

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.
Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes



2022 CHAPTER 18

PROSPECTIVE

PART 1

Adoption

CHAPTER 1

Introductory

Considerations applying to the exercise of powers

1.—(1) This section applies whenever a court or adoption agency is coming to a decision relating to the adoption of a child.

(2) The paramount consideration of the court or adoption agency must be the child's welfare, throughout the life of the child.

(3) The court or adoption agency must at all times bear in mind that, in general, any delay in coming to the decision is likely to prejudice the child's welfare.

(4) The court or adoption agency must have regard to the following matters (among others)—

- (a) the value to the child of a stable and harmonious family unit;
- (b) the child's particular needs;
- (c) the likely effect on the child (throughout the life of the child) of having ceased to be a member of the original family and become an adopted person;

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- (d) the child's age, sex, background and any of the child's characteristics which the court or agency considers relevant;
- (e) any harm (within the meaning of the Children Order) which the child has suffered or is at risk of suffering;
- (f) the child's ascertainable wishes and feelings regarding the decision (considered in the light of the child's age and understanding);
- (g) the relationship which the child has with relatives, with any person who is a prospective adopter with whom the child is placed, and with any other person in relation to whom the court or agency considers the relationship to be relevant, including—
 - (i) the likelihood of any such relationship continuing and the value to the child of its doing so;
 - (ii) the ability and willingness of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, to provide the child with a secure environment in which the child can develop, and otherwise to meet the child's needs;
 - (iii) the wishes and feelings of any of the child's relatives, or of any such person, regarding the child.

(5) In placing the child for adoption, the adoption agency must give due consideration to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.

(6) The court or adoption agency must always consider the whole range of powers available to it in the child's case (whether under this Act or the Children Order); and the court must not make any order under this Act unless it considers that making the order would be better for the child than not doing so.

(7) In this section "coming to a decision relating to the adoption of a child", in relation to a court, includes—

- (a) coming to a decision in any proceedings where the orders that might be made by the court include an adoption order (or the revocation of such an order), a placement order (or the revocation of such an order) or an order under section 23 or 49 (or the revocation or variation of such an order); and
- (b) coming to a decision about granting leave in respect of any action (other than the initiation of proceedings in any court) which may be taken by an adoption agency or individual under this Act,

but does not include coming to a decision about granting leave in any other circumstances.

(8) For the purposes of this section—

- (a) references to relationships are not confined to legal relationships;
- (b) references to a relative, in relation to a child, include the child's mother and father.

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Commencement Information

II S. 1 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

CHAPTER 2

The Adoption Service

The Adoption Service

Basic definitions

2.—(1) The services maintained under section 4(1) may be collectively referred to as “the Adoption Service”.

(2) In this Act—

“adoption agency” means an adoption authority or an appropriate voluntary organisation;

“adoption society” means a body whose functions consist of or include making arrangements for the adoption of children;

“adoption authority” is to be construed in accordance with section 3.

(3) In this Act “appropriate voluntary organisation” means a voluntary organisation which is an adoption society in respect of which a person is registered; but in relation to the provision of any facility of the Adoption Service, references to an appropriate voluntary organisation or to an adoption agency do not include an adoption society if the registration is not in respect of that facility.

(4) Registration in respect of an adoption society is to be treated as being in respect of any facility of the Adoption Service unless it is a condition of the registration that that facility is not provided.

(5) In subsections (3) and (4)—

“registered” means registered under Part 3 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003;

“registration” means registration under that Order.

(6) In this Act “adoption support services” means—

(a) counselling, advice and information; and

(b) such other services as may be prescribed,

in relation to adoption.

(7) The power to make regulations under subsection (6)(b) is to be exercised so as to secure that adoption authorities provide financial support.

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(8) In this Chapter references to adoption are to the adoption of persons, wherever they may be habitually resident, effected under the law of any country or territory, whether within or outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Commencement Information

I2 S. 2 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption authority

3.—(1) Every HSC trust is the adoption authority in relation to its area.

(2) But regulations may provide that in relation to prescribed functions or services under this Act another HSC trust is to be the adoption authority in relation to that area.

(3) In this Act—

“HSC trust” means a Health and Social Care trust established under Article 10 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 except the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust; and

references to the area of an HSC trust are to its operational area as specified under paragraph 3A of Schedule 3 to the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1991.

(4) Regulations may amend the definition of “HSC trust” in subsection (3).

Commencement Information

I3 S. 3 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

The Adoption Service

4.—(1) An adoption authority must maintain a service designed to meet the needs, in relation to adoption, of—

- (a) children who may be adopted, their parents and guardians;
- (b) persons wishing to adopt a child; and
- (c) adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians;

and for that purpose must provide the requisite facilities.

(2) Those facilities must include making, and participating in, arrangements—

- (a) for the adoption of children; and

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(b) for the provision of adoption support services.

(3) As part of the service, the arrangements made for the purposes of subsection (2)(b)—

(a) must extend to the provision of adoption support services to persons who are within a prescribed description;

(b) may extend to the provision of those services to other persons.

(4) An adoption authority may provide any of the requisite facilities by securing their provision by—

(a) an appropriate voluntary organisation or in relation to the provision of adoption support services of a prescribed description a voluntary organisation; or

(b) other persons who are within a prescribed description of persons who may provide the facilities in question.

(5) The facilities of the service must be provided in conjunction with any other social care provided by the adoption authority, with appropriate voluntary organisations and with voluntary organisations providing facilities under subsection (4)(a), so that help may be given in a co-ordinated manner without duplication, omission or avoidable delay.

(6) In this section “social care” has the meaning given by section 2(5) of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009 (and, in particular, social care in so far as it relates to children).

Commencement Information

I4 S. 4 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Assessments etc. for adoption support services

5.—(1) An adoption authority must at the request of—

(a) any of the persons mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) of section 4(1), or

(b) any other person who falls within a prescribed description (subject to subsection (8)(a)),

carry out an assessment of that person’s needs for adoption support services.

(2) An adoption authority may, at the request of any person, carry out an assessment of that person’s needs for adoption support services.

(3) An adoption authority may request the help of the persons mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of section 4(4) in carrying out an assessment.

(4) Where, as a result of an assessment, an adoption authority decides that a person has needs for adoption support services, the adoption authority must

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then decide whether to provide any such services to that person, subject to subsection (5).

(5) An adoption authority must provide adoption support services to a person under subsection (4) where—

- (a) that person is a child who may be adopted;
- (b) that person is a parent or guardian of a child who may be adopted;
- (c) that person is a person wishing to adopt a child;
- (d) that person is an adopted person;
- (e) that person is a parent, natural parent or former guardian of an adopted person; or
- (f) that person is within a prescribed description.

(6) If—

- (a) an adoption authority decides to provide any adoption support services to a person under subsection (4) or is under a duty to do so by virtue of subsection (5); and
- (b) the circumstances fall within a prescribed description,

the adoption authority must prepare a plan in accordance with which adoption support services are to be provided to the person and keep the plan under review.

(7) Regulations may make provision about assessments, preparing and reviewing plans, the provision of adoption support services in accordance with plans and reviewing the provision of adoption support services.

(8) The regulations may in particular make provision—

- (a) as to the circumstances in which a person mentioned in paragraph (b) of subsection (1) is to have a right to request an assessment of that person's needs in accordance with that subsection;
- (b) about the type of assessment which, or the way in which an assessment, is to be carried out;
- (c) about the way in which a plan is to be prepared;
- (d) about the way in which, and time at which, a plan or the provision of adoption support services is to be reviewed;
- (e) about the considerations to which an adoption authority is to have regard in carrying out an assessment or review or preparing a plan;
- (f) as to the circumstances in which an adoption authority may provide adoption support services subject to conditions;
- (g) as to the consequences of conditions imposed by virtue of paragraph (f) not being met (including the recovery of any financial support provided by an adoption authority);

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- (h) as to the circumstances in which this section may apply to an adoption authority in respect of persons who are outside its area;
- (i) as to the circumstances in which an adoption authority may recover from another adoption authority the expenses of providing adoption support services to any person.

(9) An adoption authority may carry out an assessment of the needs of any person under this section at the same time as an assessment of that person's needs is made under any other statutory provision.

(10) If at any time during the assessment of the needs of any person under this section, it appears to an adoption authority that there may be a need for the provision of services to that person—

- (a) by another health and social care body (within the meaning of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009); or
- (b) by the Education Authority,

the adoption authority must notify the body or the Education Authority, as the case may be.

(11) Where it appears to an adoption authority that another public body could, by taking any specified action, help in the exercise of any of the adoption authority's functions under this section, the adoption authority may request the help of that body, specifying the action in question.

(12) A public body whose help is so requested must comply with the request if it is consistent with the exercise of its functions.

Commencement Information

I5 S. 5 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption support services: duty to provide information

6.—(1) Except in prescribed circumstances, an adoption authority must provide the information specified in subsection (2) to—

- (a) any person who has contacted the adoption authority to request information about adopting a child;
- (b) any person who has informed the adoption authority that he or she wishes to adopt a child;
- (c) any person within the adoption authority's area who the adoption authority is aware is a parent of an adopted child; and
- (d) any person within the adoption authority's area who is a parent of an adopted child and has contacted the adoption authority to request any of the information specified in subsection (2).

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(2) The information is—

- (a) information about the adoption support services available to people in the adoption authority's area;
- (b) information about the right to request an assessment under section 5 (assessments etc. for adoption support services), and the adoption authority's duties under that section and regulations made under it; and
- (c) any other information prescribed by regulations.

Commencement Information

I6 S. 6 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Arrangements on cancellation of registration

7.—(1) Where, by virtue of the cancellation of its registration, a body has ceased to be an appropriate voluntary organisation, the Department may direct the body to make such arrangements as to the transfer of the body's functions relating to children and other transitional matters as seem to the Department expedient.

(2) In this section “registration” means registration under Part 3 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Commencement Information

I7 S. 7 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Inactive or defunct adoption societies, etc.

8.—(1) This section applies where it appears to the Department that—

- (a) a body which is or has been an appropriate voluntary organisation is inactive or defunct, or
- (b) a body which has ceased to be an appropriate voluntary organisation by virtue of the cancellation of its registration has not made such arrangements for the transfer of its functions relating to children as are specified in a direction given by the Department.

(2) The Department may, in relation to such functions of the body as relate to children, direct what appears to it to be the appropriate adoption authority to take any such action as might have been taken by the body or by the body jointly with the authority.

(3) An adoption authority is entitled to take any action which—

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(a) apart from this subsection the authority would not be entitled to take, or would not be entitled to take without joining the body in the action, but

(b) the authority is directed to take under subsection (2).

(4) The Department may charge the body for expenses necessarily incurred by the Department or on its behalf in securing the transfer of the body's functions relating to children.

(5) Before giving a direction under subsection (2) the Department must, if practicable, consult both the body and the adoption authority.

(6) In this section "registration" means registration under Part 3 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Commencement Information

18 S. 8 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Regulations

General power to regulate adoption agencies

9.—(1) Regulations may make provision for any purpose relating to the exercise by adoption agencies of their functions in relation to adoption.

(2) The extent of the power to make regulations under this section is not limited by sections 10 to 12, 42, 53, 55 to 64 and 102 or by any other powers exercisable in respect of adoption agencies.

(3) Regulations may provide that a person who contravenes or fails to comply with any provision of regulations under this section is to be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

Commencement Information

19 S. 9 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Management, etc., of agencies

10.—(1) In relation to adoption agencies, regulations under section 9 may make provision as to—

(a) the persons who are fit to work for them for the purposes of their functions relating to adoption;

(b) the fitness of premises;

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- (c) the management and control of their operations;
- (d) the number of persons, or persons of any particular type, working for the purposes of those functions;
- (e) the management and training of persons working for the purposes of those functions;
- (f) the keeping of information.

(2) Regulations made by virtue of subsection (1)(a) may, in particular, make provision for prohibiting persons from working in prescribed positions unless they are registered in, or in a particular part of, the register maintained under section 3 of the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.

(3) In relation to appropriate voluntary organisations, regulations under section 9 may—

- (a) make provision as to the persons who are fit to manage an appropriate voluntary organisation, including provision prohibiting persons from doing so unless they are registered as mentioned in subsection (2);
- (b) impose requirements as to the financial position of an appropriate voluntary organisation;
- (c) make provision requiring the appointment of a manager;
- (d) make provision for securing the welfare of children placed by the appropriate voluntary organisation, including provision as to the promotion and protection of their health.

(4) Regulations under section 9 may make provision as to the conduct of appropriate voluntary organisations, and may in particular make provision—

- (a) as to the facilities and services to be provided by an appropriate voluntary organisation;
- (b) as to the keeping of accounts;
- (c) as to the notification to the RQIA of events occurring in premises used for the purposes of an appropriate voluntary organisation;
- (d) as to the giving of notice to the RQIA of periods during which the manager of an appropriate voluntary organisation proposes to be absent, and specifying the information to be given in such a notice;
- (e) as to the making of adequate arrangements for the running of an appropriate voluntary organisation during a period when its manager is absent;
- (f) as to the giving of notice to the RQIA of any intended change in the identity of the manager;
- (g) as to the giving of notice to the RQIA of changes in the ownership of an appropriate voluntary organisation or the identity of its officers;

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- (h) requiring the payment of a prescribed fee to the RQIA in respect of any notification required to be made by virtue of paragraph (g);
- (i) requiring arrangements to be made for dealing with complaints made by or on behalf of those seeking, or receiving, any of the services provided by an appropriate voluntary organisation and requiring the appropriate voluntary organisation or manager to take steps for publicising the arrangements.

Commencement Information

I10 S. 10 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Fees

11.—(1) Regulations under section 9 may prescribe—

- (a) the fees which may be charged by adoption agencies in respect of the provision of services to persons providing facilities as part of the Adoption Service (including Adoption Services in Great Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man);
- (b) the fees which may be paid by adoption agencies to persons providing or assisting in providing such facilities.

(2) Regulations under section 9 may prescribe the fees which may be charged by adoption authorities in respect of the provision of prescribed facilities of the Adoption Service where the following conditions are met.

(3) The conditions are that the facilities are provided in connection with—

- (a) the adoption of a child brought into the United Kingdom for the purpose of adoption; or
- (b) a Convention adoption, an overseas adoption or an adoption effected under the law of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

(4) Regulations under section 9 may prescribe the fees which may be charged by adoption agencies in respect of the provision of counselling, where the counselling is provided in connection with the disclosure of information in relation to a person's adoption.

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I11 S. 11 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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Independent review of qualifying determinations of adoption agencies

12.—(1) Regulations under section 9 may establish a procedure under which any person in respect of whom a qualifying determination has been made by an adoption agency may apply to the Department for a review of that determination by a panel constituted by the Department.

(2) The regulations must make provision as to the determinations which are qualifying determinations for the purposes of subsection (1).

(3) The regulations may include provision as to—

- (a) the duties and powers of a panel;
- (b) the administration and procedures of a panel;
- (c) the appointment of members of a panel (including the number, or any limit on the number, of members who may be appointed and any conditions for appointment);
- (d) the payment of fees to members of a panel;
- (e) the duties of adoption agencies in connection with reviews conducted under the regulations;
- (f) the monitoring of any such reviews.

(4) Regulations made by virtue of subsection (3)(e) may impose a duty to pay to the Department such sum as the Department may determine.

(5) The Department must secure that, taking one financial year with another, the aggregate of the sums which become payable to the Department under regulations made by virtue of subsection (4) does not exceed the cost to the Department of performing independent review functions.

(6) The Department may make an arrangement with an organisation under which independent review functions are performed by the organisation on behalf of the Department.

(7) If the Department makes such an arrangement with an organisation, the organisation is to perform its functions under the arrangement in accordance with any directions given by the Department.

(8) The arrangement may include provision for payments to be made to the organisation by the Department.

(9) Payments made by the Department in accordance with such provision are to be taken into account in determining (for the purpose of subsection (5)) the cost to the Department of performing independent review functions.

(10) In this section—

“independent review function” means a function conferred or imposed on the Department by regulations made under this section;

“organisation” includes a public body and a private or voluntary organisation.

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Commencement Information

I12 S. 12 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Supplemental

Information concerning adoption

13.—(1) Each adoption agency must give the Department any statistical or other general information which the Department requires about—

- (a) the agency's performance of all or any of its functions relating to adoption;
- (b) the children and other persons in relation to whom it has exercised those functions.

(2) The information required to be given under this section must be given at the times, and in the form, directed by the Department.

(3) The Department may publish abstracts of the information given under this section.

Commencement Information

I13 S. 13 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Inspection of premises, etc.

14.—(1) The Department may arrange for any premises in which—

- (a) a child is living with a person with whom the child has been placed by an adoption agency; or
- (b) a child in respect of whom a notice of intention to adopt has been given under section 41 is, or will be, living,

to be inspected.

(2) The Department may require an adoption agency—

- (a) to give the Department any information; or
- (b) to allow the Department to inspect any records (in whatever form they are held),

relating to the discharge of any of the adoption agency's functions in relation to adoption which the Department specifies.

(3) An inspection under this section must be conducted by a person authorised by the Department.

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(4) A person inspecting any premises under subsection (1) may—

- (a) visit the child there; and
- (b) make any examination into the state of the premises and the treatment of the child there which the person considers necessary.

(5) A person authorised to inspect any records under this section may at any reasonable time have access to, and inspect and check the operation of, any computer (and associated apparatus) which is being or has been used in connection with the records in question.

(6) A person authorised to inspect any premises or records under this section may—

- (a) enter the premises for that purpose at any reasonable time; and
- (b) require any person to give the person so authorised any reasonable assistance which the person so authorised may require.

(7) A person exercising a power under this section must, if required to do so, produce a duly authenticated document showing the person's authority.

(8) Any person who intentionally obstructs another in the exercise of a power under this section is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

Commencement Information

I14 S. 14 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

CHAPTER 3

Placement for adoption and adoption orders

Placement of children by adoption agency for adoption

Placement for adoption by agencies

15.—(1) An adoption agency may—

- (a) place a child for adoption with prospective adopters; or
- (b) where it has placed a child with any persons (whether under this Part or not), keep the child with them as prospective adopters;

but, except in the case of a child who is less than six weeks old, may only do so under section 16 or a placement order.

(2) An adoption agency may only place a child for adoption with prospective adopters if the agency is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption.

(3) A child who is placed or authorised to be placed for adoption with prospective adopters by an adoption authority is looked after by the authority.

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(4) If an application for an adoption order has been made by any persons in respect of a child and has not been disposed of—

- (a) an adoption agency which placed the child with those persons may keep the child with them until the application is disposed of; but
- (b) apart from that, the child may not be placed for adoption with any prospective adopters.

(5) References in this Act (apart from this section) to an adoption agency placing a child for adoption—

- (a) are to its placing a child for adoption with prospective adopters; and
- (b) include, where it has placed a child with any persons (whether under this Act or not), keeping the child with them as prospective adopters;

and references in this Act (apart from this section) to a child who is placed for adoption by an adoption agency are to be interpreted accordingly.

(6) References in this Chapter to an adoption agency being, or not being, authorised to place a child for adoption are to the agency being or (as the case may be) not being authorised to do so under section 16 or a placement order.

(7) This section is subject to sections 27 to 32 (removal of children placed by adoption agencies).

(8) In subsection (4) “adoption order” means an adoption order made under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I15 S. 15 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Placing children with parental consent

16.—(1) Where an adoption agency is satisfied that each parent or guardian of a child has consented to the child—

- (a) being placed for adoption with prospective adopters identified in the consent; or
- (b) being placed for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the agency,

and has not withdrawn that consent, the agency is authorised to place the child for adoption accordingly.

(2) Consent to a child being placed for adoption with prospective adopters identified in the consent may be combined with consent to the child subsequently being placed for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the agency in circumstances where the child is removed from or returned by the identified prospective adopters.

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(3) Subsection (1) does not apply where—

- (a) an application has been made on which a care order might be made and the application has not been disposed of; or
- (b) a care order or placement order has been made after the consent was given.

(4) References in this Act to a child placed for adoption under this section include a child who was placed under this section with prospective adopters and continues to be placed with them, whether or not consent to the placement has been withdrawn.

(5) This section is subject to section 51 (parental etc. consent).

Commencement Information

I16 S. 16 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Advance consent to adoption

17.—(1) A parent or guardian of a child who consents to the child being placed for adoption by an adoption agency under section 16 may, at the same or any subsequent time, consent to the making of a future adoption order.

(2) Consent under this section—

- (a) where the parent or guardian has consented to the child being placed for adoption with prospective adopters identified in the consent, may be consent to adoption by them; or
- (b) may be consent to adoption by any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the agency.

(3) A person may withdraw any consent given under this section.

(4) A person who gives consent under this section may, at the same or any subsequent time, by notice given to the adoption agency—

- (a) state that the person does not wish to be informed of any application for an adoption order; or
- (b) withdraw such a statement.

(5) A notice under subsection (4) has effect from the time when it is received by the adoption agency but has no effect if the person concerned has withdrawn the consent.

(6) This section is subject to section 51 (parental etc. consent).

Commencement Information

I17 S. 17 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Placement orders

18.—(1) A placement order is an order made by the court authorising an adoption authority to place a child for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the authority.

(2) The court may not make a placement order in respect of a child unless—

- (a) the child is subject to a care order;
- (b) the court is satisfied that the conditions in Article 50(2) of the Children Order (conditions for making a care order) are met; or
- (c) the child has no parent or guardian.

(3) The court may only make a placement order if, in the case of each parent or guardian of the child, the court is satisfied—

- (a) that the parent or guardian has consented to the child being placed for adoption with any prospective adopters who may be chosen by the adoption authority and has not withdrawn that consent; or
- (b) that the parent’s or guardian’s consent should be dispensed with.

(4) Subsection (3) is subject to section 51 (parental etc. consent).

(5) A placement order continues in force until—

- (a) it is revoked under section 21;
- (b) an adoption order is made in respect of the child; or
- (c) the child marries, forms a civil partnership or attains the age of 18 years.

