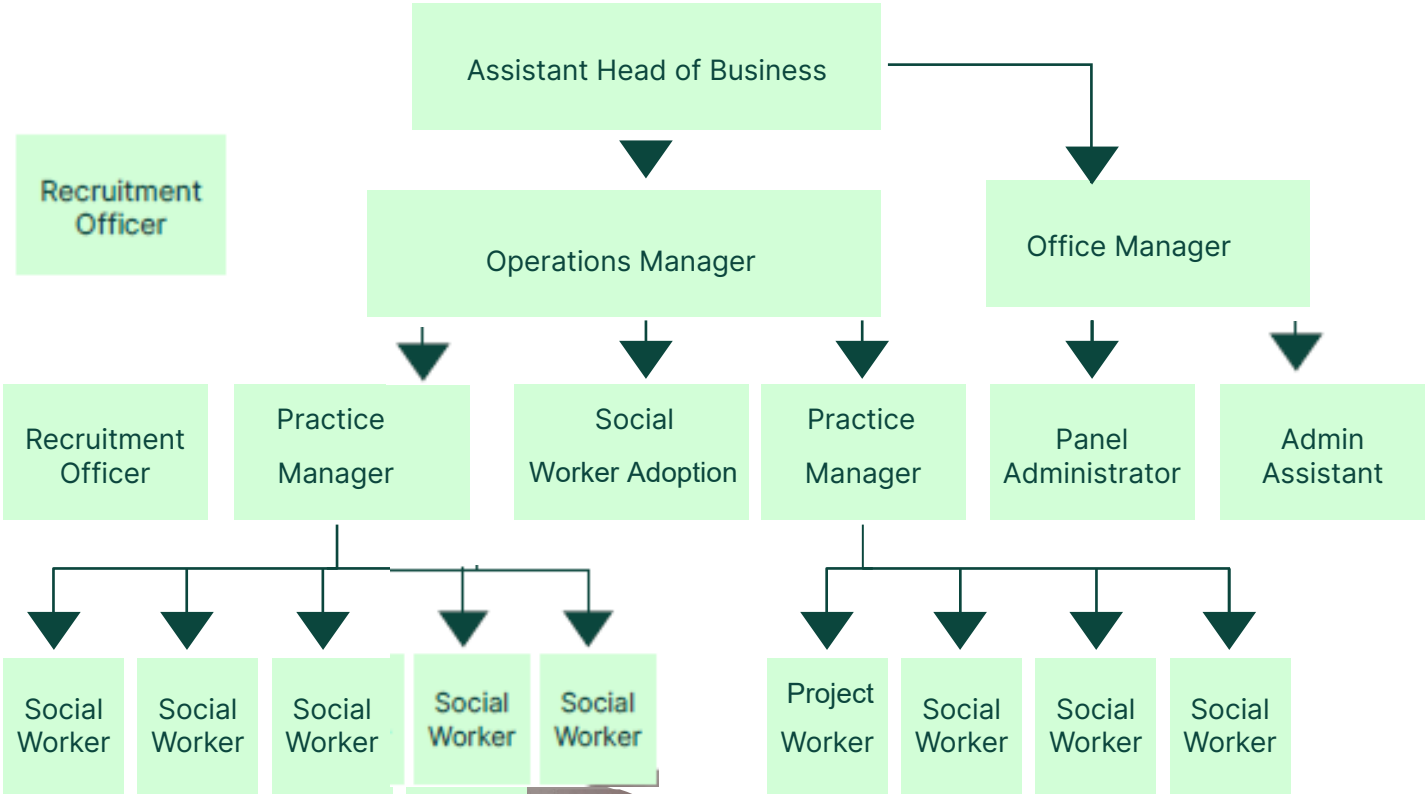
Hilary Armstrong, Barnardo's Fostering Northern Ireland, 230B Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW, 028 9065 2288

The relevant qualifications and experience of the Operations Manager

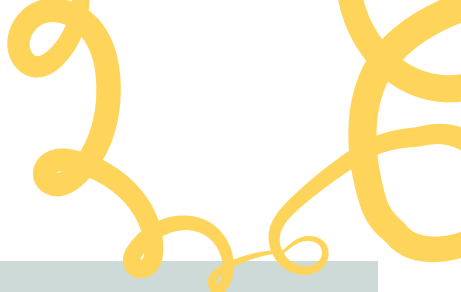
Hilary Armstrong has worked in Fostering since 2006, as both a practitioner and manager, in the voluntary sector with Barnardo's. Hilary qualified as a social worker in 2001 with a diploma in social work and holds the full Post Qualifying Award in Social Work. She is also a qualified Practice Teacher. Hilary is registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, registration No 1097618.



