

# Policy Briefing

## Adoption and Children Bill:

### Second Stage Briefing

October 2021



**It is essential that the Adoption and Children Bill completes its legislative passage to ensure children and families are supported**

#### About Barnardo's Northern Ireland

Barnardo's NI is the largest children's charity in Northern Ireland. Every year we work with more than 18,000 children, young people and families across more than 45 different services and programmes. We are a leading provider of schools-based support, reaching more than 32,000 children in schools across the UK and Ireland through our NI-managed social and emotional literacy programmes.

#### Key messages

- This Bill will bring long-overdue reform to the adoption and care system in Northern Ireland, providing much needed support to both children and families. Given the long delays already experienced in bringing this legislation to the Assembly, Barnardo's NI encourages Members to support the smooth and efficient passage of this important piece of legislation.
- Barnardo's NI warmly welcomes the approach the Department of Health has taken in the development of this Bill. The contents of this Bill have been developed, discussed and amended following detailed and ongoing consultation with the children's sector and other stakeholders in Northern Ireland.
- Barnardo's NI recommends one minor amendment to the Bill regarding Clause 133 and the definition of harm. Barnardo's NI would strongly urge the expansion of this definition further to recognise that children do not need to witness ill-treatment by sight or sound to be affected and impacted by it. This would bring the Adoption and Children Bill in line with other legislation, for example provisions in the recent Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021.
- We welcome the Committee of Health's scrutiny of the Bill and the additional clarity and information provided by the Department of Health through oral and written briefings.

*For further information, please contact*

**Trása Canavan**

Senior Policy & Public Affairs Lead

[trasa.canavan@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:trasa.canavan@barnardos.org.uk)



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