



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

Provider Access to Initial Validation of Programmes leading to QQI Awards

Report of the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel

Stage 1

Assessment of Capacity and Approval of QA Procedures

Part 1 Details of applicant provider and its proposed education and training provision

1.1 Applicant Provider

Registered Business/Trading Name:	Barnardos Republic of Ireland Ltd
Address:	4 Christchurch Square, Dublin 8
Date of Application:	14 July 2017
Date of resubmission of application:	11 April 2018
Date of re-evaluation:	22 May 2018
Date of site visit (if applicable):	21 February 2018
Date of recommendation to the Approvals and Reviews Committee:	19 th July 2018



1.2 Profile of applicant provider

Barnardos Republic of Ireland Limited is a company limited by guarantee (CLG) without share capital and beneficial owners. Its Memorandum and Articles of Association were updated in 2016. Barnardos' offices are based in Christchurch Square in Dublin 8. It is governed by members of a non-executive Board who are elected for a maximum of two three-year terms. The Board meets approximately 6 times a year and is responsible for the business of the organisation. The Board is supported in fulfilling its responsibilities by a committee structure. The executive functions of the organisation are led by the CEO and a senior management team.

In its application, the organisation describes its purpose as follows:

Barnardos works directly with the children and families who need us most, providing services and support in 40 centres around the country. We also campaign for the rights of all children in Ireland and provide training and knowledge resources to childcare professionals.

In 2016, Barnardos provided services to over 14,000 children across Ireland. In fulfilling its mission, education and training is one of the principal functions of the organisation. It currently offers three unaccredited programmes of between 1 and 3 days in Child Protection, Supervision, and Promoting Positive Behaviour, that are tailored for professionals working with children.

Barnardos is funded from both public and private sources.

1.3 Proposed education and training provision

NFQ Level	Award Class	QQI Award / Proposed Programme Title
5	Minor	Childminding Practice (5N1766)



Part 2 The Quality and Capacity Panel Membership

Name	Role of panel member	Organisation
Ms Naomi Jackson	Chair	Dean of Academic Affairs, CCT College Dublin
Mr John Burns	Learner Representative	
Ms Anne Higgins	QA Expert	Galway and Roscommon ETB (GRETB)
Other attendees		
Name	Role	Organisation
Dr Trish O'Brien	Independent Secretary	O'BRIEN / Governance Design

Part 3 Findings of the Panel

3.1 Summary Findings

In its original findings, the Panel was of the view that the quality assurance policies and procedures, and other supporting information provided by Barnardos, were well-presented and structured. It also considered that the representatives of Barnardos communicated well on the organisation and its objectives, and on how it currently operates and intends developing its education and training provision. The Panel particularly noted the evident desire of the representatives to deliver the proposed programme to a high standard and in the interests of best serving their target learners. However, the Panel's conclusion was that Barnardos was to resubmit its application for access to initial validation of programmes, and in doing so, was to address mandatory and advised changes that are summarised below:

Mandatory changes:

- Barnardos is required to review and revise its procedures in the light of its intention to deliver via a blended learning model
- Barnardos is required to review its governance structures in terms of devising a fit-for-purpose model

*Advised changes:*

- Barnardos should seek to achieve a balance of detail in its quality assurance policies and procedures
- Barnardos should resubmit more comprehensive quality assurance documentation
- Barnardos should review its self-evaluation procedures
- Barnardos should develop a strategy for engaging with peer education and training organisations.

Following a review of Barnardos resubmitted application and a meeting with representatives of Barnardos that focussed on the mandatory and advised changes made, the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel is satisfied that Barnardos has substantively addressed these mandatory and advised changes. It has, however, identified a series of advised changes throughout this report that it considers could further strengthen the QA Manual of Barnardos. These are summarised in section 6.2.

3.2 Recommendation of the Panel to the Approvals and Reviews Committee of QQI

The Panel is recommending to the QQI Approval and Reviews Committee that it approves the draft quality assurance procedures of Barnardos. Subject to the agreement of the Approval and Reviews Committee to this recommendation, Barnardos will be eligible to proceed to Stage 2 of the access to initial validation of programmes process.



