



AGENCY ACCREDITATION • INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION • DOMESTIC ADOPTION • ADOPTION SUPPORT • CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

INFORMATION AND TRACING

CELEBRATING
TEN YEARS
of
**THE ADOPTION
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND**
2010-2020

ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND



CELEBRATING TEN YEARS of
**THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY
OF IRELAND 2010-2020**



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AUTHORITY OF IRELAND**
2010-2020

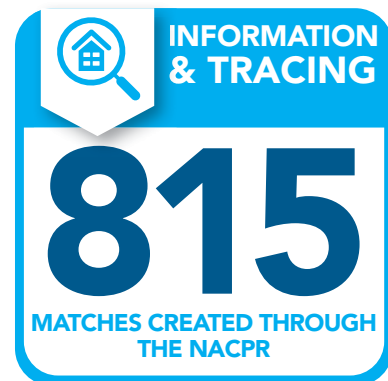
 **ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN**
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure the provision of the highest possible standard of adoption-related services, throughout the lifelong adoption process, with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective.

ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

2010-DECEMBER 2019



KEY AREAS OF WORK

DOMESTIC ADOPTION **INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION**
INFORMATION & TRACING **RESEARCH AGENCY ACCREDITATION**
ADOPTION SUPPORT **CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH**



LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

A number of legislative provisions have impacted the work of the Authority since November 1st 2010:

ADOPTION ACT 2010

Ireland's ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION (Children) ACT 2012

ADOPTION AMENDMENT ACT 2013

MARRIAGE ACT 2015

CHILDREN AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ACT 2015

ADOPTION INFORMATION & TRACING BILL 2016

ADOPTION AMENDMENT ACT 2017

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS of
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY
OF IRELAND 2010-2020



FOREWORD

IT IS with great pleasure that we present this special publication commemorating ten years of the Adoption Authority of Ireland. The years are presented in chronological order, charting our journey from the early days of planning, through the design and establishment of different facets of the Authority, and looking towards the future as we work towards our goal of developing a world-class adoption service in Ireland.

The Authority's story begins on the 1st November 2010, which was an extraordinarily significant date in the history of Irish adoption. On this day, the Adoption Act 2010 came into effect, Ireland ratified the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, and the Adoption Authority of Ireland was established.

The purpose of the new Authority was to act as a regulator, ensuring high standards, setting guidelines for the HSE and other bodies, and regulating and monitoring all adoption activities. Over the past ten years the members of the AAI Board and its executive body have worked alongside adopted individuals, their birth and adoptive families, service providers and Government Departments to put all the necessary measures in place to achieve this purpose. This booklet outlines the different changes and key activities of the Authority over those years. All of this took place in the context of wider societal and legislative developments, also outlined in this booklet.

While the Adoption Act 2010 is the primary piece of legislation under which the Authority operates, a number of other legislative developments over the past ten years have influenced our work. 2015 saw two such changes – the Amendment to the Constitution (Children) Act 2012 and the Children and Family Relationships Act (2015). Together, these changes brought huge strength and focus to the best interests of the child. As such the voice of the child, often historically absent from decisions which influenced children, was given a much stronger platform from which to be heard. The Authority welcomed this development, which aligned with our own principles, and made the necessary additional changes to ensure that the child's voice was consistently represented in our work.

Between November 2010 and the end of 2019, the Authority granted 728 domestic adoption orders, and made 2,232 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions. In that same time frame, 815 matches were created through the National Adoption Contact Preference Register, which is managed by the Authority. In the meantime, the Authority consistently processed applications to join the Register, and inquiries for support or information were managed daily through our duty social worker line.

The profile of children being adopted has changed hugely over these ten years, and the trajectory of this change is evident throughout the booklet. As we reach the end of 2020, an extraordinary year for many reasons, we commend the work of everyone connected with the Authority in ensuring that our service could continue throughout the restrictions. We acknowledge the huge challenge which coronavirus has posed to the process of intercountry adoption and all involved with it. We also anticipate the publication of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation report, and the provision of the long-awaited Information and Tracing legislation which is expected to have a huge impact on our work, and on the lives of those affected by adoption in Ireland.

We hope you enjoy reading about the work of the Authority over the past ten years. We wish to extend our thanks to the AAI's research officer Dr Judy Lovett for doing all the necessary background research to put this booklet together, and to all the members of the executive who helped with this task. We look forward to continuing to progress our mission to ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption-related services, throughout the lifelong adoption process, with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective.



MS ORLAITH TRAYNOR
Chair
Nov 2020 – Present



DR GEOFFREY SHANNON
Solicitor
Former Chairman
2010 – Nov 2020



MS PATRICIA CAREY
Chief Executive Officer
2014 – present

2010



MINISTER OF STATE FOR CHILDREN

Mr Barry Andrews, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

1ST NOV – 31ST DEC 2010

Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman)

Ms Helen Collins
(Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Ann McWilliams

Ms Corinna Carrick

Ms Siobhan Keogh

Dr Cyril McNulty

Dr Helen Grealley

CEO

Vacant

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

Conor Kerlin

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD

Kiernan Gildea



***It's all over...and it's all
about to begin"***

Brian Friel, "Philadelphia, Here I Come!" (1964).

