



# Adoption Act 1976

## 1976 CHAPTER 36

### PART II

#### ADOPTION ORDERS

##### *Freeing for adoption*

#### **18 Freeing child for adoption.**

- (1) Where, on an application by an adoption agency, an authorised court is satisfied in the case of each parent or guardian of the child that—
- he freely, and with full understanding of what is involved, agrees generally and unconditionally to the making of an adoption order, or
  - his agreement to the making of an adoption order should be dispensed with on a ground specified in section 16(2),
- the court shall make an order declaring the child free for adoption.

- (2) No application shall be made under subsection (1) unless—
- it is made with the consent of a parent or guardian of a child, or
  - the adoption agency is applying for dispensation under subsection (1)(b) of the agreement of each parent or guardian of the child, and the child is in the care of the adoption agency.

[<sup>F1</sup>(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) a child is in the care of an adoption agency if the adoption agency is a local authority and he is in their care.]

- (3) No agreement required under subsection (1)(a) shall be dispensed with under subsection (1)(b) unless the child is already placed for adoption or the court is satisfied that it is likely that the child will be placed for adoption.
- (4) An agreement by the mother of the child is ineffective for the purposes of this section if given less than 6 weeks after the child's birth.

*Status: Point in time view as at 01/02/1991.*

*Changes to legislation: Adoption Act 1976, Cross Heading: Freeing for adoption is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 02 February 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)*

- (5) On the making of an order under this section, [<sup>F2</sup>the parental rights and duties relating to the child vest in][<sup>F2</sup>parental responsibility for the child is given to] the adoption agency, and subsections (2) [<sup>F3</sup>and (3)][<sup>F3</sup>to (4)] of section 12 apply as if the order were an adoption order and the agency were the adopters.
- (6) Before making an order under this section, the court shall satisfy itself, in relation to each parent or guardian [<sup>F4</sup>of the child who can be found], that he has been given an opportunity of making, if he so wishes, a declaration that he prefers not to be involved in future questions concerning the adoption of the child; and any such declaration shall be recorded by the court.
- [<sup>X1</sup> Before making an order under this section in the case of a child whose father and  
<sup>F5</sup>(7) mother were not married to each other at the time of his birth and whose father is not his guardian, the court shall satisfy itself in relation to any person claiming to be the father that either—
- (a) he has no intention of making—
    - (i) an application under section 4 of the <sup>M1</sup>Family Law Reform Act 1987 for an order giving him all the parental rights and duties with respect to the child; or
    - (ii) an application under any other enactment for an order giving him a right to custody, legal or actual custody or care and control of the child; or
  - (b) if he did make such an application, the application would be likely to be refused.]
- [ In subsection (7) the reference to a child whose father and mother were not married  
<sup>F6X1</sup>(8) to each other at the time of his birth shall be construed in accordance with section 1 of the <sup>M2</sup>Family Law Reform Act 1987.]]
- [<sup>F7</sup>(7) Before making an order under this section in the case of a child whose father does not have parental responsibility for him, the court shall satisfy itself in relation to any person claiming to be the father that—
- (a) he has no intention of applying for—
    - (i) an order under section 4(1) of the Children Act 1989, or
    - (ii) a residence order under section 10 of that Act, or
  - (b) if he did make any such application, it would be likely to be refused.
- (8) Subsections (5) and (7) of section 12 apply in relation to the making of an order under this section as they apply in relation to the making of an order under that section.]

#### Editorial Information

- X1** S. 18(7)(8) second appearing substituted (*prosp.*) for s. 18(7)(8) first appearing by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 6(3) (with [Sch. 14 para. 1\(1\)](#))

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 18(2A) inserted (*prosp.*) by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 6(1) (with [Sch. 14 para. 1\(1\)](#))
- F2** Words commencing “parental responsibility” substituted (*prosp.*) for words commencing “the parental rights” by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 6(2) (with [Sch. 14 para. 1\(1\)](#))
- F3** Words “to (4)” substituted (*prosp.*) for words “and (3)” by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 6(2) (with [Sch. 14 para. 1\(1\)](#))

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- F4** Words substituted by Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 (c. 41, SIF 113:3), s. 9, **Sch. 2 para. 31**
- F5** S. 18(7) substituted by Family Law Reform Act 1987 (c. 42, SIF 49:7), **ss. 7(1), 34(1)**
- F6** S. 18(8) added by Family Law Reform Act 1987 (c. 42, SIF 49:7), **ss. 33(1), 34(1), Sch. 2 para. 67**
- F7** S. 18(7)(8) second appearing substituted (*prosp.*) for s. 18(7)(8) first appearing by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), **ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 6(3) (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))**

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C1** S. 18 amended (*prosp.*) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), **ss. 12(3)(a), 33(6)(b)(i), 108**, (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))

**Marginal Citations**

- M1** 1987 c. 42(49:7).
- M2** 1987 c. 42(49:7).

