



Statement of Purpose

Northern Ireland Adoption Service

March 2025

Registration Number 020764

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



Changing childhoods. Changing lives.

Contents

Legal Framework	3
Message from CEO	4
Principals	5
Aims, Objectives and Outcomes	6
Service Registration Details	7
Service & Staff Structure	8
Services Provided	10
Quality Monitoring & Governance	15
Complaints, compliments, allegations, whistleblowing	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

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 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 NI Adoption website and made available on request. This Statement of Purpose is reviewed and updated annually or more often if required.



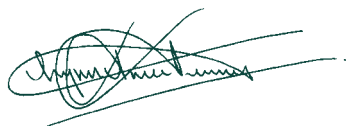
Message from CEO

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



Principals

- 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 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 needing an adoptive home 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 need an adoptive home. 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 the best match between the child and the adoptive parents, with adopters who reflect and/or promote the ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, and language of the children.
- Adoption is a lifelong commitment and Barnardo's is committed to remaining responsive and supportive to families at all stages.



Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Objectives 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 choice of adoptive homes for children waiting to be matched for adoption and to reduce delay for them in the adoption process.
3. To provide children who cannot live with adopters from their responsible Trust the opportunity to be matched with a family who can meet their needs through adoption. This will include children who need to live 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

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 and Scotland where the organisation is currently registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency. This will extend to adoption services in Northern Ireland on registration as a Voluntary Adoption Agency with RQIA. 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 Director coordinates the work of the Agency between Corporate Management and the Adoption Service. 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 is the Responsible Individual. Helen also acts as Agency Decision Maker.

Hilary Armstrong, Operations Manager, Hilary is the registered manager and also acts as the adoption panel advisor.

The Responsible Individual and Registered Manager can be contacted via:

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

In England the main registered office for Barnardo's Adoption and for UK management purposes is: Barnardo's Adoption, Unit 9, Pavilion Business Park, Royds Hall Road, Leeds, LS12 6AJ, Ofsted Registration is SC051836



Adoption Branches England:

There are four adoption branches. An Operations Manager manages each branch.

- **Barnardo's Adoption Service South East** – Ofsted Registration SC051838

Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex, IG6 1QG

This branch also provides two adoption support services:

- 1) LINK Service – Wellington House, 90-92 Butt Road, Colchester, CO3 3DA
- 2) CAFIS service – 10 Jubilee Way, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8GD

- **Barnardo's Adoption North England** – Ofsted Registration SC051836

Unit 9, Pavilion Business Park, Royds Hall Road, Leeds, LS12 6AJ. This branch also has an office base in the North West and North East of the region.

- **Barnardo's Adoption Midlands and South West** – Ofsted Registration SC434885

The Granary, Tickenham Court Farm, Washing Pound Lane, Tickenham, Clevedon, BS21 6SX

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.** SCSWIS Registration CS2005095655

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

Service & Staff Structure

The Responsible Individual

Helen Browne, Assistant Head of Fostering & Adoption 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 fostering and adoption 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

Hilary Armstrong holds the position of Operations Manager in the service. Hilary has worked in the area of fostering and adoption since 2006, as both a practitioner and manager, in the voluntary sector with Barnardo's. Hilary qualified as a social worker in 2001 and holds the full Post Qualifying Award in Social Work: parts 1-6. She is also a qualified Practice Teacher. Hilary is registered with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council, registration No 1097618.

Service Staff

Including two Practice Managers, ten social workers are employed within the service, in addition to the Assistant Head of Business and Operations Manager. There are also three administrators, a recruitment officer and a project worker. 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/assessment and support/development, respectively. All social workers employed have post-qualifying childcare and fostering/adoption experience, verified during the shortlisting process. The team comprises of a mix of full time and part time social workers with a range of fostering/adoption experience, for some staff, extending to over 30 years.

