Business Plan
2021

Adoption Authority of Ireland Business Plan 2021

Introduction

The Business Plan for 2021 sets out the key actions that enable the Adoption Authority of Ireland to deliver on its strategic objectives for 2019-2021, which can be found on the Authority's website here: https://www.aai.gov.ie/images/CORPORATE_PLAN_2019-21_eng.pdf.

The business planning process takes place annually in the Adoption Authority of Ireland. Through business planning each unit identifies key actions that as an Authority enables us to deliver on our strategic objectives.

2020 was a year like no other, and 2021 will bring additional challenges to the work, business planning environment, for all matters related to COVID-19 that are outside our control, and most likely will impact on the Business Plan.

The activities included in the 2021 Business Plan take account of the priorities agreed during the annual budgetary process.

Patricia Carey
Chief Executive Officer

Strategic Goals set out in the Adoption Authority Corporate Plan 2019 – 2021

Goal 1 "To ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount and the voice of the child is heard and responded to in a meaningful manner throughout the adoption process."

Goal 2 "To ensure all relevant parties to the adoption process are heard and their respective rights are balanced appropriately."

Goal 3 "To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland."

Goal 4 "To apply informed and balanced decision-making in adoption services, in accordance with national and international law and evidence-based best practice."

Goal 5 "To inform adoption policy and service delivery by reason of a practical understanding of the operations of the legislation through the provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework."

Goal 6 "To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes."

Goal 7 "To be proactive and responsive to change and maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation."

Goal 1*: "To ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount and the voice of the child is heard and responded to in a meaningful manner throughout the adoption process."*

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
The Authority's procedures and policies ensure that all adoption orders incorporate the views of the child giving due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child.	All Applications will include a written report detailing the consultation undertaken with the child.	Ongoing – monthly before each matter comes before the Board and is then reviewed by the Board.	Board and Executive	All applications that proceed to adoption order have a report of child consultation.	General	**1.1**
The Authority will facilitate requests from a child to be heard by the Board during the adoption process.	Requests by the child to be heard by the Board will be acknowledged, promptly.	As required.	Board and Executive	Requests for a hearing before the Board are facilitated.	General	**1.2**
	Board will be notified and the hearing will be scheduled for the next sitting of the Board.					
To ensure the Authority provides sufficient and appropriate information about adoption to enable the child to make a free and informed decision regarding being adopted.	Ensure all relevant information is provided to the child and any correspondence is responded to in a timely fashion.	At the earliest opportunity with each prospective adopted child.	Board and Executive	A record is maintained on the adoption file of all relevant information provided to children and families directly as part of their adoption application. All feedback is recorded and acted on where possible. VOC documentation and on-line resources up to date.	General	**1.3**
	Monitor feedback from the children and their families.					
	Ensure VOC information leaflet is kept up to date and relevant.	As and when required.				

Liaise with Tusla and other relevant public bodies in ensuring consistency in practice when hearing the voice of the child.	Ensure ongoing and meaningful engagement with Tusla and relevant public bodies.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Consistent high standards are maintained in hearing the voice of the child.	General	**1.4**
	Seek views and input from all stakeholders when drafting the next strategic plan	Q3/Q4	Board and Executive	New strategic plan 2022-2024.	External	**1.4**
Ongoing engagement with the Department and Minister in ensuring the voice of the child is given sufficient consideration in all adoption proceedings.	Support DCEDIY in finalising this project Awaiting publication by DCEDIY of their Voice of the Child consultation. Once it is published, AAI will work to implement recommendations.	Ongoing	Board and CEO	Full compliance with Section 19 of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017.	General	**1.5**

Goal 2 "To ensure all relevant parties to the adoption process are heard and their respective rights are balanced appropriately."