**19 Progress reports to former parent.**

- (1) This section and section 20 apply to any person ( “the former parent”) who was required to be given an opportunity of making a declaration under section 18(6) but did not do so.
- (2) Within the 14 days following the date 12 months after the making of the order under section 18 the adoption agency [<sup>F8</sup>in which the parental rights and duties were vested][<sup>F8</sup>to which parental responsibility was given] on the making of the order, unless it has previously by notice to the former parent informed him that an adoption order has been made in respect of the child, shall by notice to the former parent inform him—
- (a) whether an adoption order has been made in respect of the child, and (if not)
- (b) whether the child has his home with a person with whom he has been placed for adoption.
- (3) If at the time when the former parent is given notice under subsection (2) an adoption order has not been made in respect of the child, it is thereafter the duty of the adoption agency to give notice to the former parent of the making of an adoption order (if and when made), and meanwhile to give the former parent notice whenever the child is placed for adoption or ceases to have his home with a person with whom he has been placed for adoption.
- (4) If at any time the former parent by notice makes a declaration to the adoption agency that he prefers not to be involved in future questions concerning the adoption of the child—
- (a) the agency shall secure that the declaration is recorded by the court which made the order under section 18, and
- (b) the agency is released from the duty of complying further with subsection (3) as respects that former parent.

**Textual Amendments**

- F8** Words commencing “in which parental responsibility” substituted (*prosp.*) “in which the parental rights” by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), **ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 7 (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))**

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## 20 Revocation of s. 18 order.

- (1) The former parent, at any time more than 12 months after the making of the order under section 18 when—
- (a) no adoption order has been made in respect of the child, and
  - (b) the child does not have his home with a person with whom he has been placed for adoption,
- may apply to the court which made the order for a further order revoking it on the ground that he wishes to resume [<sup>F9</sup>the parental rights and duties][<sup>F9</sup>parental responsibility].
- (2) While the application is pending the adoption agency having [<sup>F9</sup>the parental rights and duties][<sup>F9</sup>parental responsibility] shall not place the child for adoption without the leave of the court.
- [<sup>X2</sup>(3) Where an order freeing a child for adoption is revoked under this section—
- (a) the parental rights and duties relating to the child are vested in the individual or, as the case may be, the individuals in whom they vested immediately before that order was made;
  - (b) if the parental rights and duties, or any of them, vested in a local authority or voluntary organisation immediately before the order freeing the child for adoption was made, those rights and duties are vested in the individual, or as the case may be, the individuals in whom they vested immediately before they were vested in the authority or organisation; and
  - (c) any duty extinguished by virtue of section 12(3)(b) is forthwith revived,
- but the revocation does not affect any right or duty so far as it relates to any period before the date of the revocation.]
- [<sup>F10</sup>(3) The revocation of an order under section 18 (“a section 18 order”) operates—
- (a) to extinguish the parental responsibility given to the adoption agency under the section 18 order;
  - (b) to give parental responsibility for the child to—
    - (i) the child’s mother; and
    - (ii) where the child’s father and mother were married to each other at the time of his birth, the father; and
  - (c) to revive—
    - (i) any parental responsibility agreement,
    - (ii) any order under section 4(1) of the Children Act 1989, and
    - (iii) any appointment of a guardian in respect of the child (whether made by a court or otherwise),
 extinguished by the making of the section 18 order.
- (3A) Subject to subsection (3)(c), the revocation does not—
- (a) operate to revive—
    - (i) any order under the Children Act 1989, or
    - (ii) any duty referred to in section 12(3)(b),
 extinguished by the making of the section 18 order; or
  - (b) affect any person’s parental responsibility so far as it relates to the period between the making of the section 18 order and the date of revocation of that order.]

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- (4) Subject to subsection (5), if the application is dismissed on the ground that to allow it would contravene the principle embodied in section 6—
- (a) the former parent who made the application shall not be entitled to make any further application under subsection (1) in respect of the child, and
  - (b) the adoption agency is released from the duty of complying further with section 19(3) as respects that parent.
- (5) Subsection (4)(a) shall not apply where the court which dismissed the application gives leave to the former parent to make a further application under subsection (1), but such leave shall not be given unless it appears to the court that because of a change in circumstances or for any other reason it is proper to allow the application to be made.

#### Editorial Information

- X2** S. 20(3)(3A) commencing “(3)The revocation” substituted (*prosp.*) for subsection (3) commencing “Where an order” by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 8(2) (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))

#### Textual Amendments

- F9** Words “parental responsibility” substituted (*prosp.*) for words “the parental rights and duties” by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 8(1) (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))
- F10** S. 20(3)(3A) commencing “(3)The revocation” substituted (*prosp.*) for subsection (3) commencing “Where an order” by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, Sch. 10 para. 8(2) (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1))

## 21 Transfer of parental rights and duties between adoption agencies.

On the joint application of an adoption agency in which the parental rights and duties relating to a child who is in England or Wales are vested under section 18(5) or this section or under Part I of the <sup>M3</sup>Children Act 1975 (adoption in Scotland), and any other adoption agency, an authorised court may if it thinks fit by order transfer the parental rights and duties to the latter agency.

#### Marginal Citations

- M3** 1975 c. 72 (49:3).

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