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STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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**1995 No. 755**

**The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**

**PART II**

**GENERAL**

*Parental responsibility*

**Parental responsibility for children**

5.—(1) Where a child's father and mother were married to each other at the time of his birth, they shall each have parental responsibility for the child.

(2) Where a child's father and mother were not married to each other at the time of his birth—

(a) the mother shall have parental responsibility for the child;

(b) the father shall not have parental responsibility for the child, unless he acquires it in accordance with the provisions of this Order.

(3) The rule of law that a father is the natural guardian of his legitimate child is abolished.

(4) More than one person may have parental responsibility for the same child at the same time.

(5) A person who has parental responsibility for a child at any time shall not cease to have that responsibility solely because some other person subsequently acquires parental responsibility for the child.

(6) Where more than one person has parental responsibility for a child, each of them may act alone and without the other (or others) in meeting that responsibility; but nothing in this Part shall be taken to affect the operation of any statutory provision which requires the consent of more than one person in a matter affecting the child.

(7) The fact that a person has parental responsibility for a child shall not entitle him to act in any way which would be incompatible with any order made with respect to the child under this Order.

(8) A person who has parental responsibility for a child may not surrender or transfer any part of that responsibility to another but may arrange for some or all of it to be met by one or more persons acting on his behalf.

(9) The person with whom any such arrangement is made may himself be a person who already has parental responsibility for the child concerned.

(10) The making of any such arrangement shall not affect any liability of the person making it which may arise from any failure to meet any part of his parental responsibility for the child concerned.

**Meaning of “parental responsibility”**

6.—(1) In this Order “parental responsibility” means all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property.

(2) It also includes the rights, powers and duties which a guardian of the child's fortune or estate (appointed, before the commencement of Part XV (guardians), to act generally) would have had in relation to the child and his property.

(3) The rights referred to in paragraph (2) include, in particular, the right of the guardian to receive or recover in his own name, for the benefit of the child, property of whatever description and wherever situated which the child is entitled to receive or recover.

(4) The fact that a person has, or does not have, parental responsibility for a child shall not affect—

- (a) any obligation which he may have in relation to the child (such as a statutory duty to maintain the child); or
- (b) any rights which, in the event of the child's death, he (or any other person) may have in relation to the child's property.

(5) A person who—

- (a) does not have parental responsibility for a particular child; but
- (b) has care of the child,

may (subject to the provisions of this Order) do what is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the child's welfare.

#### **Acquisition of parental responsibility**

7.—(1) Where a child's father and mother were not married to each other at the time of his birth—

- (a) the court may, on the application of the father, order that he shall have parental responsibility for the child; or
- (b) the father and mother may by agreement ("a parental responsibility agreement") provide for the father to have parental responsibility for the child.

(2) No parental responsibility agreement shall have effect for the purposes of this Order unless—

- (a) it is made in the prescribed form; and
- (b) it has been recorded in the prescribed manner (if any).

(3) In this Article "prescribed" means prescribed by regulations made by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

(4) Subject to Article 12(4) (residence orders and parental responsibility), an order under paragraph (1)(a), or a parental responsibility agreement, may only be brought to an end by an order of the court made on the application—

- (a) of any person who has parental responsibility for the child; or
- (b) with leave of the court, of the child himself.

(5) The court may only grant leave under paragraph (4)(b) if it is satisfied that the child has sufficient understanding to make the proposed application.