EVENTS

» The 1st November 2010 was an extraordinarily significant day in the history of Irish adoption. On this day, the Adoption Act 2010 came into effect, repealing all former Adoption Acts and bringing changes that would set the tone for a very different adoption system in the years to come:

"The new Act provides a vital framework, which supports a single standard for adoption, which will benefit the children in whose interest the adoption is undertaken and prospective adopters"

Mr Barry Andrews, T.D., Minister of State for Children

» On the same day, Ireland ratified the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption:

"the most important single development within Irish adoption since the statutory framework for intercountry adoption was introduced by the Adoption Act of 1991"

Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Adoption Authority of Ireland, 2010

AAI ACTIVITY

One of the many changes brought about by the Adoption Act 2010 was the establishment, on 1st November, of the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI):



The establishment of the new Authority is a key element of a complete overhaul of the adoption process in Ireland"

**Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman,
Adoption Authority of Ireland, 2010**

The purpose of the new Adoption Authority was to act as a regulator: it was charged with assuring high standards, setting guidelines for the HSE and other bodies, and regulating and monitoring all adoption activities. November and December 2010 were busy months for everyone working in the Adoption Authority of Ireland as they put new procedures in place in accordance with the new legislation.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: The Adoption Act 2010 and the Ratification of The Hague Convention

The events of 1st November 2010 had an immediate, significant impact on a number of parties involved in Irish adoption:

- » Prospective Adoptive Parents who held a valid Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability for a non-Hague compliant country could continue the adoption process under Section 63 of the new Act with the support of the Intercountry Adoption unit, who examined the circumstances of each adoption on a case-by-case basis. Prospective adoptive parents who were in the initial stages of applying for a Declaration had to select a different country and begin the process again.
- » Adoption Agencies and Societies were now required to apply for accreditation from the Adoption Authority of Ireland, and were given one month to do so. The administration of accreditation was a long and detailed process.
- » The Health Service Executive (HSE) was now responsible for the initial processing of all adoption applications. The Domestic Adoption unit of the AAI worked to transfer current Domestic Adoption files from the Adoption Authority of Ireland to the relevant regional HSE services.
- » Natural fathers: in cases where the natural father could not be consulted about the adoption, the AAI was now required to obtain High Court approval before authorising the HSE or accredited body to place the child for adoption.
- » Birth relatives and adopted individuals: there was no provision in the 2010 Act for information and tracing. It was anticipated that legislation would be published in 2011.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - NOV-DEC 2010

- » No new adoption orders granted.
- » 20 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued under the 2010 Act.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - NOV-DEC 2010

- » 4 new entries made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » No new Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability issued.



INFORMATION & TRACING - NOV-DEC 2010

- » Specific I&T figures are not available for Nov-Dec 2010. However the I&T unit would have handled approximately 240 enquiries during this period - roughly six per day.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - NOV-DEC 2010

- » The Adoption Authority was now responsible for the accreditation of all adoption agencies and societies operating in Ireland.
- » The process commenced with agencies applying for accreditation in November and December 2010.

IN THE NEWS:

- » In December 2010, after months of negotiation, the EU agreed an €85bn rescue package for Ireland.
- » Following a massive earthquake, by the end of 2010 Haiti was in the grip of a cholera outbreak with over 1 million Haitians living in temporary shelters.

2011



**MINISTER FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**
Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

**BOARD OF
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY
OF IRELAND 2011**

Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman)

Ms Helen Collins
(Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Ann McWilliams

Ms Corinna Carrick

Ms Siobhán Keogh

CEO

Ms Elizabeth Canavan
(March – September)

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

Mr Conor Kerlin

**REGISTRAR AND SECRETARY
TO THE BOARD**

Mr Kiernan Gildea

**ACTING PRINCIPAL
SOCIAL WORKER**

Ms Celia Loftus

“

A Busy and Challenging Year”

*Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman,
Adoption Authority of Ireland*

EVENTS

» Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Frances Fitzgerald T.D. committed to the introduction of the Information and Tracing Bill in 2012 – a move welcomed by the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

AAI ACTIVITY

2011 saw members of the AAI's Board and Executive developing the AAI to fulfil its role as set out in the Adoption Act 2010. This involved detailed administrative work in a number of areas:

- » Drafting of the Adoption Authority of Ireland Corporate Plan commenced, including an online public consultation to inform its development.
- » The profile around intercountry adoptions changed at this time. The number of children adopted from Russia and Ethiopia increased. The programme with Vietnam was suspended, and there was a downward shift in the number of children available and eligible for adoption from China.
- » Adoption Authority of Ireland delegations visited the USA, Bulgaria, Italy, Mexico, Vietnam and Russia to discuss mechanisms for implementing The Hague Convention or establishing bi-lateral agreements where possible. Similar meetings took place in Ireland and via correspondence.
- » There were significant processing delays to domestic adoptions, brought about in part by the necessity of the AAI to gain High Court approval before approving an adoption without consulting the natural father if his identity was unknown.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: The origins of a dedicated Department for Ireland's Children ...

- » The year 2011 was also a busy and challenging one in the Irish political arena, with a new Fine Gael/Labour coalition government, new Taoiseach Enda Kenny, and President Michael D. Higgins. It was an exciting time for those involved in the children's sector in Ireland. For the first time, the State established a full Department dedicated to children – the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, known as the DCYA.
- » Children had historically been under the remit of a number of different Departments, such as Justice, Education and Health, prompting stakeholders to call for a specific Department to meet their particular needs. The seeds of the DCYA were planted in 2001 with the establishment of the National Children's Office (NCO), whose role was to lead and oversee the National Children's Strategy. This was followed in 2005 by the announcement of the Office of the Minister for Children, which was re-named the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in 2008. In 2011, this was in turn replaced by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. On 9th March, Ms Frances Fitzgerald was appointed as the first Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, with full cabinet status. The Adoption Authority, although an independent body, is funded by and reports to the DCYA.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2011

- » 39 adoption orders granted.
- » 71 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 500 files forwarded to the HSE for assessment, as the Authority moved from the role of service provider to service regulator.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2011

- » 342 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 626 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2011

- » 620 new applications to join the NACPR.
- » 60 NACPR matches.
- » 71 applications for the release of birth certificates.
- » 9 birth certs released*
- » 1 application refused*
- » 1 application withdrawn*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2011

- » 12 bodies were granted accreditation in 2011.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals/withdrawals related to requests made prior to 2011

IN THE NEWS:

- » The global economic crisis continued, with growing unrest and worldwide anti-austerity and anti-consumerist protests.
- » An earthquake and subsequent tsunami in Japan led to a nuclear accident at the Fukushima plant.
- » Seventy-seven people, many of them teenagers, were killed in terrorist attacks in Norway.
- » The USA confirmed the death of Osama Bin Laden.