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
Ensure that all relevant parties (the child; applicants; mother of the child; father of the child; relevant non-guardians; guardians; person having charge or control over the child) are fully informed of their right to be heard.	Confirmation received from Tusla that all parties have been offered a hearing.	Ongoing	Executive	All relevant information is provided to the relevant parties in a timely manner. All applications for adoption, whether or not they proceed to adoption order, have a record of all relevant parties being informed of their option to be heard by the board.	General	**2.1**
Facilitate requests to be heard from any of the above relevant parties.	All requests to be heard by the Board will be acknowledged promptly. The Board is notified and the hearing will be scheduled for the next sitting of the Board.	As required	Board and Executive	All requests for a hearing before the Board are facilitated and scheduled.	General	**2.2**
Seek to progress the provision of Legal Aid support for Birth Parents in the adoption process.	Continued engagement with Dept. of Justice/ DCEDIY/Legal Aid Board. Monitoring and reviewing to ensure all who require Legal Aid are in receipt of same.	Ongoing	Board/CEO	Birth parents will have service provided to them where required in the adoption process.	General	**2.2**
The Authority's procedures and policies ensure that all adoption orders incorporate the views of all relevant parties.	Respective documentation on file setting out the views of all relevant parties. All cases reviewed before coming before the Board for decision.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	In all cases evidence on file of engagement and or attempts to engage with all relevant parties. Board can make decision in timely manner.	General	**2.3**

Ensure the Authority provides sufficient and clear information to enable all relevant parties to make a free and informed decision to engage in the adoption process	Receive feedback from relevant parties as to whether they felt they were adequately informed to enable them to make decisions	Ongoing	Board and Executive	All relevant information is provided to all relevant parties directly as part of their hearing application.	General	**2.4**

Goal 3 "To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland."

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
To support and oversee the development of comprehensive, high quality and integrated adoption services with our key statutory and non-statutory partners.	Ensure accuracy of documentation and reports received. Review standards of documentation and reports received. Ensure accurate, comprehensive and timely submissions to court.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Reduced delays in processing of applications and decision making.	General	**3.1**
To engage effectively with service users and their advocates, service providers, policy makers and government to bring about continuous quality improvements in our adoption services.	Carry out regular consultation and user empathy with adopted children to proactively seek their thoughts in regards to their experience interfacing with the Authority.	After each Order Day	Board and Executive	Continual consultation with recently adopted children to get feedback on their specific experience interfacing with the Authority via a 'user feedback' style follow up questionnaire' and other more involved user empathy tools as feasible and appropriate.	General	**3.2**
Ongoing engagement between AAI and Tusla on operational issues, to reflect the Minister's comments.	Timely scheduling of Meetings	Ongoing	Executive	Adherence to planned schedule of meetings / consultations. Timely response to unscheduled meeting requests.	General	**3.2**
	Speedy response time to meeting requests					
	Communications Policy and Procedures to be drawn up and rolled out to all staff	Ongoing	Head of Compliance /Corporate Services	Mapping report scoped and produced.	General	**3.2.1**
	User empathy (survey, conversations, observation and/or other appropriate empathy mapping tools)	Q4	Executive	Survey designed and pilot testing complete.		**3.2.4**

Maintain active oversight of all accredited agencies, including reaccreditation and registration against approved regulations	Inspections carried out.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Statutory Reports filed on time.	General	**3.3**
	Regular reporting to the Board.			Monthly status report to the Board.		
	Regular scheduled engagements with various accredited agencies			Inspection plan to reflect the accredited agencies still in operation.		
	Assist in the closure of accredited bodies and transfer of files to the Authority			Agencies' files will transferred to the Authority as approved by the Board.		