Service & Staff Structure



Job roles and qualifications



Assistant Head of Business

Is the Responsible Individual for the service in Northern Ireland. She is a qualified social worker who holds the role of Agency Decision-maker in relation to both adoption and fostering for the service. She has budgetary responsibility and has a lead role for learning & development of staff in fostering & adoption. She has line management responsibility for the Operations Manager.

Operations Manager

Qualified social worker with management experience who is responsible for budget oversight, and 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 conjoined foster and adoption 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 complaints and allegations, ensuring appropriate procedures are followed and safeguards are in place.

Practice Managers

Qualified social work manager who are registered with NISCC and are 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

Are qualified social workers registered with NISCC who undertake the assessment, support and annual reviews of foster carers. They work in partnership with the children's social work teams to promote good outcomes for each child. They also deliver training, coordinate support groups and together with the Practice Managers, cover the out-of-hours helpline for carers and adopters.

Project Worker

Has responsibility for responding to fostering enquirers and undertaking fostering information face to face and online sessions with fostering enquirers. Her personal experience as a foster carer and adopter enables her to empathise fully with members of the public enquiring for the first time and how they may be feeling at this early stage in the process. The Project Worker also takes a lead role in developing foster care training and links in with the duty team when children are referred.

Office Manager

Undertakes financial duties in the fostering service including invoicing, carer payments, credit control and accounts payable. The Office Manager also has responsibility for health and safety and ensures that the office remains a safe working environment with appropriate risk assessments completed by staff.

Job roles and qualifications

Panel Administrator

Provides administrative support for the foster care/adoption panel ensuring that reports are available for panel members to access and taking a record of panel meetings and ADM decisions. She is also responsible, in consultation with the Operations Manager, for co-ordinating panel meetings and drafting the panel agenda. The Panel Administrator also undertakes required checks in relation to fostering applicants.

Administrative 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.



Foster Homes we Provide

Standard

Most referrals will be considered as 'standard' allowing for emergency, short and long term fostering. Many of our carers are able to offer care for brothers and sisters to allow them 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 foster child in the home so there are no competing needs for the carers to balance, and the children can benefit from intensive support. All carers providing solo foster homes will have specific attachment-focused training designed to enhance their skills and confidence in responding to complex behaviours and to build nurturing and secure relationships with the young person into the future.

The need for a solo foster home may be identified at the point of referral to our service or it may become apparent after the child moves in. 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 foster child in the home, this will become a solo foster home.

Children with Additional Needs

We provide specialist foster homes 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 this area, as well as supporting children with additional needs on short breaks.

Planned Breaks/ Short Breaks

We have carers who provide short breaks to children either on a regular basis or one off basis. These can be for children living at home with their parents, living with kinship foster carers, in residential homes or in Trust foster homes.

Older Young People

We provide foster homes to young people on the brink of adolescence. These foster carers often have a background in working with young people already and are pivotal in giving stability and an experience of family life that they can take into adulthood.

Permanence

We have a proven track record in 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.

Through our integrated model with Children's House, between 2003-2023 we demonstrated expertise in achieving permanence for children who wait the longest for a foster home. We can accept a referral of a child with a permanence plan for whom the Trust has been unable to identify a suitable home for child-specific family finding.

We always put children at the centre of our work, and it was with this in mind that we registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency with RQIA in 2021. The aim of our adoption work is to recruit families for children waiting to be matched for adoption, including children with additional needs, older children and children who require an adoptive home with their brother/sister. Registration as a Voluntary Adoption Agency also enables us to fully support existing foster carers in adopting children in their care so minimising disruption and the risk of broken attachment for the children and enabling their carers to continue to benefit from the support provided by the service after adoption.

Additionally, registration as a Voluntary Adoption Agency alongside the service's status as an independent fostering agency allows us to recruit carers who are approved as both foster carers and adopters so that children can live with our carers at the earliest opportunity, carers who can offer adoption if this plan is agreed by the Trust and through Court.

