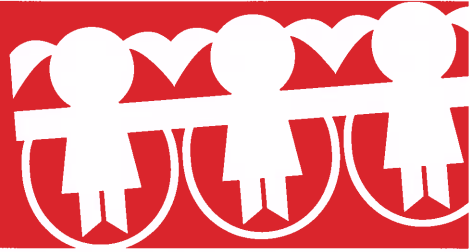


THE ROLE OF THE GUARDIAN AD LITEM IN

ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS

(under the Adoption (N.I.) Order 1987)



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND PROFESSIONALS

When the court receives an adoption application from the prospective adopters, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is appointed. The main duty of the GAL is to safeguard the interests of the child who is being considered for adoption.

The GAL will also want to speak to other people who are important in the child's life. These will include:

- The child's birth parents (where possible) – to discuss with them any agreement they have made in relation to their child's adoption.
- The people who have applied to adopt the child (the 'applicants') – to speak with them about their reasons for wanting to adopt the child.
- Anyone else who may be relevant – this could include other family members (eg. aunts, uncles, grandparents), foster carers, social workers who have previously been involved with the child, and so on.

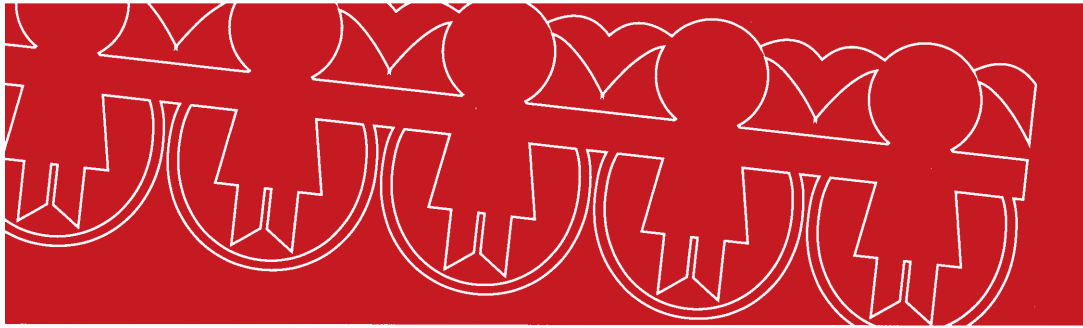
The granting of an Adoption Order is a life-long decision that involves the transfer of parental responsibility from a birth parent(s). The Guardian ad Litem is asked by the court to independently consider the adoption application and will remain involved until the court makes a final decision about the application.

Who will the Guardian ad Litem speak to?

The GAL will meet with the child to talk about the adoption application (depending on the age and level of understanding of the child). The GAL will want to know what the feelings and wishes of the child are, and what they would like to see happen.

What will the Guardian ad Litem consider?

In considering the adoption application, the GAL will want to review all relevant information to enable them to make their recommendation to the court. They will look at all written information that has been sent to the court, Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) case files and attend meetings where appropriate.



What else does the Guardian ad Litem do?

The Guardian also has the following responsibilities:

- Where necessary, write to the court to advise of specific matters that the court needs to know about.
- Make a recommendation as to whether the child should/should not attend court for the final hearing.
- Write a report for the court, recommending what they think is in the best interests of the child.

What if I don't agree with the GAL's recommendation to the court?

If you don't agree with the GAL's recommendation to the court you are advised to seek legal advice.

However, NIGALA is keen to obtain feedback on the service it provides, and so if you wish to provide any feedback, please complete the enclosed Comments, Compliments and Complaints form and return to the Agency.