Goal 4 "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	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference – Appendix One
Make informed and timely decisions regarding: **A) the granting of declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt;** **B) the making of adoption orders;** **C) the recognition of intercountry adoption orders;** **D) Article 17 referrals**	A) Speedy turnaround times from application to decision. B) All adoption applications processed fully before age 18. C) Routine and non-routine processing of applications. D) Timely Processing of referrals	Ongoing	Board	A) Turnaround time of 6 weeks. B) Before age 18. C) Two weeks for routine and 12 weeks for non-routine. D) One week.	General	**4.1**
Ongoing engagement with the Department and Minister on all adoption related matters.	Timely response to Departmental requests.	Ongoing	Board and CEO	Full and constructive engagement with Dept. and Minister on all relevant matters.	General	**4.2**
Maintain all statutory and non-statutory Registers in line with agreed requirements.	Timely updating of all registers. Timely response to updates and corrections to records.	Ongoing	Executive	Registers are up-to-date and accurate.	General	**4.3**
Further develop DocuWare eDMS across all sections	Digitise all AAI adoption files. Import all inherited and already digitised adoption agency files into DocuWare.	Q3/Q4	Head of Compliance/ Digitisation Unit /Information and Tracing Unit	DocuWare rolled out across all units. Migrate all registers and documents to DocuWare.	General & External	**4.3.5**

	Revise processes and protocols to accommodate the new files and to manage the additional workload.			Agency files effectively integrated into DocuWare and fully searchable and linked with relevant AAI files.		
Risk Management Review	Consult staff, executive, RAC and Board	Ongoing	Head of Compliance	Risk Registers Produced.	General	**4.3.6**
	Report to RAC on a quarterly basis					
	Report to Board on a monthly basis					
Make informed and timely decisions regarding the release of personal sensitive information to adult adoptees and birth parents.	Turnaround time on routine applications.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Routine Applications 1-2 weeks.	General	**4.4**
	Release of identifying information. Time to bring non-routine applications to Board. Await impending legislation - develop and action an implementation plan	Ongoing		Non-routine Applications to next appropriate Board meeting.		
Maintain constructive relationships with all partners and develop national and international relationships that promote the highest possible standards in adoption and adoption related services.	Schedule of engagements.	Ongoing	Executive	Quarterly teleconference with English speaking Central Authorities. Adherence to visits schedule.	General	**4.5**
	Response time to requests.					
	Visit programme and travel plan subject to COVID restrictions.					
	Hosting of delegates from sending countries and other Central Authorities subject to COVID restrictions.					
	Maintain effective communication through using remote technologies					

Goal 5 "To inform adoption policy and service delivery by reason of a practical understanding of the operations of the legislation through the provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework."

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
Engage proactively and communicate effectively with all stakeholders	Regular scheduling of meetings with stakeholders.	Ongoing Q3	Executive	Regular engagements with stakeholders.	General	**5.1**
	Continuing intelligence gathering and reporting.			Timely response to stakeholder issues.		
	Facilitate stakeholder communication through remote technology in COVID environment.			Boardroom equipped with a professional video-conferencing suite.		
Website to be the prime source of information for all stakeholders and the public at large. **Update website to ensure timely release of all new information.** **Improve internal stakeholder engagement in context of social distancing**	Website reviewed quarterly.	Ongoing Q3	Executive	Positive external feedback.	General	**5.2** **5.2.1**
	Produce Activity Reports.			Quarterly monitoring report to Board.		
	Creation of an AAI Intranet			Staff access to an engaging shared information and communications platform.		
Undertake and promote research opportunities and research capacity	Implement research projects as set out in the research strategy. Produce and circulate reports re same. Meetings of Research Advisory Committee	Ongoing Q1/Q2/ Q3/Q4	Research Officer/Board and Executive	Research published and disseminated.	General	**5.3**

Support Government Departments in the development of adoption related policy and legislation **Promote informed and considered analysis and debate on adoption issues**	Speedy turnaround time to Department requests.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Timely response to all requests.	General	**5.4**
	Respond to media requests.					
	Investigate remote options for seminars and forums.		Board and Executive	Examine remote options for seminars and forums.	General	**5.5**

Goal 6 "To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes."

