

**PRACTICE NOTE**  
**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**  
**FAMILY DIVISION**

**PRACTICE NOTE NO. 01 of 2023 ('PN 01/23')**

**Electronic transmission of certain documents in Freeing for Adoption cases**

Whereas:

[1] Rules 4A.3(4) and 4A.4(7) Family Proceedings Rules (Northern Ireland) 1996, as amended in 2003, require that in Freeing for Adoption applications under Articles 17 and 18 of The Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 the applicant shall file three copies of the application in Form A1 together with three copies of: 1. other accompanying documents and 2. A report in accordance with Part 1 of Appendix 4, and Rule 4A.5(1)2 of the said rules provides that after the application is so filed the Master shall appoint a guardian for the child and send to the guardian a copy of the application and any supporting documents.

[2] Since October 2013, Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunal Service ('NICTS') and related organisations have been sharing documents electronically under an agreed "Protocol for the electronic exchange of information between the NICTS and other organisations, in proceedings under the Children (NI) Order 1995 & The Adoption (NI) Order 1987" ('the 2013 Protocol').

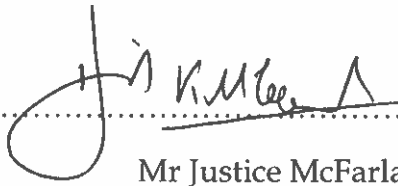
[3] The 2013 Protocol has been revised by agreement of the parties involved to allow for papers in Freeing for Adoption applications to be transmitted electronically from NICTS to The Children's Court Guardian Agency for Northern Ireland ('CCGANI').

[4] This Practice Note makes provision for a more efficient process which acknowledges the utility and confidentiality afforded by secure electronic transmission of documents and reflects the current practical realities and requirements of the process as follows:

[5] Provided that payment of the appropriate fee has been made in accordance with the rules, an electronic copy of each document may be filed in the court *via* secure CJSM email by transmitting them to the NICTS email addresses detailed in the 2013 protocol. NICTS will further transmit the electronic copies of the documentation to a secure generic CCGANI mailbox which will then be passed on to the Guardian once assigned.

[6] Accordingly, from the date on which this Practice Note comes into operation it will be sufficient to file one hard copy only of the required documentation in the court together with an electronic copy of the said documentation (to be used for onward transmission to CCGANI) and the court will regard this approach as compliant with the required process for freeing for adoption.

Dated this 10th day of November 2023

Signed .....  .....

Mr Justice McFarland