(6) In subsection (5) “adoption order” means an adoption order made under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I18 S. 18 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Applications for placement orders

19.—(1) An adoption authority must apply to the court for a placement order in respect of a child if—

- (a) the child is placed for adoption by the adoption authority or is being provided with accommodation by it;
- (b) no adoption agency is authorised to place the child for adoption;
- (c) the child has no parent or guardian or the authority considers that the conditions in Article 50(2) of the Children Order are met; and
- (d) the adoption authority is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(2) If—

- (a) an application has been made (and has not been disposed of) on which a care order might be made in respect of a child; or
- (b) a child is subject to a care order and the appropriate authority is not authorised to place the child for adoption,

the appropriate authority must apply to the court for a placement order if the appropriate authority is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption.

(3) If—

- (a) a child is subject to a care order; and
- (b) the appropriate authority is authorised to place the child for adoption under section 16,

the appropriate authority may apply to the court for a placement order.

(4) If an adoption authority—

- (a) is under a duty to apply to the court for a placement order in respect of a child; or
- (b) has applied for a placement order in respect of a child and the application has not been disposed of,

the child is looked after by that adoption authority.

(5) Subsections (1) to (3) do not apply in respect of a child—

- (a) if any persons have given notice of intention to adopt, unless the period of four months beginning with the giving of the notice has expired without them applying for an adoption order or their application for such an order has been withdrawn or refused; or
- (b) if an application for an adoption order has been made and has not been disposed of.

(6) Where—

- (a) an application for a placement order in respect of a child has been made and has not been disposed of; and
- (b) no interim care order is in force,

the court may give any directions it considers appropriate for the medical or psychiatric examination or other assessment of the child; but a child who is of sufficient understanding to make an informed decision may refuse to submit to the examination or other assessment.

(7) The appropriate authority—

- (a) in relation to a care order, is the authority in whose care the child is placed by the order; and
- (b) in relation to an application on which a care order might be made, is the authority which makes the application.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(8) In subsection (5) “adoption order” means an adoption order made under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I19 S. 19 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Varying placement orders

20.—(1) The court may vary a placement order so as to substitute another adoption authority for the adoption authority authorised by the order to place the child for adoption.

(2) The variation may only be made on the joint application of both adoption authorities.

Commencement Information

I20 S. 20 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Revoking placement orders

21.—(1) The court may revoke a placement order on the application of any person.

(2) But an application may not be made by a person other than the child or the adoption authority authorised by the order to place the child for adoption unless—

- (a) the court has given leave to apply; and
- (b) the child is not placed for adoption by the adoption authority.

(3) The court cannot give leave under subsection (2)(a) unless satisfied that there has been a change in circumstances since the order was made.

(4) If the court determines, on an application for an adoption order, not to make the order, it may revoke any placement order in respect of the child.

(5) Where—

- (a) an application for the revocation of a placement order has been made and has not been disposed of; and
- (b) the child is not placed for adoption by the adoption authority,

the child may not without the court’s leave be placed for adoption under the order.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Commencement Information

I21 S. 21 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Parental responsibility

22.—(1) This section applies while—

- (a) a child is placed for adoption under section 16 or an adoption agency is authorised to place a child for adoption under that section; or
- (b) a placement order is in force in respect of a child.

(2) Parental responsibility for the child is given to the agency concerned.

(3) While the child is placed with prospective adopters, parental responsibility is given to them.

(4) The agency may determine that the parental responsibility of any parent or guardian, or of prospective adopters, is to be restricted to the extent specified in the determination.

Commencement Information

I22 S. 22 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Contact

23.—(1) On an adoption agency being authorised to place a child for adoption, or placing a child for adoption who is less than six weeks old, any provision for contact under the Children Order ceases to have effect.

(2) While an adoption agency is so authorised or a child is placed for adoption—

- (a) no application may be made for any provision for contact under the Children Order; but
- (b) the court may make an order under this section requiring the person with whom the child lives, or is to live, to allow the child to visit or stay with the person named in the order, or for the person named in the order and the child otherwise to have contact with each other.

(3) An application for an order under this section may be made by—

- (a) the child or the agency;
- (b) any parent, guardian or relative;
- (c) any person in whose favour there was provision for contact under the Children Order which ceased to have effect by virtue of subsection (1);

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- (d) if a residence order was in force immediately before the adoption agency was authorised to place the child for adoption or (as the case may be) placed the child for adoption at a time when the child was less than six weeks old, the person in whose favour the order was made;
- (e) if a person had care of the child immediately before that time by virtue of an order made in the exercise of the High Court's inherent jurisdiction with respect to children, that person;
- (f) any person who has obtained the court's leave to make the application.

(4) When making a placement order, the court may on its own initiative make an order under this section.

(5) In this section “provision for contact under the Children Order” means a contact order under Article 8 of the Children Order or an order under Article 53 of that Order (parental contact with children in care).

Commencement Information

I23 S. 23 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Contact: supplementary

24.—(1) An order under section 23—

- (a) has effect while the adoption agency is authorised to place the child for adoption or the child is placed for adoption; but
- (b) may be varied or revoked by the court on an application by the child, the agency or a person named in the order.

(2) The agency may refuse to allow the contact that would otherwise be required by virtue of an order under that section if—

- (a) it is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to safeguard or promote the child's welfare; and
- (b) the refusal is decided upon as a matter of urgency and does not last for more than seven days.

(3) Regulations may make provision as to—

- (a) the steps to be taken by an agency which has exercised its power under subsection (2);
- (b) the circumstances in which, and conditions subject to which, the terms of any order under section 23 may be departed from by agreement between the agency and any person for whose contact with the child the order provides;

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- (c) notification by an agency of any variation or suspension of arrangements made (otherwise than under an order under that section) with a view to allowing any person contact with the child.
- (4) Before making a placement order the court must—
 - (a) consider the arrangements which the adoption agency has made, or proposes to make, for allowing any person contact with the child; and
 - (b) invite the parties to the proceedings to comment on those arrangements.
- (5) An order under section 23 may provide for contact on any conditions the court considers appropriate.

Commencement Information

I24 S. 24 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Further consequences of placement

- 25.—**(1) Where a child is placed for adoption under section 16 or an adoption agency is authorised to place a child for adoption under that section—
- (a) a parent or guardian of the child may not apply for a residence order unless an application for an adoption order has been made and the parent or guardian has obtained the court’s leave under subsection (3) or (5) of section 44;
 - (b) if an application has been made for an adoption order, a guardian of the child may not apply for a special guardianship order unless the guardian has obtained the court’s leave under subsection (3) or (5) of that section.
- (2) The following subsections apply where—
- (a) a child is placed for adoption under section 16 or an adoption agency is authorised to place a child for adoption under that section; or
 - (b) a placement order is in force in respect of a child.
- (3) A person must not remove the child from the United Kingdom unless the court gives leave or each parent or guardian of the child gives written consent.
- (4) Subsection (3) does not prevent the removal of the child from the United Kingdom for a period of less than one month by a person who provides the child’s home.
- (5) A person must not cause the child to be known by a new surname unless the court gives leave or each parent or guardian of the child or the adoption agency gives written consent.
- (6) The adoption agency must not give its consent under subsection (5) unless it has given at least 14 days’ notice of its intention to do so to—
- (a) every person with parental responsibility for the child; and

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- (b) if the agency considers that the child has sufficient understanding, the child.
- (7) Subsection (5) is subject to any direction of the court.
- (8) The court may vary or revoke a direction under subsection (7)—
 - (a) on the application of—
 - (i) any person mentioned in subsection (6)(a);
 - (ii) if the child appears to the court to have sufficient understanding, the child; or
 - (iii) the adoption agency; or
 - (b) in any family proceedings in which a question arises in relation to the welfare of the child without an application having been made.
- (9) In subsection (8)(b) “family proceedings” has the same meaning as in the Children Order.
- (10) This section applies whether or not the child is in Northern Ireland.

Commencement Information

I25 S. 25 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Further consequences of placement orders

- 26.**—(1) Where a placement order is made in respect of a child and either—
- (a) the child is subject to a care order; or
 - (b) the court at the same time makes a care order in respect of the child,
- the care order does not have effect at any time when the placement order is in force.
- (2) On the making of a placement order in respect of a child, any order mentioned in Article 8(1) of the Children Order, and any supervision order in respect of the child, ceases to have effect.
- (3) Where a placement order is in force—
- (a) no prohibited steps order, residence order or specific issue order; and
 - (b) no supervision order or child assessment order,
- may be made in respect of the child.
- (4) Subsection (3)(a) does not apply in respect of a residence order if—
- (a) an application for an adoption order has been made in respect of the child; and

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(b) the residence order is applied for by a parent or guardian who has obtained the court's leave under subsection (3) or (5) of section 44 or by any other person who has obtained the court's leave under this subsection.

(5) Where a placement order is in force, no special guardianship order may be made in respect of the child unless—

- (a) an application has been made for an adoption order; and
- (b) the person applying for the special guardianship order has obtained the court's leave under this subsection or, if the person is a guardian of the child, has obtained the court's leave under section 44(5).

(6) Article 14A(7) of the Children Order applies in respect of an application for a special guardianship order for which leave has been given as mentioned in subsection (5)(b) with the omission of the words “the beginning of the period of three months ending with”.

(7) Where a placement order is in force—

- (a) Article 14C(1)(b) of the Children Order (special guardianship: parental responsibility) has effect subject to any determination under section 22(4);
- (b) paragraphs (3) and (4) of that Article (special guardianship: removal of child from UK etc.) do not apply.

Commencement Information

I26 S. 26 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Removal of children who are or may be placed by adoption agencies

General prohibitions on removal

27.—(1) Where—

- (a) a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency under section 16; or
- (b) a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency and either the child is less than six weeks old or the agency has at no time been authorised to place the child for adoption,

a person (other than the agency) must not remove the child from the prospective adopters.

(2) Where—

- (a) a child who is not for the time being placed for adoption is being provided with accommodation by an authority; and
- (b) the authority has applied to the court for a placement order and the application has not been disposed of,

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only a person who has the court's leave (or the authority) may remove the child from the accommodation.

- (3) Where subsection (2) does not apply, but—
- (a) a child who is not for the time being placed for adoption is being provided with accommodation by an adoption agency; and
 - (b) the agency is authorised to place the child for adoption under section 16 or would be so authorised if any consent to placement under that section had not been withdrawn,

a person (other than the agency) must not remove the child from the accommodation.

(4) This section is subject to sections 28 to 30 but those sections do not apply if the child is subject to a care order.

(5) This group of sections (that is, this section and those sections) apply whether or not the child in question is in Northern Ireland.

(6) This group of sections does not affect the exercise by any authority or other person of any power conferred by any statutory provision, other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order (removal of children from accommodation provided under Article 21).

(7) This group of sections does not prevent the removal of a child who is arrested.

(8) A person who removes a child in contravention of this section is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

Commencement Information

I27 S. 27 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Recovery by parent etc. where child not placed or is a baby

- 28.**—(1) Subsection (2) applies where—
- (a) a child who is not for the time being placed for adoption is being provided with accommodation by an adoption agency; and
 - (b) the agency would be authorised to place the child for adoption under section 16 if consent to placement under that section had not been withdrawn.
- (2) If any parent or guardian (“P or G”) of the child informs the agency that P or G wishes the child to return to P or G, the agency must secure the child's return to P or G within the period of 14 days beginning with the request unless

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an application is, or has been, made for a placement order and the application has not been disposed of.

(3) Subsection (4) applies where—

- (a) a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency and either the child is less than six weeks old or the agency has at no time been authorised to place the child for adoption; and
- (b) any parent or guardian (“P or G”) of the child informs the agency that P or G wishes the child to return to P or G,

unless an application is, or has been, made for a placement order and the application has not been disposed of.

(4) The agency must give notice of the parent’s or guardian’s wish to the prospective adopters who must secure the child’s return to the agency within the period of seven days beginning with the day on which the notice is given.

(5) A prospective adopter who fails to comply with subsection (4) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(6) The agency must secure the child’s return to the parent or guardian in question before the end of the period of seven days from the day on which the child returns to the agency.

Commencement Information

I28 S. 28 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Recovery by parent etc. where child placed and consent withdrawn

29.—(1) This section applies where—

- (a) a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency under section 16; and
- (b) consent to placement under that section has been withdrawn,

unless an application is, or has been, made for a placement order and the application has not been disposed of.

(2) If a parent or guardian (“P or G”) of the child informs the agency that P or G wishes the child to return to P or G—

- (a) the agency must give notice of P’s or G’s wish to the prospective adopters; and
- (b) the prospective adopters must secure the return of the child to the agency within the period of seven days beginning with the day on which the notice is given.

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(3) A prospective adopter who fails to comply with subsection (2)(b) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(4) The agency must secure the return of the child to the parent or guardian in question within the period of seven days beginning with the day on which the child returns to the agency.

(5) Where a notice under subsection (2) is given, but—

- (a) before the notice was given, an application for an adoption order, special guardianship order or residence order, or for leave to apply for a special guardianship order or residence order, was made in respect of the child; and
- (b) the application (and, in a case where leave is given on an application to apply for a special guardianship order or residence order, the application for the order) has not been disposed of,

the prospective adopters are not required by virtue of the notice to secure the return of the child to the agency unless the court so orders.

(6) In subsection (5) references to an application for an adoption order are references to an application for an adoption order under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I29 S. 29 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Recovery by parent etc. where child placed and placement order refused

30.—(1) This section applies where—

- (a) a child is placed for adoption by an adoption authority under section 16;
- (b) the adoption authority has applied for a placement order and the application has been refused; and
- (c) any parent or guardian (“P or G”) of the child informs the adoption authority that P or G wishes the child to return to P or G.

(2) The prospective adopters must secure the return of the child to the adoption authority on a date determined by the court.

(3) A prospective adopter who fails to comply with subsection (2) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

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(4) The adoption authority must secure the return of the child to the parent or guardian in question within the period of seven days beginning with the day on which the child returns to the adoption authority.

Commencement Information

I30 S. 30 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Placement orders: prohibition on removal

31.—(1) Where a placement order in respect of a child—

- (a) is in force; or
- (b) has been revoked, but the child has not returned from the prospective adopters or remains in any accommodation provided by an adoption authority,

a person (other than the adoption authority) may not remove the child from the prospective adopters or from accommodation provided by the adoption authority.

(2) A person who removes a child in contravention of subsection (1) is guilty of an offence.

(3) Where a court revoking a placement order in respect of a child determines that the child is not to remain with any former prospective adopters with whom the child is placed, they must secure the return of the child to the adoption authority within the period determined by the court for the purpose; and a person who fails to do so is guilty of an offence.

(4) Where a court revoking a placement order in respect of a child determines that the child is to return to a parent or guardian, the adoption authority must secure the return of the child to the parent or guardian before the end of the period of seven days—

- (a) from the day on which the child returns to the adoption authority; or
- (b) where the child is in accommodation provided by the adoption authority, from the day on which the revocation of the placement order comes into force.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(6) This section does not affect the exercise by any adoption authority or other person of a power conferred by any statutory provision, other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

(7) This section does not prevent the removal of a child who is arrested.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(8) This section applies whether or not the child in question is in Northern Ireland.

Commencement Information

I31 S. 31 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Return of child in other cases

32.—(1) Where a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency and the prospective adopters give notice to the agency of their wish that the child return to the agency to end the placement, the agency must—

- (a) receive the child from the prospective adopters before the end of the period of seven days beginning with the giving of the notice; and
- (b) give notice to any parent or guardian of the child of the prospective adopters' wish to end the placement.

(2) Where a child is placed for adoption by an adoption agency, and the agency—

- (a) is of the opinion that the child should not remain with the prospective adopters; and
- (b) gives notice to them of its opinion,

the prospective adopters must, not later than the end of the period of seven days beginning with the giving of the notice, secure the child's return to the agency.

(3) If the agency gives notice under subsection (2)(b), it must give notice to any parent or guardian of the child of the obligation to secure the child's return to the agency.

(4) A prospective adopter who fails to comply with subsection (2) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(5) Where—

- (a) an adoption agency gives notice under subsection (2) in respect of a child;
- (b) before the notice was given, an application for an adoption order, special guardianship order or residence order, or for leave to apply for a special guardianship order or residence order, was made in respect of the child; and
- (c) the application (and, in a case where leave is given on an application to apply for a special guardianship order or residence order, the application for the order) has not been disposed of,

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prospective adopters are not required by virtue of the notice to secure the child's return to the agency unless the court so orders.

(6) This section applies whether or not the child in question is in Northern Ireland.

(7) In subsection (5)(b) "adoption order" means an adoption order made under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I32 S. 32 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Removal of children in non-agency cases

Restrictions on removal

33.—(1) At any time when a child's home is with any persons ("the people concerned") with whom the child is not placed by an adoption agency, but the people concerned—

- (a) have applied for an adoption order in respect of the child and the application has not been disposed of;
- (b) have given notice of intention to adopt; or
- (c) have applied for leave to apply for an adoption order under section 39(6) and the application has not been disposed of,

a person may remove the child only in accordance with the provisions of this group of sections (that is, this section and sections 34 to 37).

(2) For the purposes of this group of sections, a notice of intention to adopt is to be disregarded if—

- (a) the period of four months beginning with the giving of the notice has expired without the people concerned applying for an adoption order; or
- (b) the notice is a second or subsequent notice of intention to adopt and was given during the period of five months beginning with the giving of the preceding notice.

(3) For the purposes of this group of sections, if the people concerned apply for leave to apply for an adoption order under section 39(6) and the leave is granted, the application for leave is not to be treated as disposed of until the period of three days beginning with the granting of the leave has expired.

(4) This section does not prevent the removal of a child who is arrested.

(5) Where a parent or guardian may remove a child from the people concerned in accordance with the provisions of this group of sections, the

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people concerned must at the request of the parent or guardian secure the child's return to the parent or guardian at once.

(6) A person who—

- (a) fails to comply with subsection (5); or
- (b) removes a child in contravention of this section,

is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

(7) This group of sections applies whether or not the child in question is in Northern Ireland.

(8) The reference in subsection (1) to a child placed by an adoption agency includes a child placed by an adoption agency within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or Scottish adoption agency within the meaning of section 144(3) of that Act.

Commencement Information

I33 S. 33 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Applications for adoption

34. If section 33(1)(a) applies, the following persons may remove the child—

- (a) a person who has the court's leave;
- (b) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

Commencement Information

I34 S. 34 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Authority foster parents

35.—(1) This section applies if the child's home is with authority foster parents.

(2) If—

- (a) the child's home has been with the foster parents at all times during the period of five years ending with the removal and the foster parents have given notice of intention to adopt; or
- (b) an application has been made for leave under section 39(6) and has not been disposed of,

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the following persons may remove the child.

(3) They are—

- (a) a person who has the court's leave;
- (b) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision, other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

(4) If subsection (2) does not apply but—

- (a) the child's home has been with the foster parents at all times during the period of one year ending with the removal; and
- (b) the foster parents have given notice of intention to adopt,

the following persons may remove the child.

(5) They are—

- (a) subject to subsection (6), a person with parental responsibility for the child who is exercising the power in Article 22(2) of the Children Order;
- (b) a person who has the court's leave;
- (c) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision, other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

(6) The power mentioned in subsection (5)(a) is not exercisable by the person there mentioned for such period as the court may, on an application made by the adoption authority, order.

Commencement Information

I35 S. 35 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Partners of parents

36.—(1) This section applies if a child's home is with a partner of a parent and the partner has given notice of intention to adopt.

(2) If the child's home has been with the partner for not less than three years (whether continuous or not) during the period of five years ending with the removal, the following persons may remove the child—

- (a) a person who has the court's leave;
- (b) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

(3) If subsection (2) does not apply, the following persons may remove the child—

- (a) a parent or guardian;
- (b) a person who has the court's leave;

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- (c) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

Commencement Information

I36 S. 36 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Other non-agency cases

37.—(1) In any case where sections 34 to 36 do not apply but—

- (a) the people concerned have given notice of intention to adopt; or
- (b) the people concerned have applied for leave under section 39(6) and the application has not been disposed of,

the following persons may remove the child.

(2) They are—

- (a) a person who has the court's leave;
- (b) an adoption authority or other person in the exercise of a power conferred by any statutory provision, other than Article 22(2) of the Children Order.

Commencement Information

I37 S. 37 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Breach of restrictions on removal

Recovery orders

38.—(1) This section applies where it appears to the court—

- (a) that a child has been removed in contravention of any of the preceding provisions of this Chapter or that there are reasonable grounds for believing that a person intends to remove a child in contravention of those provisions; or
- (b) that a person has failed to comply with section 28(4), 29(2), 30(2), 31(3) or 32(2).

(2) The court may, on the application of any person, by an order—

- (a) direct any person who is in a position to do so to produce the child on request to any person mentioned in subsection (4);
- (b) authorise the removal of the child by any person mentioned in that subsection;

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(c) require any person who has information as to the child's whereabouts to disclose that information on request to any constable or officer of the court;

(d) authorise a constable to enter any premises specified in the order and search for the child, using reasonable force if necessary.

(3) Premises may only be specified under subsection (2)(d) if it appears to the court that there are reasonable grounds for believing the child to be on them.

(4) The persons referred to in subsection (2) are—

(a) any person named by the court;

(b) any constable;

(c) any person who, after the order is made under that subsection, is authorised to exercise any power under the order by an adoption agency which is authorised to place the child for adoption.

(5) A person who intentionally obstructs a person exercising a power of removal conferred by the order is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale.

(6) A person must comply with a request to disclose information as required by the order even if the information sought might constitute evidence that the person had committed an offence.

(7) But in criminal proceedings in which the person is charged with an offence (other than one mentioned in subsection (8))—

(a) no evidence relating to the information provided may be adduced; and

(b) no question relating to the information may be asked,

by or on behalf of the prosecution, unless evidence relating to it is adduced, or a question relating to it is asked, in the proceedings by or on behalf of the person.

(8) The offences excluded from subsection (7) are offences under Article 7 or 10 of the Perjury (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (false statements made on oath otherwise than in judicial proceedings or made otherwise than on oath).

Commencement Information

I38 S. 38 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Preliminaries to adoption

Child to live with adopters before application

39.—(1) An application for an adoption order may not be made unless—

(a) if subsection (2) applies, the condition in that subsection is met;

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(b) if that subsection does not apply, the condition in whichever is applicable of subsections (3) to (5) applies.

