



# Adoption Act 1976

## 1976 CHAPTER 36

### PART III

#### CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTION

##### *Restrictions on removal of children*

#### **27 Restrictions on removal where adoption agreed or application made under s. 18.**

(1) While an application for an adoption order is pending in a case where a parent or guardian of the child has agreed to the making of the adoption order (whether or not he knows the identity of the applicant), the parent or guardian is not entitled, against the will of the person with whom the child has his home, to remove the child from the [F1home] of that person except with the leave of the court.

(2) While an application is pending for an order freeing a child for adoption and—  
(a) the child is in the care of the adoption agency making the application, and  
(b) the application was not made with the consent of each parent or guardian of the child,

no parent or guardian of the child is entitled, against the will of the person with whom the child has his home, to remove the child from the [F1home] of that person except with the leave of the court.

[F2(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) a child is in the care of an adoption agency if the adoption is a local authority and he is in their care.]

(3) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) or (2) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or a fine not exceeding [F3level 5 on the standard scale] or both.

(4) ..... F4

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### Textual Amendments

- F1** Word in s. 27(1)(2) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.12(a)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F2** S. 27(2A) inserted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 13** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F3** Words substituted by virtue of Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), **ss. 38, 46**
- F4** S. 27(4)(5) repealed by Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 (c. 41, SIF 113:3), ss. 9, 30, Sch. 2 para. 33, **Sch. 10 Pt. I**

### Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 27 applied (with modifications) (1.6.2003) by The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/118), regs. 1(1), 34, **Sch. 3** (with reg. 37)

## 28 Restrictions on removal where applicant has provided home for 5 years.

- (1) While an application for an adoption order in respect of a child made by the person with whom the child has had his home for the 5 years preceding the application is pending, no person is entitled, against the will of the applicant, to remove the child from the applicant's [<sup>F5</sup>home] except with the leave of the court or under authority conferred by any enactment or on the arrest of the child.
- (2) Where a person ("the prospective adopter") gives notice to the local authority within whose area he has his home that he intends to apply for an adoption order in respect of a child who for the preceding 5 years has had his home with the prospective adopter, no person is entitled, against the will of the prospective adopter, to remove the child from the prospective adopter's [<sup>F5</sup>home], except with the leave of a court or under authority conferred by any enactment or on the arrest of the child, before—
- the prospective adopter applies for the adoption order, or
  - the period of 3 months from the receipt of the notice by the local authority expires,
- whichever occurs first.

[<sup>F6</sup>(2A) The reference in subsections (1) and (2) to any enactment does not include a reference to section 20(8) of the Children Act 1989]

[<sup>F7</sup>(3) In any case where subsection (1) or (2) applies and—

- the child was being looked after by a local authority before he began to have his home with the applicant or, as the case may be, the prospective adopter, and
- the child is still being looked after by a local authority,

the authority which are looking after the child shall not remove him from the home of the applicant or the prospective adopter except in accordance with section 30 or 31 or with the leave of a court.]

- (4) In subsections (2) and (3) "a court" means a court with jurisdiction to make adoption orders.
- (5) A local authority which [<sup>F8</sup>receive] such notice as is mentioned in subsection (2) in respect of a child whom the authority know to be [<sup>F9</sup>looked after by another local authority] shall, not more than 7 days after the receipt of the notice, inform that other authority [<sup>F10</sup> . . .], in writing, that they have received the notice.

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- (6) Subsection (2) does not apply to any further notice served by the prospective adopter on any local authority in respect of the same child during the period referred to in paragraph (b) of that subsection or within 28 days after its expiry.
- (7) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) or (2) shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or a fine not exceeding [<sup>F11</sup>level 5 on the standard scale] or both.
- (8) ..... <sup>F12</sup>
- (10) The Secretary of State may by order amend subsection (1) or (2) to substitute a different period for the period of 5 years mentioned in that subsection (or the period which, by a previous order under this subsection, was substituted for that period).