2012



**MINISTER FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**
Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

**BOARD OF THE ADOPTION
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND 2012**
Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman)

Ms Helen Collins
(Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Ann McWilliams

Ms Corinna Carrick

Ms Siobhán Keogh

Dr Imelda Ryan

CEO

Mr Pat Bennett

DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

Mr Conor Kerlin
(Retired 28th February 2012)

**REGISTRAR AND HEAD
OF OPERATIONS**

Mr Kiernan Gildea

**ACTING PRINCIPAL SOCIAL
WORKER**

Ms Celia Loftus

“

A Productive and Successful Year”

*Mr Pat Bennett, CEO & Dr Geoffrey Shannon,
Chairman, Adoption Authority of Ireland*

EVENTS

» The Children’s Referendum 2012 was passed by a 58% majority. This increased the number of children in long-term foster care who could be adopted, and placed much greater emphasis on the voice of the child being heard in the process, where they were old enough to do so:

“the referendum wording is likely to make a real and positive difference to the area of adoption”

Mr Pat Bennett, CEO & Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Adoption Authority of Ireland.

» The “Adoption Information & Tracing Bill” was drafted, with input from the Adoption Authority of Ireland alongside other stakeholders. It was expected to go to Government in 2013.

» A number of member states of the Council of Europe ratified the revised European Convention on the Adoption of Children – an instrument designed to provide a modern framework for the adoption of children.

AAI ACTIVITY

- » Delegations from the AAI travelled to meetings in Vietnam, Ethiopia, the UK and The Hague. Members of the social work team and Board also attended an adoption conference in India.
- » September 2012: the Intercountry Adoption programme resumed with Vietnam.
- » Following the delays in 2011 as new procedures were put in place, domestic adoption applications were processed much more quickly in 2012. However, the necessity to gain High Court approval to make an adoption order without consulting the natural father continued to delay processing and finalising of adoption applications.
- » The Adoption Authority's Corporate Plan 2012-2015 was published.
- » Work commenced on "Practice Guidelines for Domestic Adoption" – a manualised system to ensure uniformity in domestic adoption processes at all levels.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: Intercountry Adoption

The number of children available for intercountry adoption was falling rapidly on a global scale by 2012. This was partly due to The Hague Convention, and also the fact that many countries were putting child protection frameworks in place domestically, aimed at keeping children in their country of birth.

The profile of available children was also changing, with children typically older, often having spent over three years in institutional care, and with a number of additional health or medical needs. The countries from which Irish citizens have adopted children have changed over the years as part of an international effort to ensure the highest standards are adhered to in this highly sensitive process. The AAI consistently works and builds on relationships with other countries, keeping communication channels open to ensure that the best interests of the child are always put first.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2012

- » 49 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 79 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2012

- » 242 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 181 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2012

- » 542 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 54 matches.
- » 50 applications for release of birth certs.
- » 17 birth certs released.
- » 4 applications refused*.
- » 9 applications withdrawn*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2012

- » Two bodies received accreditation in 2012.
- » Total number of accredited bodies on the register by end of 2012: 14.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2012

IN THE NEWS:

- » The Costa Concordia cruise ship capsized off the coast of Italy, killing 32 passengers and crew. Captain Francesco Schettino was later sentenced for manslaughter.
- » Ireland won 6 medals in 3 different sports at the London Olympics; including gold for boxer Katie Taylor.

2013



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND 2013

Dr Geoffrey Shannon
(Chairman)

Ms Helen Collins
(Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Ann McWilliams

Ms Corinna Carrick

Ms Siobhan Keogh

Dr Imelda Ryan

Ms Anne O'Flaherty

ACTING CEO

Mr Kiernan Gildea

HEAD OF OPERATIONS

Mr Anthony Abbott King

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ms Celia Loftus



We've come full circle"

*"Philomena" Screenplay,
Steve Coogan & Jeff Pope, (2013).*

EVENTS

In 2013, adoption, childhood and motherhood were very much at the forefront of the public domain:

» The McAleese Report was published. This was a long-awaited report of the inter-departmental committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries. Post-publication, Taoiseach Enda Kenny issued a State apology to Magdalen survivors:

"It shines a bright and necessary light on a dark chapter of Ireland's history"
an Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D.

» The Magdalen Commission Report was published. Also known as the Quirke Report, this was the report of Mr Justice John Quirke on the establishment of an ex-gratia scheme and related matters for the benefit of those women who were admitted to and worked in the Magdalen Laundries. It set out a number of recommendations.

- » There was anticipation around the planned publication of the General Scheme of the Children and Family Relationship Bill 2014: “[this] represents an important milestone on the road to the recognition of children as rights holders”
Dr Geoffrey Shannon & Mr Kiernan Gildea
- » The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2013 was passed by the Oireachtas in December to enable applicants proposing to adopt from the Russian Federation to have one further year to complete the process.
- » The publication of the long-awaited Information and Tracing Bill was now scheduled for 2014.

AAI ACTIVITY

The 18th informal meeting of European Central Authorities for Intercountry Adoption was held in Dublin. Hosted by the Adoption Authority, it was opened by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ms Frances Fitzgerald. Fifty-five delegates attended, representing 23 countries, alongside Unicef and The Hague Permanent Bureau.

2013 was a year for building and strengthening intercountry adoption links:

- » The AAI received approval for the bi-lateral arrangement on intercountry adoption with the USA in May 2013.
- » The AAI welcomed visiting delegates from the Russian Federation, the Chinese Centre for Children’s Welfare and Adoption, the Indian and Ukrainian Embassies, and the Bridge of Love Adoption Service.
- » Delegations from the AAI travelled to India, the Philippines, and the USA in 2013.

