Adoption Authority of Ireland
Business Plan
2016

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Introduction

The Adoption Authority looks forward to the implementation of its Business Plan with optimism and is confident that it can continue to develop its role and services in line with its legislative brief. The Authority takes pride in what has been achieved since its establishment in November 2010. This year it sees the next planning cycle being concerned with consolidating earlier achievements and continuous improvement in services, while being adaptive to new changes as required, aligned to our Corporate Plan.

The Authority relies upon and deeply appreciates the collaboration of multiple external partners in successfully discharging its role, and it plans a further strengthening of these key relationships as a particular goal in the coming period.

The Authority's staff are key to the success of the Business Plan, and we are fortunate to have a committed and skilled staff group.

Our intentions and planned activities over the next year are mirrored in the Five Strategic Goals we have adopted for the Corporate Plan.

Our collective aim is to provide the highest possible standards in adoption and adoption related services, in line with our legal and policy obligations but also consistent with the limitations on our resources.

We appreciate the strong support we receive from the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the Department and all key adoption stakeholders.

Patricia Carey
Chief Executive Officer

Goals and Objectives set out in the Adoption Authority Corporate Plan 2015-2019

Goal 1:
To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland.

Goal 2:
To apply informed and balanced decision-making in adoption services, in accordance with national and international law and evidence-based best practice.

Goal 3:
To inform and influence adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework.

Goal 4:
To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes

Goal 5:
To maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation.

The AAI is currently operating with 21.5 whole time equivalents. The current full staff complement would be 26 if all positions were to be filled and on a full time basis. It is noted that the historic ECF as stated in previous business plans is 26.

Number of employees of the Authority for the period of the Plan will be dependent upon sanction for additional resources from central government.

Patricia Carey
CEO

Goal 1:
To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland.

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Inspection Visits	Complete two further inspections based on the Cunamh pilot	Q2 Q4	All Units, incl Social Work Team /Senior Management Team	Inspection Reports compiled and published
Review the Suitability and Eligibility Assessment Standardised Framework	Establish Review Group	Q4	Domestic and ICA Units + Social Work Team (SWT)	New Standardised Framework compiled and published
Reaccredit and re-register all agencies providing adoption services	Issue guidelines to all current agencies advising them of the reaccreditation process and the time frames for responding Provide monthly reports to the Board of the Authority on the status of accredited bodies	Ongoing	Corporate Services + Board of the Authority	All agencies which have applied for reaccreditation will have their applications processed in a timely manner to ensure continuity of service Board of the Authority will be fully informed at all times of any issues arising in respect of the accredited bodies
Accredit new applicant agencies	For new agencies seeking accreditation, issue guidelines on the accreditation process, assist them with their application and submit application to the Board in a timely manner	Ongoing	Corporate Services + Board of the Authority	Agencies applying for accreditation for the first time will have their applications processed in a timely manner and will be issued with a decision as soon as possible
Consultation with stakeholders	Board Circuits to meet with local adoption service providers from Tusla and	Q1 Q3	Corporate Services / CEO	AAI Board meetings convened locally, to formally meet and consult with the providers of adoption services in the area so as to review the level of service and support offered by the groups involved in

	Local Adoption Committees; accredited bodies; support groups; and to finalise local adoption orders.			the provision of adoption services in both Cork and Sligo, and surrounding areas. Local adoption orders and hearings will also take place. Opportunity to meet and engage with all adoption community groups and representatives.

Goal 2:

To apply informed and balanced decision-making in adoption services, in accordance with national and international law and evidence-based best practice.

