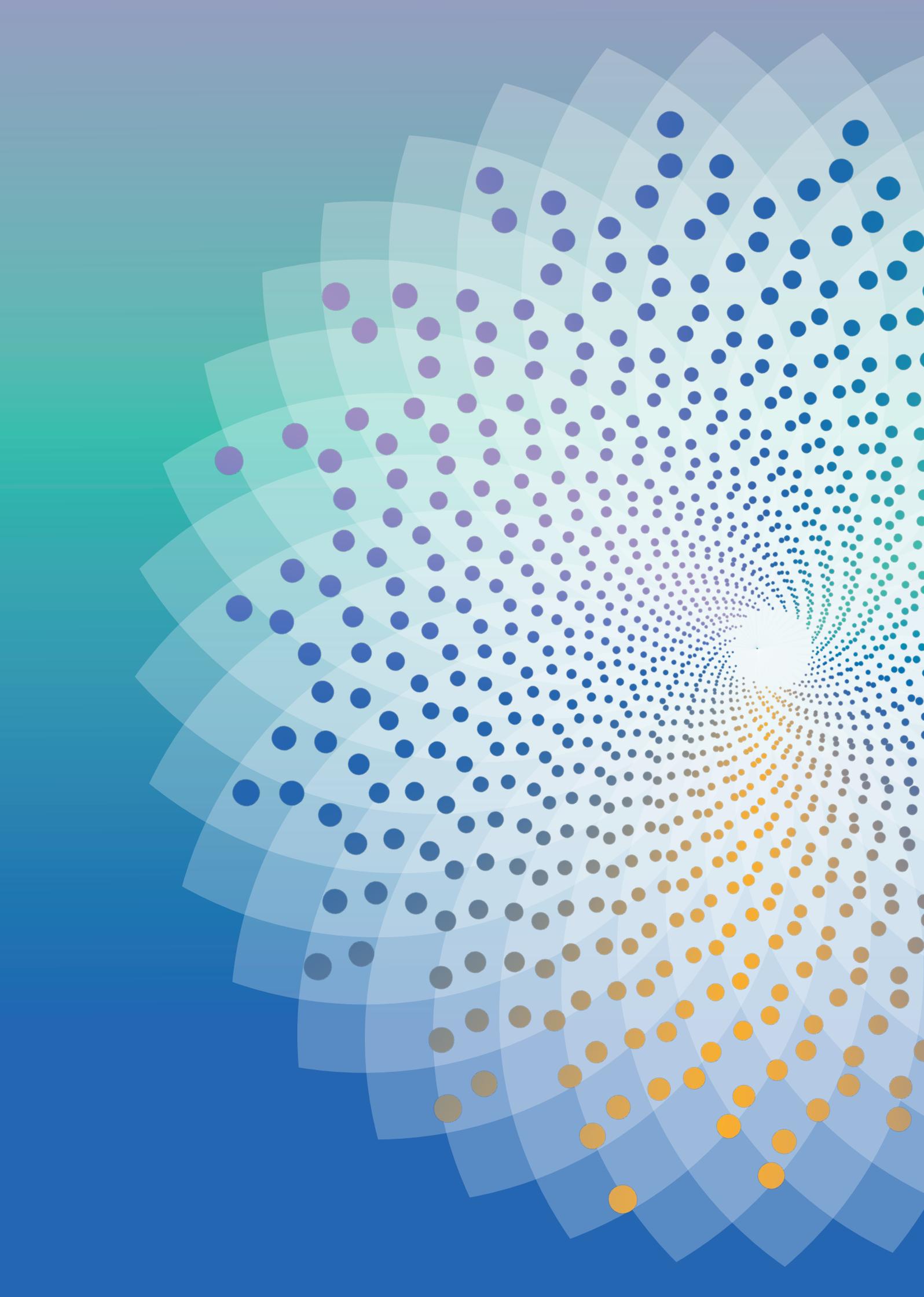




ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Strategic Plan 2025–2027

Adoption Authority of Ireland



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Foreword from the Chairperson and the Chief Executive Officer

We are pleased to present the new three-year Strategic Plan 2025–2027 of the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI).

Recognising the growth and change in our organisation since the previous strategic cycle, 2022–2024, this Strategic Plan aims to guide the AAI in its mission to ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption-related services, with the best interests of the child and young person as the first and paramount objective, and act as the memory institution for our service users.