Domestic adoption: The number of domestic adoption orders granted more than doubled between 2012 and 2013. Of these, 74% were stepfamily adoptions. After a long and detailed process, “Practice Guidelines for Domestic Adoption” were finalised in 2013, ready for publication in 2014.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: The Philomena Effect

The 2013 movie “Philomena” told the true story of an Irish mother’s search for her son, adopted shortly after birth. Its release created intense media and public interest in the area of adoption information and tracing, towards the end of a year in which all of these issues were already the subject of much public discussion. The lack of clear I&T legislation had been consistently highlighted by the Adoption Authority and its predecessor, the Adoption Board, since 1983:

“Were the National Adoption Contact Preference Register in existence at the time, the mother and son whose lives the film Philomena is based on, would have been in a position to have contact with each other”

p.12, Annual Report, 2013

“Philomena” was released in Irish cinemas on 1st Nov 2013. In the month that followed, applications to join the National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) increased sharply to 95, almost doubling from a previous monthly average of 50. Members of the AAI Executive working in the Information and Tracing unit at the time noted a number of applicant references to the film in email and phone conversations.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2013

- » 116 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 161 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2013

- » 141 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 266 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 94 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2013

- » 721 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 71 matches.
- » 43 applications for release of birth certs.
- » 18 birth certs released*.
- » 15 applications refused*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2013

- » No new bodies were accredited in 2013.
- » Total number of accredited bodies on the register at the end of 2013: 14.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2013

IN THE NEWS:

- » Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in the Philippines. One of the most powerful recorded typhoons of all time, it displaced 4 million people, killing over 7,000.
- » Two bombs were detonated at the finishing line of the Boston Marathon in an act of terrorism, killing 3 people and injuring 264.
- » Former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela died in December aged 95.

2014



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

To May 2014:

Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

From May 2014:

Dr James Reilly, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND 2014

As in 2013

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

Mr Kiernan Gildea

HEAD OF OPERATIONS

Mr Anthony Abbott King

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ms Celia Loftus



We have to uphold the law. We have to be absolutely rigorous

Ms Patricia Carey, CEO, Irish Times interview, 2014

EVENTS

» The General Scheme of the Children and Family Relationships Bill 2014 was published:

“These proposals put the child’s welfare and best interests at the heart of decisions on parentage, guardianship, custody and access”

Alan Shatter, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence.

» In the wake of the public interest in adoption following the 2013 film, *Philomena* Lee established the Philomena Project in conjunction with the Adoption Rights Alliance. The purpose of the Project was to support natural mothers and their adopted children in the process of information and tracing:

“It is my hope that every mother and child who want to be reunited are able to come together once again.”

Philomena Lee

» The publication of Information and Tracing legislation was now expected to take place in 2015.

AAI ACTIVITY

The year 2014 was a very busy one in the administration and governance of the AAI:

- » New CEO Ms Patricia Carey was appointed.
- » Four years into a five-year corporate strategy, the AAI was now entering a mature phase in its development and was working to meet its goals as set out in the 2012 - 2015 plan.
- » The AAI prepared for financial independence in 2015 by establishing a dedicated finance section and appointing a finance officer.
- » A Risk and Audit Committee was established to oversee the internal audit function of the AAI.
- » A delegation from the AAI, including the Chairman and Director of Operations & Corporate Services, visited Port-au-Prince, Haiti in April.

The AAI hosted a number of stakeholder information meetings as part of its communications strategy, including specific seminars on:

- » The issues of permanence and openness for children available for adoption from foster care.
- » Developments in Inter-country Adoption.
- » Clarification and promotion of the AAI's Information & Tracing service.

After a detailed drafting process, "Practice Guidelines for Domestic Adoption" was published.

The average time taken between application and granting of a Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability for a domestic adoption was now 4.4 weeks, a big reduction on the 2013 average of 17.5 weeks. Factors contributing to the improvement included revised application forms, alongside the provision of clear guidelines and training to adoption social workers by AAI staff.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: Accreditation

Since its inception, the Adoption Board had been legally responsible for maintaining a register of Adoption Societies. However, the Adoption Act 2010 brought a new standard of quality control to the registration process. Any bodies working in the area of adoption, some of whom had been in operation and on the original register for decades, were urgently required to go through a rigorous application process in order to receive the accreditation needed to legally continue their work. By the end of 2011, 12 such bodies had been added to the register, and this number rose to 14 in 2012.

In accordance with the 2010 Act, the AAI established a system of accreditation to ensure a high standard of quality control in adoption services. In a system of interim review reporting to the Board, all accredited bodies on the register were required to submit six-monthly self-assessment reports to the AAI alongside supporting documentation re governance, finance and practice. In addition, in 2014 the AAI commenced work on the development of a full inspection regime that would ultimately be rolled out to provide an extra layer of ongoing quality control of registered accredited bodies.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2014

- » 112 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 121 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2014

- » 106* entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 106 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 65 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING- 2014

- » 787 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 95 new NACPR matches identified.
- » 124 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » The AAI social work team contacted people in 88 matches.
- » 38 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 23 birth certificates released**.
- » 2 applications refused**.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2014

- » No new bodies were accredited in 2014.
- » Total number of accredited bodies on the register at the end of 2014: 14.

*A review of the AAI's historical statistics and the implementation of a new database has allowed for more accurate reporting of figures. Some statistics published in previous years have been adjusted accordingly.

**It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2014

IN THE NEWS:

- » A number of Ebola cases were reported in West Africa. This was the first indicator of the West African Ebola Epidemic – the largest Ebola outbreak in history.
- » Malaysian Airlines flight 370 disappeared while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board. Four months later another Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board.

2015



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Dr James Reilly, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND: TO 31ST OCTOBER 2015

As 2014

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND FROM 1ST NOVEMBER 2015

Dr Geoffrey Shannon
(Chairman)

Ms Orlaith Traynor
(Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Anne O'Flaherty

Dr Imelda Ryan

Dr Helen Buckley

Mr Paul Harrison

Judge Patrick McMahon (retired)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

As in 2014



This investigation is an opportunity for Irish society"

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr. James Reilly, T.D., on the establishment of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters

EVENTS

2015 brought with it a number of legislative changes, all of which had ramifications for the Irish Adoption process:

- » The Amendment to the Constitution (Children) Act 2012 saw Article 42a inserted into the Constitution. It recognised the specific needs and rights of children, and gave the State the power to intervene when parents were deemed to have failed in their parental duties to an extent where the child's safety was at risk.

- » The Children and Family Relationships Act (2015) was enacted, addressing a number of anomalies in family law. It placed the best interests of the child at the centre of all decisions on custody, guardianship and adoption, providing different pathways to parenthood which would have significant implications for adoption practice:

“One of the most significant changes in family law in a generation”

Dr Geoffrey Shannon and Ms Patricia Carey, Annual Report 2015

- » The General Scheme and heads of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill were published in July 2015.