(2) If—

(a) the child was placed for adoption with the applicant or applicants by an adoption agency or in pursuance of an order of the High Court; or

(b) the applicant is a parent of the child,

the condition is that the child's home must have been with the applicant or, in the case of an application by a couple, with one or both of them at all times during the period of ten weeks preceding the application.

(3) If the applicant or one of the applicants is the partner of a parent of the child, the condition is that the child's home must have been with the applicant or, as the case may be, applicants at all times during the period of one year preceding the application.

(4) If the applicants are authority foster parents, the condition is that the child's home must have been with the applicants at all times during the period of one year preceding the application.

(5) In any other case, the condition is that the child's home must have been with the applicant or, in the case of an application by a couple, with one or both of them for not less than three years (whether continuous or not) during the period of five years preceding the application.

(6) But subsections (4) and (5) do not prevent an application being made if the court gives leave to make it.

(7) An adoption order may not be made unless the court is satisfied that sufficient opportunities to see the child with the applicant or, in the case of an application by a couple, both of them together in the home environment have been given—

(a) where the child was placed for adoption with the applicant or applicants by an adoption agency, to that agency;

(b) in any other case, to the adoption authority within whose area the child's home is.

(8) In this section and sections 40 and 41(1)—

(a) references to an adoption agency include an adoption agency within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or Scottish adoption agency within the meaning of 144(3) of that Act;

(b) references to a child placed for adoption by an adoption agency are to be read accordingly.

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Commencement Information

I39 S. 39 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Reports where child placed by agency

40.—(1) Where an application for an adoption order relates to a child placed for adoption by an adoption agency, the agency must—

- (a) submit to the court a report on the suitability of the applicants and on any other matters relevant to the operation of section 1; and
- (b) assist the court in any manner the court directs.

(2) Arrangements may be made by an adoption agency which has placed a child for its functions in relation to that child with respect to—

- (a) the report on the suitability of the applicants for adoption; and
- (b) any other matters relevant to the operation of section 1,

to be discharged by another adoption agency.

Commencement Information

I40 S. 40 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Notice of intention to adopt

41.—(1) This section applies where persons (referred to in this section as “proposed adopters”) wish to adopt a child who is not placed for adoption with them by an adoption agency.

(2) An adoption order may not be made in respect of the child unless the proposed adopters have given notice to the appropriate adoption authority of their intention to apply for the adoption order (referred to in this Act as a “notice of intention to adopt”).

(3) The notice must be given not more than two years, or less than three months, before the date on which the application for the adoption order is made.

(4) Where—

- (a) if a person were seeking to apply for an adoption order, subsection (4) or (5) of section 39 would apply; but
- (b) the condition in the subsection in question is not met,

the person may not give notice of intention to adopt unless the person has the court’s leave to apply for an adoption order.

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(5) On receipt of a notice of intention to adopt, the appropriate adoption authority must arrange for the investigation of the matter and submit to the court a report of the investigation.

(6) In particular, the investigation must, so far as practicable, include the suitability of the proposed adopters and any other matters relevant to the operation of section 1 in relation to the application.

(7) If an adoption authority receives a notice of intention to adopt in respect of a child who the adoption authority knows was (at any time before the notice was given) looked after by another adoption authority, the first adoption authority must, not more than seven days after the receipt of the notice, inform the other adoption authority in writing that it has received the notice.

(8) Where—

(a) an adoption authority has placed a child with any persons otherwise than as prospective adopters; and

(b) the persons give notice of intention to adopt,

the adoption authority is not to be treated as keeping the child with them as prospective adopters for the purposes of section 15(1)(b).

(9) In this section, references to the appropriate adoption authority, in relation to any proposed adopters, are—

(a) in prescribed cases, references to the prescribed adoption authority;

(b) in any other case, references to the adoption authority for the area in which, at the time of giving the notice of intention to adopt, the proposed adopters have their home.

Commencement Information

I41 S. 41 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Suitability of adopters

42.—(1) Regulations under section 9 may make provision as to the matters to be taken into account by an adoption agency in determining, or making any report in respect of, the suitability of any persons to adopt a child.

(2) In particular, the regulations may make provision for the purpose of securing that, in determining the suitability of a couple to adopt a child, proper regard is had to the need for stability and permanence in their relationship.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) or (2) affects the application of section 1.

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Commencement Information

I42 S. 42 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

The making of adoption orders

Adoption orders

43.—(1) An adoption order is an order made by the court on an application under section 47 or 48 giving parental responsibility for a child to the adopters or adopter.

(2) The making of an adoption order operates to extinguish—

- (a) the parental responsibility which any person other than the adopters or adopter has for the adopted child immediately before the making of the order;
- (b) any order under the Children Order or the Children Act 1989;
- (c) any order under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 other than an excepted order;
- (d) any child assessment order or child protection order within the meaning given in section 202(1) of the Children’s Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011; and
- (e) any duty arising by virtue of an agreement or an order of a court to make payments, so far as the payments are in respect of the adopted child’s maintenance or upbringing for any period after the making of the adoption order.

“Excepted order” means an order under section 9, 11(1)(d) or 13 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 or an exclusion order within the meaning of section 76(1) of that Act.

(3) An adoption order—

- (a) does not affect parental responsibility so far as it relates to any period before the making of the order; and
- (b) in the case of an order made on an application under section 48(2) by the partner of a parent of the adopted child, does not affect the parental responsibility of that parent or any duties of that parent within subsection (2)(e).

(4) Subsection (2)(e) does not apply to a duty arising by virtue of an agreement—

- (a) which constitutes a trust; or

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(b) which expressly provides that the duty is not to be extinguished by the making of an adoption order.

(5) An adoption order may be made even if the child to be adopted is already an adopted child.

(6) Before making an adoption order, the court must consider whether there should be arrangements for allowing any person contact with the child; and for that purpose the court must consider any existing or proposed arrangements and obtain any views of the parties to the proceedings.

Commencement Information

I43 S. 43 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Conditions for making adoption orders

44.—(1) An adoption order may not be made if the child has a parent or guardian unless one of the following three conditions is met; but this section is subject to section 51 (parental etc. consent).

(2) The first condition is that, in the case of each parent or guardian of the child, the court is satisfied—

- (a) that the parent or guardian consents to the making of the adoption order;
- (b) that the parent or guardian has consented under section 17 or under section 20 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or section 31(2) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 (and has not withdrawn the consent) and does not oppose the making of the adoption order; or
- (c) that the parent's or guardian's consent should be dispensed with.

(3) A parent or guardian may not oppose the making of an adoption order under subsection (2)(b) without the court's leave.

(4) The second condition is that—

- (a) the child has been placed for adoption by an adoption agency with the prospective adopters in whose favour the order is proposed to be made;
- (b) either—
 - (i) the child was placed for adoption with the consent of each parent or guardian and the consent of the mother was given when the child was at least six weeks old; or
 - (ii) the child was placed for adoption under a placement order; and
- (c) no parent or guardian opposes the making of the adoption order.

(5) A parent or guardian may not oppose the making of an adoption order under the second condition without the court's leave.

(6) The third condition is that—

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(a) the child is the subject of a Scottish permanence order which includes provision granting authority for the child to be adopted; or

(b) an adoption agency (within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002) is authorised to place the child for adoption under section 19 of that Act or an order under section 21 of that Act.

(7) The court cannot give leave under subsection (3) or (5) unless satisfied that there has been a change in circumstances since the consent of the parent or guardian was given or, as the case may be, the placement order was made.

(8) An adoption order may not be made in relation to a person—

(a) who is or has been married or a civil partner; or

(b) who has attained the age of 19 years.

(9) In this section, “Scottish permanence order” means a permanence order under section 80 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 (including a deemed permanence order having effect by virtue of article 13(1), 14(2), 17(1) or 19(2) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 (Commencement No. 4, Transitional and Savings Provisions) Order 2009).

Commencement Information

I44 S. 44 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restrictions on making adoption orders

45.—(1) The court may not hear an application for an adoption order in relation to a child, where a previous application to which subsection (2) applies made in relation to the child by the same persons was refused by any court, unless—

(a) it appears to the court that, because of a change in circumstances or for any other reason, it is proper to hear the application; or

(b) the court which refused the previous application directed otherwise.

(2) This subsection applies to any application—

(a) for an adoption order under the law of any part of the United Kingdom; or

(b) for an order for adoption made in the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands.

Commencement Information

I45 S. 45 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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Applications for adoption

46.—(1) An application for an adoption order may be made by—

- (a) a couple; or
- (b) one person,

but only if it is made under section 47 or 48 and one of the following conditions is met.

(2) The first condition is that—

- (a) at least one of the couple (in the case of an application under section 47); or
- (b) the applicant (in the case of an application under section 48),

is domiciled in a part of the United Kingdom, or in any of the Channel Islands or in the Isle of Man.

(3) The second condition is that—

- (a) both of the couple (in the case of an application under section 47) have; or
- (b) the applicant (in the case of an application under section 48) has,

been habitually resident in a part of the United Kingdom, or in any of the Channel Islands or in the Isle of Man for a period of not less than one year ending with the date of the application.

(4) An application for an adoption order may only be made if the person to be adopted has not attained the age of 18 years on the date of the application.

(5) References in this Act to a child, in connection with any proceedings (whether or not concluded) for adoption, (such as “child to be adopted” or “adopted child”) include a person who has attained the age of 18 years before the proceedings are concluded.

Commencement Information

I46 S. 46 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption by couple

47.—(1) An adoption order may be made on the application of a couple where both of them have attained the age of 21.

(2) An adoption order may be made on the application of a couple where—

- (a) one of the couple is the mother or the father of the person to be adopted and has attained the age of 18 years; and
- (b) the other has attained the age of 21 years.

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Commencement Information

I47 S. 47 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption by one person

48.—(1) An adoption order may be made on the application of one person who has attained the age of 21 years and is not married or a civil partner.

(2) An adoption order may be made on the application of one person who has attained the age of 21 years if the court is satisfied that the person is the partner of a parent of the person to be adopted.

(3) An adoption order may be made on the application of one person who has attained the age of 21 years and is married if the court is satisfied that—

- (a) the person's spouse cannot be found;
- (b) the spouses have separated and are living apart, and the separation is likely to be permanent; or
- (c) the person's spouse is by reason of ill-health, whether physical or mental, incapable of making an application for an adoption order.

(4) An adoption order may be made on the application of one person who has attained the age of 21 years and is a civil partner if the court is satisfied that—

- (a) the person's civil partner cannot be found;
- (b) the civil partners have separated and are living apart, and the separation is likely to be permanent; or
- (c) the person's civil partner is by reason of ill-health, whether physical or mental, incapable of making an application for an adoption order.

(5) An adoption order may not be made on an application under this section by the mother or the father of the person to be adopted unless the court is satisfied that—

- (a) the other natural parent is dead or cannot be found;
- (b) by virtue of the provisions specified in subsection (6) there is no other parent; or
- (c) there is some other reason justifying the child's being adopted by the applicant alone,

and, where the court makes an adoption order on such an application, the court must record that it is satisfied as to the fact mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) or, in the case of paragraph (c), record the reason.

(6) The provisions referred to in subsection (5)(b) are—

- (a) section 28 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (disregarding subsections (5A) to (5I) of that section); or

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- (b) sections 34 to 47 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 (disregarding sections 39, 40 and 46 of that Act).

Commencement Information

I48 S. 48 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Post-adoption contact

Post-adoption contact

49.—(1) This section applies where—

- (a) an adoption agency has placed or was authorised to place a child for adoption; and
- (b) the court is making or has made an adoption order in respect of the child.

(2) When making the adoption order or at any time afterwards, the court may make an order under this section—

- (a) requiring the person in whose favour the adoption order is or has been made to allow the child to visit or stay with the person named in the order under this section, or for the person named in that order and the child otherwise to have contact with each other; or
- (b) prohibiting the person named in the order under this section from having contact with the child.

(3) The following people may be named in an order under this section—

- (a) any person who (but for the child's adoption) would be related to the child by blood (including half-blood), marriage or civil partnership;
- (b) any former guardian of the child;
- (c) any person who had parental responsibility for the child immediately before the making of the adoption order;
- (d) any person who was entitled to make an application for an order under section 23 in respect of the child (contact with children placed or to be placed for adoption) by virtue of subsection (3)(c), (d) or (e) of that section;
- (e) any person with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year.

(4) An application for an order under this section may be made by—

- (a) a person who has applied for the adoption order or in whose favour the adoption order is or has been made;
- (b) the child; or
- (c) any person who has obtained the court's leave to make the application.

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(5) In deciding whether to grant leave under subsection (4)(c), the court must consider—

- (a) any risk there might be of the proposed application disrupting the child's life to such an extent that the child would be harmed by it (within the meaning of the Children Order);
- (b) the applicant's connection with the child; and
- (c) any representations made to the court by—
 - (i) the child; or
 - (ii) a person who has applied for the adoption order or in whose favour the adoption order is or has been made.

(6) When making an adoption order, the court may on its own initiative make an order of the type mentioned in subsection (2)(b).

(7) The period of one year mentioned in subsection (3)(e) need not be continuous but must not have begun more than five years before the making of the application.

(8) Where this section applies, an order under Article 8 of the Children Order may not make provision about contact between the child and any person who may be named in an order under this section.

Commencement Information

I49 S. 49 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Orders under section 49: supplementary

50.—(1) An order under section 49—

- (a) may contain directions about how it is to be carried into effect;
- (b) may be made subject to any conditions the court thinks appropriate;
- (c) may be varied or revoked by the court on an application by the child, a person in whose favour the adoption order was made or a person named in the order; and
- (d) has effect until the child's 18th birthday or an earlier date as specified by the court, unless revoked.

(2) Subsection (3) applies to proceedings—

- (a) on an application for an adoption order in which—
 - (i) an application is made for an order under section 49; or
 - (ii) the court indicates that it is considering making such an order on its own initiative;
- (b) on an application for an order under section 49;

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(c) on an application for such an order to be varied or revoked.

(3) The court must (in the light of any rules of court made by virtue of subsection (4))—

(a) draw up a timetable with a view to determining without delay whether to make, (or as the case may be) vary or revoke an order under section 49; and

(b) give directions for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that that timetable is adhered to.

(4) Rules of court may—

(a) specify periods within which specified steps must be taken in relation to proceedings to which subsection (3) applies; and

(b) make other provision with respect to such proceedings for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the court makes determinations about orders under section 49 without delay.

Commencement Information

I50 S. 50 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Placement and adoption: general

Parental etc. consent

51.—(1) The court cannot dispense with the consent of any parent or guardian of a child to the child being placed for adoption or to the making of an adoption order in respect of the child unless the court is satisfied that—

(a) the parent or guardian cannot be found or is incapable of giving consent; or

(b) the welfare of the child requires the consent to be dispensed with.

(2) The following provisions apply to references in this Chapter to any parent or guardian of a child giving or withdrawing—

(a) consent to the placement of a child for adoption; or

(b) consent to the making of an adoption order (including a future adoption order).

(3) Any consent given by the mother to the making of an adoption order is ineffective if it is given less than six weeks after the child's birth.

(4) The withdrawal of any consent to the placement of a child for adoption, or of any consent given under section 17, is ineffective if it is given after an application for an adoption order is made.

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(5) “Consent” means consent given unconditionally and with full understanding of what is involved; but a person may consent to adoption without knowing the identify of the persons in whose favour the order will be made.

(6) “Parent” (except in subsections (9) and (10)) means a parent having parental responsibility.

(7) Consent under section 16 or 17 must be given in the form prescribed by rules of court, and the rules of court may prescribe forms in which a person giving consent under any other provision of this Part may do so (if the person wishes).

(8) Consent given under section 16 or 17 must be withdrawn—

- (a) in the form prescribed by rules of court; or
- (b) by notice given to the adoption agency.

(9) Subsection (10) applies if—

- (a) an adoption agency has placed a child for adoption under section 15 in pursuance of consent given by a parent of the child, and
- (b) at a later time, the other parent of the child acquires parental responsibility for the child.

(10) The other parent is to be treated as having at that time given consent in accordance with this section in the same terms as those in which the first parent gave consent.

Commencement Information

151 S. 51 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Modification of Children Order in relation to adoption

52.—(1) Where—

- (a) an adoption authority is authorised to place a child for adoption; or
- (b) a child who has been placed for adoption by an authority is less than six weeks old,

regulations may provide for the following provisions of the Children Order to apply with modifications, or not to apply, in relation to the child.

(2) The provisions are—

- (a) Article 26(2)(b), (c) and (d) and (3)(b) (duty to ascertain wishes and feelings of certain persons);
- (b) Articles 29 and 39 (promoting contact with parents and parents’ obligation to contribute towards maintenance).

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(3) Where an appropriate voluntary organisation is authorised to place a child for adoption or a child who has been placed for adoption by an appropriate voluntary organisation is less than six weeks old, regulations may provide—

- (a) for Article 76 of the Children Order to have effect in relation to the child whether or not the child is accommodated by or on behalf of the organisation;
- (b) for paragraphs (2)(b) to (d) and (3)(b) of that Article (duty to ascertain wishes and feelings of certain persons) to apply with modifications, or not to apply, in relation to the child.

(4) Where a child’s home is with persons who have given notice of intention to adopt, no contribution is payable (whether under a contribution order or otherwise) under Articles 38 to 43 of the Children Order (contributions towards maintenance of children looked after by an authority) in respect of the period referred to in subsection (5).

(5) That period begins when the notice of intention to adopt is given and ends if—

- (a) the period of four months beginning with the giving of the notice expires without the prospective adopters applying for an adoption order; or
- (b) an application for such an order is withdrawn or refused.

(6) In this section, “notice of intention to adopt” includes notice of intention to apply for an adoption order under the law of any part of the United Kingdom.

Commencement Information

I52 S. 52 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing information to prospective adopters

53. Regulations under section 9 may require adoption agencies in prescribed circumstances to disclose in accordance with the regulations prescribed information to prospective adopters.

Commencement Information

I53 S. 53 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Revocation of adoptions on legitimation

54.—(1) Where any child adopted by one natural parent as sole adoptive parent subsequently becomes a legitimated person on the marriage of, or formation of a civil partnership by, the natural parents, the court by which

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the adoption order was made may, on the application of any of the parties concerned, revoke the order.

(2) In relation to an adoption order made by a county court, the reference to the court by which the order was made includes a reference to any other county court.

Commencement Information

I54 S. 54 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosure of information about a person's adoption

Information to be kept about a person's adoption

55.—(1) In relation to an adopted person, regulations may prescribe—

- (a) the information which an adoption agency must keep in relation to the adoption;
- (b) the form and manner in which it must keep that information.

(2) Below in this group of sections (that is, this section and sections 56 to 64), any information kept by an adoption agency by virtue of subsection (1)(a) is referred to as section 55 information.

(3) Regulations may provide for the transfer in prescribed circumstances of information held, or previously held, by an adoption agency to another adoption agency.

Commencement Information

I55 S. 55 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restrictions on disclosure of protected etc. information

56.—(1) Any section 55 information kept by an adoption agency which—

- (a) is about an adopted person or any other person; and
- (b) is or includes identifying information about the person in question,

may only be disclosed by the agency to a person (other than the person the information is about) in pursuance of this group of sections.

(2) Any information kept by an adoption agency—

- (a) which the agency has obtained from the Registrar General on an application under section 78(5) and any other information which would enable the adopted person to obtain a certified copy of the record of the adopted person's birth; or

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(b) which is information about an entry relating to the adopted person in the Adoption Contact Register,

may only be disclosed to a person by the agency in pursuance of this group of sections.

(3) In this group of sections, information the disclosure of which to a person is restricted by virtue of subsection (1) or (2) is referred to (in relation to the person) as protected information.

(4) Identifying information about a person means information which, whether taken on its own or together with other information disclosed by an adoption agency, identifies the person or enables the person to be identified.

(5) This section does not prevent the disclosure of protected information in pursuance of a prescribed agreement to which the adoption agency is a party.

(6) Regulations may authorise or require an adoption agency to disclose protected information to a person who is not an adopted person.

Commencement Information

I56 S. 56 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosure of other information

57.—(1) This section applies to any section 55 information other than protected information.

(2) An adoption agency may for the purposes of its functions disclose to any person in accordance with prescribed arrangements any information to which this section applies.

(3) An adoption agency must, in prescribed circumstances, disclose prescribed information to a prescribed person.

Commencement Information

I57 S. 57 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Offence

58. Regulations may provide that an appropriate voluntary organisation which discloses any information in contravention of section 56 is to be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

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Commencement Information

I58 S. 58 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing information to adopted adult

59.—(1) This section applies to an adopted person who has attained the age of 18 years.

(2) The adopted person has the right, on request, to receive from the appropriate adoption agency—

- (a) any information which would enable the person to obtain a certified copy of the record of the person’s birth, unless the High Court orders otherwise;
- (b) any prescribed information disclosed to the adopters by the agency by virtue of section 53.

(3) The High Court may make an order under subsection (2)(a), on an application by the appropriate adoption agency, if satisfied that the circumstances are exceptional.

(4) The adopted person also has the right, on request, to receive from the court which made the adoption order a copy of any prescribed document or prescribed order relating to the adoption.

(5) Subsection (4) does not apply to a document or order so far as it contains information which is protected information.

(6) In subsection (4) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules of court.

Commencement Information

I59 S. 59 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing protected information about adults

60.—(1) This section applies where—

- (a) a person applies to the appropriate adoption agency for protected information to be disclosed to the person; and
- (b) none of the information is about a person who is a child at the time of the application.

(2) The agency is not required to proceed with the application unless it considers it appropriate to do so.

(3) If the agency does proceed with the application it must take all reasonable steps to obtain the views of any person the information is about as to the disclosure of the information about that person.

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(4) The agency may then disclose the information if it considers it appropriate to do so.

(5) In deciding whether it is appropriate to proceed with the application or disclose the information, the agency must consider—

- (a) the welfare of the adopted person;
- (b) any views obtained under subsection (3);
- (c) any prescribed matters,

and all the other circumstances of the case.

(6) This section does not apply to a request for information under section 59(2) or to a request for information which the agency is authorised or required to disclose in pursuance of regulations made by virtue of section 56(6).

Commencement Information

I60 S. 60 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing protected information about children

61.—(1) This section applies where—

- (a) a person applies to the appropriate adoption agency for protected information to be disclosed to the person; and
- (b) any of the information is about a person who is a child at the time of the application.

