

SCHEDULE 1

PART IVA

FREEING FOR ADOPTION AND ADOPTION ORDERS

Freeing for Adoption

Commencement of proceedings under Article 17

4A.3.—(1) An application under Article 17 (freeing child for adoption with parental agreement) for an order freeing a child for adoption shall be made in Form A1 issued out of the Office.

(2) The applicants shall be the adoption agency and each parent or guardian of the child and the respondents shall be –

- (a) any Board or voluntary organisation that has parental responsibility for, is looking after, or is caring for the child;
- (b) any person (not being an applicant) liable by virtue of any order or agreement to contribute to the maintenance of the child; and
- (c) the child.

(3) The court may at any time direct that any other person or body be made a respondent to the application.

(4) On filing the application the applicant shall pay the appropriate fee and supply three copies of: –

- (a) the application, together with any other documents required to be supplied under this Part, and
- (b) a report, in writing, covering all the relevant matters specified in Part I of Appendix 4.

Commencement of proceedings under Article 18

4A.4.—(1) An application under Article 18 (Freeing child for adoption without parental agreement) for an order freeing a child for adoption shall be made in Form A2 issued out of the Office.

(2) The applicant shall be the adoption agency and the respondents shall be each parent or guardian of the child and those persons prescribed by rule 4A.3(2).

(3) The court may at any time direct that any other person or body be made a respondent to the application.

(4) There shall be attached to the application a statement of the facts upon which the applicant intends to rely for the purpose of satisfying the court that the agreement of each parent or guardian of the child to the making of an adoption order ought to be dispensed with on a ground specified in Article 16(2).

(5) Where the applicant has been informed by a person with whom the child has been placed for adoption that he wishes his identity to remain confidential, the statement of facts supplied under paragraph (4) shall be framed in such a way as not to disclose the identity of that person.

(6) Except where the request for dispensation is based on the ground that the parent or guardian cannot be found, the Master shall, as soon as practicable, inform the parent or guardian of the request to dispense with his agreement and shall send him a copy of the statement supplied under paragraph (4).

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(7) On filing the application the applicant shall pay the appropriate fee and supply three copies of: –

- (a) the application, together with any other documents required to be supplied under this Part;
- (b) a report in writing covering all the relevant matters specified in Part I of Appendix 4.
- (c) the statement of facts.

Appointment of guardian ad litem

4A.5.—(1) As soon as practicable after the application has been filed, the Master shall appoint a guardian ad litem of the child, and shall send to him a copy of the application and any documents attached thereto and of the report supplied by the applicant and that report shall be confidential.

(2) The guardian ad litem shall not be a member or employee of the applicant or any respondent body nor have been involved in the making of any arrangements for the adoption of the child.

Duties of the guardian ad litem

4A.6.—(1) The guardian ad litem shall: –

- (a) ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that any agreement to the making of an adoption order is given freely and unconditionally and with full understanding of what is involved;
- (b) confirm that the parent or guardian has been given an opportunity of making a declaration under Article 17(5), that he prefers not to be involved in future questions concerning the adoption of the child;
- (c) investigate all the circumstances relevant to any such agreement or declaration;
- (d) where it is proposed to free for adoption a child whose parents were not married to each other at the time of his birth and whose father is not his guardian, take all reasonable steps to identify any person claiming to be the father in order to be able to advise the court –
 - (i) of that person’s views;
 - (ii) of whether that person intends to apply for an order under Article 7(1) or 10 of the Order of 1995;
 - (iii) of any matter relevant to the determination of an application under the Order of 1995.
- (e) on completing his investigations make a report in writing to the court, drawing attention to any matters which, in his opinion, may be of assistance to the court in considering the application, and shall notify the applicant that he has done so.

(2) With a view to safeguarding the interests of the child before the court, the guardian ad litem shall, so far as is reasonably practicable –

- (a) investigate –
 - (i) the matters alleged in the application, the report supplied by the applicant and, where appropriate, the statement of facts supplied under rule 4A.4; and
 - (ii) any other matters which appear to him to be relevant to the making of an order freeing the child for adoption;
- (b) advise whether, in his opinion, the child should be present at the hearing of the application; and
- (c) perform such other duties as appear to him to be necessary or as the court may direct.

(3) With a view to obtaining the directions of the court on any matter, the guardian ad litem may at any time make such interim report to the court as appears to him to be necessary and in such a case the Master shall notify the applicant.

(4) The court may, at any time before the final determination of the application, require the guardian ad litem to perform such further duties as the court considers necessary.

(5) The guardian ad litem shall attend any hearing of the application if so required by the court.

(6) Any report made to the court under this rule shall be confidential.

Agreement

4A.7.—(1) Any document signifying the agreement of a person to the making of an adoption order shall be in Form A3, and, shall, if executed in Northern Ireland, be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace.

(2) If the document is executed in Scotland it shall be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace or a Sheriff.

(3) If the document is executed in England and Wales it shall be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace.