Part 4 Evaluation of the capacity of the applicant to provide quality education and training to learners

4.1 Legal and compliance requirements:

- 4.1.1(a) **Criterion:** *Is the applicant an established Legal Entity who has Education and/or Training as a Principal Function?*
- 4.1.2(a) **Criterion:** *Is the legal entity established in the European Union and does it have a substantial presence in Ireland?*
- 4.1.3(a) **Criterion:** *Are any dependencies, collaborations, obligations, parent organisations, and subsidiaries clearly specified?*
- 4.1.4(a) **Criterion:** *Are any third-party relationships and partnerships compatible with the scope of access sought?*
- 4.1.5(a) **Criterion:** *Are the applicable regulations and legislation complied with in all jurisdictions where it operates?*
- 4.1.6(a) **Criterion:** *Is the applicant in good standing in the qualifications systems and education and training systems in any countries where it operates (or where its parents or subsidiaries operate) or enrolls learners, or where it has arrangements with awarding bodies, quality assurance agencies, qualifications authorities, ministries of education and training, professional bodies and regulators.*

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos has addressed the criteria above in its application form, providing evidence of its legal status as a company limited by guarantee and registered in Ireland. It has confirmed its compliance with applicable legislation and regulations. Barnardos has not provided accredited qualifications to date and there is no evidence that it is not in good standing with the education and training community in the context of its non-accredited provision. The Panel is satisfied that these criteria have been met.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The findings above stand.



4.2 Resource, governance and structural requirements:

- 4.2.1(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a sufficient resource base and is it stable and in good financial standing?*
- 4.2.2(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a reasonable business case for sustainable provision?*
- 4.2.3(a) **Criterion:** *Are fit-for-purpose governance, management and decision-making structures in place?*
- 4.2.4(a) **Criterion:** *Are there arrangements in place for providing required information to QQI?*

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos is funded from both private and public sources. It submitted an up-to-date tax clearance certificate. The organisation has confirmed that it has sufficient resources to deliver the Childcare Practice programme it is proposing to offer. It has also provided a reasonable business case, based on analysis, for the market available to engage with its proposed programme. The provision of qualifications in this area is also being actively supported by government policy.

Barnardos has proposed a governance structure for the oversight of its quality management. The Panel has placed as a condition the revision of this governance structure, as is discussed in sections 3.2 above and Part 5 (section 1) below.

In section 8.1.1 of its *Training Quality Assurance Manual*, Barnardos confirms that it has expanded and customised its CRM system to support QQI data reporting and to further inform its internal analysis and decision-making.

The Panel has placed a condition on the governance structure put forward by Barnardos. The details regarding same are available in section 3.2 above and in Part 5 (section 1). The Panel is therefore not satisfied that condition 4.2 has been met.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The original findings of the Panel on Barnardos resources and business case, and on its arrangements for providing required information to QQI stand. Having reviewed Barnardos resubmitted governance structure and documentation and discussed this with Barnardos



during the review meeting, the Panel is now satisfied that criterion 4.2.3(a) has been met. It has, however, identified some advised changes to Barnardos in this area to further strengthen its governance model.

4.3 Programme development and provision requirements:

- 4.3.1(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have experience and a track record in providing education and training programmes?*
- 4.3.2(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have a fit-for-purpose and stable complement of education and training staff?*
- 4.3.3(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have the capacity to comply with the standard conditions for validation specified in Section 45(3) of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012) (the Act)?*
- 4.3.4(a) **Criterion:** *Does the applicant have the fit-for-purpose premises, facilities and resources to meet the requirements of the provision proposed in place?*
- 4.3.5(a) **Criterion:** *Are there access, transfer and progression arrangements that meet QQI's criteria for approval in place?*
- 4.3.6(a) **Criterion:** *Are structures and resources to underpin fair and consistent assessment of learners in place?*
- 4.3.7(a) **Criterion:** *Are arrangements for the protection of enrolled learners to meet the statutory obligations in place (where applicable)?*

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos has experience of providing unaccredited programmes of between 1 and 3 days and has established a training team, which has in turn recruited significant external training resources, to undertake these programmes, and to provide other tailored trainings and public events. In this regard, Barnardos is considered to have both a relevant track-record and adequate human and other resources. The representatives at the Panel meeting also articulated that they are aware of their protection of enrolled learners' responsibilities and that the return of funds to learners option is currently favoured. Section 3.4 of the *Training Quality Assurance Manual* sets out Barnardos' Learner Admissions, progression and recognition policy; this includes its monitoring of learner progression and completion rates and its provision of information for learners on progression opportunities. Section 6 of the *Training Quality Assurance Manual* describes Barnardos' assessment policies and procedures.