Recruitment & Support for Foster Families

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

Enquiries

On receiving an enquiry from a prospective foster carer, we take basic information and provide an information pack. A fostering information meeting will then be offered (remove office interview) information meeting may then be offered to provide enquirers with further information on fostering with Barnardo's. An initial home visit is then arranged to discuss in more detail the work of the service and to answer any queries or concerns the enquirer may have. A decision will be reached as to whether the prospective foster carer wishes to and is, suitable to proceed.

Assessment and Approval

If a prospective foster carer is suitable and wishes to proceed, an application to be assessed is completed, including consent for the Fostering Service to undertake background checks to ascertain suitability to foster.

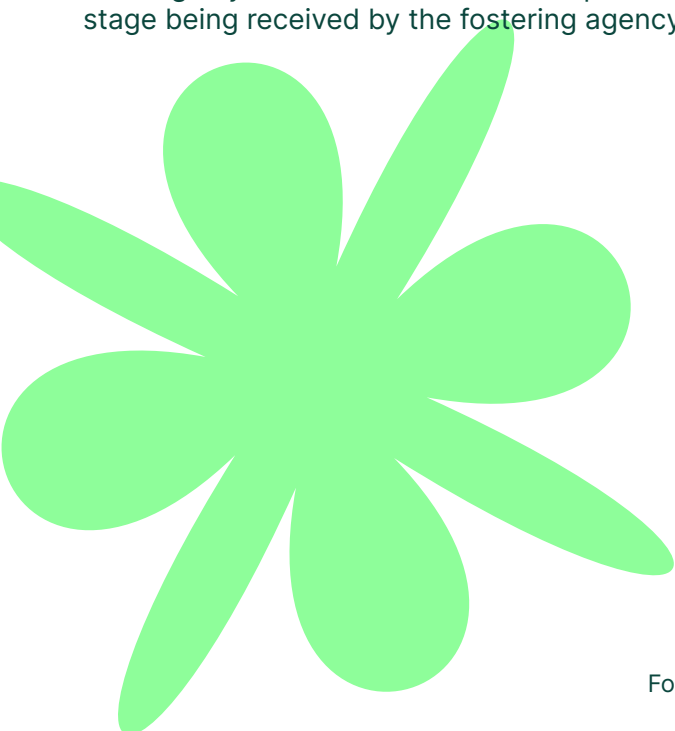
The process for assessing a person's suitability to foster consists of two parts. This is referred to as **Stage 1** and **Stage 2**. These stages can be carried out concurrently, but the information for **Stage 1** must be sought as soon as possible, and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 is 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.
- Criminal records checks undertaken on household members via the DBS / PVG/ Disclosure Scotland/ Access NI on all household members 10 years and over, as well as checks with Department of Health, Social Services and any other relevant agency, for example Health, Education, NSPCC, Ofsted, previous fostering and adoption agencies.
- Criminal records checks may also be undertaken on any other regular visitor to the household who may have care of foster children. Some checks are repeated every three years.
- The applicant/s are required to have a medical examination which is completed by their GP, who sends the completed Medical Report to Barnardo's Medical Adviser for comments about the applicant/s health.
- The applicant/s is also asked to name up 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 approval 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 Agency Decision Maker 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 Two

If it is decided to undertake Stage 2 of the assessment, this requires the fostering service to obtain the information below -

- Details of personality and childhood and life experiences.
- Capacity to care for a child/ young person from any particular religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic 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, competence and potential relevance to their capacity to care effectively for a child/ young person who will be fostered by them.

A qualified and experienced social worker will carry out the assessment by carrying out a number of visits to the applicant at home, and virtually, meeting all members of the family and gather information about the applicant's experience and skills. The information will be collated and forms the basis of an assessment report (Coram BAAF Form F). This report is shared and discussed with the applicants.

During the assessment preparation period, Skills to Foster training is provided by the Service. This includes the role and responsibilities of foster carers, working with different agencies, and child/ young person attachment, trauma and development. All applicants are required to attend.



Panel

The completed assessment report is presented to the Fostering Panel. Applicants are invited to attend the Panel.

