



adoptni

empowering adults in adoption and care

Annual Report & Financial Statements 31 March 2024

ADOPT NI COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered charity name	Adopt NI
Charity registration number	NIC 102048
Company registration number	NI050259
	Unit 2 18 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE
Registered office	Unit 2 18 Heron Road Belfast BT3 9LE

THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows:

K Scott Harrison
T Robson
L Gilmore
D Weir

Company Secretary	C Scully
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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT *(continued)*

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 8 April 2004. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £5.

Recruitment and Appointment of Board of Directors

Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association a Director shall hold office until the next Annual General Meeting following his/her appointment. A retiring Director is then eligible for re-election.

The Board of Directors seeks to ensure that the needs of the adoption and looked-after communities are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the trustee body. The more traditional business and professional skills are well represented on the Board of Directors. In the event of particular skills being lost due to retirements, individuals are approached to offer themselves for election to the Board of Directors.

Trustee Induction and Training

New trustees are familiarised with the charity through an induction with the Regional Manager. The induction covers:

- The services the charity provides.
- The obligations of the Board of Directors.
- The main documents which set out the operational framework for the charity including the Memorandum and Articles.
- Resourcing and the current financial position as set out in the latest published accounts.
- Future plans and objectives.

The Board of Directors are invited to attend a variety of relevant training sessions including good governance and strategic planning.

Risk Management

A risk register has been established and is updated at least annually. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces. Significant external risks to funding are reduced by a strategic plan which allows for the diversification of funding and activities. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors to the charity's offices and hired premises for outreach projects. All procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they meet required standards and the needs of the charity.

Organisational Structure and Guidance

The charity has a Board of Directors of no less than four members who meet quarterly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. There were no new appointments and no resignations in the financial year.

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT *(continued)*

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The day-to-day responsibility for the provision of services, financial and staff management rests with the Regional Manager. The Chairperson is responsible for providing supervision to the Regional Manager.

In so far as it is complimentary to the charity's objectives, the charity is guided by the relevant legislation in particular the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Adoption and Children Act 2002, the Children (Leaving Care) Act (Northern Ireland) 2002, and the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The charity was originally established to provide the services of a support organisation, the main aim of which is to help adults deal with their feelings about the challenges that adoption can bring and, if necessary, to provide help with the tracing process. On 8th April 2008, the committee passed a special resolution that Adopt NI would, from now on, also offer support to birth families who have lost, or are at risk of losing their children (under 18s) through adoption and adults who were brought up within the looked after community.

The charity's objects and principal activities are to:

- To ensure Adopt NI is properly governed.
- To ensure that Adopt NI has the appropriate skills, resources and systems in place to operate efficiently and effectively.
- To generate income from a diverse income base to ensure the delivery of appropriate Adopt NI services and stakeholders.
- To meet demand for all Adopt NI's tracing services.
- To increase the availability of peer support to all those in the adoption and looked after communities across Northern Ireland.
- To increase the availability of independent specialist support to all those in the adoption and looked after communities across Northern Ireland
- To improve relationships and credibility with statutory and voluntary adoption agencies, LAC and mental health teams.
- To develop an effective and comprehensive PR/advertising strategy.
To reduce the stigma surrounding the adoption and looked after communities.

The main objectives and activities for the year continued to focus upon the provision of a first-class independent support service that will empower all those in the adoption and looked after communities in Northern Ireland and those involved with them.

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT *(continued)*

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Adopt NI has four main services and continues to collaborate with other organisations in the sector, to identify and address the needs of service users and adapt to meet those needs. For the year 2023-24 Adopt NI dealt with a total of 173 enquiries. Of those, many were either signposted to the relevant agency or went on to access support via Adopt NI.

TRACING

➤ Regional Origins Tracing Service (ROTS)

ROTS has been operating successfully since 2003 thanks to funding from SPPG, and will continue to operate subject to funding. Adopt NI delivers ROTs as a tracing service for Family and Childcare Social Workers in the statutory and voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland. ROTs can only be used by social workers searching on behalf of adoptees, birth mothers and birth siblings and those who are looked after. Referrals totalled 101 for the year.

➤ Outside Agencies Tracing Service (OATS)

Adopt NI established this tracing service in 2009, for those social workers and agencies who do not qualify to use ROTs, such as childcare social workers employed outside Northern Ireland. It operates in exactly the same way as ROTs although fees apply to cover our resources for this work. In the year we processed 2 OATS referrals.

➤ Private Tracing Service (PTS)

We offer a private tracing service to adoptees and adults who have been looked after; however, we encourage everyone to trace via a statutory agency. In the year we processed 0 private traces.

INTERMEDIARY WORK

Our intermediary service is designed to ensure individuals establish contact safely and at a pace that suits both parties.

➤ Help to Remain Anonymous

If an adoptee or birth parent does not want to have contact and does not want the other party to gain identifying information, Adopt NI will endeavour to assure the person feels confident that their wishes will be respected and can work with the other party to help them accept and respect the other's wish to remain anonymous.

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YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

SUPPORT

Overall, Adopt NI provided advice, support and signposting for approximately 177 individual enquirers, of these 65 availed of ongoing support or advocacy.

➤ Peer Support

Peer support is founded on mutual agreement and respect, and based on shared experiences. At Adopt NI we offer peer support on a one-to-one and group basis.

➤ One to one

One-to-one support offers individuals an opportunity to talk in confidence to one of their peers or an experienced member of the Adopt NI team.

The service is aimed at those who are not ready, or do not want, to attend a support group. It is free and open-ended, i.e. it is available as often and as long as the client needs the service.

➤ Support Groups

The charity's support groups are self-financing, as members pay a small attendance contribution of £3.00 to cover the cost of refreshments. The Belfast Group continues to meet regularly with approximately 12 members and 7-9 at most meetings.

An additional group was set up on Zoom in line with the Truth Recovery Strategy and runs bi-weekly for adopted adults, with attendees joining from NI, ROI, UK and abroad.

SPECIALIST COUNSELLING

Counselling is available for those who feel it is right for them. Our counsellors are fully trained and accredited by BACP and specialise in the issues that surround the adoption and looked after communities.

MOTHER AND BABY HOME, MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES AND WORKHOUSES (FUNDED BY VSS)

We launched new services this year in August 2022, funded by the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS). In the period we supported 184 individuals with information recovery, advocacy, family tracing and wraparound support.

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TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT *(continued)*

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

The charity was delighted to continue to receive the continued support of both SPPG and DHSSPS £57,475 for the ROTS project from SPPG and £7,019.64 toward the Regional Manager's salary and premises costs from DHSSPS. It relies on charitable grants and is grateful to have received funding this year from Halifax, Enkalon TBF Thompson, Esme Mitchell and Souter Trust.

The charity is also delighted to receive continued funding received in the year from VSS of £190,020.25 to allow us to support victims and survivors of the Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses in NI.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Subject to satisfactory funding arrangements, the charity intends to continue to provide the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years.

Adopt NI has continued to collaborate within the sector in the year, utilising its networks within the teams in the 5 HSCTs and 2 voluntary adoption agencies in NI, to further identify additional support needs of service users. The overall aim is to tailor existing services and implement new services, which are people led and evidenced as currently being unavailable to adults affected by adoption or long term care.

The aim is to both increase our presence and the availability of tailored services within the sector in NI in 2025 and beyond.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Adopt NI for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the income and expenditure of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;

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- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.