(4) If the document is executed outside the United Kingdom it shall be witnessed by one of the following persons –

(a) any person for the time being authorised by law in the place where the document is executed to administer an oath for any judicial or other legal purpose;

(b) a British consular officer;

(c) a notary public; or

(d) if the person executing the document is serving in any of the regular armed forces of the Crown, an officer holding a commission in any of those forces.

(5) If the document is executed by a person outside Northern Ireland before the commencement of the proceedings it shall be filed with the application.

Notice of hearing

4A.8.—(1) Within 14 days of being notified by the guardian ad litem that he has made his report to the court, the applicant shall apply to the Master to fix a date for the hearing of the application.

(2) On an application under paragraph (1) the Master shall fix a date and time for the hearing and shall take account of any directions given under paragraph (5) and rule 4A.10(3).

(3) The Master shall inform the applicant and the guardian ad litem of the date and time fixed for the hearing and the applicant shall serve notice of the hearing on all the parties in Form A4.

(4) Any one who wishes to object to the making of an order freeing the child for adoption shall, within 14 days of the date of service on him of the notice of hearing, give the Master written notice of his intention to object in Form A5.

(5) If at any stage before the hearing of the application it appears to the court that directions for the hearing are required the court may give such directions as it considers necessary.

Objections

4A.9.—(1) Where the Master receives notice of objection under rule 4A.8 he shall notify the judge, the applicant or his solicitor and the guardian ad litem and the judge shall give such directions as appear appropriate.

(2) The judge may direct that the person who served such notice of objection shall appear before him in his chambers on a date fixed by him and, upon hearing the nature or grounds for objection made by him or his legal representative on his behalf, may give such directions or make such orders as appear just.

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The hearing

4A.10.—(1) Subject to any directions given under rule 4A.9(2), on the hearing of the application, any person upon whom notice is required to be served under rule 4A.8 may attend and be heard on the question whether an order freeing the child for adoption should be made.

(2) Any member or employee of a Board, adoption agency or other body which is a party to the proceedings may address the court if he is duly authorised in that behalf.

(3) Where the court has been informed by the applicant that the child has been placed with a person (whether alone or jointly with another) for adoption and that person wishes his identity to remain confidential, the proceedings shall be conducted with a view to securing that any such person is not seen by or made known to any respondent who is not already aware of his identity, except with his consent.

(4) Evidence may be given orally or by affidavit, but where the evidence of any person is on affidavit, the judge may require such person to give oral evidence.

(5) Subject to paragraph (6), the judge shall not make an order freeing the child for adoption except after the personal attendance before him of the child and of a representative of the applicant duly authorised in that behalf.

(6) If there are special circumstances which, having regard to the report of the guardian ad litem, appear to the court to make the attendance of the child unnecessary, the court may direct that the child need not attend.

(7) If there are special circumstances which appear to the court to make the attendance of any other party desirable, the court may direct that that party shall attend.

Proof of identity of child, etc.

4A.11.—(1) Where the child who is the subject of the proceedings is identified in the application by reference to a birth certificate which is the same, or relates to the same entry in the Register of Births, as a birth certificate exhibited to a form of agreement, the child so identified shall be deemed, unless the contrary appears, to be the child to whom the form of agreement refers.

(2) Where the child has previously been adopted, paragraph (1) shall have effect as if for the references to a birth certificate and to the Register of Births there were substituted respectively references to a certified copy of an entry in the Adopted Children Register and to that Register.

(3) Where the precise date of the child's birth is not proved to the satisfaction of the court, the court shall determine the probable date of his birth and the date so determined may be specified in the order freeing the child for adoption as the date of his birth.

(4) Where the place of birth of the child cannot be proved to the satisfaction of the court but it appears probable that the child was born in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, he may be treated as having been born in the registration district in which the court sits, and in any other case (where the country of birth is not proved) the particulars of the country of birth may be omitted from the order freeing the child for adoption.

Application for revocation of order freeing a child for adoption

4A.12.—(1) An application under Article 20(1) for an order revoking an order freeing the child for adoption shall be made in Form A6.

(2) Notice of proceedings in Form A7 shall be served by the applicant on all parties and on any adoption agency which has parental responsibility for the child by virtue of Articles 17, 18 or 21, sections 18 or 21 of the 1976 Act or sections 18 or 21 of the 1978 Act save that notice shall not be served on a party to the proceedings who was joined as a party by virtue of rule 4A.3(2)(a).

(3) As soon as practicable after receipt of the application, the Master shall list the case for hearing by a judge and shall appoint a guardian ad litem of the child in accordance with rule 4A.5 and shall send to him a copy of the application and any documents attached thereto.

(4) The guardian ad litem shall have the same duties as if he had been appointed under rule 4A.5 but as if in that rule: –

- (a) the reference to an order freeing the child for adoption was a reference to the revocation of an order freeing the child for adoption; and
- (b) each reference to the report supplied by the applicant was omitted.

Substitution of one adoption agency for another

4A.13.—(1) An application under Article 21 shall be made in Form A8.

(2) Notice of any order made under Article 21 shall be sent by the court to the court which made the order under Articles 17, 18 or 21 (if a different court), or under section 18 or 21 of the 1976 Act or under sections 18 or 21 of the 1978 Act and to any former parent of the child.