As is elaborated under the conditions section (3.2), the Panel has stated its concerns regarding the adequate representation of a blended learning environment in the policies and procedures of Barnardos. This extends to how assessment is quality assured in this context. Therefore, whilst assessment structures and resources are described in its documentation, the Panel is of the view that these are not fully fit-for-purpose. Criterion 4.3.6(a) has therefore not been met.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The Panel spent a significant portion of the second meeting with Barnardos referring to its documentation on blended learning and discussing the implementation of its procedures. The Panel is now satisfied that criterion 4.3.6(a) has been met. It has, however, identified some advised changes to Barnardos to further strengthen its documentation of how it manages its blended learning environment.

4.4 Evaluation of capacity to provide the proposed education and training provision - Overall finding:

The Panel is now confident that Barnardos has addressed its mandatory and advised changes sufficiently for it to endorse the capacity of Barnardos to provide the proposed education and training provision.



Part 5 Evaluation of draft QA Procedures submitted by Barnardos

The following is the panel's findings following evaluation of Barnardos quality assurance procedures against QQI's Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016). This section of the report follows the structure and referencing of the guidelines. It first identifies the findings of the Panel's original access to initial validation meeting and then sets out its findings for its meeting with Barnardos to review its resubmitted application.

1 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF QUALITY

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos has a broad remit in its provision of services and supports to children and families. In carrying out this role, it has developed a comprehensive Board structure which is assisted by several committees with distinct areas of responsibilities. In developing its quality assurance governance structures, the organisation drew from its current corporate governance experience and sought to build a governance model that would accommodate growth in its provision. In doing so, however, it proposed to the Panel a governance structure that was more elaborate than currently warranted and which, when implemented, was likely to prove inefficient for Barnardos. The Panel noted that the governance system proposed was not always reflected in the quality assurance policies and procedures; instead, in certain procedures, executive decision-making by individuals was apparent in areas where governance involvement would be expected. It has also noted that within the structure proposed there is a discrepancy in some cases between the apparent seniority of the governance unit and its associated decision-making role and membership.

To support the organisation in its intended delivery of accredited programmes, the Panel is requiring Barnardos to revisit its governance and quality management structures from the perspectives of proportionality, efficiency, role, and membership. Where there are any opportunities to leverage the current corporate governance structures to underpin the governance and management of quality, for example in the area of risk, this is also encouraged.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

Having reflected on the governance structure originally submitted to the Panel, Barnardos was similarly of the view that it was overly elaborate in the context of its intended provision. As a



result, it has sought to streamline its governance and to reduce the duplication of membership. As part of its restructuring the Academic Governance Committee (AGC) now reports to a Services Sub-Committee which in turn reports directly to the Board of Directors. The Services Sub-Committee includes members of the Board of Directors and was described as providing challenge to the AGC where required, and for the purpose of maintaining quality standards.

The positioning of the AGC on an organisational governance diagram provided by Barnardos led the Panel to question whether the AGC was conceived as a relatively low-level unit of governance without appropriate decision-making authority or direct access to the Board of Directors. The representatives from Barnardos assured the Panel that this was a misunderstanding based on the diagram presented and did not reflect the seniority of the AGC. Whilst the Panel supported the reduced governance structure proposed by Barnardos, it emphasised the importance of full clarity regarding where academic decision-making and authority is situated. Barnardos is therefore advised to review its terms of reference for both the AGC and the Services Sub-Committee to ensure that the decision-making relationship between the two, and with the Board of Directors, is fully elaborated for an internal and external audience. The Panel also identified for Barnardos an error in its QA Manual regarding the Chair of the AGC (p.153), which needs to be rectified.

In response to the previous advice of the Panel to leverage its existing corporate governance structures to support its governance of FET, Barnardos clarified that risk associated with education and training is now being addressed by the Audit and Risk Sub-Committee.

2 DOCUMENTED APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

QQI's *Core Statutory QA Guidelines* associate the 'documented approach to quality assurance' with decisions made by the provider regarding how procedures are developed; the types of information they will contain; and how appropriate they are to their environment and context. The guidelines also expect a comprehensive approach to documentation, with responsibilities and accountability clearly identified.

