

Status: This version of this chapter contains provisions that are prospective.
Changes to legislation: *Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, CHAPTER 3 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 19 June 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

PART 1 **N.I.**

Adoption

PROSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 3 **N.I.**

Placement for adoption and adoption orders

Placement of children by adoption agency for adoption

Placement for adoption by agencies **N.I.**

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.

(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—

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(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

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

Placing children with parental consent **N.I.**

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.

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

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(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

I2 S. 16 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Advance consent to adoption **N.I.**

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).

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I3 S. 17 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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Placement orders **N.I.**

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

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

Applications for placement orders **N.I.**

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.

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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.

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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

I5 S. 19 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Varying placement orders **N.I.**

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

I6 S. 20 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Revoking placement orders **N.I.**

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.

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Commencement Information

I7 S. 21 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Parental responsibility **N.I.**

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

I8 S. 22 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Contact **N.I.**

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

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

Contact: supplementary **N.I.**

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

I10 S. 24 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Further consequences of placement **N.I.**

- 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

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

Further consequences of placement orders **N.I.**

- 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

112 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 **N.I.**

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

I13 S. 27 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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

- 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

I14 S. 28 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Recovery by parent etc. where child placed and consent withdrawn **N.I.**

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

I15 S. 29 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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

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

I16 S. 30 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

Placement orders: prohibition on removal **N.I.**

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 chapter 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

I17 S. 31 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Return of child in other cases **N.I.**

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

I18 S. 32 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Removal of children in non-agency cases

Restrictions on removal **N.I.**

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

I19 S. 33 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Applications for adoption **N.I.**

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

I20 S. 34 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Authority foster parents **N.I.**

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

I21 S. 35 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Partners of parents **N.I.**

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

I22 S. 36 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Other non-agency cases **N.I.**

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

I23 S. 37 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Breach of restrictions on removal

Recovery orders **N.I.**

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

I24 S. 38 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Preliminaries to adoption

Child to live with adopters before application **N.I.**

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

I25 S. 39 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Reports where child placed by agency **N.I.**

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

I26 S. 40 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Notice of intention to adopt **N.I.**

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

I27 S. 41 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Suitability of adopters **N.I.**

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

I28 S. 42 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

The making of adoption orders

Adoption orders **N.I.**

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

I29 S. 43 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Conditions for making adoption orders **N.I.**

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

I30 S. 44 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restrictions on making adoption orders **N.I.**

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

I31 S. 45 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

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Applications for adoption **N.I.**

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

I32 S. 46 not in operation at Royal Assent, see **s. 160(1)**

Adoption by couple **N.I.**

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

I33 S. 47 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Adoption by one person **N.I.**

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

I34 S. 48 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Post-adoption contact

Post-adoption contact **N.I.**

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

I35 S. 49 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Orders under section 49: supplementary **N.I.**

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;

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(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

I36 S. 50 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Placement and adoption: general

Parental etc. consent **N.I.**

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

I37 S. 51 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Modification of Children Order in relation to adoption **N.I.**

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

I38 S. 52 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing information to prospective adopters **N.I.**

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

I39 S. 53 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Revocation of adoptions on legitimation **N.I.**

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

I40 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 **N.I.**

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

I41 S. 55 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Restrictions on disclosure of protected etc. information **N.I.**

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

I42 S. 56 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosure of other information **N.I.**

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

I43 S. 57 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Offence **N.I.**

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

I44 S. 58 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing information to adopted adult **N.I.**

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

I45 S. 59 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing protected information about adults **N.I.**

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

I46 S. 60 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Disclosing protected information about children **N.I.**

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

I47 S. 61 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Counselling **N.I.**

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.

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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

I48 S. 62 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Other provision to be made by regulations **N.I.**

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

I49 S. 63 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Sections 55 to 64: interpretation **N.I.**

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

I50 S. 64 not in operation at Royal Assent, see [s. 160\(1\)](#)

Status:

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Changes to legislation:

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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](#)