The AAI developed this strategy in line with our priorities and with regard to the legislation that underpins all our functions: the Adoption Act 2010 (as amended) and the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA).

The AAI commits to continuing to proactively navigate the operational and legislative changes in the landscape of adoption and family formation in Ireland and internationally while maintaining and further developing our current services.

In this plan, we identify the key drivers of our work over the new cycle and detail the AAI's strategic objectives and the ways we aim to achieve them across four thematic contexts: the people we serve; what we do; who delivers our services; and how we deliver our services. Guided by these themes, we are confident that we can achieve our mission and deliver our vision for the AAI.

We recognise that the success of our ambition depends on our staff, and this Strategic Plan provides a framework to foster a culture in the AAI where all our staff feel empowered, challenged and energised, where staff can all grow and learn as we live our values.

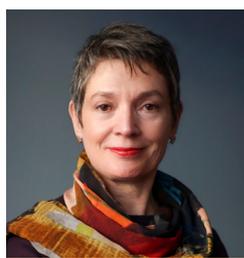
We personally express our gratitude to all stakeholders, internal and external, who contributed their valuable time and insights to the consultations that informed the development of the strategic themes and values that form part of this strategy. Those insights are key to understanding the strategic context the AAI operates within. They have allowed us to identify opportunities to improve outcomes and, ultimately, support our development to continue to deliver in the public interest and in the best interests of all of our services users with compassion, understanding and respect.

Under the Strategic Plan 2025–2027, the AAI remains dedicated to upholding the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and to fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for both services users and staff.

We continue to value and acknowledge the support of the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and that of their department in progressing the policy that shapes the evolving context of how adoption-related services are regulated and delivered.