A register of Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions (GRICA) was signed into law. Individuals adopted from abroad could now apply to have their recognised gender entered on the register, and a certificate issued to them accordingly. One entry was made in the GRICA Register in 2015.

The AAI made a detailed submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children regarding the long-awaited legislation on Information and Tracing.

AAI ACTIVITY

- » A delegation from the AAI travelled to the USA to carry out the bi-annual review of the 2013 bilateral agreement.
- » A number of new initiatives were undertaken in 2015. Plans for a new website and improved Human Resources support, alongside a detailed review of the 2015 Business Plan and 2012-2015 Corporate Plan in the 2015 annual report, marked the AAI's transition from a fledgling organisation to an established agency.
- » Information & Tracing: 2015 marked the tenth anniversary of the National Adoption Contact Register (NACPR). With approximately 12,000 people on the register, the AAI piloted a programme for updating contact information and preference of contact level. Birth parents in particular were encouraged to register.
- » A new Board of the AAI was appointed by the Minister on 1st November 2015.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: Mother and Baby Homes

Local historian Catherine Corless called for a national inquiry after her research of public records indicated that almost 800 babies were buried in the grounds of the Bon Secours mother and baby home in Tuam, Co. Galway. The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters was opened in 2015. Investigation into records and practices at 14 Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland commenced.

On 1st July, Redress for Women Who Were Resident in Certain Institutions Act came into effect, establishing a support package for former residents as recommended in the Quirke Report. Women who had lived in Magdalen laundries were now entitled to apply for ex-gratia payments, medical cards, and access to a number of services including free home help, physiotherapy, counselling services.

Dr Katherine O'Donnell of the Justice for Magdalenes group, asked the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva to call on the Irish State to establish a “thorough investigation into the Magdalene Laundries abuse” (Irish Times, June 2015).



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2015

- » 94 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 101 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2015

- » 160* entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 86 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 86 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2015

- » 572 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 92 new NACPR matches identified.
- » Social worker duty line: 138 people sought information and advice on tracing.
- » 212 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » 68 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 30 birth certs released**.
- » 5 applications refused**.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2015

- » No new bodies were accredited in 2015.
- » Two bodies were de-registered.
- » Total number on the register at the end of 2015: 12.

*A review of the AAI's historical statistics and the implementation of a new database has allowed for more accurate reporting of figures. Some statistics published in previous years have been adjusted accordingly.

**It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2015

IN THE NEWS:

- » The biggest influx of refugees and migrants since the Second World War became known as the European Migrant Crisis, with over 1 million people arriving in Europe in 2015. Over 75% were fleeing conflict in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq.
- » Five adults, five children and an unborn baby, all members of the Traveller Community, were killed when fire broke out at a halting site in South Dublin.

2016



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

To May 2016: Dr James Reilly, T.D.

From May 2016: Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND 2016

As appointed in November 2015

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

Mr Kiernan Gildea

HEAD OF OPERATIONS

Mr Anthony Abbott King
(to April 2016)

HEAD OF COMPLIANCE AND RESOURCES

Ms Fiona Farrell (from November 2016)

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ms Celia Loftus



**A photo"... "certificate"...
"information"... "colour"!**

*Consultation with Young People about
Adoption Order hearings, 2016*

EVENTS

» The long-awaited Adoption Information and Tracing Bill (2016) was published in November, prompting a mixed reaction from stakeholders. While Tusla referred to it as "a positive and important step for adoptees seeking their personal information and identity", campaigners and advocates such as First Mothers were strongly critical of how the Bill sought to reconcile conflicting issues of privacy and identity.

AAI ACTIVITY

The year 2016 marked a very busy year for the AAI as it moved forward with the objectives outlined in its Corporate Plan:

- » **Website:** The AAI's website was launched, providing general information on adoption, and on the AAI, its Board and functions. A directory of post-adoption services was published on the website, alongside contact details of other relevant bodies.
- » **Human Resources:** The AAI's HR function was established, with an employee handbook provided to all staff, a number of in-house training sessions, a dedicated Employee Assistance Service, and a review of the performance management system.
- » **Accreditation:** Following the successful pilot inspection of an accredited body in 2015, two further on-site inspections were carried out in 2016. This was in addition to the six-monthly self-assessment reports carried out by all accredited bodies during 2016.
- » The AAI's Risk and Audit Committee had been set up in 2014. In 2016, its membership and terms of references were finalised. A Research Sub-committee was established to fulfil the AAI's Research remit, as set out in the 2010 Adoption Act.
- » Following the publication of the Information and Tracing Bill (2016), the AAI continued to work with Tusla and the DCYA to plan for the implementation of the proposed legislation.
- » The AAI hosted two seminars in 2016. The first was a seminar on the Family and Relationships Act. The second related specifically to the foster care to adoption process. Both seminars include addresses by Board members Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman) and Orlaith Traynor (Deputy Chairperson). Meanwhile the social work team organised 4 development forums with expert domestic and international speakers. Topics covered in 2016 included attachment, loss, therapeutic parenting and infectious diseases.
- » A delegation from the AAI, including the Chairman, CEO, and Director of Operations & Corporate Services, visited Beijing, China and Hanoi, Vietnam.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: The Voice of the Child

- » The legislative and Constitutional developments of 2015 provided a strong foundation for the AAI's long-held principle of having a child-centred approach. Accordingly, a number of changes were made in 2016 to support this goal:
- » The AAI and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children designed and implemented a consultation with young people who had been through the adoption process, to obtain their views on Adoption Order hearings.
- » Following the consultation, the AAI reviewed the young people's recommendations and developed a plan to incorporate their feedback. Work commenced in 2016 to improve the process and areas used for Adoption Order hearings in line with their suggestions. A new protocol was put in place for hearing children in adoption matters before the AAI. The reception and waiting area were made more child-friendly, with one dedicated waiting room specifically designed with young people in mind.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2016

- » 95 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 88 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2016

- » 214 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 72 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 49 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2016

- » 538 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 102 new NACPR matches identified.
- » Social worker duty line: 199 people sought information and advice on tracing.
- » 303 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » 70 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 23 Birth certs released*.
- » 15 applications refused*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2016

- » One new body was accredited in 2016.
- » Six bodies were de-registered.
- » Total number on the register at the end of 2016: 7.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2016

IN THE NEWS:

- » The centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising was marked with a parade in Dublin and a number of other ceremonies and events.
- » The year 2016 was a time of clear political change internationally, with Britain voting to leave the EU, and Donald Trump elected President of the USA.