(2) The agency is not required to proceed with the application unless it considers it appropriate to do so.

(3) If the agency does proceed with the application, then, so far as the information is about a person who is at the time a child, the agency must take all reasonable steps to obtain—

- (a) the views of any parent or guardian of the child; and
- (b) the views of the child, if the agency considers it appropriate to do so having regard to the child's age and understanding and to all the other circumstances of the case,

as to the disclosure of the information.

(4) And, so far as the information is about a person who has at the time attained the age of 18 years, the agency must take all reasonable steps to obtain that person's views as to the disclosure of the information.

(5) The agency may then disclose the information if it considers it appropriate to do so.

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(6) In deciding whether it is appropriate to proceed with the application, or disclose the information, where any of the information is about a person who is at the time a child—

- (a) if the child is an adopted child, the child's welfare must be the paramount consideration;
- (b) in the case of any other child, the agency must have particular regard to the child's welfare.

(7) And, in deciding whether it is appropriate to proceed with the application or disclose the information, the agency must consider—

- (a) the welfare of the adopted person (where subsection (6)(a) does not apply);
- (b) any views obtained under subsection (3) or (4);
- (c) any prescribed matters,

and all the other circumstances of the case.

(8) This section does not apply to a request for information under section 59(2) or to a request for information which the agency is authorised or required to disclose in pursuance of regulations made by virtue of section 56(6).

Commencement Information

161 S. 61 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Counselling

62.—(1) Regulations may require adoption agencies to give information about the availability of counselling to persons—

- (a) seeking information from them in pursuance of this group of sections;
- (b) considering objecting or consenting to the disclosure of information by the agency in pursuance of this group of sections; or
- (c) considering entering with the agency into an agreement prescribed for the purposes of section 56(5).

(2) Regulations may require adoption agencies to make arrangements to secure the provision of counselling for persons seeking information from them in prescribed circumstances in pursuance of this group of sections.

(3) The regulations may authorise adoption agencies—

- (a) to disclose information which is required for the purposes of such counselling to the persons providing the counselling;
- (b) where the person providing the counselling is outside the United Kingdom, to require a prescribed fee to be paid to an adoption agency.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(4) The regulations may require the following persons to provide counselling for the purposes of arrangements under subsection (2)—

- (a) an adoption authority;
- (b) an appropriate voluntary organisation.

Commencement Information

I62 S. 62 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Other provision to be made by regulations

63.—(1) Regulations may make provision for the purposes of this group of sections, including provision as to—

- (a) the performance by adoption agencies of their functions;
- (b) the manner in which information may be received; and
- (c) the matters mentioned in subsections (2) to (6).

(2) Regulations may prescribe—

- (a) the manner in which agreements made by virtue of section 56(5) are to be recorded;
- (b) the information to be provided by any person on an application for the disclosure of information under this group of sections.

(3) Regulations may require adoption agencies—

- (a) to give to prescribed persons prescribed information about the rights or opportunities to obtain information, or to give their views as to its disclosure, given by this group of sections;
- (b) to seek prescribed information from, or give prescribed information to, the Registrar General in prescribed circumstances.

(4) Regulations may require the Registrar General—

- (a) to disclose to any person (including an adopted person) on request any information which the person requires to assist the person to make contact with the adoption agency which is the appropriate adoption agency in the case of an adopted person specified in the request (or, as the case may be, in the applicant's case);
- (b) to disclose to the appropriate adoption agency any information which the agency requires about any entry relating to the adopted person on the Adoption Contact Register.

(5) Regulations may provide for the payment of a prescribed fee in respect of the disclosure in prescribed circumstances of any information in pursuance of section 59, 60 or 61; but an adopted person (“A”) may not be required to pay any fee in respect of any information disclosed to A in relation to any person

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who (but for A's adoption) would be related to A by blood (including half-blood), marriage or civil partnership.

(6) Regulations may provide for the payment of a prescribed fee by an adoption agency obtaining information under subsection (4)(b).

(7) The making of regulations by virtue of subsections (3) to (6) which relate to the Registrar General requires the approval of the Department of Finance.

Commencement Information

I63 S. 63 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Sections 55 to 64: interpretation

64. In this group of sections—

“appropriate adoption agency”, in relation to an adopted person or to information relating to that person's adoption, means—

- (a) if the person was placed for adoption by an adoption agency, that agency or (if different) the agency which keeps the information in relation to that person's adoption;
- (b) in any other case, the adoption authority to which notice of intention to adopt was given;

“prescribed” means, except in section 59(4), prescribed by regulations;

“regulations” means regulations under section 9.

Commencement Information

I64 S. 64 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

CHAPTER 4

Status of adopted children

Meaning of adoption in Chapter 4

65.—(1) In this Chapter “adoption” means—

- (a) adoption by an adoption order made under the law of any part of the United Kingdom;
- (b) adoption by an order made in the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands;
- (c) an adoption effected under the law of a Convention country outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and certified

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in pursuance of Article 23(1) of the Convention (referred to in this Act as a “Convention adoption”);

- (d) an overseas adoption; or
- (e) an adoption recognised by the law of Northern Ireland and effected under the law of any other country.

(2) But references in this Chapter to adoption do not include an adoption effected before the day on which this Chapter comes into operation (referred to in this Chapter as “the appointed day”).

(3) Any reference in a statutory provision to an adopted person within the meaning of this Chapter includes a reference to an adopted child within the meaning of Part 5 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

Commencement Information

I65 S. 65 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status conferred by adoption

66.—(1) An adopted person is to be treated in law as if born as the child of the adopters or adopter.

(2) An adopted person is the legitimate child of the adopters or adopter and, if adopted by—

- (a) two persons who are a couple; or
- (b) one of a couple under section 48(2),

is to be treated as the child of the relationship of the couple in question.

(3) An adopted person—

- (a) if adopted by one of a couple under section 48(2), is to be treated in law as not being the child of any person other than the adopter and the other one of the couple; and
- (b) in any other case, is to be treated in law, subject to subsection (4), as not being the child of any person other than the adopters or adopter;

but this subsection does not affect any reference in this Act to a person’s natural parent or to any other natural relationship.

(4) In the case of a person adopted by one of the person’s natural parents as sole adoptive parent, subsection (3)(b) has no effect as respects entitlement to property depending on relationship to that parent, or as respects anything else depending on that relationship.

(5) This section has effect from the date of the adoption.

(6) Subject to the provisions of this Chapter and Schedule 4, this section—

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- (a) applies for the interpretation of statutory provisions or instruments passed or made before as well as after the adoption, and so applies subject to any contrary indication; and
 - (b) has effect as respects things done, or events occurring, on or after the adoption.
- (7) This section—
- (a) does not apply to a statutory provision or other instrument passed or made before 1st October 1989 in so far as it contains a disposition of property; and
 - (b) does not apply to any public general Act in its application to any disposition of property in a statutory provision or other instrument passed or made before 1st October 1989.

Commencement Information

I66 S. 66 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoptive relatives

67.—(1) A relationship existing by virtue of section 66 may be referred to as an adoptive relationship, and—

- (a) an adopter may be referred to as an adoptive parent or (as the case may be) as an adoptive father or adoptive mother;
- (b) any other relative of any degree under an adoptive relationship may be referred to as an adoptive relative of that degree.

(2) Subsection (1) does not affect the interpretation of any reference, not qualified by the word “adoptive”, to a relationship.

(3) A reference (however expressed) to the adoptive mother and father of a child adopted by—

- (a) two persons of the same sex who are a couple; or
- (b) a partner of the child’s parent, where the couple are of the same sex,

is to be read as a reference to the child’s adoptive parents.

Commencement Information

I67 S. 67 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Rules of interpretation for instruments concerning property

68.—(1) The rules of interpretation contained in this section apply (subject to any contrary indication and to Schedule 4) to any instrument so far as it contains a disposition of property.

(2) In applying section 66(1) and (2) to a disposition which depends on the date of birth of a child or children of the adoptive parent or parents, the disposition is to be interpreted as if—

- (a) the adopted person had been born on the date of adoption;
- (b) two or more people adopted on the same date had been born on that date in the order of their actual births;

but this does not affect any reference to a person's age.

(3) Examples of phrases in wills on which subsection (2) can operate are—

1. Children of A “living at my death or born afterwards”.
2. Children of A “living at my death or born afterwards before any one of such children for the time being in existence attains a vested interest and who attain the age of 21 years”.
3. As in example 1 or 2, but referring to grandchildren of A instead of children of A.
4. A for life “until A has a child”, and then to A's child or children.

Note. Subsection (2) will not affect the reference to the age of 21 years in example 2.

(4) Section 66(3) does not prejudice—

- (a) any qualifying interest;
- (b) any interest expectant (whether immediately nor not) upon a qualifying interest; or
- (c) any contingent interest (other than a contingent interest in remainder) which the adopted person has immediately before the adoption in the estate of a deceased parent, whether testate or intestate.

“Qualifying interest” means an interest vested in possession in the adopted person before the adoption.

(5) Where it is necessary to determine for the purposes of a disposition of property effected by an instrument whether a woman can have a child—

- (a) it must be presumed that once a woman has attained the age of 55 years she will not adopt a person after execution of the instrument; and
- (b) if she does so, then (in spite of section 66) that person is not to be treated as her child or (if she does so as one of a couple) as the child of the other one of the couple for the purposes of the instrument.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(6) In this section, “instrument” includes a private Act settling property, but not any other statutory provision.

(7) This section does not apply to a statutory provision or other instrument passed or made before 1st October 1989.

Commencement Information

I68 S. 68 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Dispositions depending on date of birth

69.—(1) Where a disposition depends on the date of birth of a person who was born illegitimate and who is adopted by one of the natural parents as sole adoptive parent, section 68(2) does not affect entitlement by virtue of Part 2 of the Family Law Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 or Article 22 of the Wills and Administration Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 (dispositions of property).

(2) Subsection (1) applies for example where—

- (a) a testator (“T”) dies in 2017 bequeathing a legacy to T’s eldest grandchild living at a specified time;
- (b) T’s unmarried daughter has a child in 2018 who is the first grandchild;
- (c) T’s married son has a child in 2019;
- (d) subsequently T’s unmarried daughter adopts her child as sole adoptive parent.

In that example the status of the daughter’s child as T’s eldest grandchild is not affected by the events described in paragraph (c) and (d).

Commencement Information

I69 S. 69 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Property devolving with peerages etc.

70.—(1) An adoption does not affect the descent of any peerage or dignity or title of honour.

(2) An adoption does not affect the devolution of any property limited (expressly or not) to devolve (as nearly as the law permits) along with any peerage or dignity or title of honour.

(3) Subsection (2) applies only if and so far as a contrary intention is not expressed in the instrument, and has effect subject to the terms of the instrument.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Commencement Information

I70 S. 70 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Protection of trustees and personal representatives

71.—(1) A trustee or personal representative is not under a duty, by virtue of the law relating to trusts or the administration of estates, to enquire, before conveying or distributing any property, whether any adoption has been effected or revoked if that fact could affect entitlement to the property.

(2) A trustee or personal representative is not liable to any person by reason of a conveyance or distribution of the property made without regard to any such fact if the trustee or personal representative has not received notice of the fact before the conveyance or distribution.

(3) This section does not prejudice the right of a person to follow the property, or any property representing it, into the hands of another person, other than a purchaser, who has received it.

Commencement Information

I71 S. 71 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Meaning of disposition

72.—(1) This section applies for the purposes of this Chapter.

(2) A disposition includes the conferring of a power of appointment and any other disposition of an interest in or right over property (including a disposition by the creating of an entailed interest); and in this subsection a power of appointment includes any discretionary power to transfer a beneficial interest in property without the furnishing of valuable consideration.

(3) This Chapter applies to an oral disposition as if contained in an instrument made when the disposition was made.

(4) The date of death of a testator is the date at which a will or codicil is to be regarded as made.

(5) The provisions of the law of intestate succession applicable to the estate of a deceased person are to be treated as if contained in an instrument executed by the deceased (while of full capacity) immediately before the deceased died.

Commencement Information

I72 S. 72 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Miscellaneous

73.—(1) Section 66 does not apply for the purposes of Articles 68 and 69 of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (sex with an adult relative) but nothing in this subsection is to be read as preventing the application of section 66 for the purposes of Article 68(3)(a) or 69(3)(a) of that Order.

(2) Section 66 does not apply for the purposes of Article 18 of the Family Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 or Schedule 12 to the Civil Partnership Act 2004 (prohibited degrees of relationship).

(3) Section 66 does not apply for the purposes of any provision of—

- (a) the British Nationality Act 1981;
- (b) the Immigration Act 1971;
- (c) any instrument having effect under a provision within paragraph (a) or (b); or
- (d) any other provision of the law for the time being in force which determines British citizenship, British overseas territories citizenship, the status of a British National (Overseas) or British Overseas citizenship.

Commencement Information

I73 S. 73 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Pensions

74. Section 66(3) does not affect entitlement to a pension which is payable to or for the benefit of a person and is in payment at the time of the person's adoption.

Commencement Information

I74 S. 74 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Insurance

75.—(1) Where a child is adopted whose natural parent has effected an insurance with a friendly society or a collecting society or an industrial insurance company for the payment on the death of the child of money for funeral expenses, then—

- (a) the rights and liabilities under the policy are by virtue of the adoption transferred to the adoptive parents; and

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(b) for the purposes of the statutory provisions relating to such societies and companies, the adoptive parents are to be treated as the person who took out the policy.

(2) Where the adoption is effected by an order made by virtue of section 48(2), the references in subsection (1) to the adoptive parents are to be read as references to the adopter and the adopter's partner.

Commencement Information

I75 S. 75 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

CHAPTER 5

Registers

Adopted Children Register, etc.

Adopted Children Register

76.—(1) The Registrar General must continue to maintain at the General Register Office a register, to be called the Adopted Children Register.

(2) The Adopted Children Register is not to be open to public inspection or search, subject to regulations under this section.

(3) No entries may be made in the Adopted Children Register other than entries—

- (a) directed to be made in it by adoption orders; or
- (b) required to be made under Schedule 1.

(4) A certified copy of an entry in the Adopted Children Register, if purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office, is to be received as evidence of the adoption to which it relates without further or other proof.

(5) Where an entry in the Adopted Children Register contains a record—

- (a) of the date of birth of the adopted person; or
- (b) of the country, or the registration district, of the birth of the adopted person,

a certified copy of the entry is also to be received, without further or other proof, as evidence of that date, or country or registration district, (as the case may be) in all respects as if the copy were a certified copy of an entry in the registers of live-births.

(6) Schedule 1 (registration of adoptions and the amendment of adoption orders) has effect.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(7) Regulations may make provision for any person to have access, on payment of the prescribed fee, to any information contained in the Adopted Children Register.

(8) Regulations under subsection (7) may provide that the relevant period must have expired in relation to the information.

(9) In subsection (8) “the relevant period” in relation to the adoption of a child means the expiration of the period of 100 years from the date of the child’s birth or such other period as may be prescribed.

(10) Regulations under subsection (7) may provide for the Registrar General—

- (a) to make arrangements with any person for the purpose of providing access to information as mentioned in that subsection; and
- (b) for that purpose to transfer information to that person subject to conditions (including conditions as to the making of payments by that person to the Registrar General).

Commencement Information

I76 S. 76 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Searches and copies

77.—(1) The Registrar General must continue to maintain at the General Register Office an index of the Adopted Children Register.

(2) Any person may—

- (a) search the index;
- (b) have a certified copy of any entry in the Adopted Children Register.

(3) But a person is not entitled to have a certified copy of an entry in the Adopted Children Register relating to an adopted person who has not attained the age of 18 years unless the applicant has provided the Registrar General with the prescribed particulars.

(4) The terms, conditions and regulations as to payment of fees, and otherwise, applicable under the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 in respect of—

- (a) searches in indexes kept in the General Register Office;
- (b) the supply from that Office of certified copies of entries in the registers of live-births,

also apply in respect of searches, and supplies of certified copies, under subsection (2).

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Commencement Information

I77 S. 77 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Connections between the register and birth records

78.—(1) The Registrar General must make traceable the connection between any entry in the registers of live-births or other records which has been marked “Adopted” and any corresponding entry in the Adopted Children Register.

(2) Information kept by the Registrar General for the purposes of subsection (1) is not to be open to public inspection or search.

(3) Any such information, and any other information which would enable an adopted person to obtain a certified copy of the record of the adopted person’s birth, may only be disclosed by the Registrar General in accordance with this section.

(4) In relation to a person adopted before the appointed day the court may, in exceptional circumstances, order the Registrar General to give any information mentioned in subsection (3) to a person.

(5) On an application made in the prescribed manner by the appropriate adoption agency in respect of an adopted person a record of whose birth is kept by the Registrar General, the Registrar General must give the agency any information relating to the adopted person which is mentioned in subsection (3).

(6) In relation to a person adopted before the appointed day, Schedule 2 applies instead of subsection (5).

(7) On an application made in the prescribed manner by an adopted person a record of whose birth is kept by the Registrar General and who—

- (a) is under the age of 18 years; and
- (b) intends to be married or form a civil partnership,

the Registrar General must inform the applicant whether or not it appears from information contained in the registers of live-births or other records that the applicant and the intended spouse or civil partner may be within the prohibited degrees of relationship.

(8) Before the Registrar General gives any information by virtue of this section, any prescribed fee which the Registrar General has demanded must be paid, but this does not apply to an application under subsection (7).

(9) In this section—

“appointed day” means the day appointed for the commencement of sections 55 to 64;

“appropriate adoption agency” has the same meaning as in section 64;

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“prohibited degrees of relationship” is to be construed in accordance with Article 18 of the Family Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 and Schedule 12 to the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

Commencement Information

I78 S. 78 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption Contact Register

Adoption Contact Register

79.—(1) The Registrar General must maintain at the General Register Office in accordance with regulations a register in two Parts to be called the Adoption Contact Register.

(2) Part 1 of the register is to contain the prescribed information about adopted persons who have given the prescribed notice expressing their wishes as to making contact with their relatives.

(3) The Registrar General may only make an entry in Part 1 of the register for an adopted person—

- (a) a record of whose birth is kept by the Registrar General;
- (b) who has attained the age of 18 years; and
- (c) who the Registrar General is satisfied has such information as is necessary to enable the person to obtain a certified copy of the record of the person’s birth.

(4) Part 2 of the register is to contain the prescribed information about persons who have given the prescribed notice expressing their wishes, as relatives of adopted persons, as to making contact with those persons.

(5) The Registrar General may only make an entry in Part 2 of the register for a person—

- (a) who has attained the age of 18 years; and
- (b) who the Registrar General is satisfied is a relative of an adopted person and has such information as is necessary to enable the relative to obtain a certified copy of the record of the adopted person’s birth.

(6) Regulations may provide for—

- (a) the disclosure of information contained in one Part of the register to persons for whom there is an entry in the other Part;
- (b) the payment of prescribed fees in respect of the making or alteration of entries in the register and the disclosure of information contained in the register.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I79 S. 79 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption Contact Register: supplementary

80.—(1) The Adoption Contact Register is not to be open to public inspection or search.

(2) In section 79, “relative”, in relation to an adopted person, means any person who (but for the adopted person’s adoption) would be related to the adopted person by blood (including half-blood), marriage or civil partnership.

(3) The Registrar General must not give any information entered in the register to any person except in accordance with subsection (6)(a) of that section or regulations made by virtue of section 63(4)(b).

Commencement Information

I80 S. 80 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Interpretation

81.—(1) In this Chapter—

“prescribed” means prescribed by regulations;

“records” includes certified copies kept by the Registrar General of entries in any register of births;

“registers of live-births” means the registers of live-births made under the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976;

“regulations” means regulations made by the Department of Finance.

(2) Any register, record or index maintained under this Chapter may be maintained in any form the Registrar General considers appropriate; and references (however expressed) to entries in such a register, or to their amendment, marking or cancellation, are to be read accordingly.

Commencement Information

I81 S. 81 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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CHAPTER 6

Adoptions with a foreign element

Bringing children into and out of the United Kingdom

Restriction on bringing children in

82.—(1) This section applies where a person who is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man (the “British resident”)—

- (a) brings, or causes another to bring, a child who is habitually resident outside the United Kingdom, any of the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man into the United Kingdom for the purpose of adoption by the British resident; or
- (b) at any time brings, or causes another to bring, into the United Kingdom a child adopted by the British resident under an external adoption effected within the period of twelve months ending with that time.

The references to adoption, or to a child adopted, by the British resident include a reference to adoption, or to a child adopted, by the British resident and another person.

(2) But this section does not apply if the child is intended to be adopted under a Convention adoption order.

(3) An external adoption means an adoption, other than a Convention adoption, of a child effected under the law of any country or territory outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, whether or not the adoption is—

- (a) an adoption within the meaning of Chapter 4; or
- (b) a full adoption (within the meaning of section 91(3)).

(4) Regulations may require a person intending to bring, or to cause another to bring, a child into the United Kingdom in circumstances where this section applies—

- (a) to apply to an adoption agency (including an adoption agency in Great Britain) in the prescribed manner for an assessment of the person's suitability to adopt the child; and
- (b) to give the agency any information it may require for the purpose of the assessment.

(5) Regulations may require prescribed conditions to be met in respect of a child brought into the United Kingdom in circumstances where this section applies.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(6) In relation to a child brought into the United Kingdom for adoption in circumstances where this section applies, regulations may—

- (a) provide for any provision of Chapter 3 to apply with modifications or not to apply;
- (b) if notice of intention to adopt has been given, impose functions in respect of the child on the authority to which the notice was given.

(7) If a person (“P”) brings, or causes another to bring, a child into the United Kingdom at any time in circumstances where this section applies, P is guilty of an offence if—

- (a) P has not complied with any requirement imposed by virtue of subsection (4); or
- (b) any condition required to be met by virtue of subsection (5) is not met, before that time, or before any later time which may be prescribed.

(8) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

- (a) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both;
- (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or a fine, or both.

Commencement Information

182 S. 82 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Giving parental responsibility prior to adoption abroad

83.—(1) The High Court may, on an application by persons who the court is satisfied intend to adopt a child under the law of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, make an order giving parental responsibility for the child to them.