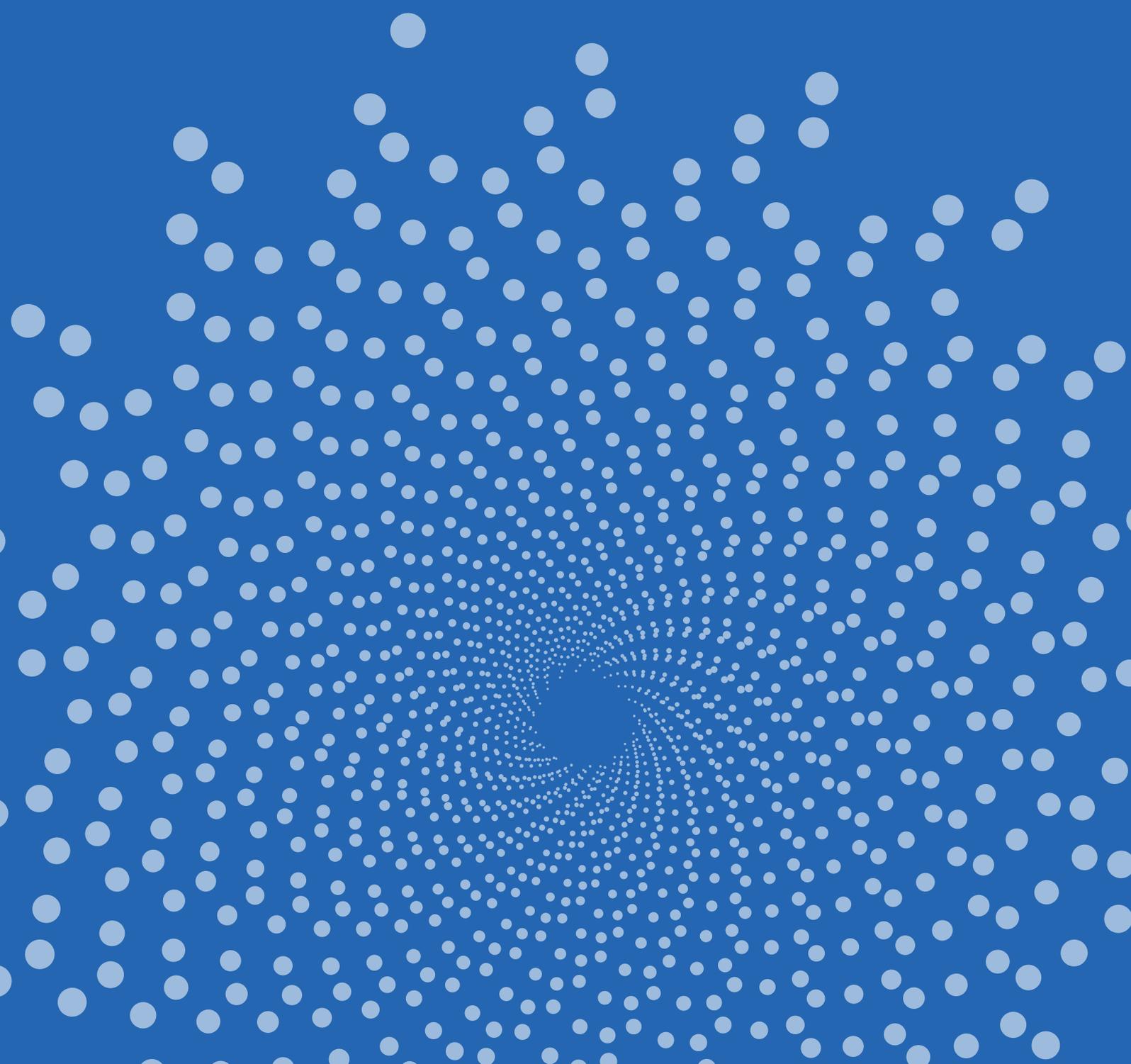


Ms Orlaith Traynor
Chairperson



Dr Lorraine Horgan
Chief Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION



1.1 About Us

The Adoption Authority of Ireland was established under the Adoption Act 2010 on 1 November 2010. The Adoption Act 2010 (as amended) was introduced to improve standards in both domestic and intercountry adoption, replacing its predecessor organisation, the Adoption Board. We are an independent, quasi-judicial statutory body under the aegis of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (the Department).

The AAI's functions and responsibilities are set out in the Adoption Act 2010 (as amended) and the BITA. They can be summarised as

- Being the state authority for domestic adoptions in Ireland – granting Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability, hearing the views of the child or young person and granting adoption orders;
- Being the designated Central Authority for intercountry adoption in the State (under the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption);
- Granting Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability for intercountry adoptions and recognising, where appropriate, adoptions effected in other states and maintaining the Register of Intercountry Adoptions;
- Providing birth, early life, care and medical information to people who were adopted, boarded out, nursed out, resident in a scheduled institution or the subject of an illegal birth registration. These services are provided under the BITA;
- Providing a statutory tracing service, alongside a mediation, brief intervention and adoption support service via a specialised social work team;

- Maintaining the Contact Preference Register (CPR);
- Collecting and maintaining information, data and records about adoption;
- Conducting, commissioning and supporting research into adoption and adoption-related topics;
- Safeguarding records relating to adopted persons and those subject to historic care arrangements;
- Maintaining the Register of Accredited Bodies of entities that are accredited to provide adoption services; and
- Providing advice, on request, to the Minister on matters relating to adoption.

The services we provide are diverse and complex, and our stakeholders represent every part of society, including adopted people of all ages, birth and adoptive families, and others whose lives involved adoption in some way. In addition to the Department and our accredited agencies, we work closely with other government departments, state agencies, representative and advocacy groups and international partners to deliver our services.

1.2 Our Strategic Context

In recent years, the landscape of adoption and family formation in Ireland, and internationally, has changed a great deal. The AAI has also undergone significant change since the introduction of the BITA. We expect the pace of change to continue over the lifetime of our strategy, and we will need to be flexible and adaptable over the coming years to respond to our changing operating environment.

We have identified the following strategic drivers as being the most important for us in the coming years:

- **Legislative changes:** Changes to law and regulation around adoption and family formation have been, and will continue to be, a major driver of our strategic decisions in the next three years.

- The BITA led to the establishment of the CPR for which the AAI is responsible. The BITA also established a statutory tracing service along with access to information provisions to be delivered by the AAI which led to a surge in demand for this service on its introduction in October 2022.
- The introduction of the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024 provides for regulation of a wide range of practices in relation to assisted human reproduction and surrogacy.

Our stewardship of the legislation and its effective implementation for which we are responsible, as it continually changes, and our engagement with government, other agencies, organisations and our current and potential service users (includes people who are adopted, other historic care arrangements, as well as the birth families and the adoptive families) are central organising features of this strategy.

