

Thailand adoption programme – appointment of Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) as the Central Authority in Ireland under The Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption has accredited Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency (HHAMA) to facilitate adoptions from Thailand.

This decision is in line with the Authority's policy to maintain its independence as the regulatory body for adoption matters in Ireland and is in keeping with international best practice whereby it is deemed best that the body charged with deciding the suitability of a 'match' i.e. the referral of a child to prospective adoptive parents (paps), should not be put in a position whereby it might have to advocate for those paps. Furthermore, the AAI has statutory responsibility for the maintenance of the Register of Inter Adoptions (RICA). This involves the adjudication of applications received seeking recognition of foreign adoptions. The AAI must remain impartial in the decision-making in those applications and it is felt that facilitating adoptions, the recognition of which it would be called upon later to decide upon is at odds with international best practice in this area.

The Board of the Authority is satisfied that the accreditation of HHAMA to facilitate adoptions from Thailand will result in a positive experience for paps. For example, HHAMA will provide administrative support, to an extent that the resources of the AAI would not permit to date. HHAMA has a committed team who will be able to support applicants in all matters relating to Dossier submission. Added to this service is the ongoing support of the HHAMA database supporting applicants with document renewal reminders and updates.

As part of the mediation of country programmes HHAMA values the individual relationships that they build with sending country authorities which is of benefit to applicants as they fully explore applicant eligibility considerations and the real time situation in a country programme. To this end, HHAMA plan to visit Thailand and to engage with the Thai Central Authority within the year.

Included in the administrative support is the ongoing monitoring of Post Placement commitments with Database reminders and processing support. Furthermore, HHAMA can offer an applicant preparation pre country choice, expectation preparation in relation to additional needs, process and support during the referral process and the very important pre travel preparation where the benefits of having a mediation agency with HHAMA's experience (established 2005) will be most beneficial to applicants. It should also be noted that as a consequence of the notification from Thailand, highlighted by the AAI's web notice in March 2016 the Thai programme will undergo some changes in respect of the children available for adoption and the timing of HHAMA's involvement, bearing in mind their experience should prove to be a positive development in this regard.

As a consequence of the decision to accredit HHAMA, the AAI will no longer be in a position to facilitate adoptions from Thailand. Therefore, all applicants both current and future, will be required to use the services of HHAMA in pursuing adoptions from Thailand.

It should be noted that the status of current application in Thailand will not be affected by the passing of responsibilities for facilitation to HHAMA.

This transfer of responsibilities will incur costs and HHAMA has registered a fee schedule with the AAI which has been accepted by the Board of the Authority. The schedule takes account of those applicants whose dossiers have been sent to Thailand and the fees listed reflect the fact that some elements of the facilitation service have already been provided by the AAI. A copy of the fee schedule for current applicants whose dossiers are in Thailand has been posted to the applicants.

If you would like to speak to a member of staff in the Authority, please contact

Phone: 01 2309305

Email: intercountry@aai.gov.ie

Or you may wish to speak to a member of staff at HHAMA – please contact

Phone: 021 4966805

Email: helpinghands.ama@gmail.com

The formal passing date of the mediation of the Thai programme has been agreed as **Friday 15 February 2019**.