The Panel will make a recommendation about the suitability of the applicants to be approved as foster carers. The recommendation is then passed to a Senior Manager in Barnardo's, who is nominated as the organisation's 'Agency Decision Maker', who makes 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.

Matching

Our matching process and planning take account of our foster parents' particular strengths, skills and experience.

Our training and support programme for foster parents enables us to assess and match children and young people with suitable foster parents. This promotes good foster home stability and is always child/ young person focussed.

All children/ young people living with foster parents have access to health, activity, education, and employment opportunities in accordance with their assessed needs, considering for example, their age, cultural identity and cognitive and physical abilities.

Foster Carer Reviews

Reviews take place by Barnardo's Fostering Service, in line with regulatory requirements outlined in Regulation 4 Foster Placement (Children) Regulations.

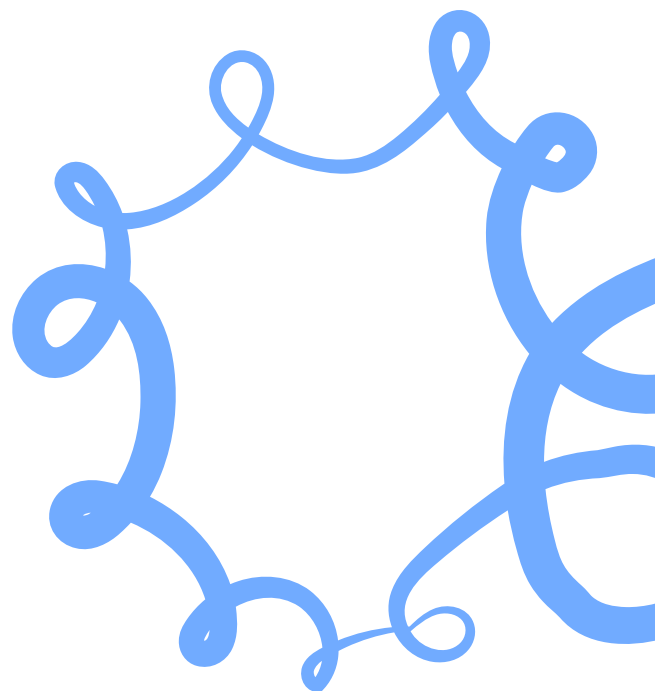
A first review must take place within 12 months after approval and subsequent reviews take place every 12 months thereafter. Barnardo's must be satisfied that the foster carers continue to meet the required standards.

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, 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 foster home is the quality of support that foster carers receive. Barnardo's Fostering Service offers the following support to all our foster carers:

- All of our 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 and in taking a therapeutic care- giving approach to aid recovery.
- We recognise 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 trained social workers have been trained to undertake narrative work with children alongside their carers and Trust social workers.
- Supervision and support from a named qualified and experienced Social Worker Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm.
- Access to a 24/7 out of hours helpline.
- Frequent visits, (minimum of once per month) and regular telephone contact from the supervising social worker.
- Foster carer handbook.
- At least two unannounced visits per year.
- Regular support group meetings and / or Buddy / Mentoring Support.



- Social events including events for children/ young people in foster homes, children of foster carers and foster carers.
- A comprehensive post-approval training programme.
- Foster carer handbook.
- Twice yearly service newsletter.
- Where appropriate, and where in line with the child/ young person's care plan, a planned break service to provide alternative experiences for the child/ young person.
- Liaison with local authorities/ trusts including attendance at relevant meetings.
- A level of financial support that values and recognises foster carer's skills and time including a foster carer fee and fostering allowance.
- Twice yearly focus groups which enable foster carers to share their views and influence service development.



Foster carer training

Barnardo's Fostering recognises that fostering is a complex and demanding role 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 foster carers are competent and confident in providing safe care and in protecting children/young people 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 carer groups
- Participation in formal training events with other foster carers and social workers.