- **Changes in the pattern of adoption and adoption-related services:** Patterns and trends in domestic and intercountry adoption continue to change, and this naturally impacts the core services provided by the AAI. This can be proactively managed by underpinning the design and delivery of our services with a clear evidence base.

- **The public discourse around adoption:** The public perception of adoption is heavily influenced by Ireland's history of adoption, and the legacy of Mother and Baby and County Homes institutions. The societal trauma associated with Ireland's history of institutional care, alongside the advocacy of adopted people, their birth and adoptive families, has a strong influence on public awareness, confidence and trust in the services we provide.

- **Changes within the AAI:** Legislative changes and new service requirements in recent years have driven a rapid change in the size and scope of the AAI as an organisation. We are also adapting to new ways of working and the influence of new technologies on working life.

1.3 Achievement of Our Strategic Plan 2022–2024

The AAI’s Strategic Plan 2022–2024 set out to assist the organisation in providing and overseeing the highest possible standards of adoption services, with the best interest of children as the first and paramount priority. To achieve this, the Strategic Plan set out six key priorities with 12 associated goals and a range of objectives and actions to be undertaken over the period.



Figure 1: Six key priorities contained in the AAI’s Strategic Plan 2022–2024

It is important to note that there has been significant change in the operating environment and across the organisation over the life of the current Strategic Plan. The introduction of the BITA led to an increase in demand for services provided by the AAI, which in turn contributed to the increase in staff across the organisation, bringing significant change to the organisation. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic created major disruption across the world, changing patterns of adoption, both domestic and intercountry, and impacting on the services provided by the AAI and the manner of delivery, with remote delivery becoming a feature during the pandemic.

In mid-2024, the AAI conducted a review on progress made against the goals, objectives and actions set out

in the Strategic Plan. Given the significant changes in the AAI’s operating environment, the AAI has made significant progress against the objectives set out within the current strategy.

The AAI assessed progress against a total of 161 objectives and actions across the 12 goals set out within the Plan. Throughout the life of the 2022–2024 Strategic Plan, the AAI made progress across a range of deliverables and had many achievements, highlighting the effective implementation of that strategy and the ongoing and effective delivery of its statutory functions relating to the granting of adoption orders and the processing of intercountry adoption applications.

Some of the key deliverables and achievements are set out below.

The development of the organisation, through the establishment of the Information Services and Records Directorate, and its new processes to enable the implementation of the BITA was a major undertaking for the AAI. Following the commencement in full of the BITA in October 2022, the AAI was achieving the release of birth and early life records to applicants within the statutory timeframes from September 2023. The CPR was established on a statutory footing in the BITA, and by early December 2024 a total of 4,006 people were registered on the CPR.

The digitisation of the AAI's adoption records and those it acquired continued over the period of the current Strategic Plan, and extensive work on the organisation's document management system was completed.

A robust statutory tracing service and bespoke tracing model was also developed by the AAI under the BITA, with over 900 tracing applications referred to the AAI by early December 2024. In addition, a dedicated tracing service for intercountry adoptees in Ireland was established.

Other key deliverables include the agreement of a new three-year Research Strategy for the period 2023–2025 and the progressing of several key research projects derived from this strategy, including a new study to document the experience of intercountry adopted people in Ireland. The launch in July 2024 of the research report, *Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022*, was the culmination of several years of research that explored the development of the Irish domestic adoption process over a 70-year period, capturing experiences from both voluntary and professional perspectives.

The significant increase in the staff of the AAI (32 in 2022 to 57 at end of 2024) was accompanied by the expansion of the supports available to our staff through, inter alia, a well-being committee, an enhanced employee assistance programme and a social committee as well as periodic in-person 'lunch-and-learn' sessions.

At the point of the review a total of 59 actions were completed with a further 73 on track to be completed by the end of the period of the Strategic Plan, accounting for approximately 82% of all actions set out within the Plan. There were 20 actions which had not commenced at the time of this review, with six actions being deprioritised for various reasons including capacity and other priorities, Department recommendations, and actions being paused pending the enactment of legislation.

The following table provides a breakdown of the status of all actions under each of the 12 goals in the Plan.