The Panel was impressed with the presentation and structure of the quality assurance policies and procedures submitted by Barnardos. The Panel also noted that the representatives of



Barnardos who attended the Panel meeting, had engaged with the formulation of the quality assurance policies and procedures and displayed ownership of the documentation.

However, the Panel noted an unevenness to the documentation provided in terms of the level of detail included across the policies and procedures. It identified a lack of consistency in the representation of roles and responsibilities associated with individual procedures. It also noted specific procedures that were not as clearly set out in documentation as they might be; despite the fact that the representatives in attendance were generally able to complete the picture for the Panel members when requested. During the Panel meeting, examples of documents identified as lacking in detail, were the inclusion policy, the complaints, appeals and extensions procedures, and tutor recruitment requirements.

The Panel also had significant concerns regarding the representation of a quality assured environment for blended learning, which led to its condition in this area. This is elaborated further in the sections below.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

Overall the Panel considered that the QA procedures of Barnardos better reflected how it manages and implements its quality assurance system. The level of detail had improved and there was more information provided regarding individual roles and responsibilities. However, the Panel also felt that Barnardos' documentation isn't doing justice to 'the lived experience' that its representatives was able to convey to the Panel during the review meeting. It was evident to the Panel from this discussion, as it was during the first meeting, that Barnardos gives detailed and careful attention to assuring a quality environment. The Panel also considered that there are areas remaining in the QA Manual that the staff and learners of Barnardos would benefit if a more stepped-out approach to their documentation was adopted.

The Panel has therefore advised Barnardos to review all of its procedures and to identify and address any areas that would benefit from further elaboration. In doing so, Barnardos should be informed by the advised changes that are identified in this report and implement those in a further version of its QA Manual to be made available at the point of its application for validation.



3 PROGRAMMES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

The self-evaluation provided by Barnardos, and the representatives that attended the Panel meeting, emphasised that the development of accredited programmes is very much in line with Barnardos' *Strategic Plan 2017-2021*. The quality assurance documentation provided, places emphasis on the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement through the ongoing review of its programmes and their delivery. It also displays knowledge of QQI's procedures governing validation.

The procedures provided by Barnardos identified how proposals for new programme development would be managed and governed. However, this is an area in which the overly-elaborate nature of the governance structure was particularly apparent when applied. The *Programme Monitoring and Review* procedure provided by Barnardos (3.3) is one of the procedures that signalled the organisation's intent to provide oversight of other centres providing validated programmes. The scope of the Quality and Capacity Panel's meeting with Barnardos was clarified at the outset and was restricted to the delivery of programmes from Christchurch Square. This, and any related procedures, will require amendment as a result.

Kirkpatrick (2017) is referred to in the *Programme Monitoring and Review* procedure but is not followed through as a model of self-evaluation in section 11. The Panel has recommended that Barnardos gives further consideration to what model of self-evaluation it wishes to implement and that it does so consistently across its documentation. Finally, in the same procedure, reference is made to decision-making around programme modifications. The Panel suggests that Barnardos needs to review the parameters around programme revisions that are detailed in QQI's *Policies and Criteria for Programme Validation* (2016) and to include approval of programme modifications as a function of its governance structure.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The simpler governance structure that is discussed in section 1 has reduced the level of governance required for Barnardos' programmes. Barnardos also clarified in its reapplication that its focus is on delivery in one location only and so delivery from multiple centres was not a



concern for the Panel. In line with the Panel's previous findings, Barnardos compared its procedures with the QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes (QQI, 2018). Having made this comparison Barnardos focused primarily on how it could ensure that its programme design, learning outcomes, and teaching learning and assessment could better align in a blended learning context. It has sought to reflect this focus in its updated QA Manual.

In terms of how its programmes are developed and tested, Barnardos discussed with the Panel the important role of the Programme Development Team and how it designs programmes in conjunction with Innovate (a company that is providing hosting and technical support for Barnardos' use of Moodle). Feedback is then sought internally amongst experienced practitioners and a subject-matter expert also provides advice on programme content. In this way, an incremental and collaborative approach is taken to testing programme content and its suitability to a blended learning format.