2017



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND 2017

Dr Geoffrey Shannon
(Chairman)

Ms Orlaith Traynor
(Deputy Chairperson)

Dr Helen Buckley

Ms Anne O'Flaherty

Mr Paul Harrison

Judge Patrick McMahon (Retired)

Dr Imelda Ryan
(to September 2017)

Dr Margo Anglim
(from 26th October 2017)

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

Mr Kiernan Gildea
(to November 2017)

HEAD OF COMPLIANCE AND RESOURCES

Ms Fiona Monaghan

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ms Celia Loftus



Children need clear information about any process affecting them."

Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman) & Ms Patricia Carey (CEO), November 2017

EVENTS

» October saw the enactment of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. This Act brought about a number of changes to adoption in Ireland, allowing single and co-habiting adults to adopt, and ensuring the birth father could be fully involved in any adoption process about his child. For the first time, it also allowed the adoption of children of marriage, if in the child's best interests.

AAI ACTIVITY

2017 marked another very busy year for the AAI in its second year of the three-year Corporate Plan:

» **GDPR:** The AAI engaged in comprehensive planning for General Data Protection Regulation compliance.

- » **Record Keeping:** The AAI met with the National Archives, Military Archives, Mother and Baby Home Commission and DCYA in preparation for the project of cataloguing and scanning records, with the AAI identifying potentially up to 200 locations of adoption files in various locations throughout the country.
- » **Planning for the anticipated implementation of Information and Tracing legislation** continued, with the AAI leading the Adoption Records Working Group (ARWG), which included Tusla and the DCYA, in preparation for the responsibility of holding, preserving and conserving all adoption records.
- » **Strengthening Relationships:** Successful visits were undertaken by AAI delegates to the USA, Bulgaria and Haiti.
- » The Board held a two-day meeting in Galway as part of an initiative to provide greater accessibility to the Board for stakeholders with a presence outside of Dublin.
- » Two entries were made in the Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions Register in 2017.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: AAI Conferences:

In 2017, the Authority hosted two conferences to promote discussion around specific elements of adoption and proposed legislation.

The first of these was called "Exploring Information and Tracing". Launched by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the seminar was addressed by a number of individuals directly personally affected by adoption. These included Philomena Lee, who spoke about her own experience as a birth mother, and Susan Lohan of the Adoption Rights Alliance who spoke about rights as an adopted individual. The AAI Chair and Deputy Chair also addressed the seminar.

A number of months later, the Authority held a second conference, entitled "Adoption Practice in the aftermath of the Adoption Amendment Act". The focus was on the voice of the child. After a number of speakers including senior representatives from AAI's Board and executive, Tusla, the Ombudsman for Children's Office, and the Children's Rights Alliance, the AAI formally launched its bespoke video on children's voices at adoption order hearings (narrated by a child), and two new leaflets designed to directly inform children and young people about adoption order hearings.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2017

- » 72 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 79 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2017

- » 324 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 68 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 23 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2017

- » 667 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 121 new NACPR matches identified.
- » 327 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » 100 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 39 Birth certs released*.
- » 9 applications.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2017

- » No new new bodies were accredited in 2017.
- » Total number on the register at the end of 2017: 7.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2017

IN THE NEWS:

- » In January, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th President of the USA.
- » In March, Irish Coast Guard Rescue 116 crashed off the coast of Mayo while on a rescue mission, resulting in the loss of 4 lives.
- » Storm Ophelia - the worst storm to hit Ireland in 50 years - forced many cancellations and caused widespread damage across the country in October.

2018



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND: 2018

As in 2017

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE SERVICES

Ms Tara Downes

HEAD OF COMPLIANCE AND RESOURCES

Ms Fiona Monaghan

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ms Celia Loftus



The past, as they say, is a foreign country"

Simon Harris, TD and Minister for Health

Speaking at the Kennedy Summer School about Ireland's decision to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution

EVENTS

Illegal Birth registrations: Minister Katherine Zappone ordered an independent review of the practice of illegal birth registrations after Tusla identified irregularities in some adoption files originating in St Patrick's Guild Adoption Society between 1946 and 1969. The files were all marked with the term "Adopted from birth". While the practice of illegal birth registrations had been known about, the use of this phrase enabled the files in question to be identified for the first time as connected to illegal registrations.

AAI ACTIVITY

- » **GDPR:** The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in May 2018, bringing with it very strong implications for data held at the AAI. The Adoption Authority's Data Protection Officer successfully completed a GDPR Practitioner's Certificate and commenced working to ensure GDPR compliance within the AAI.
- » **The Voice of the Child:** The AAI continued to prioritise hearing the voice of the child in all adoption-related matters, introducing a number of changes to its procedures accordingly. Furthermore, it continued to set in place procedures preparing for the potential influx of files upon progression of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016.
- » **Helping Hands:** In 2018 Thailand accredited Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency (HHAMA) to commence activities as a mediation agency for Thai adoptions the following year.
- » **Corporate Planning:** the AAI marked another busy year in 2018 as it completed the final year of its three-year Corporate Plan 2016-2019.
- » **Two entries were made in the Gender Recognition of Inter-country Adoptions Register in 2018.**

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: Step-parent adoptions

Nearly half of the domestic adoption orders granted in 2018 related to step-parent adoptions (35, out of 72). Most were made in accordance with the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. Stepfamily, in the context of adoption, generally refers to families formed when the birth mother of a child marries or lives with a person who is not the birth father of that child, and the child is living with this couple. In a small number of cases the child is living with the birth father whose wife/partner wishes to adopt the child.