Tasks	Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Engaging with Hague Convention National Central Authorities in accordance with the Corporate Plan.	Identify new states while monitoring existing arrangements on an ongoing basis	Q3	CEO / DoOCS	AAI has formal links with − Haiti − Kazakhstan − South Africa Plan to continue to negotiate agreements and options for an accredited body to work with each country. All proposed arrangements will be reviewed and discussed with the Department.
Consolidate agreement with the USA	Visit the USA and liaise with all relevant stakeholders	Q1	CEO / DoOCS	Clear guidelines established with US Adoption Service Providers (ASPs)
Continue to implement the FOI Acts	Staff training Publish request outcomes	Q2 Ongoing	Corporate Services	Requests dealt with in accordance with statutory provisions. Results published on website.
Continue to implement the DP Acts	Draft and publish protocols	Q2	Corporate Services	Requests dealt with in accordance with statutory provisions.
Establish integrated document management system, incl. National Adoption Contacts Preference Register, Register of Intercountry Adoptions, Birth Father Register, Gender	Research systems used in other similar bodies Provide training on document management/ data protection and	Q4	Corporate Services and Operation Units	Comprehensive records in respect of applications for Adoption Orders – request for RICA entries – all registers- and other matters can be reported on efficiently and consistently.

Recognition Register (ICA).	project management to relevant staff			
Make informed and timely and timely decisions regarding: - the granting of declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt - the making of adoption orders - the recognition of intercountry adoption orders - Article 17 referrals		Ongoing	ICA Dept	Timely, equitable, transparent and quality decisions. Due process followed.
Make informed and timely decisions regarding the release of identifying information to adult adoptees and birth parents.		Ongoing	I&T Dept SW Dept	Balanced decision-making on release or non-release of information.

Goal 3:
To inform and influence adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework.

Tasks	Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Clarity of communication with the public & stakeholders to include a corporate identity.	Evaluate current oral, written and electronic communication. Prepare a strategy to address deficiencies including engagement with NALA.	Q2	Corporate Services	Consistency in image, style of communications, language.

Compile post adoption services directory	Consult with Accredited Bodies and Support Groups and TUSLA on services for children that include specialist adoption expertise	Q2	Domestic and ICA Units + SWT	Directory of children's services that also provide specialist adoption expertise, and have been accessed by adoptive families. Directory compiled and published with disclaimer in hardcopy and on AAI website. Directory will be reviewed by Board of Authority in advance of publication. There will no endorsement of services; rather, a collation of information already existing in one central publication as a resource tool.
Develop and maintain the website as a primary resource of information for all stakeholders and the public at large	Establish new website Have content reviewed by NALA to ensure information is understandable and consistent Liaise with accredited bodies and other stakeholders to ensure accuracy and validity of information Set up monthly internal review of content and of the comments sent in through the contact us section	Q1 2016 Q1 and Q2 Ongoing Ongoing	Corporate Services + all staff	New website is available and contains up to date and accurate information in a plain English format Content is updated as required – statistics are published in timely manner Staff can refer callers to the website in the knowledge that the information is accurate, up to date and easily understood.
Undertake and promote research opportunities	Launch ICGP/AAI research. Consultation with stakeholders and training to raise awareness of issues specific to adoption	Q2 Ongoing	All Units and SWT	Service delivery informed through research and training. Stakeholders consulted about adoption research and training. All stakeholders informed of current research and practice.

	and the use of post adoption services.			
	Continue to organise professional Forum groups in the areas of medical, social work and tracing service provision.	Q2 and Q4		Professional stakeholders practicing with up-to-date information. Continuing Professional Development supported in adoption service practice.
	Information and Tracing project designed	Q4		Oral histories taken from retired adoption service providers and collated with narratives about practice with a view to informing future research and policy.
Support DCYA in the development of adoption related policy and legislation	Continue to provide statistics and submissions as requested.	Ongoing	All	More informed and relevant policies and legislation developed.

Goal 4:
To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes

Tasks	Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Information and Tracing Bill	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	When published Ongoing monthly meeting	I+T Unit CEO	Process, procedures and forms revised and updated as required. Work underway with Adoption Records Working Group meeting regularly. TUSLA/AAI/DCYA to develop a plan and framework for the transfer of all adoption records - Appoint Project Manager for records transfer - Agree location - All legal/logistics and planning matters for transfers to be agreed

Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2016	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	When published	All	Process, procedures and forms revised and updated as required.
Children and Family Relationships Act	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	Enacted	All	Process, procedures and forms revised and updated as required. When each section is commenced, work will proceed as required to comply with legislation.
Marriage Act	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	Q1	All	Process, procedures and forms revised and updated as required.
Establish a robust HR function in the Authority	Engage consultants to assist with this	Q1	Corporate Services HR Team	Filling of vacancies and recruitment process will meet appropriate standards and will speed up this process for AAI Appendix 1 gives rationale to application for AHR licence.
	Have comprehensive procedures on recruitment	Q1		
	Obtain direct recruitment licence from CPSA	Q2		
	Draw up succession plan	Q3		AAI will have a schedule of planned departures from AAI and can make preparations for replacement of staff
	Have functional database to allow accurate recording of personnel data as required under Civil and Public Service Regulations and Employment Law Regulations	Q3		AAI will be compliant with all relevant legislation.
	Staff in HR to undergo			Staff in HR unit will be conversant with issues which may arise for

	training in various HR functions	Ongoing		staff and be in a position to deal with them promptly and effectively
Be prepared for any potential changes in statutory functions of the Authority through any further legislative changes.		Ongoing in terms of preparation and undefined in terms of actual start.		Authority is ready to respond immediately to any changes in its statutory functions.

Goal 5:

To maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation.

Maintain learning environment where competencies and training requirements are fully met	Carry out survey of staff to establish database of staff qualifications and experience	Q2	HR Team	AAI will have a picture of skill on hand which can be used to facilitate staff mobility and maintain corporate knowledge
	Draw up training programme to fill 'gaps' in skills and competence across all areas	Q2		Staff will be trained at appropriate levels to be able to carry out their functions and ensure AAI compliance with legislation such as data protection, health and safety
	Support professional memberships/CPD for relevant staff	Ongoing		Staff with the appropriate qualifications which they are using to carry out their role in the AAI will be supported by the organisation and will continue to update their professional training
Ensure full value for money in discharge of allocated resources	AAI staff involved in expenditure are trained in correct procurement procedures and	Q2	Corporate Services + SMT	AAI will be in compliance with procurement legislation and will be recognised as an organisation which ensures full value for money. Management Accounts / Variance Analysis reports to Audit & Risk Committee and subsequently Board.

	legislation Information on same is disseminated to all staff	Q3		Internal Financial Controls Report 2015 to Members. Variance Reports to DCYA monthly to secure drawdown of allocation. Value for money checks within Internal Plan. Corporate Procurement Plan reviewed annually. Independent External Audit annually and audit opinion in Annual Report.
Maintain highest standards in data confidentiality and data integrity	Staff trained and informed on standards required in respect of Data Protection, Records management , confidentiality and data integrity	Ongoing	Corporate Services & all staff	Full compliance with Data Protection legislation Full compliance with FOI legislation Full confidentiality and practice in the management, security and archiving of all data
Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	Full compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies May 2009 All actions from the revised (May2015) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies currently at draft stage	Ongoing Awaiting finalis-ation of draft	Head of Operations	Completion of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies Check List and submission to DCYA in Q 4 Completion of Traffic Light: AAI & departmental legislation obligations on performance, business & corporate planning, audit, risk, governance - submission to DCYA Q4 Completion of the annual statement of interests for all Members and designated employs (Code of Practice & Ethics Legislation) Q1 Implementation of the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (Draft May 2015)
Risk Management Framework	Review and up-date Risk Register Implement of 3 year draft internal audit plan to be agreed with the Risk & Audit	Ongoing	Head of Operations	A minimum of 4 meeting of the AAI Risk & Audit Committee per annum Review of the Internal Audit Charter by the Risk & Audit Committee Q1 The presentation of the workings of the Committee to the Members

	Committee Q1			of the Authority (clearly recorded in the minutes of the meetings of the Members) Internal Auditors presentation their findings to the Chair and members of the Risk & Audit Committee (Committee report on independence of internal audit function to board). The completion of the Annual Report of the Chairman of Risk and Audit Committee to the Members of the Authority Q4. Regular Review by Members of the AAI Risk Register, which is a recurring item on the agenda of the meetings of the Members at their ordinary meetings