In terms of programme modifications, Barnardos has updated its documentation in this area and has included programme amendments as a governance responsibility.

In discussion with the representatives of Barnardos, and in reviewing its documentation, the Panel considered that Barnardos had progressed in its understanding and articulation of how programmes of education and training are quality assured in a blended learning context. It advised, however, that the thorough programme testing and quality checks that it carries out could be further detailed in its QA Manual; including named responsibility for ensuring that this quality testing and checking is implemented.

4 STAFF RECRUITMENT, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

The Panel noted the detailed policies and procedures submitted by Barnardos to underpin its staff recruitment, management, and development processes. This approach was further elaborated upon by the representatives of Barnardos during the Panel meeting discussion. Particular strengths include the comprehensive approach to induction provided to all staff to ensure that they understand their roles within the context of the strategy of Barnardos. There's also little doubt that the organisation applies a very high-quality recruitment, appointment and staff support system.



Some areas worthy of further attention and development were discussed during the Panel meeting. In terms of the recruitment of tutors, requirements with respect to qualifications and experience could be clarified and teased out further. The area of continuous professional development was also discussed. In the first instance, the Panel noted that the Director of HR & Engagement will be playing the role of registrar. Whilst this doesn't present a difficulty in principle, it does point to the need for planned supports for this individual to incorporate these responsibilities into her existing role profile. Continuous professional development for tutors, particularly in pedagogy and in delivery within a blended learning context, is another area that was highlighted for further consideration.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The Panel continued to be impressed by the staff recruitment, management and development processes and procedures of Barnardos and acknowledged the additional information provided in its QA Manual. As noted above, the Panel wished to see further information regarding CPD in the revised QA procedures of Barnardos. In its discussion with the Panel, Barnardos further elaborated on the ongoing training and support that is provided to tutors post their recruitment. In addition to individual supports provided, tutor meetings are used as a source of collective support. Tutors also complete a self-reflection element to assist them in identifying their own areas of strength and weakness.

The Panel encourages Barnardos as part of its next stage of development to document a tailored approach to tutor CPD in the context of blended learning.

5 TEACHING AND LEARNING

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

It is evident that Barnardos has gathered extensive experience in the delivery of its unaccredited training programmes; including subject-matter and delivery expertise. In doing so, it has developed a range of mechanisms to systematically support the administration, delivery, and continuous development of these programmes. The representatives attending the Panel meeting also conveyed a significant interest and wish to provide a suitable and quality assured teaching and learning environment. It is also important to note that Barnardos' Learning and Development Service has



developed two e-learning modules that are available via its website.

As noted previously, however, the Panel was not satisfied that the quality assurance policies and procedures of Barnardos, as they currently stand, sufficiently reflect the blended model of teaching and learning that it intends to apply. The adoption of a blended model brings with it a series of required dimensions of quality assurance support for tutors, for learners and for the organisation itself. Tutors will require organisational support but also support in the form of continuous professional development, as referred to in the section above. Learner engagement within a blended learning environment is a further area that requires quality assurance. Mechanisms for doing this, including through data analytics, providing dedicated tutor support, and enabling learners to meet each other, were all articulated by the representatives of Barnardos at the Panel meeting.

The Panel has set as a condition a requirement for Barnardos to further elaborate these and other quality assurance provisions in revised quality assurance procedures and, in doing so, to build upon and adapt the experience and expertise that it has gained in its role as a provider to date.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The representatives from Barnardos indicated that they found the original discussion with the Panel to have been extremely helpful in assisting Barnardos to identify how it currently runs its training programmes and how this could be better represented in its QA Manual. As referenced above, in comparing its QA procedures with the QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes (QQI 2018), it also identified programme delivery, including the use of technology and support for learners in this context, as a key area requiring further attention in its procedures. Barnardos has worked to reflect these connections in its revised QA Manual.

The Panel encourages Barnardos as part of its next stage of development to document a Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy.