In these step-parent cases, an application for an adoption is made so that the birth parent's spouse/partner can establish legal rights in respect of the child within the family unit. This also ensures the child's inheritance rights within the family. The birth parent gives up sole legal rights in respect of the child and, with his or her spouse/partner, taking on joint legal rights, responsibilities and guardianship in respect of the child. If the birth father is a legal guardian of the child, his consent is required before the adoption can proceed.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2018

- » 72 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 81 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2018

- » 313 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 53 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 35 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2018

- » 639 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 105 new NACPR matches identified.
- » Social work team received 327 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » 121 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 43 Birth certs released*
- » 6 applications refused*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2018

- » No new new bodies were accredited in 2018.
- » Total number on the register at the end of 2018: 7.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2018

IN THE NEWS:

- » In May 2018, Ireland voted to repeal the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. The 36th Amendment to the Constitution was introduced, allowing the Oireachtas to legislate for abortion.
- » It emerged that a number of women were suing the State when the national cervical cancer screening programme, CervicalCheck, incorrectly diagnosed the results of their positive tests. This led to a wider investigation in what became known as the CervicalCheck Controversy.
- » Storm Emma, also known as the Beast from the East, led to heavy snowfall across the country.

2019



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D.

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND: 2019

As in 2018

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS/
BOARD SECRETARY**

Ms Tara Downes

**HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES
AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Ms Fiona Monaghan

HEAD OF COMPLIANCE

Ms Kate O'Hara



The one thing we all had in common was a passionate interest in adoption"

Tom Young, Chairman, Cúnamh, speaking to the Irish Times on Cúnamh's closure in December 2019

EVENTS

Cúnamh: The operations of Cúnamh adoption agency ceased in December 2019. Initially founded as the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland, it had been in operation since 1913, facilitating 5,700 adoptions since the 1953 legislation, and more recently, 1,700 reunions. All of Cúnamh's 13,000 adoption files and records were subsequently transferred to the Adoption Authority. Cúnamh will be formally de-registered as an accredited body in due course.

AAI ACTIVITY

- » **Corporate Plan:** The AAI's Corporate and Business Plan 2019–2021 was laid before both houses of the Oireachtas in March 2019. It is based on four guiding principles: child-centredness, quality services, accountability through ethical practice and transparency, and respect.
- » **Website:** Following a substantial update and redesign, the new AAI website was launched in 2019.
- » **Strengthening Relationships:** Representatives from the Authority's Board and Senior Management team travelled to The Hague, Montreal, the Philippines, the USA and Vietnam to discuss and learn more about various issues affecting intercountry adoption.
- » **Record keeping:** Corporate Services managed the reconfiguration of the electronic document management system, which will add an additional layer of security and improve efficiency around searches.
- » **Training:** The social work team hosted a professional development forum in November, at which the keynote speaker, the director of the National Immunisation Office, spoke about intercountry adoption and vaccines.
- » The AAI appointed a full-time research officer to fulfil its research function as set out in the 2010 Adoption Act.
- » **ICAN meeting:** The AAI hosted the annual meeting for the Inter Country Adoption Network (ICAN) in Dublin in November, welcoming delegates from ten other countries to discuss issues around ICA programmes, tracing, illicit practices and data protection.
- » One entry was made in the Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions Register in 2019.

DID YOU KNOW?

FOCUS ON: Data Protection

The work conducted by the AAI is impacted by a number of different legislative provisions. These legislative provisions often overlap in parts. Therefore, for the AAI, supporting individuals affected by adoption who seek data relating to that adoption necessarily involves a very delicate balancing exercise. In keeping with GDPR, the AAI must do all it can to safeguard any personal information it collects, creates, uses and/or shares.

If a person wants to see information that the AAI holds about them, the best way to do this is via a Subject Access Request under Data Protection laws (typically GDPR). The AAI acknowledges the right of any individual to have access to data which has been collected concerning him/ her. In line with GDPR Article 15(4), the Adoption Authority must also balance the right of a person other than that individual to have their personal data protected.



DOMESTIC ADOPTION - 2019

- » 79 Adoption Orders granted.
- » 104 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION - 2019

- » 386 entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA).
- » 48 Declarations of Eligibility & Suitability issued.
- » 27 existing Declarations extended by 12 months.



INFORMATION & TRACING - 2019

- » 560 applications to join the NACPR.
- » 115 new NACPR matches identified.
- » Social work team received 246 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services.
- » 71 applications for the release of birth certs.
- » 37 birth certs released*.
- » 9 applications refused*.



REGISTER OF ACCREDITED BODIES - 2019

- » One body was removed from the register in 2019.
- » Total number on the register at the end of 2019: 6.

*It should be noted that some of these releases/refusals related to requests made prior to 2019

IN THE NEWS:

- » Two teenage boys were found guilty of the murder of 14-year-old Ana Kriégel in Lucan, Co. Dublin, in 2018. Ana had been adopted from Russia at the age of 2. In a victim impact statement, her mother said "life without Ana is no longer, nor is it even an existence".
- » Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year for 2019.
- » In December 2019, authorities in Wuhan, China confirmed that hospitals were treating dozens of cases of pneumonia of "unknown cause" ...

2020



MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D.
To June 2020

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN, DISABILITY, EQUALITY & INTEGRATION

Mr Roderic O’Gorman, T.D.
From June 2020

BOARD OF THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND: TO 31ST OCTOBER, 2020

As in 2019

CEO

Ms Patricia Carey

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS/ BOARD SECRETARY

Ms Tara Downes

HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Ms Fiona Monaghan

HEAD OF COMPLIANCE

Ms Kate O’Hara



***We are in this together,
we can get through it, and
better days will come”***

*Former Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, T.D.,
addressing the nation on 10th April, 2020*

EVENTS

- » Government: The 2020 General Election took place on 8th February. Taoiseach Leo Varadkar resigned on 20th February, and coalition talks commenced between the parties. These talks would continue for four months.
- » Coronavirus: The first case of Covid-19 in Ireland was confirmed on 29th February 2020. Two weeks later all schools, colleges, childcare facilities and cultural institutions were closed, and on 24th March businesses, shops, and all other amenities followed suit in an effort to stop the spread of the virus.
- » In the weeks that followed, all non-essential travel was banned, a limit of a 2km radius was imposed, people were urged not to socialise with anyone outside of their immediate household. As the over-70s and vulnerable cocooned, the Oireachtas passed emergency legislation allowing the State to enforce their recommendations, and giving the Gardaí power to do so.