#### Textual Amendments

- F5** Word in s. 28(1)(2) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.12(b)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F6** S. 28(2A) inserted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 14(1)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F7** S. 28(3) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.14(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F8** Word in s. 28(5) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 14(3)(a)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F9** Words in s. 28(5) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.14(3)(b)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F10** Words in s. 28(5) repealed (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch.15** (with Sch. 14 paras. 1(1), 27(4)) ; S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F11** Words substituted by virtue of Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), **ss. 38, 46**
- F12** S. 28(8)(9) repealed by Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 (c. 41, SIF 113:3), ss. 9, 30, Sch. 2 para. 33, **Sch. 10 Pt. I**

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

- C2** S. 28: transfer of functions (W) (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/672, art. 2, **Sch. 1**

## 29 Return of child taken away in breach of s. 27 or 28.

- [<sup>F13</sup>(1) An authorised court may, on the application of a person from whose home a child has been removed in breach of—
- (a) section 27 or 28,
  - (b) section 27 or 28 of the <sup>M1</sup>Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978, or
  - (c) Article 28 or 29 of the <sup>M2</sup>Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987
- order the person who has so removed the child to return the child to the applicant.
- (2) An authorised court may, on the application of a person who has reasonable grounds for believing that another person is intending to remove a child from his home in breach of—
- (a) section 27 or 28,
  - (b) section 27 or 28 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978, or
  - (c) Article 28 or 29 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987,

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by order direct that other person not to remove the child from the applicant's home in breach of any of those provisions.]

- (3) If, in the case of an order made by the High Court under subsection (1), the High Court or, in the case of an order made by a county court under subsection (1), a county court is satisfied that the child has not been returned to the applicant, the court may make an order authorising an officer of the court to search such premises as may be specified in the order for the child and, if the officer finds the child, to return the child to the applicant.
- (4) If a justice of the peace is satisfied by information on oath that there are reasonable grounds for believing that a child to whom an order under subsection (1) relates is in premises specified in the information, he may issue a search warrant authorising a constable to search the premises for the child; and if a constable acting in pursuance of a warrant under this section finds the child, he shall return the child to the person on whose application the order under subsection (1) was made.
- (5) An order under subsection (3) may be enforced in like manner as a warrant for committal.

#### Textual Amendments

**F13** S. 29(1)(2) substituted (14.10.1991) by [Children Act 1989 \(c. 41, SIF 20\)](#), ss. 88, 108, [Sch. 10 para.15](#) (with [Sch. 14 para. 1\(1\)](#)); [S.I. 1991/828](#), [art. 3\(2\)](#)

#### Marginal Citations

**M1** 1978 c. 28 (49:11).

**M2** [S.I. 1987/2203 \(N.I. 22\)](#).

### 30 Return of children placed for adoption by adoption agencies.

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), at any time after a child has been <sup>F14</sup>placed with] any person in pursuance of arrangements made by an adoption agency for the adoption of the child by that person, and before an adoption order has been made on the application of that person in respect of the child,—
  - (a) that person may give notice to the agency of his intention not to <sup>F15</sup>give the child a home]; or
  - (b) the agency may cause notice to be given to that person of their intention not to allow the child to remain in his <sup>F16</sup>home].
- (2) No notice under paragraph (b) of subsection (1) shall be given in respect of a child in relation to whom an application has been made for an adoption order except with the leave of the court to which the application has been made.
- (3) Where a notice is given to an adoption agency by any person or by an adoption agency to any person under subsection (1), or where an application for an adoption order made by any person in respect of a child placed <sup>F17</sup>with him] by an adoption agency is refused by the court or withdrawn, that person shall, within 7 days after the date on which notice was given or the application refused or withdrawn, as the case may be, cause the child to be returned to the agency, who shall receive the child.
- (4) Where the period specified in an interim order made under section 25 (whether as originally made or as extended under subsection (2) of that section) expires without

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an adoption order having been made in respect of the child, subsection (3) shall apply as if the application for an adoption order upon which the interim order was made, had been refused at the expiration of that period.

- (5) It shall be sufficient compliance with the requirements of subsection (3) if the child is delivered to, and is received by, a suitable person nominated for the purpose by the adoption agency.
- (6) Where an application for an adoption order is refused the court may, if it thinks fit at any time before the expiry of the period of 7 days mentioned in subsection (3), order that period to be extended to a duration, not exceeding 6 weeks, specified in the order.
- (7) Any person who contravenes the provisions of this section shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or to a fine not exceeding [F18]level 5 on the standard scale] or to both; and the court by which the offender is convicted may order the child in respect of whom the offence is committed to be returned to his parent or guardian or to the adoption agency which made the arrangements referred to in subsection (1).