Goal	Complete	On Track	Not Commenced	Deprioritised	Delayed / at Risk	On Hold / Significant Issue
Goal 1.1	7	2	-	-	-	-
Goal 2.1	2	3	4	-	-	-
Goal 2.2	2	10	-	-	-	-
Goal 3.1	13	3	-	1	-	-
Goal 3.2	1	2	-	1	-	-
Goal 4.1	1	1	10	-	-	-
Goal 4.2	17	11	2	2	-	-
Goal 5.1	6	8	1	-	2	-
Goal 5.2	-	11	1	-	-	-
Goal 5.3	1	10	1	-	-	1
Goal 6.1	2	9	1	2	-	-
Goal 6.2	7	3	-	-	-	-
Total	59	73	20	6	2	1

Figure 2: Breakdown of the status of all actions under each of the 12 goals in the AAI's 2022–2024 Strategic Plan

1.4 Our Strategic Planning Journey

Our approach to developing this Strategic Plan was shaped by a desire to be as inclusive and engaging as possible with our stakeholders, partners and staff. The AAI commissioned external expertise to facilitate the process and to manage the stakeholder consultation exercise. The process is shown graphically below.



Our approach was intended to ensure that our strategy reflects both our ambition as an organisation, as well as the voice of our service users and stakeholders.

As part of this process, many stakeholders participated in one-to-one discussions with the consulting team, took part in an online public

consultation, submitted written observations and engaged in focus groups and meetings. We are grateful to contributors for their time, for their candour and for their guidance in helping us identify how our vision can be progressed over the forthcoming years. Our key stakeholders consulted in this process included are set out below.



The Board



The Senior Management Team



Our Staff



The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth



Our Accredited Bodies and Partner Organisations



Our Service Users



Adoption Advocacy Bodies and Researchers

These engagements were designed to consider all aspects of the strategy and how best to shape the future of the AAI. These consultations were central to informing the development of the strategic themes and values to realise the ambition of the AAI. The feedback was used to consider the strategic context, identify how we can improve outcomes and support our strategic ambition.

The STEEPLE¹ analysis at Appendix 1 sets out a summary of the key issues in the AAI's external environment that were identified based on the documentary analysis and following the engagements with internal and external stakeholders.

The key discussions arising from these engagements were thematically analysed, and an overview of the key themes is set out below.