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
To plan and implement the changes required in organisation (including transfer of functions) and operational procedures in line with proposed tracing legislation. • **NACPR on statutory basis** • **Safeguarding of records** • **Tracing for purpose of reunion/contact**	Review structures across the AAI associated with records management and data protection.	Q1/Q2	Board and Executive	Review of AAI workforce structure.	External	**6.1**
	Development of Project plan to include ICT infrastructure, staffing, operational policies and procedures	Ongoing and subject to finalisation of legislation			General	
	Continued communication with DCEDIY to inform the legislation	Ongoing		Effective implementation of project plan.		
Tracing services for clients from whom the AAI hold both the agency and adoption file or agency and fostering file	Resource SWT	Ongoing	HR/Board/SWT	No more than a six month waiting list for and tracing services.	General	
Information sharing with client for whom we hold any information on (both where the AAI have the agency file and the AAI file)	Resource SWT	Ongoing	HR/Board/SWT	No more than a 16 week wait for information from AAI file.	General	
Prepare for the implementation of adoption related recommendations from the MBHCOI	Resource SWT	Ongoing	SWT/Board	Implementation of recommendations relating to adoption issues and services.	General	

To complete the testing & implementation of new NACPR system on DocuWare	Carry out testing	Mid-end of February	I&T team	Successful transition from Lotus Notes to DocuWare.	General	**6**
	Check for the accuracy of data being migrated from old system (with the support of Digitisation Unit)					
	Write new SOP/ Protocols for new system	End of Q1	I&T Unit Manager	Updated Operations Manual.		
Be prepared to adapt to a) DAHR and Surrogacy legislation b) any other relevant legislation	Develop and action an implementation plan Cases stated on surrogacy	Ongoing	Executive	Effective roll-out of implementation plan contingent on legislation.	General	**6.2**
Streamline processes across the organisation	Review current processes with a view to minimise eliminate unnecessary steps and reduce paper output Write new SOPs/Protocols	Ongoing	Executive	More streamlined processes and reduction in paper and posting.	General	**6**
Explore a WFH policy and procedures in line with proposed new government strategy	Set up a WFH consultation group and scope each teams' requirements. Create a road map for each section, mapping out the changes in procedures, practices, policies, skillsets and culture required to allow for effective WFH practices	Pilot Q4	Executive	WFH requirements report. All teams have a clear map of changes to be implemented in order to facilitate effective WFH practices. Working from home trials conducted (in office and remotely) and procedures improved as required.	General	**6**
To plan for and manage the increase in workload as a result of the publication of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission Report and Illegal Birth Registrations Report	Manage and monitor the increase in calls, emails and applications for the NACPR, Birth Certs, Tracing & SARs	Ongoing	Executive	Effective management and monitoring of backlogs created by increase in workload.	General	**6**

Goal 7 *"To* be proactive and responsive to change and maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation."

Tasks	Actions	Date	Unit/Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	Resources	Corporate Plan Reference
Ensure full compliance with the 2016 Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	Financial statements to Department and OCAG	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Ensuring full Compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	General	**7.1**
	Annual Report	Q2				
	Compliance Check	Ongoing				
Collaborate with OPW in obtaining fit-for-purpose file storage at existing office location	Record storage plan	Ongoing	Executive	Fit for purpose file storage facility at Shelbourne House	General	**7.2**
Maintain robust Risk Management Framework	Risk Register Review on a quarterly basis	Q1; Q2; Q3; Q4	Executive	4 meetings per annum for RAC	General	**7.3** **7.3.1** **7.3.2** **7.3.3** **7.3.4** **7.3.5**
	Adherence to Internal Audit Plan	Ongoing		Internal Audit Reports		
	Data security assessment	Q3		No open recommendations from Internal Audit Reports		
Maintain highest standards in data confidentiality and data integrity and compliance with Data Protection, GDPR and E-Privacy Legislation	Develop and roll out new NACPR forms		Board and Executive	All forms and data protection policies approved by the Board.	General	**7.4**
	Ensure all appropriate data protection policies are regularly reviewed and in place.	Q1/Q2		Data Protection Policies reviewed periodically.		
	Data Security Assessment	Ongoing	Head of Compliance	Dates for publication of outstanding policies.	External	
	Incorporate new ICT provider policies into procedures across the AAI	Q3/Q4		Data security assessment report.		