#### Textual Amendments

- F14** Words in s. 30(1) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.16(1)(a)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F15** Words in s. 30(1)(a) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.16(1)(b)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F16** Word in s. 30(1)(b) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 88, **Sch. 10 para.16(1)(c)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F17** Words in s. 30(3) “” substituted (14.10.1991) “” by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 16(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F18** Words substituted by virtue of Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), ss. 38, 46

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

- C3** S. 30 applied (with modifications) (1.6.2003) by The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/118), regs. 1(1), 34, **Sch. 3** (with reg. 37)

### 31 Application of s. 30 where child not placed for adoption.

- (1) Where a person gives notice in pursuance of section 22(1) to the local authority within whose area he has his home of his intention to apply for an adoption order in respect of a [F19]child—
  - (a) who is (when the notice is given) being looked after by a local authority; but
  - (b) who was placed with that person otherwise than in pursuance of such arrangements as are mentioned in section 30(1),that section shall apply as if the child had been placed in pursuance of such arrangements] that where the application is refused by the court or withdrawn the child need not be returned to the local authority in whose care he is unless that authority so require.
- (2) Where notice of intention is given as aforesaid in respect of any child who is [F20](when the notice is given) being looked after by] a local authority then, until the application for an adoption order has been made and disposed of, any right of the local authority

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to require the child to be returned to them otherwise than in pursuance of section 30 shall be suspended.

- (3) While the child [<sup>F21</sup>has his home with] the person by whom the notice is given no contribution shall be payable (whether under a contribution order or otherwise) in respect of the child by any person liable under [<sup>F22</sup>Part III of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989] to make contributions in respect of him (but without prejudice to the recovery of any sum due at the time the notice is given), unless 12 weeks have elapsed since the giving of the notice without the application being made or the application has been refused by the court or withdrawn.

- [<sup>F23</sup>(4) Nothing in this section affects the right of any person who has parental responsibility for a child to remove him under section 20(8) of the Children Act 1989]

#### Textual Amendments

- F19** Words in s. 31(1) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 17(1)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F20** Words in s. 31(2) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 17(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F21** Words in s. 31(3) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 17(3)(a)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F22** Words in s. 31(3) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 17(3)(b)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F23** S. 31(4) added (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 17(4)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**

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

- C4** S. 31 applied (with modifications) (1.6.2003) by The Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/118), regs. 1(1), 34, **Sch. 3** (with reg. 37)

### Protected children

#### 32 Meaning of “protected child”.

- (1) Where a person gives notice in pursuance of section 22(1) to the local authority within whose area he lives of his intention to apply for an adoption order in respect of a child, the child is for the purposes of this Part a protected child while he has his home with that person.
- (2) A child shall be deemed to be a protected child for the purposes of this Part if he is a protected child within the meaning of
- [<sup>F24</sup>(a) section 32 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978; or
- (b) Article 33 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.].
- (3) A child is not a protected child by reason of any such notice as is mentioned in subsection (1) while—
- [<sup>F25</sup>(a) he is in the care of any person—
- (i) in any [<sup>F26</sup>children’s home in respect of which a person is registered under Part II of the Care Standards Act 2000];
- (ii) in any school in which he is receiving full-time education;
- (iii) in any health service hospital]; or

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- [<sup>F27</sup>(b) he is—
- (i) suffering from mental disorder within the meaning of the <sup>M3</sup>Mental Health Act 1983; and
  - (ii) resident in a residential care home, within the meaning of Part I of Schedule 4 to the <sup>M4</sup>Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983;]
- (c) he is liable to be detained or subject to guardianship under [<sup>F28</sup>the <sup>M5</sup>Mental Health Act 1983]
- [<sup>F29</sup>(d) he is in the care of any person in any home or institution not specified in this subsection but provided, equipped and maintained by the Secretary of State.]

[<sup>F30</sup>(3A) In subsection (3) [<sup>F31</sup>“children’s home”], “school” and “health service hospital” have the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989.]

[<sup>F32</sup>(4) A protected child ceases to be a protected child—

- (a) on the grant or refusal of the application for an adoption order;
- (b) on the notification to the local authority for the area where the child has his home that the application for an adoption order has been withdrawn;
- (c) in a case where no application is made for an adoption order, on the expiry of the period of two years from the giving of the notice;
- (d) on the making of a residence order, a care order or a supervision order under the Children Act 1989 in respect of the child;
- (e) on the appointment of a guardian for him under that Act;
- (f) on his attaining the age of 18 years; or
- (g) on his marriage,

whichever first occurs.

(5) In subsection (4)(d) the references to a care order and a supervision order do not include references to an interim care order or interim supervision order.]