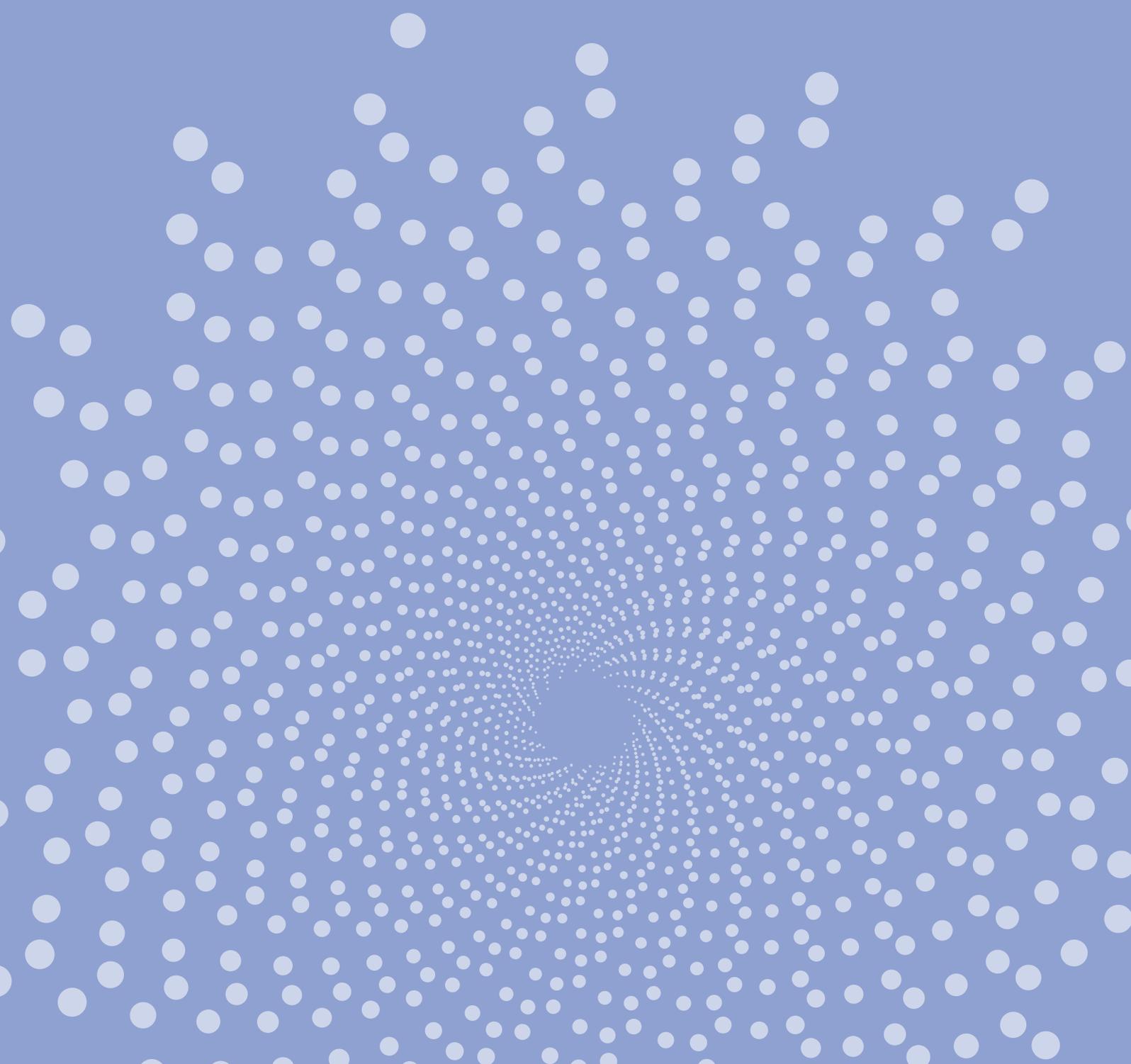
In the following pages we have set out our mission, vision and values and our strategic objectives. Our objectives are organised across four themes that support the achievement of our mission and vision, informed by values which will guide our approach to our work. Each goal is complemented with key actions and measurable indicators of success.

Recognising our obligations as a public body under the terms of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, and the need to be a champion of human rights in all of our duties, we have set out, in Appendix B: Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, an overview of the practices the AAI commits to in all our work.

BOARD	MANAGEMENT STAFF	EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases going to court and the challenge this presents • Evolving legal landscape for family formation and its influence on the AAI • The Board's dual role • Relationships are critical (Tusla, Dept., etc.) • Staffing changes in the AAI • Public communication is good but more can be done (utilisation of research/ media/website) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAI is mostly strong on functional delivery • There are further opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder engagement - Contributions to legislative review and policy formation - Building the evidence base • Far greater scope for outreach, public engagement and communications • Importance of the governance arrangements with our stakeholders • Building a positive, capable and resilient workforce • Staff desire for internal career growth and learning opportunities via formal development pathways • Enhanced focus on staff retention, staff well-being activities and recognition of staff endeavours • Increased two-way communication flows and consistency in sharing of leadership decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAI is largely capable, open and responsive • There is a feeling that the AAI does not focus on the 'user experience' or public communications • Staff changes seen as creating some turbulence • Demand can overpower delivery times • Need to do 'more of the same but better' – reduce waiting lists and having faster processes for example • Should be proactive in addressing changing needs and trends in adoption globally • Finance and governance capacity should be bolstered

¹ STEEPLE is an acronym for social, technological, economic, environmental, political, legal and ethical factors for consideration

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES



2.1 Our Mission

To ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption-related services, with the best interests of the child and young person as the first and paramount objective, and act as the memory institution for our service users.

2.2 Our Vision

To be the centre of excellence, and principal authoritative source of information, on all aspects of adoption and adoption-related services and to deliver these services in a way that is consistent, high-quality, trusted and responsive.

2.3 Our Values



Empathy and Respect

We recognise that adopted people of all ages, birth and adoptive families all have their unique circumstances and needs. Our services are highly consequential to them, and we commit to being sensitive and conscious of each person's needs as we deliver our functions. Everybody that engages with us is treated courteously and with dignity. We listen to and are focused on empowering our staff, our partners and our service users.