(2) An order under this section may not give parental responsibility to persons who the court is satisfied meet those requirements as to domicile, or habitual residence, in Northern Ireland which have to be met if an adoption order is to be made in favour of those persons.

(3) An order under this section may not be made unless any prescribed requirements are satisfied.

(4) An application for an order under this section may not be made unless at all times during the preceding ten weeks the child’s home was with the applicant or, in the case of an application by two people, both of them.

(5) Section 43(2) to (4) have effect in relation to an order under this section as they have effect in relation to adoption orders.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(6) Regulations may provide for any provision of this Act which refers to adoption orders to apply, with or without modifications, to orders under this section.

Commencement Information

183 S. 83 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restriction on taking children out

84.—(1) A child who—

- (a) is a Commonwealth citizen; or
- (b) is habitually resident in the United Kingdom,

must not be removed from the United Kingdom to a place outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man for the purpose of adoption unless the condition in subsection (2) is met.

(2) The condition is that—

- (a) the prospective adopters have parental responsibility for the child by virtue of an order under section 83; or
- (b) the child is removed under the authority of an order under section 84 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or section 59 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

(3) Removing a child from the United Kingdom includes arranging to do so; and the circumstances in which a person arranges to remove a child from the United Kingdom include those where the person—

- (a) enters into an arrangement for the purpose of facilitating such a removal of the child;
- (b) initiates or takes part in any negotiations of which the purpose is the conclusion of an arrangement within paragraph (a); or
- (c) causes another person to take any step mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).

An arrangement includes an agreement (whether or not enforceable).

(4) A person who removes a child from the United Kingdom in contravention of subsection (1) is guilty of an offence.

(5) A person is not guilty of an offence under subsection (4) of causing a person to take any step mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (3) unless it is proved that the person knew or had reason to suspect that the step taken would contravene subsection (1).

But this subsection only applies if sufficient evidence is adduced to raise an issue as to whether the person had the knowledge or reason mentioned.

(6) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

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- (a) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both;
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or a fine, or both.
- (7) In any proceedings under this section—
- (a) a report by a British consular officer or a deposition made before a British consular officer and authenticated under the signature of that officer is admissible, upon proof that the officer or the deponent cannot be found in the United Kingdom, as evidence of the matters stated in it; and
 - (b) it is not necessary to prove the signature or official character of the person who appears to have signed any such report or deposition.

Commencement Information

184 S. 84 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Power to modify sections 82 and 84

85.—(1) Regulations may provide for section 82 not to apply if—

- (a) the adopters or (as the case may be) prospective adopters are natural parents, natural relatives or guardians of the child in question (or one of them is); or
- (b) the British resident in question is a partner of a parent of the child,

and any prescribed conditions are met.

(2) Regulations may provide for section 84(1) to apply with modifications, or not to apply, if—

- (a) the prospective adopters are parents, relatives or guardians of the child in question (or one of them is); or
- (b) the prospective adopter is a partner of a parent of the child,

and any prescribed conditions are met.

Commencement Information

185 S. 85 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Adoptions from abroad: special restrictions

Declaration of special restrictions on adoptions from abroad

86.—(1) This section applies if the Department has reason to believe that, because of practices taking place in a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, (the “other country”) in connection with the adoption of children, it would be contrary to public policy to further the bringing of children into the United Kingdom in the cases mentioned in subsection (2).

(2) The cases are that—

- (a) a British resident wishes to bring, or cause another to bring, a child who is not a British resident into the United Kingdom for the purpose of adoption by the British resident, and, in connection with the proposed adoption, there have been, or would have to be, proceedings in the other country or dealings with authorities or agencies there, or
- (b) a British resident wishes to bring, or cause another to bring, into the United Kingdom a child adopted by the British resident under an adoption effected, within the period of twelve months ending with the date of the bringing in, under the law of the other country.

(3) The Department may by order declare, in relation to any such country or territory, that special restrictions are to apply for the time being in relation to the bringing in of children in the cases mentioned in subsection (2).

(4) A country or territory in relation to which such a declaration has effect for the time being is referred to in this section as a “restricted country”.

(5) The Department must publish reasons for making the declaration in relation to each restricted country.

(6) The Department must publish a list of restricted countries (“the restricted list”) and keep the list up to date.

(7) The reasons and the restricted list are to be published in whatever way the Department thinks appropriate for bringing them to the attention of adoption agencies and members of the public.

(8) In this section, “British resident” means a person who is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and the reference to adoption by a British resident includes adoption by a British resident and another person.

Commencement Information

186 S. 86 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Review

87.—(1) The Department must keep under review, in relation to each restricted country, whether it should continue to be a restricted country.

(2) If the Department determines, in relation to a restricted country, that there is no longer reason to believe what is mentioned in subsection (1) of section 86, the Department must by order revoke the order containing the declaration made in relation to it under subsection (3) of that section.

(3) In this section, “restricted country” has the same meaning as in section 86.

Commencement Information

187 S. 87 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

The special restrictions

88.—(1) The special restrictions mentioned in section 86(3) are that the Department is not to take any step it might otherwise have taken in connection with furthering the bringing of a child into the United Kingdom in the cases mentioned in section 86(2) (whether or not that step is provided for by or by virtue of any statutory provision), except as mentioned in subsection (2).

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) prevents the Department from taking those steps if, in any particular case, the prospective adopters or, as the case may be, the adopters satisfy the Department that it should take those steps despite the special restrictions.

(3) The Department may make regulations providing for—

- (a) the procedure to be followed by the Department in determining whether or not it is satisfied as mentioned in subsection (2);
- (b) matters which the Department is to take into account when making such a determination (whether or not it also takes other matters into account).

Commencement Information

188 S. 88 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Imposition of extra conditions in certain cases

89.—(1) The Department may make regulations providing—

- (a) for it to specify in the restricted list, in relation to any restricted country, a step which is not otherwise provided for by or by virtue of any statutory provision but which, by virtue of the arrangements between the United

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Kingdom and that country, the Department normally takes in connection with the bringing in of a child where that country is concerned; and

(b) that, if such a step has been so specified in relation to a restricted country, one or more conditions specified in the regulations are to be met in respect of a child brought into the United Kingdom in either of the cases mentioned in section 86(2) (reading the reference there to the “other country” as being to the restricted country in question).

(2) Those conditions are in addition to any provided for by virtue of—

(a) section 82; or

(b) under or by virtue of any other statutory provision.

(3) A person who brings, or causes another to bring, a child into the United Kingdom is guilty of an offence if any condition required to be met by virtue of subsection (1)(b) is not met.

(4) Subsection (3) does not apply if the step specified in the restricted list in relation to any country had already been taken before the publication of the restricted list.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—

(a) on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or both;

(b) on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or a fine, or both.

(6) In this section, “restricted country” and “restricted list” have the same meanings as in section 86.

Commencement Information

189 S. 89 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Overseas adoptions

Overseas adoptions

90.—(1) In this Act, “overseas adoption”—

(a) means an adoption of a prescribed description, being a description of adoptions effected under the law of any country or territory outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man; but

(b) does not include a Convention adoption.

(2) Regulations may prescribe the requirements that ought to be met by an adoption of any description effected after the commencement of the regulations for it to be an overseas adoption for the purposes of this Act.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(3) At any time when regulations under this section have effect, the Department must exercise its powers under this section so as to secure that subsequently effected adoptions of any description are not overseas adoptions for the purposes of this Act if the Department considers that they are not likely within a reasonable time to meet the prescribed requirements.

(4) In this section references to this Act include the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

(5) Regulations under this section may contain provision as to the manner in which evidence of any overseas adoption may be given.

(6) In this section “adoption” means an adoption of a child or of a person who was a child at the time the adoption was applied for.

Commencement Information

190 S. 90 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Miscellaneous

Modification of section 66 for Hague Convention adoptions

91.—(1) If the High Court is satisfied, on an application under this section, that each of the following conditions is met in the case of a Convention adoption, it may direct that section 66(3) does not apply, or does not apply to any extent specified in the direction.

(2) The conditions are—

- (a) that under the law of the country in which the adoption was effected, the adoption is not a full adoption;
- (b) that the consents referred to in Article 4(c) and (d) of the Convention have not been given for a full adoption or that the United Kingdom is not the receiving State (within the meaning of Article 2 of the Convention);
- (c) that it would be more favourable to the adopted child for a direction to be given under subsection (1).

(3) A full adoption is an adoption by virtue of which the child is to be treated in law as not being the child of any person other than the adopters or adopter.

(4) In relation to a direction under this section and an application for it, Articles 35 and 36 of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (declarations under Part 5 of that Order as to status) apply as they apply in relation to a direction under that Part and an application for such a direction.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I91 S. 91 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Annulment etc. of overseas or Hague Convention adoptions

92.—(1) The High Court may, on an application under this subsection, by order annul a Convention adoption or Convention adoption order on the ground that the adoption is contrary to public policy.

(2) The High Court may, on an application under this subsection—

- (a) by order provide for an overseas adoption or a determination under section 94 to cease to be valid on the ground that the adoption or determination is contrary to public policy or that the authority which purported to authorise the adoption or make the determination was not competent to entertain the case; or
- (b) decide the extent, if any, to which a determination under section 94 has been affected by a subsequent determination under that section.

(3) The High Court may, in any proceedings in that court, decide that an overseas adoption or a determination under section 94 is to be treated, for the purposes of those proceedings, as invalid on either of the grounds mentioned in subsection (2)(a).

(4) Subject to subsections (1) to (3), the validity of a Convention adoption, Convention adoption order or overseas adoption or a determination under section 94 cannot be called in question in proceedings in any court in Northern Ireland.

Commencement Information

I92 S. 92 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Section 92: supplementary

93.—(1) Any application for an order under section 92 or a decision under subsection (2)(b) or (3) of that section must be made in the manner, and within any period, prescribed by rules of court.

(2) No application may be made under section 92(1) in respect of an adoption unless immediately before the application is made—

- (a) the person adopted; or
- (b) the adopters or adopter,

habitually reside in Northern Ireland.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(3) In deciding in pursuance of section 92 whether such an authority as is mentioned in section 94 was competent to entertain a particular case, a court is bound by any finding of fact made by the authority and stated by the authority to be so made for the purpose of determining whether the authority was competent to entertain the case.

Commencement Information

I93 S. 93 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Overseas determinations and orders

94.—(1) Subsection (2) applies where any authority of a Convention country (other than the United Kingdom) or of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or any British overseas territory has power under the law of that country or territory—

- (a) to authorise, or review the authorisation of, an adoption order made in that country or territory; or
- (b) to give or review a decision revoking or annulling such an order or a Convention adoption.

(2) If the authority makes a determination in the exercise of that power, the determination is to have effect for the purpose of effecting, confirming or terminating the adoption in question or, as the case may be, confirming its termination.

(3) Subsection (2) is subject to section 92 and to any subsequent determination having effect under that subsection.

Commencement Information

I94 S. 94 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Power to charge

95.—(1) This section applies to adoptions to which—

- (a) section 82 applies; or
- (b) regulations made under section 1 of the Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 apply.

(2) The Department may charge a fee to adopters for services provided or to be provided by the Department in relation to adoptions to which this section applies.

(3) The Department may determine the level of fee as it sees fit, and may in particular—

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- (a) charge a flat fee; and
- (b) waive a fee.

(4) But the Department must secure that, taking one financial year with another, the income from fees under this section does not exceed the total cost to the Department of providing the services in relation to which the fees are imposed.

(5) In this section references to adoptions and adopters include prospective adoptions and prospective adopters.

Commencement Information

195 S. 95 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

CHAPTER 7

Miscellaneous

Restrictions

Restriction on arranging adoptions etc.

96.—(1) A person who is neither an adoption agency nor acting in pursuance of an order of the High Court must not take any of the steps mentioned in subsection (2).

(2) The steps are—

- (a) asking a person other than an adoption agency to provide a child for adoption;
- (b) asking a person other than an adoption agency to provide prospective adopters for a child;
- (c) offering to find a child for adoption;
- (d) offering a child for adoption to a person other than an adoption agency;
- (e) handing over a child to any person other than an adoption agency with a view to the child's adoption by that or another person;
- (f) receiving a child handed over to the person in contravention of paragraph (e);
- (g) entering into an agreement with any person for the adoption of a child, or for the purpose of facilitating the adoption of a child, where no adoption agency is acting on behalf of the child in the adoption;
- (h) initiating or taking part in negotiations of which the purpose is the conclusion of an agreement within paragraph (g);

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(i) causing another person to take any of the steps mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (h).

(3) Subsection (1) does not apply to a person taking any of the steps mentioned in paragraphs (d), (e), (g), (h) and (i) of subsection (2) if the following condition is met.

(4) The condition is that—

(a) the prospective adopters are parents, relatives or guardians of the child (or one of them is); or

(b) the prospective adopter is the partner of a parent of the child.

(5) References to an adoption agency in subsection (2) include a prescribed person outside the United Kingdom exercising functions corresponding to those of an adoption agency, if the functions are being exercised in prescribed circumstances in respect of the child in question.

(6) The Department may by order make any amendments of subsections (1) to (4), and any consequential amendments of this Act, which the Department considers necessary or expedient.

(7) In this section “agreement” includes an arrangement (whether or not enforceable).

Commencement Information

196 S. 96 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Offence of breaching restrictions under section 96

97.—(1) A person who contravenes section 96(1) is guilty of an offence; and, if that person is an adoption society, the person who manages the society is also guilty of the offence.

(2) A person (“P”) is not guilty of an offence under subsection (1) of taking the step mentioned in paragraph (f) of section 96(2) unless it is proved that P knew or had reason to suspect that the child was handed over to the person in contravention of paragraph (e) of that subsection.

(3) A person (“P”) is not guilty of an offence under subsection (1) of causing a person to take any of the steps mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (h) of section 96(2) unless it is proved that P knew or had reason to suspect that the step taken would contravene the paragraph in question.

(4) But subsections (2) and (3) only apply if sufficient evidence is adduced to raise an issue as to whether the person had the knowledge or reason mentioned.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding £10,000, or both.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

197 S. 97 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restriction on reports

98.—(1) A person who is not within a prescribed description may not, in any prescribed circumstances, prepare a report for any person about the suitability of a child for adoption or of a person to adopt a child or about the adoption, or placement for adoption, of a child.

(2) If a person (“P”)—

- (a) contravenes subsection (1); or
- (b) causes a person to prepare a report, or submits to any person a report which has been prepared, in contravention of that subsection,

P is guilty of an offence.

(3) If a person who works for an appropriate voluntary organisation—

- (a) contravenes subsection (1); or
- (b) causes a person to prepare a report, or submits to any person a report which has been prepared, in contravention of that subsection,

the person who manages the appropriate voluntary organisation is also guilty of the offence.

(4) A person (“P”) is not guilty of an offence under subsection (2)(b) unless it is proved that P knew or had reason to suspect that the report would be, or had been, prepared in contravention of subsection (1); but this subsection only applies if sufficient evidence is adduced to raise an issue as to whether P had the knowledge or reason mentioned.

(5) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

Commencement Information

198 S. 98 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Prohibition of certain payments

99.—(1) This section applies to any payment (other than an excepted payment) which is made for or in consideration of—

- (a) the adoption of a child;
- (b) giving any consent required in connection with the adoption of a child;

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- (c) removing from the United Kingdom a child who is a Commonwealth citizen, or is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, to a place outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man for the purpose of adoption;
- (d) a person (who is neither an adoption agency nor acting in pursuance of an order of the High Court) taking any step mentioned in section 96(2);
- (e) preparing, causing to be prepared or submitting a report the preparation of which contravenes section 98(1).

(2) In this section and section 100, removing a child from the United Kingdom has the same meaning as in section 84.

(3) Any person who—

- (a) makes any payment to which this section applies;
- (b) agrees or offers to make any such payment; or
- (c) receives or agrees to receive or attempts to obtain any such payment,

is guilty of an offence.

(4) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or a fine not exceeding £10,000, or both.

Commencement Information

199 S. 99 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Excepted payments

100.—(1) A payment is an excepted payment if it is made by virtue of, or in accordance with provision made by or under this Act, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 or the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

(2) A payment is an excepted payment if it is made to an adoption agency by—

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child; or
- (b) a person who adopts or proposes to adopt a child;

in respect of expenses reasonably incurred by the adoption agency in connection with the adoption or proposed adoption of the child.

(3) A payment is an excepted payment if it is made in respect of any legal or medical expenses incurred or to be incurred by any person in connection with an application to a court which the person has made or proposes to make for an adoption order, a placement order, or an order under section 23, 49 or 83.

(4) A payment made as mentioned in section 99(1)(c) is an excepted payment if—

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- (a) the condition in section 84(2) is met; and
- (b) the payment is made in respect of the travel and accommodation expenses reasonably incurred in removing the child from the United Kingdom for the purpose of adoption.

Commencement Information

I100 S. 100 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Sections 96 to 100: interpretation

101. In sections 96 to 100—

“adoption agency” includes an adoption agency in Great Britain;

“payment” includes reward; and

references to adoption are to the adoption of persons, wherever they may be habitually resident, effected under the law of any country or territory, whether within or outside the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Commencement Information

I101 S. 101 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Information

Pre-commencement adoptions: information

102.—(1) Regulations under section 9 may make provision for the purpose of—

- (a) assisting persons adopted before the appointed day who have attained the age of 18 to obtain information in relation to their adoption;
- (b) assisting a natural parent of a person referred to in paragraph (a) to obtain information in relation to that person’s adoption; and
- (c) facilitating contact between persons referred to in paragraph (a) and their relatives.

(2) Regulations under section 9 may make provision for the purpose of facilitating contact between persons with a prescribed relationship to a person adopted before the appointed day and that person’s relatives.

(3) Regulations under section 9 may make provision for the purpose of authorising or requiring adoption agencies in prescribed circumstances to

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disclose or provide access to prescribed information relating to the adoption of a person adopted before the appointed day who has attained the age of 18.

(4) For a purpose within subsection (1) or (2) the regulations may confer functions on—

- (a) adoption agencies; and
- (b) the Registrar General.

(5) For a purpose within subsection (1) or (2) the regulations may—

- (a) authorise or require any person mentioned in subsection (4) to disclose information;
- (b) authorise or require the disclosure of information contained in records of any court kept under the Public Records Act (Northern Ireland) 1923.

(6) For a purpose within subsection (1), (2) or (3) the regulations may impose conditions on the disclosure of information, including conditions restricting its further disclosure.

(7) The regulations may authorise the charging of prescribed fees by any person mentioned in subsection (3) or (4) or in respect of the disclosure of information under subsection (5)(b); but an adopted person (“A”) may not be required to pay any fee in respect of any information disclosed to A or to which A was provided access.

(8) An authorisation or requirement to disclose information by virtue of subsection (3) or (5)(a) has effect in spite of any restriction on the disclosure of information in Chapter 5.

(9) The making of regulations by virtue of subsections (4) to (7) which relate to the Registrar General requires the approval of the Department of Finance.

(10) In this section—

“appointed day” means the day appointed for the commencement of sections 55 to 64;

“prescribed” means prescribed by regulations under section 9;

“relative”, in relation to an adopted person (“A”), means any person who (but for A’s adoption) would be related to A by blood (including half-blood), marriage or civil partnership.

Commencement Information

I102 S. 102 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Proceedings

Proceedings for offences

103. Proceedings for an offence by virtue of section 9 or 58 may not, without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, be taken by any person other than the RQIA.

Commencement Information

I103 S. 103 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Appeals

104.—(1) An appeal lies to the High Court against—

- (a) the making by a county court of any order under this Act; or
- (b) any refusal by a county court to make such an order,

as if the decision had been made in the exercise of the jurisdiction conferred by Part 3 of the County Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 (original civil jurisdiction) and the appeal were brought under Article 60 of that Order (ordinary appeals in civil cases).

(2) On an appeal under subsection (1), the High Court may make such orders as may be necessary to give effect to its determination of the appeal.

(3) Where an order is made under subsection (2), the High Court may also make such incidental or consequential orders as appear to it to be just.

(4) Any order of the High Court made on an appeal under subsection (1) (other than one directing that an application be re-heard by the county court) is to be treated, for the purposes of—

- (a) the enforcement of the order; and
- (b) any power to vary, revive or discharge orders,

as if it were an order of the county court from which the appeal was brought and not an order of the High Court.

(5) Subsections (1) to (4) are subject to paragraphs (14) and (15) of Article 166 of the Children Order.

Commencement Information

I104 S. 104 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Privacy

105.—(1) Rules of court may make provision for the court to sit in private in any proceedings under this Act.

(2) In Schedule 2 to the Administration of Justice Act 1960, in subparagraph (1) of the entry relating to section 12, in subsection (1)(a)(ii) after “1995” insert “or the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022”.

(3) Paragraphs (2) to (9A) of Article 170 of the Children Order have effect for the purposes of this Act as if references in those paragraphs to that Order included references to this Act.

(4) This section is without prejudice to—

- (a) the generality of any other power to make rules of court; or
- (b) any other power of the court to sit in private.

Commencement Information

I105 S. 105 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Children’s court guardians

Children’s court guardians

106.—(1) Rules of court must provide for the appointment in prescribed cases of a children’s court guardian for the purposes of any relevant application.

(2) Rules of court may provide for the children’s court guardian—

- (a) to act on behalf of the child upon the hearing of any relevant application, with the duty of safeguarding the interests of the child in the prescribed manner;
- (b) where the court so requests, to prepare a report on matters relating to the welfare of the child in question;
- (c) to perform prescribed functions.

(3) A report prepared in pursuance of the rules of court on matters relating to the welfare of a child must—

- (a) deal with prescribed matters (unless the court orders otherwise); and
- (b) be made in the manner required by the court.

(4) A person who—

- (a) in the case of an application for the making, varying or revocation of a placement order, is employed by the adoption authority which made the application;

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(b) in the case of an application for an adoption order in respect of a child who was placed for adoption, is employed by the adoption agency which placed the child; or

(c) is within a prescribed description,

is not to be appointed under subsection (1).

(5) In this section, “relevant application” means an application for—

(a) the making, varying or revocation of a placement order;

(b) the making of an order under section 23, or the varying or revocation of such an order;

(c) the making of an adoption order, or

(d) the making of an order under section 83.

(6) Rules may make provision as to the assistance which the court may require a children’s court guardian to give to it.