#### Textual Amendments

- F24** S. 32(2)(a)(b) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 18(1)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F25** S. 32(3)(a) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 18(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F26** Words in s. 32(3)(a)(i) substituted (1.4.2002) by 2000 c. 14, s. 116, Sch. 4 para. 5(8)(a); S.I. 2001/4150, **art. 3(3)(a)** (subject to transitional provisions in art. 4 and S.I. 2002/1493, art. 4); S.I. 2002/920, **art. 3(3)(d)** (with art. 3(4)-(10)) (subject to transitional provisions in Schs. 1-3)
- F27** S. 32(3)(b) substituted by Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 (c. 41, SIF 113:3), s. 29, **Sch. 9 Pt. I para. 19**
- F28** Words in s. 32(3)(c) substituted by virtue of Mental Health Act 1983 (c. 20, SIF 85), s. 148, **Sch. 4 para. 45**
- F29** S. 32(3)(d) added (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 18(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F30** S. 32(3A) inserted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 18(3)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F31** Words in s. 32(3A) substituted (1.4.2002) by 2000 c. 14, s. 116, Sch. 4 para. 5(8)(b); S.I. 2001/4150, **art. 3(3)(a)** (subject to transitional provisions in art. 4 and S.I. 2002/1493, art. 4); S.I. 2002/920, **art. 3(3)(d)** (with art. 3(4)-(10)) (subject to transitional provisions in Schs. 1-3)

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**F32** S. 32(4)(5) substituted (14.10.1991) for s. 32(4) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para. 18(4)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**

**Marginal Citations**

- M3** 1983 c. 20(85).
- M4** 1983 c. 41(113:3).
- M5** 1983 c. 20(85).

**33 Duty of local authorities to secure well-being of protected children.**

- (1) It shall be the duty of every local authority to secure that protected children within their area are visited from time to time by officers of the authority, who shall satisfy themselves as to the well-being of the children and give such advice as to their care and maintenance as may appear to be needed.
- (2) Any officer of a local authority authorised to visit protected children may, after producing, if asked to do so, some duly authenticated document showing that he is so authorised, inspect any premises in the area of the authority in which such children are to be or are being kept.

<sup>F33</sup>**34** .....

**Textual Amendments**

**F33** S. 34 repealed (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch.15** (with Sch. 14 paras. 1(1), 27(4)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**

**35 Notices and information to be given to local authorities.**

- (1) Where a person [<sup>F34</sup>with whom a protected child has his home] changes his permanent address he shall, not less than 2 weeks before the change, or, if the change is made in an emergency, not later than one week after the change, give notice specifying the new address to the local authority in whose area his permanent address is before the change, and if the new address is in the area of another local authority, the authority to whom the notice is given shall inform that other local authority and give them such of the following particulars as are known to them, that is to say—
  - (a) the name, sex and date and place of birth of the child;
  - (b) the name and address of every person who is a parent or guardian or acts as a guardian of the child or from whom the child was received.
- (2) If a protected child dies, the person [<sup>F35</sup>with whom he had his home] at his death shall within 48 hours give notice of the child’s death to the local authority.

**Textual Amendments**

- F34** Words in s. 35(1) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.19(1)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**
- F35** Words in s. 35(2) substituted (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), ss. 88, 108, **Sch. 10 para.19(2)** (with Sch. 14 para. 1(1)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**



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### 36 Offences relating to protected children.

- (1) A person shall be guilty of an offence if—
- (a) being required, under section 35 to give any notice or information, he fails to give the notice within the time specified in that provision or fails to give the information within a reasonable time, or knowingly makes or causes or procures another person to make any false or misleading statement in the notice of information;
  - (b) he refuses to allow the visiting of a protected child by a duly authorised officer of a local authority or the inspection, under the power conferred by section 33(2) of any premises;
  - <sup>F36</sup>(c) .....
- (2) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or a fine not exceeding [<sup>F37</sup>level 5 on the standard scale] or both.

#### Textual Amendments

**F36** S. 36(1)(c) repealed (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch.15**; (with Sch. 14 paras. 1(1), 27(4)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**

**F37** Words substituted by virtue of Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48, SIF 39:1), **ss. 38, 46**

### 37 Miscellaneous provisions relating to protected children.

- <sup>F38</sup>(1) .....
- (2) A person who maintains a protected child shall be deemed for the purposes of the <sup>M6</sup>Life Assurance Act 1774 to have no interest in the life of the child.
- <sup>F38</sup>(3) .....
- <sup>F38</sup>(4) .....

#### Textual Amendments

**F38** S. 37(1)(3)(4) repealed (14.10.1991) by Children Act 1989 (c. 41, SIF 20), s. 108, **Sch.15** (with Sch. 14 paras. 1(1), 27(4)); S.I. 1991/828, **art. 3(2)**

#### Marginal Citations

**M6** 1774 c. 48(67).

**Status:**

Point in time view as at 01/06/2003.

**Changes to legislation:**

Adoption Act 1976, Part III is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 03 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.