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

- safeguarding
- recording
- first aid
- managing behaviour
- attachment
- bereavement & loss
- health and safety
- relationship and sexual health
- sexual exploitation
- relational and developmental trauma
- therapeutic parenting
- resilience building
- self-esteem & identity
- life story work
- managing and promoting family time
- child development
- equal opportunities
- medication management
- drug and alcohol awareness
- education and health
- anti-radicalisation

Quality Monitoring & Governance

There are a range of systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision of Barnardo's fostering services, to ensure they are effective and that the quality is of an appropriate standard -

- Foster Carer Annual Reviews
- Foster carers and foster children/ young people review feedback forms
- Children/ young people feedback from participation sessions
- Annual staff appraisals
- Carer focus groups & annual satisfaction questionnaire
- Monthly supervision of foster carers
- Regular supervision of staff
- Reflective Forum facilitated by Consultant Child Psychologist
- Feedback from foster carers regarding training
- Feedback from other professionals
- Feedback from trust workers
- Evaluation of foster carers by trainers
- Feedback from panel members and panel attendees
- File Audits
- Quarterly performance & improvement reviews by the Assistant Director and Head of Service Development & Quality
- External Monitoring via Trust / Framework monitoring processes
- External monitoring via regulatory body The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) when it comes into force.
- Young Inspectors



Complaints, compliments, allegations & whistleblowing

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.

The stages to managing any complaint are:

Stage 1- Early Resolution

A worker or manager listens to the complaint and agrees a course of action to resolve the situation. It is an opportunity to resolve concerns or complaints without recourse to a formal process.



Stage 1- Formal Complaint

When the worker or manager has been unable to resolve concerns at the early resolution stage or the complaint is such that the manager considers a stage one would be the first step.



Stage 2- Final Complaint

When the complaint has been investigated at Stage One and the complainant remains unhappy with the outcome. Decision to investigate at stage two is made by the complaints lead manager. Another manager will be the investigating officer and an independent person will shadow investigation.

Complaints contact:

Barnardo's Head Office, Tanners Lane, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG

Telephone: **020 8550 8822** Email: **cs.complaints@barnardos.org.uk**



Compliments

We celebrate our work and achievements with compliments and commendations being recorded. Here is a selection of comments made about our staff and the services we offer:

Comments from Young Inspectors Inspection Feb 2024

Children said they were–

“well supported by foster carers and Barnardo’s Social Workers who are well established within the service. Carers are doing a good job taking children out to lots of places.”

Health Trusts said –

“One of the great strengths with Barnardo’s is just really good communication. There’s a good matching process, in terms of making sure that the right children are matched with the right carers. And I think Barnardo’s has put a lot of work and thought into that.”

Young Inspectors said –

“Foster Carers have good relationships with Barnardo’s staff who go above and beyond meeting their needs more than the Trusts and have a longevity with the service. Foster carers receive extensive training based around specific children.”

Panel members said –

“Barnardo’s foster carers are supported by their Barnardo’s social workers who visit them regularly. They seem to go the extra mile in terms of access and those different supports.”

“External organisations and Commissioners consider Barnardo’s Fostering and Adoption Northern Ireland Service to be welcoming, approachable, transparent, and meet the needs of children especially keeping siblings together and continually providing safe care and positive outcomes.”

Foster carers said –

“Our social worker is very helpful in giving us advice and tips in terms of how to communicate with the children that are in our care and that they are good at providing training just on particular topics.”

“Barnardo’s social workers have always been very good at putting us at ease and very good in terms of their communication with us. They are very helpful and their ability to recognise our skills in terms of matching us up with a child, and very supportive all the way through the process.”

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.

Foster carers are supported by Barnardo's during an allegation and encouraged to access support via their Fostering Network membership, sourced by Barnardo's.

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.

Safecall is our Whistleblowing service provider, and their details are below. The link [here](#) also takes through how we handle any reports we receive. You can contact Safecall on 0800 915 1571 or online

through the '[Report a Whistleblowing Concern](#)'. Your report won't be traced and Safecall has trained operators to support you. The service is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Other routes of complaint

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

RQIA: when in force:

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, 7th Floor, Victoria House, 15-27 Gloucester St, Belfast, BT1 4LS

You can also contact the Children's Commissioner www.niccy.org

Regulation & Inspection

Barnardo's Fostering Services in Northern Ireland are awaiting the new Fostering Regulations 2025. When established the regulatory body will be The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, 7th Floor, Victoria House, 15-27 Gloucester St, Belfast, BT1 4LS

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barnardos.org.uk

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Ely Family Centre, Grand Avenue, Cardiff CF5 4LE. 029 2057 7074.



Changing childhoods. Changing lives.