**6 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS****Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017**

The Panel noted the assessment policies and procedures submitted by Barnardos. Again, however, this is an area that requires reconsideration by Barnardos when reviewing its policies and procedures in the context of blended learning. The Panel noted the emphasis placed by Barnardos on the importance of an assessment plan in assuring consistency of approach amongst tutors to learner assessment. It also noted the intended provision of assessment information to all learners through the *Learner Information Pack* and the cohesion of communication on assessment coming from the Programme Tutor. The representatives in attendance understood the pre-defined nature of the assessment associated with the minor award for which they wish to seek validation. They also explained their intention to supplement this with tools, such as MCQs, which will not form part of the formal assessment strategy, but which will assist in building learner confidence and familiarising individuals with the virtual learning environment.

The Panel underlined the difficulties that can be experienced in assuring consistency of assessment between tutors and encouraged continued attention to assessment procedures that focus on securing that consistency. It also noted that there are a limited number of External Authenticators/Examiners who are likely to be comfortable with commenting upon assessment in a blended learning environment. In this regard, it is important that Barnardos considers from the outset the criteria that it will require to be satisfied when engaging an External Authenticator/Examiner.

The Panel notes in its recommendations that Barnardos' appeals procedure requires attention. Reference to the National Appeals Process should be taken out, and the grounds for appeal and the appeal process itself need to be clarified.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The comparison of Barnardos QA Manual against the QA Guidelines for Blended Learning Programmes assisted it in addressing the previous observations of the Panel on its assessment procedures. Barnardos discussed how consistency in assessment across tutors is being considered as part of an overall strategy to align programme design, learning outcomes, and assessment with teaching and learning in a blended learning context. It has sought to improve its assessment procedures to reflect this understanding.



The Panel discussed with Barnardos how it intends monitoring the completion of assessments via Moodle; particularly where these do not result in the assignment of marks. Barnardos assured the Panel that each tutor will be actively monitoring and routinely engaging with learners on their assessment record. Individual tutors will also be engaging with the training officer, who will be charting the progress of learners in a more holistic manner, both individually and as part of a cohort, and will work with the tutor to support motivation and retention.

In terms of specific procedures, the Panel considered that the procedures regarding learner appeals had improved but would still benefit from further elaboration, including the specifics of who a learner submits an appeal to, who considers the grounds of appeals and who conducts and oversees the outcome of an appeal.

The Panel noted that Barnardos anticipates that External Authenticators will attend Results Approval Panel meetings and it suggested that it ensure that this expectation is included in the agreement that engages the EA. The Panel also advised that Barnardos would give further consideration to its criteria for selecting External Authenticators that have experience of blended learning and can assist Barnardos in evaluating the learner experience.

7 SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

During the Panel meeting with Barnardos, its representatives emphasised the commitment of the organisation to supporting learners participating on its programmes, and its wish to successfully recruit and engage the most appropriate learner-base. Barnardos can make available quite significant learner resources in the form of its library (actual and virtual) and information sources. The opportunity for learners to fully utilise these resources is further enhanced through the availability of qualified staff that are connected nationally with fellow librarians through the Library Association of Ireland (LAI). Barnardos has also developed online learning supports and has undertaken to establish a reasonable accommodation policy.

The Panel pointed to the importance of Barnardos focussing further on the specific types of supports that its learner cohort is likely to require in a blended learning environment. It also



recommended that Barnardos avail of some of the work on ‘reasonable accommodation’ that is currently being undertaken in the ETB sector.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

Barnardos communicated to the Panel that its approach to delivering programmes in a blended learning environment is focussed on the provision of tailored learner supports. It spends time working with prospective learners to prepare them for what they will experience and to understand their familiarity and comfort with technology. This includes a detailed induction and the provision of in-person as well as on-line support. It is also Barnardos intention to look at producing short recordings and to make screen captures available to support FAQ development and other learner support documentation.

The Panel considered that Barnardos had adequately enhanced its Support for Learners procedures. However, as in other areas, it considered that these procedures would benefit from the inclusion of more of the rich detail of the supports that are provided to learners by Barnardos. The Panel also noted that the learner handbook developed by Barnardos includes several academic regulations regarding penalties for late submission, plagiarism etc. The Panel advised that these procedures, whilst important to include in the learner handbook, should also be included in the QA Manual.

8 INFORMATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

The utilisation of data for quality monitoring and continuous improvement is articulated in Barnardos’ procedures and described by the representatives of Barnardos during the Panel meeting. The data derived through its CMS is used to monitor learner progression and to identify where additional supports may be required. It appears that data is also being used by the organisation to inform its decision-making. As noted previously, the CMS system has been augmented to ensure that it can provide information to QQI.