Authority to maintain a learning environment where competencies and training requirements are fully met	Ensure Personal Performance Plans are completed.	Q1	Head of HR/ Senior Management Team	Competency and skill gaps are met. SWT achieve a minimum of 30 CPD credits in every 12-month period. Current audit period is 1 June 2020 to May 2021.	General	**7.5**
	Training needs report drafted based on PPP and strategic plan with particular emphasis on ICT skills and competencies.	Q3/Q4				
	Training programme in place	Q3/Q4				
	Interim and annual reviews carried out	Q2 & Q4				
	Completion of relevant CPD courses across specific sections of the Authority (SWT and DPO)	Ongoing	DPO & SWT			
Maintain Board and Executive Succession Plan	Review of workforce requirements in light of increase volume of tracing records acquired by the Authority and increased reliance on digitised systems of working.	Q1/Q2	Board and Executive	Review of organisational requirements report with specific focus on records management. Induction programme for all new and existing Board members. No gaps in membership/ no competency gaps. No extended vacancies and no loss of corporate knowledge. Staff complement meets needs of changing organisation.	General	**7.6**
	Anticipate any Board vacancies and provide competency requirements to Dept.	Ongoing	Executive			
	Staff strategy plan for succession and expansion (as required).	Q2/Q3	Head of HR/ Senior Management Team			
Ensure full value for money in discharge of allocated resources	Two Internal Audits per year	Q1 & Q3/Q4			General	**7.7**
	Variance Analysis Reports sent to Department monthly	Ongoing	Board and Executive	• Compliance with DPER guidelines		

	Procurement, financial and HR policies updated	Ongoing		• Adherence to procurement and financial policies • Operating within budget • Corporate Procurement Plan published • Contract Register produced and updated • Procurement Register produced and updated • AAI procurement is administered through the OGCIO, who operate under the OGP's commercially-driven ICT framework		
	Budget plan and report to Board	Q1				
	Corporate procurement plan published and yearly plans approved by the RAC and Board	Q1				
	Contracts register up to date. Move from manual to a digital process of managing and monitoring procurement data.	Q2				
	Improve value for money on all ICT infrastructure, hardware & software.	Ongoing				
Full implementation of Corporate Plan **Formulate Strategic Plan 2022-2024**	Report to Board on quarterly basis.	Ongoing	Board and Executive	Corporate Plan implemented in full, in line with agreed objectives. Business Plan fully aligned to Corporate Plan. Publish 2022-2024 Strategic Plan.	General General & external	**7.8**
	Quarterly report to department on Corporate Plan and annual Business Plan.					
	Keep oversight agreement under review.					
	Task Planner and % level of achievement against each objective.					
	Draft next Strategic Plan 2022-2024	Q3/Q4				
Deliver on Public Sector 2015 ICT Strategy - 5 Strategic Objectives	i. Build to Share (BTS) ii. Digital First iii. Data as an Enabler iv. Improve Governance	Q1; Q2 – ICT Migration All Tasks across Q1-Q4	Head of Compliance and Executive	(i) Move to a shared services' model of shared ICT infrastructure to support integration of Public Service resources to drive efficiency and control cost. Full AAI ICT migration of services to the OGCIO's BTS Managed suite of services as per project plan	General & External	**7**

		v. Increase Capability – increase ICT skills diversity across Public Service			(ii) Digitisation of existing and future AAI processes and services – front-end systems put online to deliver services internally, across government and the public domain.		
					(iii) Sharing organisational data on a whole-of-government basis to support better decision-making, increase simplicity of engagement and drive efficiency - e.g., AAI submission access to ePQ platform.		
					(iv) Engage with the developing public service ICT governance model through OGCIO collaboration.		
					(v) Advisory input from the OGCIO		
					Procurement of outsourced ICT provision to address the AAI's ICT knowledge and skills gap - to fulfil essential ICT operations which are not part of the OGCIO's remit		