(7) In subsections (1) to (4) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules of court.

(8) The Department may by regulations provide that children’s court guardians appointed under this section must be selected from persons employed or approved for that purpose by such special agency or other public body as may be prescribed.

(9) Subsection (8) is not to be taken to prejudice the power of the Lord Chief Justice to confer or impose duties on the Official Solicitor under section 75(2) of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978.

(10) The regulations may, in particular, make provision—

(a) for the employment or approval of persons for the purposes of this section by such special agency or other public body as may be prescribed;

(b) as to the qualifications for appointment as a children’s court guardian;

(c) as to the training to be given to children’s court guardians or to persons with a view to their appointment as children’s court guardians; and

(d) for monitoring the work of children’s court guardians.

(11) The Department may, with the approval of the Department of Finance, make such grants as the Department considers appropriate with respect to expenditure incurred under regulations made under subsection (8).

Commencement Information

I106 S. 106 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Right of access to adoption agency records

107.—(1) Where a children’s court guardian has been appointed to act under section 106(1), the children’s court guardian has the right at all reasonable times to examine and take copies of any records of, or held by, an adoption agency which were compiled in connection with the making, or proposed making, by any person of any application under this Part in respect of the child concerned.

(2) Where a children’s court guardian takes a copy of any record which the children’s court guardian is entitled to examine under this section, that copy or any part of it is admissible as evidence of any matter referred to in any—

- (a) report which the children’s court guardian makes to the court in the proceedings in question; or
- (b) evidence which the children’s court guardian gives in those proceedings.

(3) Subsection (2) has effect regardless of any statutory provision or rule of law which would otherwise prevent the record in question being admissible in evidence.

Commencement Information

I107 S. 107 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Evidence

Evidence of consent

108.—(1) If a document signifying any consent which is required by this Part to be given is witnessed in accordance with rules of court, it is to be admissible in evidence without further proof of the signature of the person by whom it was executed.

(2) A document signifying any such consent which purports to be witnessed in accordance with rules of court is to be presumed to be so witnessed, and to have been executed and witnessed on the date and at the place specified in the document, unless the contrary is proved.

Commencement Information

I108 S. 108 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Orders made in Great Britain, etc.

Effect of certain Scottish orders and provisions

109.—(1) A Scottish adoption order has effect in Northern Ireland as it has in Scotland, but as if references to the parental responsibilities and the parental rights in relation to a child were to parental responsibility for the child.

(2) A Scottish permanence order which includes provision granting authority for the child to be adopted has the same effect in Northern Ireland as it has in Scotland, but as if references to the parental responsibilities and the parental rights in relation to a child were to parental responsibility for the child.

(3) Any person who contravenes any of the provisions of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 mentioned in subsection (4) is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both.

(4) The provisions are—

- (a) section 20 (restrictions on removal: child placed for adoption);
- (b) section 21 (restrictions on removal: notice of intention to adopt given);
- (c) section 22 (restrictions on removal: application for adoption order pending).

(5) Orders made under section 24 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 (return of child removed in breach of certain provisions) are to have effect in Northern Ireland as if they were orders of the High Court under section 38 of this Act.

(6) In this section—

“Scottish adoption order” includes an order under section 25 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978 (interim adoption orders);

“Scottish permanence order” means a permanence order under section 80 of the [Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007 \(asp 4\)](#) (including a deemed permanence order having effect by virtue of article 13(1), 14(2), 17(1) or 19(2) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 (Commencement No. 4, Transitional and Savings Provisions) Order 2009).

Commencement Information

I109 S. 109 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Effect of certain orders made in England and Wales

110.—(1) The following have effect in Northern Ireland as they have effect in England and Wales—

- (a) an adoption order within the meaning of section 46(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;
- (b) an order made under section 21 of that Act (placement orders), and the variation or revocation of such an order under section 23 or 24 of that Act;
- (c) an order under section 26 of that Act (contact);
- (d) an order under section 41 of that Act (recovery orders).

(2) Any person who contravenes any of the provisions of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 mentioned in subsection (3) is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or both.

(3) The provisions are—

- (a) section 30 (general prohibitions on removal);
- (b) section 34 (placement orders: prohibitions on removal);
- (c) section 36 (restrictions on removal).

Commencement Information

I110 S. 110 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Use of adoption records from Great Britain, etc.

111. Any document which is receivable as evidence of any matter—

- (a) in Scotland under section 56(1) or (2) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007;
- (b) in England and Wales under section 77(4) and (5) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002; or
- (c) in the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands under a statutory provision corresponding to section 76(3) of this Act,

is also receivable as evidence of that matter in Northern Ireland.

Commencement Information

I111 S. 111 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Channel Islands and the Isle of Man

112.—(1) Regulations may provide—

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- (a) for a reference in any provision of this Act to an order of a court to include an order of a court in the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands which appears to the Department to correspond in its effect to the order in question;
- (b) for a reference in any provision of this Act to an adoption agency to include a person who appears to the Department to exercise functions under the law of the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands which correspond to those of an adoption agency and for any reference in any provision of this Act to a child placed for adoption by an adoption agency to be read accordingly;
- (c) for a reference in any provision of this Act to a statutory provision (including a provision contained in this Act) to include a provision of the law of the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands which appears to the Department to correspond in its effect to that statutory provision;
- (d) for any reference in any provision of this Act to the United Kingdom or to Great Britain to include the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands.

(2) Regulations may modify any provision of this Act, as it applies to any order made, or other thing done, under the law of the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands.

Commencement Information

1112 S. 112 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

General

Avoiding delay

113.—(1) In proceedings in which a question may arise as to whether an adoption order or placement order should be made, or any other question with respect to such an order, the court must (in the light of any rules made by virtue of subsection (2))—

- (a) draw up a timetable with a view to determining such a question without delay; and
- (b) give such directions as it considers appropriate for the purpose of ensuring that the timetable is adhered to.

(2) Rules of court may—

- (a) prescribe periods within which prescribed steps must be taken in relation to such proceedings; and
- (b) make other provision with respect to such proceedings for the purpose of ensuring that such questions are determined without delay.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I113 S. 113 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Service of notices etc.

114.—(1) Any notice or information required to be given by virtue of this Act may be given by post.

(2) Section 24 of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954 has effect in relation to this Act as if in subsection (1) the word “registering” were omitted.

Commencement Information

I114 S. 114 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Jurisdiction of courts

115.—(1) In this Act “the court” means the High Court or a county court.

(2) Subsection (1) is subject to any provision made by or under subsection (4) or Schedule 7 to the Children Order.

(3) In paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 7 to the Children Order, after “this Order” in each place where it occurs insert “or the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022”.

(4) The Department of Justice may, after consulting the Lord Chief Justice, by order provide for courts of summary jurisdiction to be included among the courts who may hear proceedings under this Part.

(5) Any power to make an order under subsection (4) may, in particular, be exercised by amending, repealing, revoking or otherwise modifying any provision made by or under this Act or any other statutory provision.

Commencement Information

I115 S. 115 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

PART 2

Children order amendments

Definition of family proceedings

116. In Article 8 of the Children Order (residence, contact and other orders with respect to children), in paragraph (4) after sub-paragraph (h) insert—

“(ha) Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (other than paragraph 20 of that Schedule).”

Commencement Information

I116 S. 116 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

I117 S. 116 in operation at 1.4.2024 by [S.R. 2024/30](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(a\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Article 8 orders: authority foster parents

117. In Article 9 of the Children Order (restrictions on making Article 8 orders)—

- (a) in paragraph (3)(c), for “three years” substitute “one year”; and
- (b) omit paragraph (4).

Commencement Information

I118 S. 117 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Duration of residence orders

118.—(1) The Children Order has effect in relation to a child who is looked after by an authority (within the meaning of that Order) as follows.

(2) Article 9(6) (restrictions on making Article 8 orders) has effect as if for the words from the beginning to “Article 8 order” there were substituted “No court shall make a specific issue order, contact order or prohibited steps order”.

(3) Article 179(10) (duration of Article 8 orders), has effect as if after “Article 8 order” there were inserted “other than a residence order”.

Commencement Information

I119 S. 118 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

1120 S. 118 in operation at 1.4.2024 by S.R. 2024/30, **art. 2(1)(b)**

PROSPECTIVE

Special guardianship

119.—(1) After Article 14 of the Children Order insert—

“Special guardianship

Special guardianship orders

14A.—(1) A “special guardianship order” is an order appointing one or more persons to be a child’s “special guardian” (or special guardians).

(2) A special guardian—

- (a) must be aged 18 or over; and
- (b) must not be a parent of the child in question,

and paragraphs (3) to (6) are to be read in that light.

(3) The court may make a special guardianship order with respect to any child on the application of a person who—

- (a) is entitled to make such an application with respect to the child; or
- (b) has obtained the leave of the court to make the application,

or on the joint application of more than one such person.

(4) The persons who are entitled to apply for a special guardianship order with respect to a child are—

- (a) any guardian of the child with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application;
- (b) any person in whose favour a residence order is in force with respect to the child and with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application;
- (c) any person listed in paragraph (5)(b) of Article 10 (as read with paragraph (10) of that Article);
- (d) any person listed in paragraph (5)(c) of Article 10 and with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application;
- (e) an authority foster parent with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application;
- (f) a relative with whom the child has lived for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(5) A person may not apply for leave to make an application for a special guardianship order with respect to a child unless the child concerned has lived with the person who may be appointed as the child's special guardian for a period of at least one year immediately preceding the application.

(6) The court may also make a special guardianship order with respect to a child—

- (a) in any family proceedings in which a question arises with respect to the welfare of the child if an application for the order has been made by a person who falls within paragraph (3)(a) or (b) (or more than one such person jointly); or
- (b) in any proceedings on an application for a care or supervision order in which a question arises with respect to the welfare of the child if the court considers that a special guardianship order should be made even though no such application has been made.

(7) No person may make any application under paragraph (3) or (6)(a) unless, before the beginning of the period of three months ending with the date of the application, the person has given written notice of intention to make the application—

- (a) if the child in question is being looked after by an authority, to that authority; or
- (b) otherwise, to the authority in whose area the person is ordinarily resident.

(8) On receipt of such a notice, the authority must investigate the matter and prepare a report for the court dealing with—

- (a) the suitability of the applicant to be a special guardian;
- (b) such matters (if any) as may be prescribed; and
- (c) any other matter which the authority considers to be relevant.

(9) The court may itself ask an authority to conduct such an investigation and prepare such a report, and the authority must do so.

(10) If the child in question is being looked after by an authority, a report referred to in paragraph (8) or (9) must be prepared in accordance with prescribed arrangements.

(11) The authority may make such arrangements as it sees fit for any person to act on its behalf in connection with conducting an investigation or preparing a report referred to in paragraph (8) or (9).

(12) The court may not make a special guardianship order unless it has received a report dealing with the matters referred to in paragraph (8).

(13) Paragraphs (8) and (9) of Article 10 apply in relation to special guardianship orders as they apply in relation to Article 8 orders.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(14) This Article is subject to section 26(5) and (6) of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Special guardianship orders: making

14B.—(1) Before making a special guardianship order, the court must consider whether, if the order were made—

- (a) a contact order should also be made with respect to the child; and
- (b) any Article 8 order in force with respect to the child should be varied or discharged.

(2) On making a special guardianship order, the court may also—

- (a) give leave for the child to be known by a new surname;
- (b) grant the leave required by Article 14C(3)(b), either generally or for specified purposes.

Special guardianship orders: effect

14C.—(1) The effect of a special guardianship order is that while the order remains in force—

- (a) a special guardian appointed by the order has parental responsibility for the child in respect of whom it is made; and
- (b) subject to any other order in force with respect to the child under this Order, a special guardian is entitled to exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of any other person with parental responsibility for the child (apart from another special guardian).

(2) Paragraph (1) does not affect—

- (a) the operation of any statutory provision or rule of law which requires the consent of more than one person with parental responsibility in a matter affecting the child; or
- (b) any rights which a parent of the child has in relation to the child's adoption or placement for adoption.

(3) While a special guardianship order is in force with respect to a child, no person may—

- (a) cause the child to be known by a new surname; or
- (b) remove the child from the United Kingdom,

without either the written consent of every person who has parental responsibility for the child or the leave of the court.

(4) Paragraph (3)(b) does not prevent the removal of a child, for a period of less than three months, by a special guardian of the child.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(5) If the child with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force dies, the special guardian of the child must take reasonable steps to give notice of that fact to—

- (a) each parent of the child with parental responsibility; and
- (b) each guardian of the child,

but if the child has more than one special guardian, and one of them has taken such steps in relation to a particular parent or guardian, any other special guardian need not do so as respects that parent or guardian.

(6) This Article is subject to section 26(7) of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Special guardianship orders: variation and discharge

14D.—(1) The court may vary or discharge a special guardianship order on the application of—

- (a) the special guardian (or any of them, if there are more than one);
- (b) any parent or guardian of the child concerned;
- (c) any person in whose favour a residence order is in force with respect to the child;
- (d) any person not falling within any of sub-paragraphs (a) to (c) who has, or immediately before the making of the special guardianship order had, parental responsibility for the child;
- (e) the child; or
- (f) an authority designated in a care order with respect to the child.

(2) In any family proceedings in which a question arises with respect to the welfare of a child with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force, the court may also vary or discharge the special guardianship order if it considers that the order should be varied or discharged, even though no application has been made under paragraph (1).

(3) The following must obtain the leave of the court before making an application under paragraph (1)—

- (a) the child;
- (b) any parent or guardian of the child;
- (c) any step-parent of the child who has acquired, and has not lost, parental responsibility for the child by virtue of Article 7(1A);
- (d) any person falling within paragraph (1)(d) who, immediately before the making of the special guardianship order had, but no longer has, parental responsibility for the child.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(4) Where the person applying for leave to make an application under paragraph (1) is the child, the court may only grant leave if it is satisfied that the child has sufficient understanding to make the proposed application under paragraph (1).

(5) The court may not grant leave to a person falling within paragraph (3) (b), (c) or (d) unless it is satisfied that there has been a change in circumstances since the making of the special guardianship order.

Special guardianship orders: supplementary

14E.—(1) In proceedings in which any question of making, varying or discharging a special guardianship order arises, the court must (in the light of any rules made by virtue of paragraph (3))—

- (a) draw up a timetable with a view to determining the question without delay; and
- (b) give such directions as it considers appropriate for the purpose of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the timetable is adhered to.

(2) Paragraph (1) applies also in relation to proceedings in which any other question with respect to a special guardianship order arises.

(3) The power to make rules of court in paragraph (2) of Article 11 applies for the purposes of this Article as it applies for the purposes of Article 11.

(4) A special guardianship order, or an order varying one, may contain provisions which are to have effect for a specified period.

(5) Article 11(7) (apart from sub-paragraph (c)) applies in relation to special guardianship orders and orders varying them as it applies in relation to Article 8 orders.

Special guardianship support services

14F.—(1) Each authority must make arrangements for the provision within its area of special guardianship support services, which means—

- (a) counselling, advice and information; and
- (b) such other services as are prescribed,

in relation to special guardianship.

(2) The power to make regulations under paragraph (1)(b) is to be exercised so as to secure that authorities provide financial support.

(3) An authority must at the request of—

- (a) a relevant child;
- (b) a special guardian of a relevant child;

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- (c) a prospective special guardian of a relevant child;
- (d) a parent of a relevant child; or
- (e) any other person who falls within a prescribed description (subject to sub-paragraph (a) of paragraph (10)),

carry out an assessment of that person's needs for special guardianship support services.

(4) In paragraph (3)—

(a) “relevant child” means a child in respect of whom—

- (i) a special guardianship order is in force;
- (ii) a person has given notice to an authority under Article 14A(7) of intention to make an application for a special guardianship order; or
- (iii) a court is considering whether a special guardianship order should be made and has asked an authority to conduct an investigation and prepare a report under Article 14A(9);

(b) “prospective special guardian” means a person—

- (i) who has given notice to an authority under Article 14A(7) of the person's intention to make an application for a special guardianship order; or
- (ii) in respect of whom a court has requested that an authority conduct an investigation and prepare a report under Article 14A(9).

(5) An authority may, at the request of any other person, carry out an assessment of that person's needs for special guardianship support services.

(6) Where, as a result of an assessment, an authority decides that a person has needs for special guardianship support services, it must then decide whether to provide any such services to that person, subject to paragraph (7).

(7) An authority must provide special guardianship support services to a person under paragraph (6) where that person falls within—

- (a) any of sub-paragraphs (a) to (d) of paragraph (3); or
- (b) a prescribed description.

(8) If—

- (a) an authority decides to provide any special guardianship support services to a person under paragraph (6) or is under a duty to do so by virtue of paragraph (7); and
- (b) the circumstances fall within a prescribed description,

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the authority must prepare a plan in accordance with which special guardianship support services are to be provided to that person, and keep the plan under review.

(9) The Department may by regulations make provision about assessments, preparing and reviewing plans, the provision of special guardianship support services in accordance with plans and reviewing the provision of special guardianship support services.

(10) The regulations may in particular make provision—

- (a) as to the circumstances in which a person mentioned in subparagraph (e) of paragraph (3) is to have a right to request an assessment of that person's needs in accordance with that paragraph;
- (b) about the type of assessment which is to be carried out, or the way in which an assessment is to be carried out;
- (c) about the way in which a plan is to be prepared;
- (d) about the way in which, and the time at which, a plan or the provision of special guardianship support services is to be reviewed;
- (e) about the considerations to which an authority is to have regard in carrying out an assessment or review or preparing a plan;
- (f) as to the circumstances in which an authority may provide special guardianship support services subject to conditions (including conditions as to payment for the support or the repayment of financial support);
- (g) as to the consequences of conditions imposed by virtue of subparagraph (f) not being met (including the recovery of any financial support provided);
- (h) as to the circumstances in which this Article may apply to an authority in respect of persons who are outside that authority's area;
- (i) as to the circumstances in which an authority may recover from another authority the expenses of providing special guardianship support services to any person.

(11) An authority may provide special guardianship support services (or any part of them) by securing their provision by—

- (a) another authority; or
- (b) a person within a prescribed description of persons who may provide special guardianship support services,

and may also arrange with another authority or any such person for that other authority or that person to carry out the authority's functions in relation to assessments under this Article.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(12) An authority may carry out an assessment of the needs of any person for the purposes of this Article at the same time as an assessment of the person's needs is made under any other provision of this Order or under any other statutory provision.

(13) Article 46 (co-operation between authorities and other bodies) applies in relation to the exercise of functions of an authority under this Article as it applies in relation to the exercise of functions of an authority under Part 4.”

(2) In Article 3 of that Order (child's welfare to be paramount consideration), in paragraph (4)(b), after “discharge” insert “a special guardianship order or”.

(3) In Article 57 of that Order (interim orders), after paragraph (3) insert—
 “(3A) Where, in any proceedings on an application for a care or a supervision order, a court makes a special guardianship order with respect to the child concerned, it may also make an interim supervision order with respect to the child if it considers it necessary to do so to satisfactorily safeguard the child's welfare.”

(4) In Article 159 of that Order (appointment of guardians by court), in paragraph (1)—

(a) in sub-paragraph (b), for “or guardian” substitute “, guardian or special guardian”; and

(b) at the end of sub-paragraph (b) add—

“; or

(c) sub-paragraph (b) does not apply, and the child's only or last surviving special guardian dies.”

(5) In Article 160 of that Order (appointment of guardians by parent or guardian)—

(a) in paragraph (2), at the end add “; and a special guardian of a child may appoint another person to be the child's guardian in the event of the special guardian's death”; and

(b) in paragraph (5), at the end of sub-paragraph (b) add “or the person was the child's only (or last surviving) special guardian”.

Commencement Information

1121 S. 119 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Ascertainment of children's wishes

120.—(1) In Article 18 of the Children Order (general duty of authority to provide social care for children in need, their families and others) after paragraph (4) insert—

“(4A) Before determining what (if any) services to provide for a particular child in need in the exercise of functions conferred on it by this Article, an authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child’s welfare—

- (a) ascertain the child’s wishes and feelings regarding the provision of those services; and
- (b) give due consideration (having regard to the child’s age and understanding) to such wishes and feelings of the child as the authority has been able to ascertain.”

(2) In Article 21 of the Children Order (provision of accommodation for children: general), in sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph (6) after “wishes” insert “and feelings”.

(3) In Article 66 of the Children Order (authority’s duty to investigate), after paragraph (5) insert—

“(5A) For the purposes of making a determination under this Article as to the action to be taken with respect to a child, an authority must, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child’s welfare—

- (a) ascertain the child’s wishes and feelings regarding the action to be taken with respect to the child; and
- (b) give due consideration (having regard to the child’s age and understanding) to such wishes and feelings of the child as the authority has been able to ascertain.”

Commencement Information

I122 S. 120 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

I123 S. 120 in operation at 1.4.2024 by [S.R. 2024/30](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(c\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Provision of services to children in need, etc.

121.—(1) In Article 18 of the Children Order (general duty of authority to provide social care for children in need, their families and others), for paragraph (6) substitute—

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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“(6) The services provided by an authority in the exercise of functions conferred on it by this Article may include—

- (a) giving assistance in kind;
- (b) subject to paragraph (6A), giving assistance in cash;
- (c) in the case of an eligible child and subject to paragraph (6B), providing accommodation.

(6A) In deciding whether to give assistance in cash, the authority must have regard to any guidance provided by the Department.

(6B) In providing accommodation, the authority must have regard to any guidance provided by the Department.

(6C) In paragraph (6) “eligible child” means a child who is not being looked after by an authority and—

- (a) is disabled; or
- (b) falls within a prescribed category.”.

(2) In Article 25 of the Children Order (interpretation), in paragraph (2) (accommodation), before “34C” insert “18,”.

Commencement Information

I124 S. 121 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Duty of authorities to promote etc. achievement, learning and development, and to prevent disruption to education or training

122.—(1) In Article 26 of the Children Order (general duty of authority), after paragraph (1) insert—

“(1A) The duty of an authority under paragraph (1)(a) to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by the authority includes in particular a duty to promote, facilitate and support the child’s —

- (a) learning and development; and
- (b) achievement in relation to education or training.”.