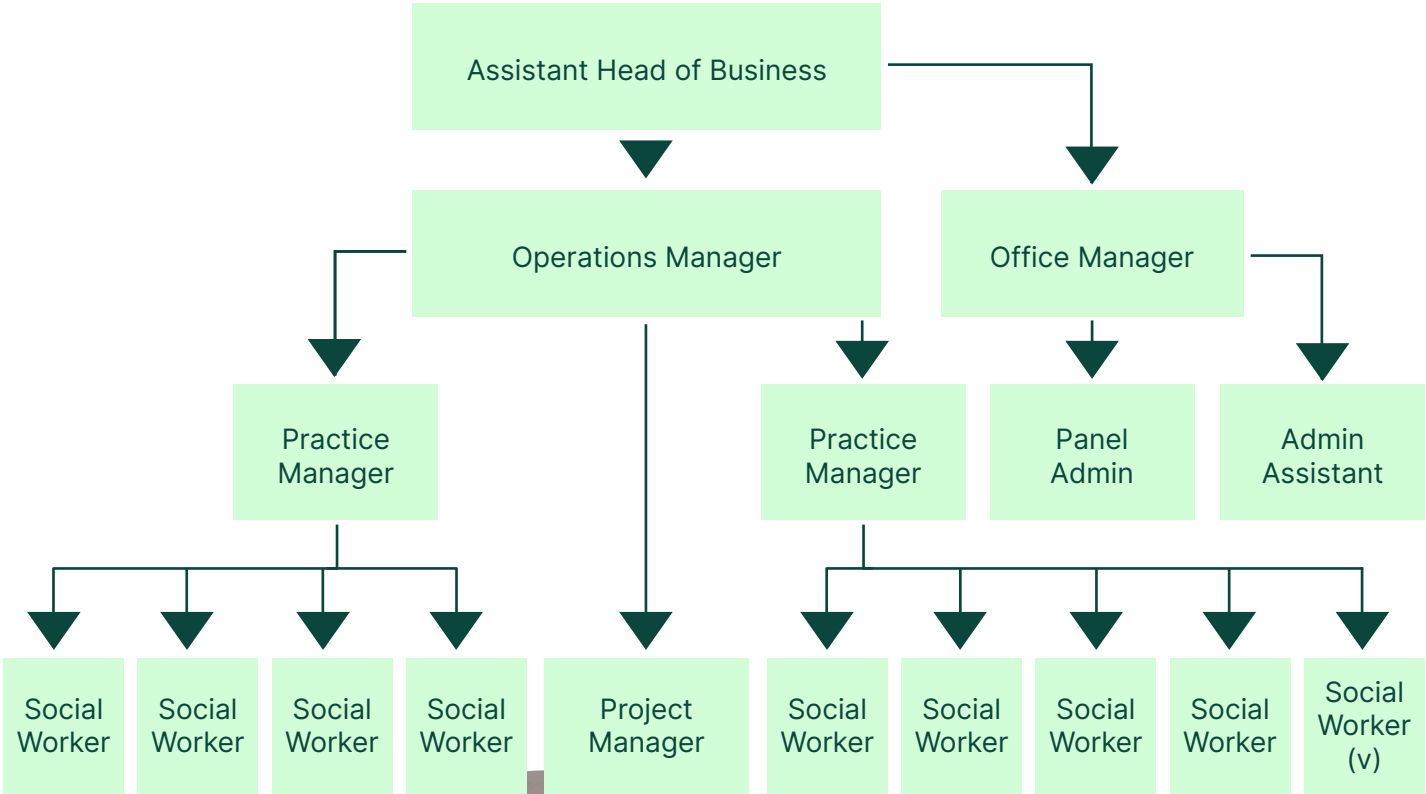
The Panel Administrator and the Administration Assistant are managed by the Office Manager. The Office Manager and operations manager are managed by the Assistant Head of Business. The Office Manager, who joined the service in 2022 has responsibility for a range of finance tasks including assisting the Assistant Head of Business and Operations Manager in budget-setting and financial management, carer payments and accounts payable. The Office Manager is responsible for health and safety and ensuring the office remains a safe working environment with appropriate risk assessments completed by staff.

Admin Assistants

Undertake 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 Recruitment Officer took up employment with the service in 2018 following a 20-year media career in television development. The Project Worker, who has personal experience as a foster carer and adopter, has responsibility for taking referrals and responding to enquiries and a remit to support the delivery of training to the foster carers and adopters.

Service & Staff Structure



Services Provided

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 needing adoptive homes. Where we are unable to identify an adoptive home 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 Project Worker or a Duty Social Worker. The worker goes through the essential criteria and answers any questions enquirers have about the adoption process. An information pack is sent out which includes further information about fostering to adopt through Barnardo's and the processes involved.

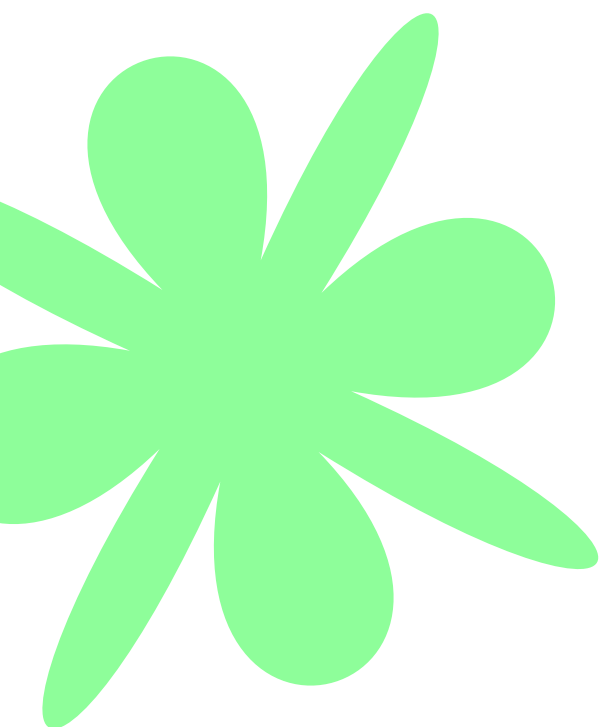
Information meeting

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

Following this meeting, enquirers will be invited to complete an 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 to consider together whether adoption at this time is right for the enquirer. In consultation with the relevant Practice Manager, a decision will then be made about whether to invite the enquirer to commence Stage One of the preparation process. If the enquirer wishes to move to the next stage, they will be required to formally complete the Registration of Interest form.



