



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Press release: 1 July 2022

BIRTH INFORMATION AND TRACING BILL SIGNED INTO LAW AND THE NEW CONTACT PREFERENCE REGISTER IS NOW OPEN TO APPLICATIONS

The Adoption Authority of Ireland has welcomed the commencement of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 and invites adopted persons, parents, and others affected by the Act to register their preferences in relation to contact with the Authority.

The landmark legislation, which has been signed into law by President Michael D Higgins, provides legal entitlement to full and unrestricted access to birth certificates, birth, early life, care and medical information for any person who was adopted, boarded out, had their birth illegally registered, or who otherwise has questions in relation to their origins.

The new law also establishes a Contact Preference Register, operated by the Adoption Authority, as well as a range of new bespoke measures to address issues arising for people affected by illegal birth registration. A broad spectrum of counselling and support is also available to persons affected on request. All of these services will be free of charge for applicants.

A public information campaign has been launched by the Adoption Authority to inform people of the important services to be provided under the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. The campaign, which will run for three months, includes delivery of an information booklet to every household in the State and will use Ireland's embassy network to reach those in other countries who are affected by the legislation.

From today, applications can be made to the Contact Preference Register by those wishing to make contact, to request privacy, or to seek or share information with a relative. The Act provides that the Contact Preference Register must be open for a minimum period of three months before applications for birth certificate and related birth information will be accepted. If a mother or father wishes to register a contact preference, they are invited to do so before the Information Service opens for applications in October, 2022. When records are released, only contact preferences recorded on the register at that point in time can be released. However, contact preferences can still be registered after that date.

Patricia Carey, CEO of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, said: "The Contact Preference Register empowers people to record their preferences in relation to contact with others and the sharing and receiving of information.

"The Birth Information and Tracing Act ensures that everyone is entitled to all their birth information held by the State, and the Contact Preference Register provides for varying levels of contact at which both parties are comfortable. It might be that someone is willing

to share background information, they might be willing to communicate by email or letter, they might be open to a telephone call, or they might be willing to meet in person. Others may wish no contact at all.

“Most families in Ireland have been touched by adoption at some stage. The Adoption Authority wants to use the next three months trying to reach as many people as possible – including those living abroad – to let them know it is now possible for them to find out about their origins. We also want to encourage all those eligible under the legislation to register their preferences on the Contact Preference Register.”

In early October 2022, both Information and Tracing services under the legislation will open. Applications for these services can be made to the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. A website, www.birthinfo.ie, has been established for people seeking to make an application under the Act or seeking further information.

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact Richard Burke, richard@4tc.ie +353 (0) 86 816 7822; or Craig McKechnie, craig@4tc.ie +353 (0) 87 621 8839.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- The Birth Information and Tracing Act, 2022 ensures, for the first time, that ‘a *relevant person*’ (adopted person, person who was, or suspects they were, boarded out, nursed out or resident in a Mother and Baby Home or County Home and persons whose birth was illegally registered or they suspect their birth was illegally registered) can now apply for their birth certificate, birth, early life, care and medical information. Any items left for the relevant person such as letters, photographs and mementoes can also be applied for.
- This means that adopted people and others will be able to have records that show their name at birth, birthplace and date, as well as their parents’ names, dates of birth and other details. Any records related to their health including details of vaccinations will also be provided.
- People affected by the issues under the legislation are invited to register their contact preference, or complete a new application to update an existing contact preference, on the new Contact Preference Register. If a person is eligible to register a preference, it’s important to do so before the Information Service opens for applications in October, 2022. Contact preferences can still be registered after that date. However, when an application for information is received, only preferences recorded on the register at that point in time can be released with the associated information. The tracing service can be used by relevant persons – parents, adoptive parents, birth relatives, other genetic relatives, or those who were carers in relation to a relevant person – to enable contact or the sharing or requesting of contemporaneous information.

- Where the relevant person has died, their son or daughter will have the same right to information that relates to their parent, if the relevant person's parents (i.e. the applicant's grandparents) are also deceased. A next of kin can also apply for access if the relevant person died while resident as a child in a Mother and Baby or County Home Institution.
- In cases where a mother chooses to have no contact, this will not prevent her identity from being shared, but her desire not to be contacted will be communicated.
- In cases where a mother chooses to have no contact, this will not stop adopted persons meeting or engaging with other family members, such as siblings or half siblings.
- A preference for no contact only gives the Authority the remit to communicate the preference and inform relevant persons of their parents wish for privacy. It does not prohibit other actions under the Act.

ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) is the central authority for adoption in Ireland. Established under the Adoption Act 2010, the Authority operates as an independent body under the aegis of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The Authority's functions include those of an operational, judicial and quasi-judicial nature in relation to the adoption process as provided for under the Act, but also relating to the Authority's designation as the Central Authority for the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. In addition, the Authority has registration and regulatory functions for all adoption related matters in Ireland.