(2) In Article 27 of the Children Order (accommodation and maintenance for children), in paragraph (8)—

- (a) at the end of sub-paragraph (a), omit the word “and”;
- (b) at the end of sub-paragraph (b) add “; and
- (c) the child’s education or training will not be disrupted.”.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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Commencement Information

I125 S. 122 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Corporate parenting principles

123. After Article 26 of the Children Order (general duty of authority) insert—

“Corporate parenting principles

26A.—(1) An authority must, in carrying out functions in relation to persons to whom this Article applies, have regard to the need—

- (a) to act in their best interests, and promote their well-being;
- (b) to encourage them to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) to take into account their views, wishes and feelings;
- (d) to help them gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the authority and any relevant partner;
- (e) to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for them;
- (f) for them to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- (g) to prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

(2) This Article applies to—

- (a) children who are looked after by an authority;
- (b) relevant children within the meaning given by Article 34B(2); and
- (c) persons aged under 25 (or such other age as may be prescribed) who are former relevant children within the meaning given by Article 34D(1).

(3) In this Article—

“relevant partner” means—

- (a) children’s authority within the meaning given by section 9 of the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015;
- (b) other children’s service provider within the meaning given by section 9 of the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015;

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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“well-being” has the meaning given by section 1 of the Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

(4) An authority must have regard to any guidance given by the Department as to the performance of the duty under paragraph (1).”.

Commencement Information

I126 S. 123 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

PROSPECTIVE

Placement of looked after children with prospective adopters

124. In Article 27 of the Children Order (accommodation and maintenance for children), after paragraph (9) insert—

“(9A) Paragraph (9B) applies (subject to paragraph (9C)) where an authority—

- (a) is considering adoption for a child; or
- (b) is satisfied that a child ought to be placed for adoption but is not authorised under section 16 of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (placing children with parental consent) or by virtue of section 18 of that Act (placement orders) to place the child for adoption.

(9B) Where this paragraph applies—

- (a) paragraphs (7A) to (9) do not apply to the authority;
- (b) the authority must consider placing the child with a person who—
 - (i) falls within paragraph (7)(b); and
 - (ii) is approved as an authority foster parent; and
- (c) where the authority decides that such a placement is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the authority must consider placing the child with a person who—
 - (i) is approved as a prospective adopter; and
 - (ii) is approved as an authority foster parent.

(9C) Paragraph (9B) does not apply where an authority has applied for a placement order under section 18 of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in respect of the child and the application has been refused.

(9D) In paragraph (9B)—

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

“approved as a prospective adopter” means approved as such in accordance with regulations made under section 9 of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022;

“approved as an authority foster parent” means approved as such in accordance with regulations made under Article 28A.”.

Commencement Information

I127 S. 124 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Accommodation for children: requirements

125.—(1) Article 27 of the Children Order (accommodation and maintenance for children) is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (2)(aa) after “him” insert “(subject to any regulations made by the Department)”.

(3) After paragraph (7) insert—

“(7A) The Department may by regulations impose requirements which an authority must comply with before making any decision concerning the provision of accommodation for a child whom it is looking after.”.

(4) In Article 28 of the Children Order (regulations under Article 27), after paragraph (3) insert—

“(4) Regulations under Article 27(7A) may, in particular, impose requirements which an authority must comply with—

- (a) before making any decision concerning the provision of accommodation for a child whom it is looking after, which could disrupt the child’s education;
- (b) before making any decision to provide a child whom it is looking after with accommodation at a place outside the area of the authority; or
- (c) if a child’s welfare requires the immediate provision of accommodation at a place outside the area of the authority, within such period of the accommodation being provided as may be prescribed.”.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I128 S. 125 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Authority foster parents

126. After Article 28 of the Children Order (regulations under Article 27) insert—

“Authority foster parents

28A.—(1) Regulations under Article 27(2)(a) may, in particular, make provision—

- (a) for securing that a child is not placed with an authority foster parent unless that person is approved as an authority foster parent in accordance with prescribed arrangements;
 - (b) establishing a procedure under which any person in respect of whom a qualifying determination has been made may apply to the Department for a review of that determination by a panel constituted by the Department.
- (2) A determination is a qualifying determination if—
- (a) it relates to the issue of whether a person should be approved, or should continue to be approved, as an authority foster parent; and
 - (b) it is of a prescribed description.
- (3) Regulations under paragraph (1)(b) may include provision as to—
- (a) the duties and powers of a panel;
 - (b) the administration and procedures of a panel;
 - (c) the appointment of persons who may be members of a panel (including the number, or any limit on the number, of members who may be appointed and any conditions for appointment);
 - (d) the payment of fees to members of a panel;
 - (e) the duties of any person in connection with reviews conducted under the regulations;
 - (f) the monitoring of any such reviews.

(4) Regulations made by virtue of paragraph (3)(e) may impose a duty to pay to the Department such sum as the Department may determine; but

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such a duty may not be imposed upon a person who has applied for a review of a qualifying determination.

(5) The Department must secure that, taking one financial year with another, the aggregate of the sums which become payable to the Department under regulations made by virtue of paragraph (4) does not exceed the cost to the Department of performing independent review functions.

(6) The Department may make an arrangement with an organisation under which independent review functions are performed by the organisation on behalf of the Department.

(7) If the Department makes such an arrangement with an organisation, the organisation is to perform its functions under the arrangement in accordance with any directions given by the Department.

(8) The arrangement may include provision for payments to be made to the organisation by the Department.

(9) Payments made by the Department in accordance with such provision are to be taken into account in determining (for the purpose of paragraph (5)) the cost to the Department of performing independent review functions.

(10) In this Article—

“independent review function” means a function conferred or imposed on the Department by regulations made by virtue of paragraph (1)(b);

“organisation” includes a public body and a private or voluntary organisation.”.

Commencement Information

I129 S. 126 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Duty to ensure visits to and advice etc. for children

127. After Article 28A of the Children Order (as inserted by section 126) insert—

“Duty to ensure visits to and advice etc. for children

28B.—(1) This Article applies to a child looked after by an authority.

(2) The authority must—

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- (a) ensure that the child is visited by a representative of the authority (“a representative”);
 - (b) arrange for appropriate advice, support and assistance to be available to the child if the child seeks it from the authority.
- (3) The duties imposed by paragraph (2)—
- (a) are to be discharged in accordance with any regulations made for the purposes of this Article by the Department;
 - (b) are subject to any requirement imposed by or under a statutory provision applicable to the place in which the child is accommodated.
- (4) Regulations under this Article for the purposes of paragraph (3)(a) may make provision about—
- (a) the frequency of visits;
 - (b) circumstances in which the child must be visited by a representative; and
 - (c) the functions of a representative.
- (5) In choosing a representative an authority must satisfy itself that the person chosen has the necessary skills and experience to perform the functions of a representative.”.

Commencement Information

I130 S. 127 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Former relevant children: continuing functions

128.—(1) After Article 34A of the Children Order (preparation for ceasing to be looked after) insert—

“Preparation for ceasing to be looked after: continuing care arrangements

34AA.—(1) This Article applies to an eligible child (within the meaning of Article 34A) who has been placed by an authority with an authority foster parent.

(2) When carrying out the assessment of the child’s needs in accordance with Article 34A(5), the authority must determine whether it would be appropriate to provide advice, assistance and support under this Order

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in order to facilitate a continuing care arrangement, and with a view to maintaining such an arrangement, after the authority ceases to look after the child.

(3) The authority must provide advice, assistance and support under this Order in order to facilitate a continuing care arrangement if—

- (a) the authority determines under paragraph (2) that it would be appropriate to do so; and
- (b) the eligible child and the authority foster parent wish to make a continuing care arrangement.

(4) In this Article, “continuing care arrangement” has the meaning given by Article 34DA.”

(2) After Article 34D of that Order (continuing functions in respect of former relevant children) insert—

“Continuing to live with former foster parents

34DA.—(1) Each authority has the duties provided for in paragraph (3) in relation to a continuing care arrangement.

(2) A “continuing care arrangement” is an arrangement under which—

- (a) a person who is a former relevant child by virtue of Article 34D(1)(b); and
- (b) a person (“a former foster parent”) who was the former relevant child’s authority foster parent immediately before the former relevant child ceased to be looked after by the authority,

continue to live together after the former relevant child has ceased to be looked after.

(3) The authority must (in discharging duties under Article 34D(3) and by other means)—

- (a) monitor the continuing care arrangement; and
- (b) provide advice, assistance and support to the former relevant child and the former foster parent with a view to maintaining the continuing care arrangement.

(4) Support provided to the former foster parent under paragraph (3)(b) must include financial support.

(5) Paragraph (3)(b) does not apply if the authority considers that the continuing care arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the former relevant child.

(6) The duties set out in paragraph (3) subsist until the former relevant child reaches the age of 21.

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(7) The duties set out in paragraph (3) cease if the continuing care arrangement is brought to an end by the former relevant child or the former foster parent.”.

(3) After Article 34DA of that Order (inserted by subsection (2)) insert—

“Further advice and support

34DB.—(1) This Article applies to a former relevant child if—

- (a) the former relevant child has reached the age of 21 but not 25 (or such other age as may be prescribed); and
- (b) an authority had duties towards the former relevant child under Article 34D (whether or not those duties subsist as a result of paragraph (7) of that Article).

(2) If the former relevant child informs the authority that he or she wishes to receive advice and support under this Article, paragraphs (3) to (6) apply to the authority.

(3) The authority must provide the former relevant child with a personal adviser until the former relevant child—

- (a) reaches the age of 25 (or such other age as may be prescribed under paragraph (1)(a)); or
- (b) if earlier, informs the authority that he or she no longer wants a personal adviser.

(4) The authority must—

- (a) carry out an assessment in relation to the former relevant child under paragraph (5); and
- (b) prepare a pathway plan for the former relevant child.

(5) An assessment under this paragraph is an assessment of the needs of the former relevant child with a view to determining—

- (a) whether any services offered by the authority (under this Order or otherwise) may assist in meeting the former relevant child’s needs; and
- (b) if so, what advice and support it would be appropriate for the authority to provide for the purpose of helping the former relevant child to obtain those services.

(6) The authority must provide the former relevant child with the advice and support that it has determined as being appropriate to provide under paragraph (5)(b).

(7) Where a former relevant child to whom this Article applies is receiving advice and support under this Article, the authority may continue to provide advice and support after the former relevant child has reached the age of

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25 (or such other age as may be prescribed under paragraph (1)(a)) if the authority is satisfied that the former relevant child has needs that cannot be met other than by providing such advice and support.

(8) Where a former relevant child to whom this Article applies is not receiving advice and support under this Article, the authority must offer such advice and support—

- (a) as soon as possible after the former relevant child reaches the age of 21; and
- (b) at least once in every 12 month period.

(9) In this Article “former relevant child” has the meaning given by Article 34D(1).

Further assistance to pursue education or training

34DC.—(1) This Article applies to a person if—

- (a) the person is under the age of 25 (or such other age as may be prescribed);
- (b) the person is a former relevant child towards whom the duties imposed by paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) of Article 34D no longer subsist; and
- (c) the person has informed the responsible authority that he or she is pursuing, or wishes to pursue, a programme of education or training.

(2) The responsible authority must appoint a personal adviser for a person to whom this Article applies.

(3) The responsible authority must—

- (a) carry out an assessment of the needs of a person to whom this Article applies with a view to determining what assistance (if any) it would be appropriate for the authority to provide to the person under this Article; and
- (b) prepare a pathway plan for the person.

(4) The responsible authority must give assistance of a kind referred to in paragraph (5) to a person to whom this Article applies to the extent that the person’s educational or training needs require it.

(5) The kinds of assistance are—

- (a) contributing to expenses incurred by the person in living near the place where the person is, or will be, receiving education or training; or
- (b) making a grant to enable the person to meet expenses connected with the person’s education and training.

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(6) If a person to whom this Article applies pursues a programme of education or training in accordance with the pathway plan prepared for the person, the duties of the authority under this Article (and under any provision applicable to the pathway plan prepared under this Article for that person) subsist for as long as the person continues to pursue that programme.

(7) For the purposes of paragraph (6), the authority may disregard any interruption in the person's pursuance of a programme of education or training if they are satisfied that the person will resume it as soon as is reasonably practicable.

(8) Paragraphs (7) to (9) of Article 18 apply to assistance given to a person under this Article as they apply to assistance given to or in respect of a child under that Article, but with the omission in paragraph (8) of the words "and of each of his parents".

(9) Paragraph (5) of Article 35B applies to a person to whom this Article applies as it applies to a person to whom paragraph (3) of that Article applies.

(10) In this Article—

"former relevant child" has the meaning given by Article 34D(1);

"the responsible authority" means, in relation to a person to whom this Article applies, the authority which had the duties provided for in Article 34D towards the person."

(4) In Article 35D of that Order (representations: Articles 34B to 35B), in paragraph (1) after sub-paragraph (a) insert—

- "(aa) a former relevant child falling within Article 34DB;
- (ab) a person falling within Article 34DC;"

Commencement Information

I131 S. 128 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

PROSPECTIVE

Local offer for care leavers

129. After Article 34F of the Children Order (Pathway Plans) insert—

"Local offer for care leavers

34G.—(1) An authority must publish information about—

- (a) services which the authority offers for care leavers in the exercise of its functions under this Order;

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(b) other services that the authority offers that may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), services which may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living include services relating to—

- (a) health and well-being;
- (b) relationships;
- (c) education and training;
- (d) employment;
- (e) accommodation;
- (f) participation in society.

(3) Where it considers appropriate, an authority must publish information about services for care leavers offered by others which the authority has power to offer as a result of its functions under this Order.

(4) Information required to be published by an authority under this Article is to be known as its “local offer for care leavers”.

(5) An authority must update its local offer for care leavers from time to time, as appropriate.

(6) Before publishing its local offer for care leavers (or any updated version) an authority must consult relevant persons about which of the services offered by the authority may assist care leavers in, or in preparing for, adulthood and independent living.

(7) In this Article—

“care leavers” means—

- (a) eligible children within the meaning given by Article 34A(3);
- (b) relevant children within the meaning given by Article 34B(2);
- (c) persons aged under 25 who are former relevant children within the meaning given by Article 34D(1);
- (d) persons qualifying for advice and assistance within the meaning given by Article 35(1);

“relevant persons”, in relation to an authority, means such care leavers and other persons as appear to the authority to be representative of care leavers in its area.”.

Commencement Information

I132 S. 129 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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PROSPECTIVE

Inquiries into representations

130.—(1) In Article 35D of the Children Order (representations: Articles 34B to 35B), after paragraph (1) insert—

“(1A) Regulations may be made by the Department imposing time limits on the making of representations under paragraph (1).”.

(2) Article 45 of the Children Order (reviews and representations) is amended in accordance with subsections (3) to (7).

(3) In paragraph (3) (which makes provision as to the persons by whom, and the matters in respect of which, representations may be made), for “functions under this Part” substitute “qualifying functions”.

(4) After that paragraph insert—

“(3A) The following are qualifying functions for the purposes of paragraph (3)—

- (a) functions under this Part;
- (b) such functions under Part 5 or 6 as are specified by the Department in regulations.

(3B) The duty under paragraph (3) extends to representations (including complaints) made to the authority by—

- (a) any person mentioned in section 4(1) of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (persons for whose needs provision is made by the Adoption Service) and any other person to whom arrangements for the provision of adoption support services (within the meaning of that Act) extend;
- (b) any other person the authority considers has sufficient interest in a child who is or may be adopted to warrant that person’s representations being considered by the authority,

about the discharge by the authority of such functions under the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as are specified by the Department in regulations.

(3C) The duty under paragraph (3) extends to any representations (including complaints) which are made to the authority by—

- (a) a child with respect to whom a special guardianship order is in force;
- (b) a special guardian or a parent of such a child;

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(c) any other person the authority considers has a sufficient interest in the welfare of such a child to warrant that person's representations being considered by the authority; or

(d) any person who has requested an assessment under Article 14F(3) or (4),

about the discharge by the authority of such functions under Article 14F as are specified by the Department in regulations.”.

(5) In paragraph (4) (procedure to require involvement of independent person), at the end add “, but this paragraph is subject to paragraph (5A).”.

(6) After that paragraph insert—

“(4A) Regulations may be made by the Department imposing time limits on the making of representations under this Article.”.

(7) After paragraph (5) insert—

“(5A) Regulations under paragraph (5) may provide that paragraph (4) does not apply in relation to any consideration or discussion which takes place as part of a procedure for which provision is made by the regulations for the purpose of resolving informally the matters raised in the representations.”.

(8) In Article 183 of the Children Order (regulations and orders), after paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) Regulations under Article 35D(1A) or Article 45(4A) must not be made unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.”.

Commencement Information

I133 S. 130 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Review of cases of looked after children

131. In Article 45 of the Children Order (reviews and representations), in paragraph (2) (regulations as to reviews)—

(a) in sub-paragraph (e), omit “to consider” and after “care of the authority” insert—

“(i) to keep the Article 50A plan for the child under review and, if the authority is of the opinion that some change is required, to revise the plan, or make a new plan, accordingly;

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(ii) to consider”;

(b) in sub-paragraph (f), omit “to consider” and after “provided by the authority” insert—

“(i) if there is no plan for the future care of the child, to prepare one;

(ii) if there is such a plan for the child, to keep it under review and, if the authority is of the opinion that some change is required, to revise the plan or make a new plan, accordingly;

(iii) to consider”.

Commencement Information

I134 S. 131 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Independent advocacy services

132. After Article 45 of the Children Order (reviews and representations) insert—

“Independent advocacy services

45A.—(1) Every authority must make arrangements for the provision of assistance to—

- (a) persons who make or intend to make representations under Article 35D; and
- (b) children who make or intend to make representations under Article 45.

(2) The assistance provided under the arrangements must include assistance by way of representation.

(3) The arrangements—

- (a) must secure that a person may not provide assistance if that person is a person who is prevented from doing so by regulations made by the Department; and
- (b) must comply with any other provision made by the regulations in relation to the arrangements.

(4) The Department may make regulations requiring authorities to monitor the steps that they have taken with a view to ensuring that they comply with regulations made for the purposes of paragraph (3).

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

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(5) Every authority must give such publicity to their arrangements for the provision of assistance under this Article as it considers appropriate.”.

Commencement Information

I135 S. 132 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

PROSPECTIVE

Definition of harm

133.—(1) In Article 2(2) of the Children Order (interpretation), at the appropriate place insert—

““impairment of health or development” includes, for example, impairment suffered as a result of—

- (a) the ill-treatment of another, or
- (b) behaviour directed at another that falls within section 2 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 (what amounts to abusive behaviour),

whether or not the child who suffered the impairment saw or heard, or was present during that ill-treatment or behaviour;”.

(2) In Article 12A(1) of the Children Order (residence and contact orders and domestic violence), for the words from “through seeing” to the end of the paragraph substitute “as a result of any behaviour of the prohibited person.”.

Commencement Information

I136 S. 133 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

PROSPECTIVE

Care plans

134.—(1) After Article 50 of the Children Order (care orders and supervision orders) insert—

“Care orders: care plans

50A.—(1) Where an application is made on which a care order might be made with respect to a child, the appropriate authority must, within such time

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as the court may direct, prepare a plan (a care plan) for the future care of the child.

(2) While the application is pending, the authority must keep any care plan prepared by it under review and, if the authority is of the opinion some change is required, revise the plan, or make a new plan, accordingly.

(3) A care plan must give any prescribed information and do so in the prescribed manner.

(4) For the purposes of this Article, the appropriate authority, in relation to a child in respect of whom a care order might be made, is the authority proposed to be designated in the order.

(5) In this Article references to a care order do not include an interim care order.

(6) A plan prepared, or treated as prepared, under this Article is referred to in this Order as an “Article 50A plan”.

(2) If—

(a) before subsection (1) comes into operation, a care order has been made in respect of a child and a plan for the future care of the child has been prepared in connection with the making of the order by the authority designated in the order, and

(b) on the day on which that subsection comes into operation the order is in force, or would be in force but for section 26(1),

the plan is to have effect as if made under Article 50A of the Children Order.

Commencement Information

I137 S. 134 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Contact: children in care of authority

135.—(1) Article 53 of the Children Order (parental contact etc. with children in care) is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1) after “subject to the provisions of this Article” insert “and the authority’s duty under Article 26(1)(a)”.

(3) After paragraph (6) insert—

“(6A) Where (by virtue of an order under this Article, or because paragraph (6) applies) an authority is authorised to refuse to allow contact between the child and a person who is mentioned in sub-paragraphs (a)

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to (c) of Article 29(1), Article 29(1) does not require the authority to endeavour to promote contact between the child and that person.”.

(4) In paragraph (8) before sub-paragraph (a) insert—

“(za) what an authority must have regard to in considering whether contact between a child and a person who is mentioned in any of sub-paragraphs (a) to (d) of paragraph (1) is consistent with safeguarding and promoting the child’s welfare;”.

(5) In paragraph (11) after the word “Before” insert “making, varying or discharging an order under this Article or”.

Commencement Information

I138 S. 135 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Persons authorised to act as children’s court guardian

136.—(1) In Article 60 of the Children Order (representation of child and of the child’s interests in certain proceedings), in paragraph (7) (establishment of panels)—

- (a) for “for the establishment of panels of persons from whom” substitute “that”;
- (b) at the end add “from persons employed or approved for that purpose by such special agency or other public body as may be prescribed”.

(2) In paragraph (9) of that Article (regulations)—

- (a) in sub-paragraph (a) for the words from “constitution” to the end substitute “employment or approval of persons for the purposes of this Article by such special agency or other public body as may be prescribed”; and
- (b) omit sub-paragraph (b).

Commencement Information

I139 S. 136 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Renaming of guardians ad litem

137.—(1) A guardian ad litem is to be known as a children’s court guardian.

(2) In Articles 60 and 61 of the Children Order (guardians ad litem)—

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- (a) for “guardian ad litem” (wherever occurring) substitute “children’s court guardian”;
- (b) for “guardians ad litem” (wherever occurring) substitute “children’s court guardians”.
- (3) In the cross-heading preceding Article 60 for “Guardians ad litem” substitute “Children’s court guardians”.
- (4) In each of the following for “guardian ad litem” substitute “children’s court guardian”—
 - (a) paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (civil legal services: excluded services);
 - (b) paragraph 1(6) of Schedule 2 to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (regulated activity);
 - (c) Article 28(11) of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (positions of trust).
- (5) Any reference in any other statutory provision to a guardian ad litem is to be read as a reference to a children’s court guardian.

