

# A History of Barnardos

## How it all began



Barnardos was founded by an Irish man, Dr Thomas Barnardo, who was born in Dame Street, Dublin.

Dr Barnardo was educated in St Patrick's Cathedral School and, at the age of 16, he decided to become a medical missionary in China and so set out for London to train as a doctor. The London in which Thomas Barnardo arrived in 1866 was a city struggling to cope with the effects of the Industrial Revolution. The population had dramatically increased and much of this increase was concentrated in the East End, where overcrowding, bad housing, unemployment, poverty and disease were rife. A few months after Thomas Barnardo came to London an outbreak of cholera swept through the East End killing more than 3,000 people and leaving families destitute. Thousands of children slept on the streets and many others were forced to beg after being maimed in factories.

Abandoning his missionary plans, Thomas Barnardo set up a ragged school in the East End of London in 1867, where vulnerable children could get a basic education. In 1870, Barnardo opened his first home for boys in Stepney Causeway, which carried a sign over the door 'No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission'.

Barnardo later opened a girls' home in Barking, which housed 1,500 girls. The philosophy of these homes was that every child deserved the best possible start in life and the children were given tools to make their own way in the world - the girls were equipped with domestic skills and the boys learnt a craft or trade.

By the time of his death in 1905, Dr Barnardo had established a large network of homes caring for about 8,000 children. After his death the Barnardos child care tradition grew, adapting to the changing needs of children and families. The emphasis changed from caring for children in residential homes to services that support children to stay within their families and communities.

## Barnardos in Ireland

In 1962, Barnardos began to work with children and families in Ireland, initially in Dublin and the Border Counties. It remained part of the UK organisation until 1989, when Barnardos (Republic of Ireland), an independent Irish organisation, was born.

Since 1989, Barnardos has grown into Ireland's leading children's charity. We operate over 40 Barnardos Centres in local communities across the country, working with vulnerable children and their families. We also run a number of national services supporting parents and professionals with an information resource network and counseling services dealing with childhood bereavement, adoption and a Guardian ad Litem service representing children's interests in court proceedings. In addition, Barnardos is using its extensive experience of working on the ground to lead a number of public awareness and advocacy campaigns to help reach the vision of "making Ireland the best place in the world to be a child."