Barnardos is evidently aware of its data protection obligations as part of its good practice in corporate governance and can apply this further to the protection of learner and assessment-related information. Procedure 8.2 clearly sets out the bases upon which data will be collected and



for what purpose. The IT Manager and Best Practice Manager have responsibility for securely storing and providing access to online documents. A Data Protection Executive also features throughout the procedures in section 8 and has defined responsibilities in this area.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The original findings of the Panel regarding Information and Data Management stand.

9 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos provides assurances in its quality assurance policies and procedures that it will provide comprehensive information for learners regarding its programmes and in a range of formats i.e., web, learner handbook and programme information booklets. Barnardos also undertakes to publish quality assurance evaluation reports and revalidation reports as they become available.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

The original findings of the Panel regarding Public Information and Communication stand.

From an IT system perspective, Barnardos is now working with an IT company to support it in modifying and tailoring Moodle to its requirements. Whilst it has out-sourced the hosting and technical support of Moodle, Barnardos has retained internal access to the system, owns the content that is being included in Moodle, and has ensured that its supplier is observing back-up and data protection protocols.

10 OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos has no formal agreements with other parties involved in education and training, however, it has formed links with organisations within its sector with a stake in education and



training. It articulated its wish to become more connected with the wider education and training community and to utilise opportunities for learning in that context. The Panel very much supports the intention of Barnardos to pursue this approach and has formally included this as a recommendation arising from the Panel meeting.

Whilst Barnardos intends to increase the number of venues delivering its programmes in the future, the Panel clarified that such extension in provision is not included in the scope within which its quality assurance procedures are being considered at this time.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

Barnardos confirmed for the Panel that it remains without any formal agreements with other parties and that, while it intends increasing the number of venues delivering its programmes in the future, this is not something that it is proposing as part of this submission. The Panel noted an inconsistency in the QA Manual that refers to ‘overseas locations’ (page 61, points 3 and 4) and Barnardos confirmed that it would rectify this oversight.

Following the advice of the Panel based on its original meeting, Barnardos has sought to increase its involvement with other education and training institutions. As a result, it has been engaging with both Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and Hibernia College, with a view to learning from their experience of offering online programmes and to designing avenues of progression. If Barnardos is successful in securing QQI validation for its programmes, it will then look more strategically at how these relationships can be built upon and extended.

11 SELF-EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Findings of the original access to initial validation of programmes meeting – August 2017

Barnardos includes self-evaluation, monitoring and review in its self-evaluation and quality assurance procedures. Its quality assurance procedures address how programmes will be monitored and reviewed and self-evaluation reports produced; these will in turn lead to the identification of areas for improvement. The procedures set out clear objectives for programme reviews and have regard to QQI’s validation procedures. Its Institutional/provider review procedure (11.4) is significantly less detailed. As indicated previously, the Panel has noted that Barnardos has been somewhat inconsistent in its application of a self-evaluation model. It has made a formal



recommendation that Barnardos identify a self-evaluation approach that is suitable for its provision and context and that it applies this consistently when reviewing its programmes and/or itself.

Findings of the second access to initial validation of programmes meeting – May 2018

Barnardos took the opportunity following the first meeting with the Panel to reconsider its description of its monitoring and review procedures and to consider how these could be implemented in a manner that is proportionate to its provision. The Panel considered that Barnardos conceptualisation of self-evaluation was much more consistent in its resubmitted procedures. It advised, however, that there remains scope to pull back further and to identify key performance indicators to be met, the different types of evidence needed to chart progress against key performance indicators, and the associated reports that will be required by the Academic Governance Committee (AGC), to oversee the quality of its provision. Barnardos accepted this advice; it also considered that initially it is likely to intensively monitor until the programmes it wishes to introduce have become embedded.

Sector Specific QA Guidelines for Independent / Private Providers

The following is the panel findings following evaluation the draft quality assurance procedures against QQI's Sector Specific Quality Assurance Guidelines (April 2016). This section of the report follows the structure and referencing of those guidelines.

1. OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING (part 9)

The findings of the Panel relating to section 10 above of the *Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines* are of equal relevance to this reference to the sector-specific quality assurance guidelines for independent providers. Those findings are reproduced below:

Barnardos confirmed for the Panel that it remains without any formal agreements with other parties and that, while it intends increasing the number of venues delivering its programmes in the future, this is not something that it is proposing as part of this submission. The Panel noted an inconsistency in the QA Manual that refers to 'overseas locations' (page 61, points 3 and 4) and Barnardos confirmed that it would rectify this oversight.



Following the advice of the Panel based on its original meeting, Barnardos has sought to increase its involvement with other education and training institutions. As a result, it has been engaging with both Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and Hibernia College, with a view to learning from their experience of offering online programmes and to designing avenues of progression. If Barnardos is successful in securing QQI validation for its programmes, it will then look more strategically at how these relationships can be built upon and extended.

Evaluation of draft QA Procedures - Overall panel findings

Following a review of Barnardos resubmitted application and a meeting with representatives of Barnardos that focussed on the original mandatory and advised changes of the Panel, the Quality and Capacity Evaluation Panel is satisfied that Barnardos has substantively addressed these mandatory and advised changes. It therefore recommends to the Approval and Reviews Committee that it approves the draft quality assurance procedures of Barnardos. The Panel has, however, identified a series of advised changes throughout this report that it considers could further strengthen the QA Manual of Barnardos. These are summarised below.

Part 6 Mandatory and advised changes

6.1 Mandatory changes

Not applicable.

6.2 Advised changes

The Panel advises the following changes to the QA Manual of Barnardos:

- 6.2.1 That Barnardos review its terms of reference for both the Academic Governance Committee and the Services Sub-Committee to ensure that the decision-making relationship between the two, and with the Board of Directors, is fully elaborated for an internal and external audience;



- 6.2.2 That Barnardos review all its procedures and identify and address any areas that would benefit from further elaboration. In doing so, Barnardos should be informed by the advised changes that are identified in this report and implement those in a further version of its QA Manual to be made available at the point of its application for validation;
- 6.2.3 That Barnardos document the thorough programme testing and quality checks that it carries out on programmes and that it includes named responsibility for ensuring that this quality testing and checking is implemented;
- 6.2.4 That Barnardos reviews and further elaborates on its procedures for learner appeals, including the specifics of who a learner submits an appeal to, who considers the grounds of appeals and who conducts and oversees the outcome of an appeal;
- 6.2.5 That Barnardos considers criteria for selecting External Authenticators that have experience of blended learning and can assist Barnardos in evaluating the learner experience;
- 6.2.6 That Barnardos includes further information in its procedures on the learner supports it provides for learners;
- 6.2.7 That Barnardos ensures that learner regulations included in its learner handbook are also included in its QA Manual;
- 6.2.8 That Barnardos rectifies the inclusion of the reference to ‘overseas locations’ in its QA Manual (page 61, points 3 and 4);
- 6.2.9 That Barnardos, in the context of monitoring and review, gives further consideration to the key performance indicators it wishes to meet, the different types of evidence needed to chart progress against key performance indicators, and the associated reports that will be required by the Academic Governance Committee, to oversee the quality of its provision.

Part 7 Proposed Approved Scope of Provision for this provider

NFQ Level(s) – min and max	Award Class(es)	Discipline areas	Mode
Levels 5 and 6	Minor	Early Childhood Care and Education	Blended Learning and Face to Face delivery



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Part 8 Approval by Chair of the Panel

This report of the Quality and Capacity Panel is approved and submitted to QQI for its decision on the recommendation to approve the draft quality assurance procedures of Barnardos.

Name: Naomi Jackson
 Chair, Quality and Capacity Panel

Date: 5 July 2018



Annexe 1: Documentation provided to the Panel in the course of the Evaluation

The following documentation was submitted by Barnardos:

- Application form for initial programme validation leading to QQI awards, including
 - Application form
 - Evidence of type of legal entity
 - Organisation chart
 - Public liability insurance details
 - Current tax clearance certificate
 - Statutory declaration

- Original and revised Self-evaluation report of Quality Assurance Procedures
- Original and revised Draft Quality Assurance Manual

Annexe 2: Provider staff met in the course of the Evaluation

Name	Role/Position
Ms Aileen Murphy	Best Practice Manager
Ms Amanda Pyron	Assistant Director, Learning and Development Service
Ms Maria Rogers	Library, Information and Advice Coordinator