Commencement Information

I140 S. 137 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

I141 S. 137 in operation at 13.2.2023 by [S.R. 2023/12, art. 2](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Interests of children in proceedings

138. In Article 60 of the Children Order (specified proceedings), in paragraph (6), after sub-paragraph (h) insert—

“(ha) on an application for the making of a special guardianship order with respect to a child who is the subject of a care order;”.

Commencement Information

I142 S. 138 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

PROSPECTIVE

Definition of privately fostered child

139.—(1) In Article 107 of the Children Order (privately fostered children further defined), paragraph (7) is amended as follows.

(2) In sub-paragraph (a)—

- (a) in head (i), for “Article 3 of the Adoption Order” substitute “section 2 of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022”;
- (b) in head (ii), for “section 1 of the Adoption Act 1976” substitute “section 2 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002”.

(3) Omit sub-paragraph (b).

(4) At the end add—

- “(c) an authority has functions in respect of the child by virtue of—
 - (i) regulations under section 82(6)(b) of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, or
 - (ii) corresponding functions by virtue of regulations under section 1 of the Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.”.

Commencement Information

I143 S. 139 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Welfare of children who will be privately fostered

140.—(1) Article 108 of the Children Order (welfare of privately fostered children) is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1)—

- (a) in sub-paragraph (a)—
 - (i) after “who are” insert “or are proposed to be”;
 - (ii) after “is being” insert “or will be”;
- (b) in sub-paragraph (b) for “caring for” substitute “concerned with”.

(3) After paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) Regulations under paragraph (2)(b) may impose requirements as to the action to be taken by an authority for the purposes of discharging

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

the authority’s duty under paragraph (1) where the authority has received notification that a child is proposed to be privately fostered.”.

(4) In paragraph (3)—

(a) after “visit privately fostered children” insert “or children who are proposed to be privately fostered”;

(b) in sub-paragraph (a) omit “or”;

(c) at the end of sub-paragraph (b) add “or

(c) it is proposed to accommodate any child who is proposed to be privately fostered in any such premises.”.

(5) In paragraph (5)—

(a) after “who is” insert “or is proposed to be”;

(b) after “is being” insert “or will be”.

Commencement Information

I144 S. 140 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Notification of fostering: public awareness

141. After Article 112 of the Children Order insert—

“Notification of fostering: public awareness

112A. Every authority must promote public awareness within its area of requirements as to notification for which provision is made under Article 112”.

Commencement Information

I145 S. 141 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Privacy for children in proceedings

142. In Article 170 of the Children Order (privacy for children in specified proceedings), after paragraph (9) insert—

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

“(9A) It is not a contravention of this Article to—

- (a) enter material in the Northern Ireland Adoption and Children Act Register (established under section 144 of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022; or
- (b) permit persons to search and inspect that register pursuant to regulations made under section 149 of that Act.”.

Commencement Information

I146 S. 142 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

Report on the operation of the Children Order

143.—(1) Article 181 of the Children Order (annual report) is amended as follows.

(2) In the title, for “Annual report” substitute “Report on the operation of this Order”.

(3) The existing text becomes paragraph (1).

(4) In that paragraph, for the words from “cause an” to the end, substitute “cause a general report on the operation of this Order to be prepared and laid before the Assembly at least once every three years.”.

(5) After that paragraph, add—

“(2) The first report under paragraph (1) must be prepared and laid before the Assembly within the period of three years beginning on the date on which the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 receives Royal Assent.”.

Commencement Information

I147 S. 143 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

I148 S. 143 in operation at 1.4.2024 by S.R. 2024/30, **art. 2(1)(d)**

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

PART 3

Miscellaneous and supplementary

PROSPECTIVE

Northern Ireland Adoption and Children Act Register

Northern Ireland Adoption and Children Act Register

144.—(1) The Department must establish and maintain a register, to be called the Northern Ireland Adoption and Children Act Register, containing—

- (a) prescribed information about children who are suitable for adoption, children for whom an adoption authority is considering adoption and prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child;
- (b) prescribed information about persons included in the register in pursuance of paragraph (a) in respect of things occurring after their inclusion.

(2) Regulations may provide that the register may contain—

- (a) prescribed information about children who an English, a Welsh or a Scottish adoption agency is satisfied are suitable for adoption;
- (b) prescribed information about prospective adopters who an English, a Welsh or a Scottish adoption agency is satisfied are suitable to adopt a child;
- (c) prescribed information about persons included in the register in pursuance of paragraph (a) or (b) in respect of things occurring after their inclusion.

(3) For the purpose of giving assistance in finding persons with whom children may be placed for purposes other than adoption, regulations under this section may—

- (a) provide for the register to contain information about such persons and the children who may be placed with them; and
- (b) apply any of the other provisions of this group of sections (that is, this section and sections 145 to 151), with or without modifications.

(4) The register is not to be open to public inspection or search (subject to regulations under section 149).

(5) Regulations under this section may make provision about the retention of information in the register.

(6) Information is to be kept in the register in any form the Department considers appropriate.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I149 S. 144 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Use of an organisation to establish the register

145.—(1) The Department may make an arrangement with an organisation under which any function of the Department under section 144 of establishing and maintaining the register, and disclosing information entered in or compiled from information entered in the register to any person is performed wholly or partly by the organisation on the Department's behalf.

(2) The arrangement may include provision for payments to be made to the organisation by the Department.

(3) If the Department makes an arrangement under this section with an organisation, the organisation is to perform the functions exercisable by virtue of this section in accordance with any directions given by the Department.

(4) References in this group of sections to the registration organisation are to any organisation for the time being performing functions in respect of the register by virtue of arrangements under this section.

Commencement Information

I150 S. 145 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Use of an organisation as an agency for payments

146.—(1) Regulations may authorise an organisation with which an arrangement is made under section 145 to act as agent for the payment or receipt of sums payable by adoption agencies to other adoption agencies and may require adoption agencies to pay or receive such sums through the organisation.

(2) The organisation is to perform the functions exercisable by virtue of this section in accordance with any directions given by the Department.

Commencement Information

I151 S. 146 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Supply of information for the register

147.—(1) Regulations may require adoption agencies to give prescribed information to the Department or the registration organisation for entry in the register.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(2) Information is to be given to the Department or the registration organisation when required by the regulations and in the prescribed form and manner.

(3) Regulations may make provision enabling adoption agencies to enter prescribed information in the register.

(4) Information that is to be entered in the register by adoption agencies is to be entered in the prescribed form and manner.

(5) Regulations may require an agency giving information which is entered on the register or entering information in the register to pay a prescribed fee to the Department or the registration organisation.

(6) But an adoption agency is not to disclose any information to the Department or the registration organisation or to enter any information in the register—

- (a) about prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child, or persons who were included in the register as such prospective adopters, without their consent;
- (b) about children suitable for adoption or for whom an adoption authority is considering adoption, or persons who were included in the register as such children, without the consent of the prescribed person.

(7) Consent under subsection (6) is to be given in the prescribed form.

Commencement Information

I152 S. 147 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosure of information

148.—(1) Information entered in the register, or compiled from information entered in the register, may only be disclosed under subsection (2), (3) or (4), section 149 or section 150.

(2) Prescribed information entered in the register may be disclosed by the Department or the registration organisation—

- (a) where an adoption agency is acting on behalf of a child who is suitable for adoption or for whom an adoption authority is considering adoption, to the agency to assist in finding prospective adopters with whom it would be appropriate for the child to be placed;
- (b) where an adoption agency is acting on behalf of prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child, to the agency to assist in finding a child appropriate for adoption by them.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

(3) Regulations may make provision permitting the disclosure of prescribed information entered in the register, or compiled from information entered in the register—

- (a) to an adoption agency or to an English, a Welsh or a Scottish adoption agency for any prescribed purpose; or
- (b) for the purpose of enabling the information to be entered in a register which is maintained in respect of England, Wales or Scotland and which contains information about children who are suitable for adoption or prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child.

(4) Prescribed information entered in the register, or compiled from information entered in the register, may be disclosed by the Department or the registration organisation to any prescribed person for use for statistical or research purposes, or for other prescribed purposes.

(5) Regulations may prescribe the steps to be taken by adoption agencies in respect of information received by them by virtue of subsection (2) or (3).

(6) Subsection (1) does not apply to a disclosure of information with the authority of the Department.

(7) Information disclosed to any person under subsection (2), (3) or (4) may be given on any prescribed terms or conditions.

(8) Regulations may, in prescribed circumstances, require a prescribed fee to be paid to the Department or the registration organisation—

- (a) by a prescribed adoption agency in respect of information disclosed under subsection (2) or (3);
- (b) by a prescribed English, Welsh or Scottish adoption agency in respect of information disclosed under subsection (3); or
- (c) by a person in respect of information disclosed under subsection (4).

(9) If any information entered in the register is disclosed to a person in contravention of subsection (1), the person disclosing it is guilty of an offence.

(10) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (9) is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or both.

Commencement Information

I153 S. 148 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Search and inspection of the register by prospective adopters

149.—(1) Regulations may make provision enabling prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child to search and inspect the register, for the

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purposes of assisting them to find a child for whom they would be appropriate adopters.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) may make provision enabling prospective adopters to search and inspect only prescribed parts of the register, or prescribed content on the register.

(3) Access to the register for the purpose of searching and inspecting it may be granted on any prescribed terms and conditions.

(4) Regulations may prescribe the steps to be taken by prospective adopters in respect of information received by them as a result of searching or inspecting the register.

(5) Regulations may make provision requiring prospective adopters, in prescribed circumstances, to pay a prescribed fee to the Department or the registration organisation in respect of searching or inspecting the register.

Commencement Information

I154 S. 149 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Search and inspection of the register by adoption agencies

150.—(1) Regulations may make provision enabling adoption agencies to search and inspect the register—

- (a) where an adoption agency is acting on behalf of a child who is suitable for adoption, to assist the agency in finding prospective adopters with whom it would be appropriate for the child to be placed;
- (b) where an adoption agency is acting on behalf of prospective adopters who are suitable to adopt a child, to assist the agency in finding a child appropriate for adoption by them;
- (c) for such other purposes as may be prescribed.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) may make provision enabling adoption agencies to search and inspect only prescribed parts of the register, or prescribed content on the register.

(3) Access to the register for the purpose of searching and inspecting it may be granted on any prescribed terms and conditions.

(4) Regulations may prescribe the steps to be taken by adoption agencies in respect of information received by them as a result of searching or inspecting the register.

(5) Regulations may make provision requiring adoption agencies, in prescribed circumstances, to pay a prescribed fee to the Department or the registration organisation in respect of searching or inspecting the register.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I155 S. 150 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Supplementary

151.—(1) In this group of sections—

“English adoption agency” means “an adoption agency” within the meaning of section 131(1)(za) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;

“organisation” includes a public body and a private or voluntary organisation;

“the register” means the Northern Ireland Adoption and Children Act Register;

“Scottish adoption agency” has the meaning given by section 144(3) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002;

“Welsh adoption agency” has the meaning given by section 131(1)(ca) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

(2) For the purposes of this group of sections (except sections 144(2) and 148(3))—

(a) a child is suitable for adoption if an adoption agency is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption;

(b) prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child if an adoption agency is satisfied that they are suitable to have a child placed with them for adoption.

(3) For the purposes of sections 144(2) and 148(3)—

(a) a child is suitable for adoption if an English, Welsh or Scottish adoption agency is satisfied that the child ought to be placed for adoption;

(b) prospective adopters are suitable to adopt a child if an English, Welsh or Scottish adoption agency is satisfied that they are suitable to have a child placed with them for adoption.

(4) Nothing authorised or required to be done by virtue of this group of sections constitutes an offence under section 97, 98 or 99.

Commencement Information

I156 S. 151 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Supplementary

PROSPECTIVE

Time limit within which proceedings may be brought

152.—(1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 19(1) of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, summary proceedings for an offence to which this section applies may be brought within a period of six months from the date on which evidence sufficient in the opinion of the complainant to warrant the proceedings came to the complainant's knowledge; but such proceedings may not be brought by virtue of this section more than six years after the commission of the offence.

(2) For the purposes of this section a certificate signed by or on behalf of the complainant and stating the date on which such evidence as is mentioned in subsection (1) came to the complainant's knowledge is conclusive evidence of that fact; and a certificate stating that matter and purporting to be so signed is to be deemed to be so signed unless the contrary is proved.

(3) This section applies to an offence by virtue of—

- section 9;
- section 58;
- section 97;
- section 98;
- section 99; or
- section 148.

Commencement Information

I157 S. 152 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Research and investigations

153. The Department may conduct or promote or assist (by grants or otherwise) any person in conducting research or investigations into any matter connected with the functions under Part 1 of an adoption authority or the Department.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I158 S. 153 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Amendments, transitional and transitory provisions, savings and repeals

154.—(1) The statutory provisions set out in Schedule 3 have effect subject to the amendments there specified.

(2) Schedule 4 (transitional and transitory provisions and savings) has effect.

(3) The statutory provisions set out in Schedule 5 are hereby repealed to the extent specified in the second column of that Schedule.

Commencement Information

I159 S. 154 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Regulations and orders

155.—(1) Regulations other than regulations to which subsection (2) applies are subject to negative resolution.

(2) This subsection applies to regulations under—

- (a) section 3(4);
- (b) section 9 which include provision made under section 42;
- (c) section 24;
- (d) section 52;
- (e) section 77;
- (f) section 98; or
- (g) section 144, 146, 147, 148, 149 or 150,

and to regulations which amend or repeal a provision of an Act of Parliament or Northern Ireland legislation.

(3) Regulations to which subsection (2) applies must not be made unless a draft of them has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.

(4) An order must not be made under—

- (a) section 96(6);
- (b) section 115(4); or

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (c) section 157 if it amends or repeals a provision of an Act of Parliament or Northern Ireland legislation,

unless a draft of the order has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the Assembly.

(5) An order under section 157 other than an order to which subsection (4) (c) applies is subject to negative resolution.

(6) Regulations and orders made under this Act by any Department mentioned in subsection (7) may contain such incidental, supplementary, transitional, transitory or saving provisions as appear to that Department to be necessary or expedient.

(7) The Departments referred to in subsection (6) are—

- (a) the Department;
- (b) the Department of Finance; and
- (c) the Department of Justice.

Commencement Information

I160 S. 155 in operation at 28.4.2022, see [s. 160\(2\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE

Rules of court

156.—(1) In this Act “rules of court” includes family proceedings rules and county court rules (as well as rules of court as defined in section 21(4) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954).

(2) In subsection (1) “family proceedings rules” has the meaning given in Article 12(5) of the Family Law (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

(3) In the case of an application for a placement order, for the variation or revocation of a placement order, or for an adoption order, the rules must require any person mentioned in subsection (4) to be notified—

- (a) of the date and place where the application will be heard; and
- (b) of the fact that, unless the person wishes or the court requires, the person need not attend.

(4) The persons referred to in subsection (3) are—

- (a) in the case of a placement order, every person who can be found whose consent to the making of the order is required under subsection (3)(a) of section 18 (or would be required but for subsection (3)(b) of that section) or, if no such person can be found, any relative who can be found;

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- (b) in the case of a variation or revocation of a placement order, every person who can be found whose consent to the making of the placement order was required under subsection (3)(a) of section 18 (or would have been required but for subsection (3)(b) of that section);
- (c) in the case of an adoption order—
 - (i) every person who can be found whose consent to the making of the order is required under subsection (2)(a) of section 44 (or would be required but for subsection (2)(c) of that section) or, if no such person can be found, any relative who can be found;
 - (ii) every person who has consented to the making of the order under section 17 (and has not withdrawn the consent) unless the person has given a notice under subsection (4)(a) of that section which has effect;
 - (iii) every person who, if leave were given under section 44(5), would be entitled to oppose the making of the order.
- (5) In subsection (4) “relative” means a relative prescribed by rules of court.
- (6) Rules of court may, for the purposes of the law relating to contempt of court, authorise the publication in such circumstances as may be specified of information relating to proceedings held in private involving children.

Commencement Information

1161 S. 156 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Supplementary and consequential provision

157.—(1) Any Department mentioned in subsection (2) may by order make—

- (a) any supplementary, incidental or consequential provision,
- (b) any transitory, transitional or saving provision,

which that Department considers necessary or expedient for the purposes of, in consequence of or for giving full effect to any provision of this Act.

(2) The Departments referred to in subsection (1) are—

- (a) the Department;
- (b) the Department of Finance; and
- (c) the Department of Justice.

(3) An order under this section may amend, repeal or modify any statutory provision.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I162 S. 157 in operation at 28.4.2022, see [s. 160\(2\)](#)

Review

158.—(1) The Department must, at least once every three years—

- (a) prepare and publish a report on the implementation of each of the provisions of Parts 1 and 2, and
- (b) lay a copy of the report before the Assembly.

(2) The first report under subsection (1) must be prepared and published within the period of 3 years beginning with the date on which this Act is passed.

(3) This section expires at the end of the period of ten years beginning with the date on which this Act is passed, but this is subject to subsection (4).

(4) Subsection (3) does not have effect unless all of the provisions of Parts 1 and 2 have been commenced and included in a report under this section.

Commencement Information

I163 S. 158 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

I164 S. 158 in operation at 1.4.2024 by [S.R. 2024/30](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(e\)](#)

Interpretation

159.—(1) In this Act—

- “adoption agency” has the meaning given by section 2;
- “adoption authority” has the meaning given by section 2(2);
- “adoption order” has the meaning given by section 43(1);
- “adoption society” has the meaning given by section 2(2);
- “adoption support services” has the meaning given by section 2(6);
- “appropriate voluntary organisation” has the meaning given by section 2(3);
- “authority foster parent” has the meaning given by Article 2(2) of the Children Order;
- “body” includes an unincorporated body;
- “care order” has the meaning given by Article 2(2) of the Children Order;
- “child”, except where used to express a relationship, means a person who has not attained the age of 18 years;
- “child assessment order” has the meaning given in Article 2(2) of the Children Order;

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

- “Children Order” means the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995;
- “the Convention” means the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, concluded at the Hague on 29th May 1993;
- “Convention adoption” has the meaning given in section 65(1)(c);
- “Convention adoption order” means an adoption order which, by virtue of regulations under section 1 of the Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 (regulations giving effect to the Convention), is made as a Convention adoption order;
- “Convention country” means a country or territory in which the Convention is in force;
- “court” has the meaning given by section 115(1);
- “the Department” means the Department of Health;
- “fee” includes expenses;
- “guardian” has the same meaning as in the Children Order and includes a special guardian within the meaning of the Children Order;
- “information” means information recorded in any form;
- “interim care order” means an interim care order under Article 57 of the Children Order;
- “notice” means a notice in writing;
- “notice of intention to adopt” has the meaning given in section 41(2);
- “overseas adoption” has the meaning given in section 90(1);
- “parental responsibility” has the meaning given in Article 6 of the Children Order;
- “placement order” has the meaning given in section 18(1);
- “placing a child for adoption” and “placed for adoption” have the meanings given in section 15(5) and section 16(4);
- “prescribed”, except in sections 51(7) and (8) and 156(5) and paragraphs 1(4), 3, 4 and 6 of Schedule 1 (where it means prescribed by rules of court), means prescribed by regulations;
- “prohibited steps order” has the meaning given in Article 8(1) of the Children Order;
- “public body” means a body established by or under any statutory provision;
- “regulations” means regulations made by the Department except where they are required to be made by the Department of Finance;
- “relative”, in relation to a child, means a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, whether of the full blood or half-blood or by marriage or civil partnership;
- “residence order” has the meaning given in Article 8(1) of the Children Order;

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

“RQIA” means the Health and Social Care Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority;

“rules of court” has the meaning given in section 156(1);

“Scottish adoption order” means an order made, or having effect as if made, under section 28(1) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 or section 12 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978;

“specific issue order” has the meaning given in Article 8(1) of the Children Order;

“statutory provision” has the meaning given in section 1(f) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954;

“supervision order” has the meaning given in Article 49(1) of the Children Order;

“voluntary organisation” means a body (other than a public body) the activities of which are not carried on for profit.

(2) Any power conferred by this Act to prescribe a fee by regulations includes power to prescribe—

- (a) a fee not exceeding a prescribed amount;
- (b) a fee calculated in accordance with the regulations;
- (c) a fee determined by the person to whom it is payable, being a fee of a reasonable amount.

(3) In this Act “couple” means—

- (a) a married couple;
- (b) two persons who are civil partners of each other; or
- (c) two persons (whether of different sexes or the same sex) living as partners in an enduring family relationship.

(4) Subsection (3)(c) does not include two people one of whom is the other’s parent, grandparent, sister, brother, aunt or uncle.

(5) References to relationships in subsection (4)—

- (a) are to relationships of the full blood or half blood or, in the case of an adopted person, such of those relationships as would exist but for adoption; and
- (b) include the relationship of a child with the child’s adoptive, or former adoptive, parents,

but do not include any other adoptive relationships.

(6) For the purposes of this Act, a person is the partner of a child’s parent if the person and the parent are a couple but the person is not the child’s parent.

Status: This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes

Commencement Information

I165 S. 159 in operation at 28.4.2022, see [s. 160\(2\)](#)

Commencement

160.—(1) Except as provided by subsection (2), the provisions of this Act come into operation on such day or days as the Department may by order appoint.

(2) This section and sections 155, 157, 159 and 161 come into operation on the day after the day on which this Act receives Royal Assent.

Commencement Information

I166 S. 160 in operation at 28.4.2022, see [s. 160\(2\)](#)

Short title

161. This Act may be cited as the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Commencement Information

I167 S. 161 in operation at 28.4.2022, see [s. 160\(2\)](#)

Status:

This version of this Act contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation:

Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 01 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.

[View outstanding changes](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to :

- Sch. 4 para. 1 repealed by [2022 c. 18 \(N.I.\) Sch. 5](#)

Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

- Act applied (with modifications) by S.I. 2018/412, Sch. 3 (as substituted) by [2022 c. 18 \(N.I.\) Sch. 3 para. 83](#)