- » New agreement reached: The former government had continued to lead the country since the election. A new majority coalition government of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party took office on 27th June 2020, with Micheál Martin as Taoiseach until June 2022, at which point Leo Varadkar will take over the role.
- » The country slowly began reopening, but many restrictions remain in place as Covid-19 continues to pose a huge challenge to Ireland, and the world

AAI ACTIVITY

- » The Executive and Board of the Authority were working to ensure that they could continue to provide their service in the face of these new and unexpected challenges.
- » After the Government's announcement on 24th March, while the majority of staff were sent home, a skeleton staff continued to work in the Authority to put a host of procedural and safety measures in place so that the full staff could return to the workplace safely as soon as possible.
- » The Authority made contact with TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency to assess the number of urgent applications upcoming in 2020, and continued to maintain regular contact with TUSLA and the DCYA. The CEO wrote to the Registrar of the High Court, providing details of upcoming adoptions to allow the courts time to prepare for this.
- » The measures undertaken were very successful in allowing urgent adoption matters to be progressed.
- » Ireland's intercountry adoption programme has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, with prospective adoptions paused while various countries impose restrictions. The Authority is working very closely with other countries and accredited agencies to monitor this situation and support the ICA process as much as possible.
- » All staff who had been working remotely returned to the AAI offices on 18th May 2020. The Authority continues to provide its service in a way that is compliant with the ongoing Covid changes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Focus on: Adoptions from Long Term Foster Care - the Covid Challenge

Once a child reaches their 18th birthday, they are no longer eligible for adoption. In cases of long term foster care (LTFC), this can have very serious implications from a legal, familial and socio-cultural point of view. If a child is in LTFC and has the consent of both birth parents, being adopted prior to turning 18 means that they can avail of certain rights.

Adoption is a detailed legal process, and requires a lot of due diligence, paperwork and background preparation. From January 2014 to December 2019 there were 123 adoptions from LTFC. Of the 123 Applications for Adoption Orders, 60 (49%) were made regarding children aged over 16, hereafter referred to as "late age" applications. Of the 60 applications, the vast majority (78%) of children were aged 17, while the remaining 22% were 16.

Late age adoptions clearly present a number of challenges for the Adoption Authority. Adoption is a complex issue, and the Authority is obliged to ensure that consent has been received from both birth parents before the Adoption Order can proceed. Either parent can challenge the application, an application to the High Court may be required, or other unforeseen events may delay proceedings.

The Board of the Adoption Authority holds regular meetings at Shelbourne House. Board meetings designated for hearings take place approximately once a month, although extra hearings can be scheduled as necessary. The preparation phase for these hearings can be lengthy, and unforeseen obstacles can sometimes become apparent only after the data gathering process has commenced.

In 2020, the hearings process was put under serious pressure with the combination of late age adoptions with a limited timeframe for completion, and the need for social distancing. After seeking advice on issues relating to remote hearings, the Authority developed legal and technical protocols for the taking of oral evidence using remote technologies. The Authority began holding remote hearings in May 2020. These measures were very successful in allowing urgent adoption matters to continue to be progressed. A number of additional hearings have been held in 2020 to increase capacity and ensure that every case is given due consideration.



Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Ms Patricia Carey and Mr Kiernan Gildea at the Fáilte Ireland Garden Party in 2017



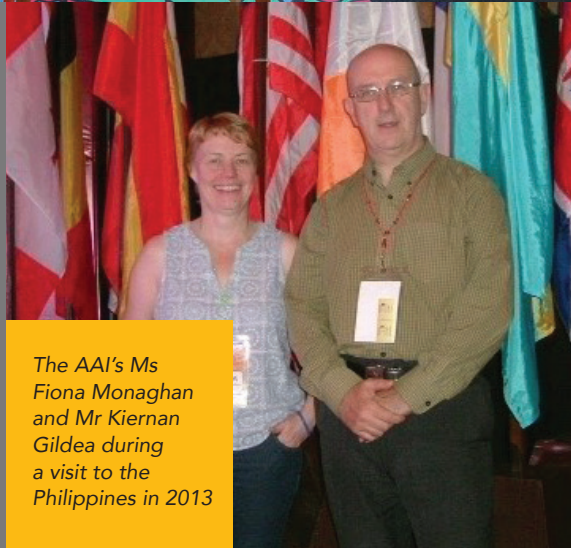
Ms Fiona Monaghan and Mr Adrian Martin receiving a NALA Plain English Award on behalf of Ms Patricia Carey in 2018



After a consultation with young people in 2016, the AAI designed new family-friendly waiting areas and spaces within their offices at Shelbourne House.



Our long-time friend and colleague Norah Gibbons (1952 -2020) speaking at the "Adoption Practice in the aftermath of the Adoption Amendment Act" Seminar held at the AAI in 2017. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.



The AAI's Ms Fiona Monaghan and Mr Kiernan Gildea during a visit to the Philippines in 2013



The Board of the Adoption Authority of Ireland in 2017. Clockwise from top left: Judge Patrick McMahon (retired), Dr Margo Anglim, Dr Helen Buckley, Mr Paul Harrison, Ms Anne O'Flaherty, Dr Geoffrey Shannon (Chairman), Ms Orlaith Traynor (Deputy Chairperson).

MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure the provision of the highest possible standard of adoption-related services, throughout the lifelong adoption process, with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective.



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND



CEO Ms Patricia Carey at the "Adoption Practice in the aftermath of the Adoption Amendment Act" Seminar held at the AAI

Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, AAI, Ms Orlaith Traynor, Deputy Chairperson, and Ms Patricia Carey, CEO, alongside Ms Sharon O'Driscoll from the Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency, meeting various representatives of a childcare facility during a visit to Vietnam in 2019.





ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

Shelbourne House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, DO4 H6F6, Ireland

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