Assessment Process

The process for assessing a person's suitability to adopt consists of two parts. This is referred to as **Stage 1** and **Stage 2**.

Stage 1

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.

Stage 1 of the assessment process is intended to provide the decision maker with basic information

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 adoption agency.

about the applicant's suitability (or not) to proceed to Stage 2 of the assessment in which more detailed information is collected.

It is expected that Stage 1 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 who 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 1 agreement is drawn up which clearly sets out what needs to be done in a way that feels right for the enquirer.

During this stage we will invite enquirers to a preparation course. This involves a series of 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 have a chance to think more about the children in need of adoption in NI.

We will keep in touch with the enquirer 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 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.



Stage Two - assessment process

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.

During the assessment process the assessing social worker will spend time with applicants, 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 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 Agency 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 an adoptive home. 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 in compiling 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.

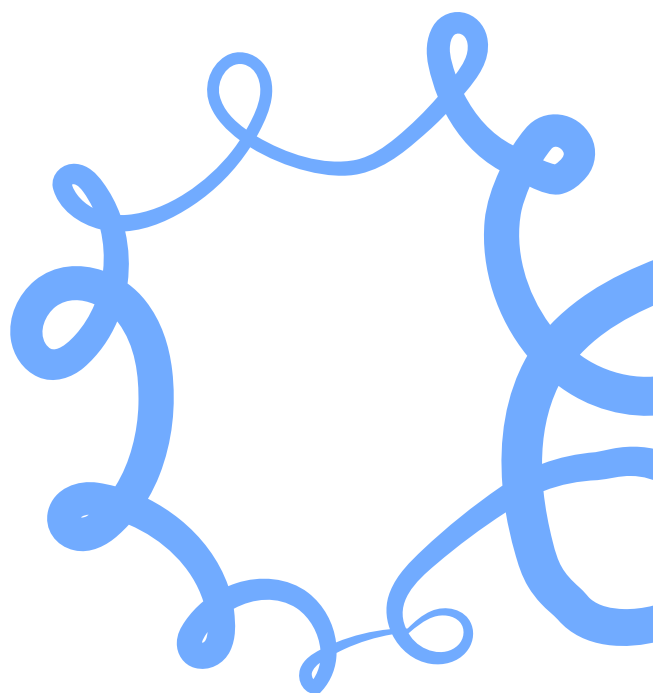
The prospective adopter will be invited to attend ARIS Adoption Exchange meetings which provide an opportunity to view information about children waiting for an adoptive home, including photographs, personal possessions, artwork, school/ nursery reports. They will have the chance to speak to the children's 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 on the potential match, the HSCT adoption panel will consider the proposed adoptive home 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 1897) 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 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 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 support needs and any specific services required to ensure these are available following the move. Barnardo's social workers work closely with adopters throughout these processes and support them in settling the children into their family.



Support Needs

Once a child moves in, the child's social worker and the adopter's social worker will continue to visit the family regularly to monitor how things are going, 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 process of granting an Adoption Order (Article 12 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1897). Regular review meetings will take place during this time which will consider the stability of the home, 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.



Quality Monitoring & Governance

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 Council (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 discussions.
- 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 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 Panel 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 children living with our adopters.



- 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 practice managers or the panel advisor.
- 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 manager. 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 adoptive homes 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 disruptions and, with the presenting social workers, advises on the lessons to be learned.
- All approved prospective adopters who do not have a child living with them 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 wider adoption service is presented a minimum of three times a year to the board of trustees.
- The adoption service is inspected by RQIA.

Complaints, compliments, allegations & whistleblowing

Complaints

Children living with Barnardo's adopters 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.

All prospective adopters have access to Barnardo's complaints procedure and will be given information on how to contact/complain to the relevant inspectorate body.

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 One - 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 One - 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 Two - 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

Other routes of complaint

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:

**Cromac Avenue,
Belfast,
BT7 2JA
Telephone: 0289536 1111**

Compliments

We are always looking at ways to improve our service and therefore we always welcome feedback, comments and compliments about any aspect of the service. These will be used to ensure continuous service improvements. A register of compliments and complaints is held centrally and regularly updated as these are received.

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.



© Barnardo's, 2024 All rights reserved

No part of this pack, including images, may be reproduced or stored on an authorised retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without prior permission of the publisher.

All images are posed by models and names have been changed to protect identities.

barnardos.org.uk

Barnardo House Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford,
Essex IG6 1QG. 020 8550 8822.

Northern Ireland 542–544 Upper Newtownards
Road, Belfast BT4 3HE. 028 9067 2366.

Scotland 111 Oxfords Road North, Edinburgh
EH14 1ED. 0131 446 7000.

Cymru/Wales Trident Court, East Moors Road,
Cardiff CF24 5TD. 029 2049 3387.