Integrity and Accountability

We are honest, open and transparent in the delivery of services, being clear about what we do, why we do it and how we do it, and communicating the consequences of our actions.



Collaboration and Teamwork

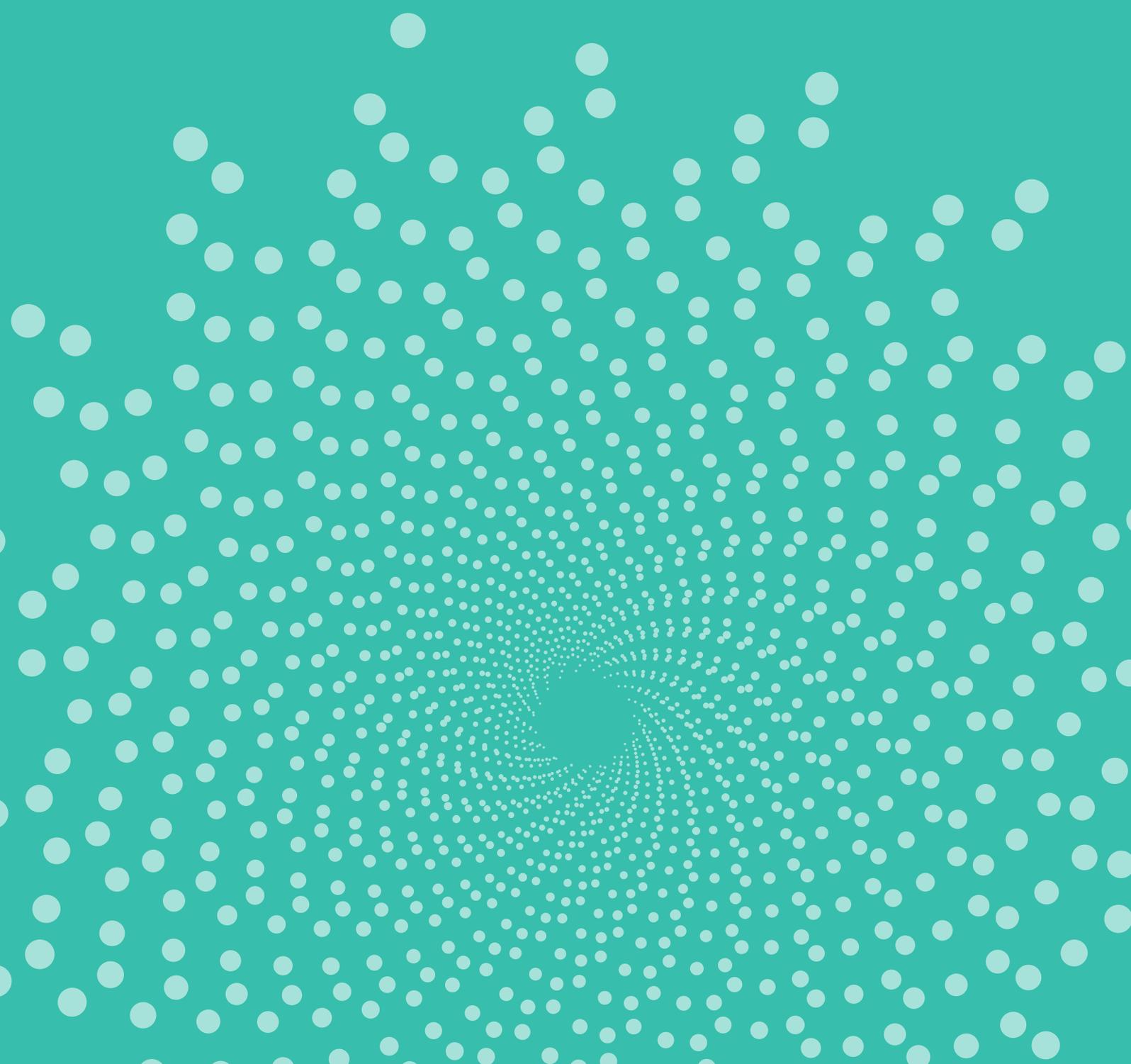
We work as a team, and as part of a wider team with our staff, partners and service users in the delivery of our functions. Through collaboration and communication, we ensure the highest standard of service delivery and uphold our duties as a trusted service provider and regulator.



Adaptability and Innovation

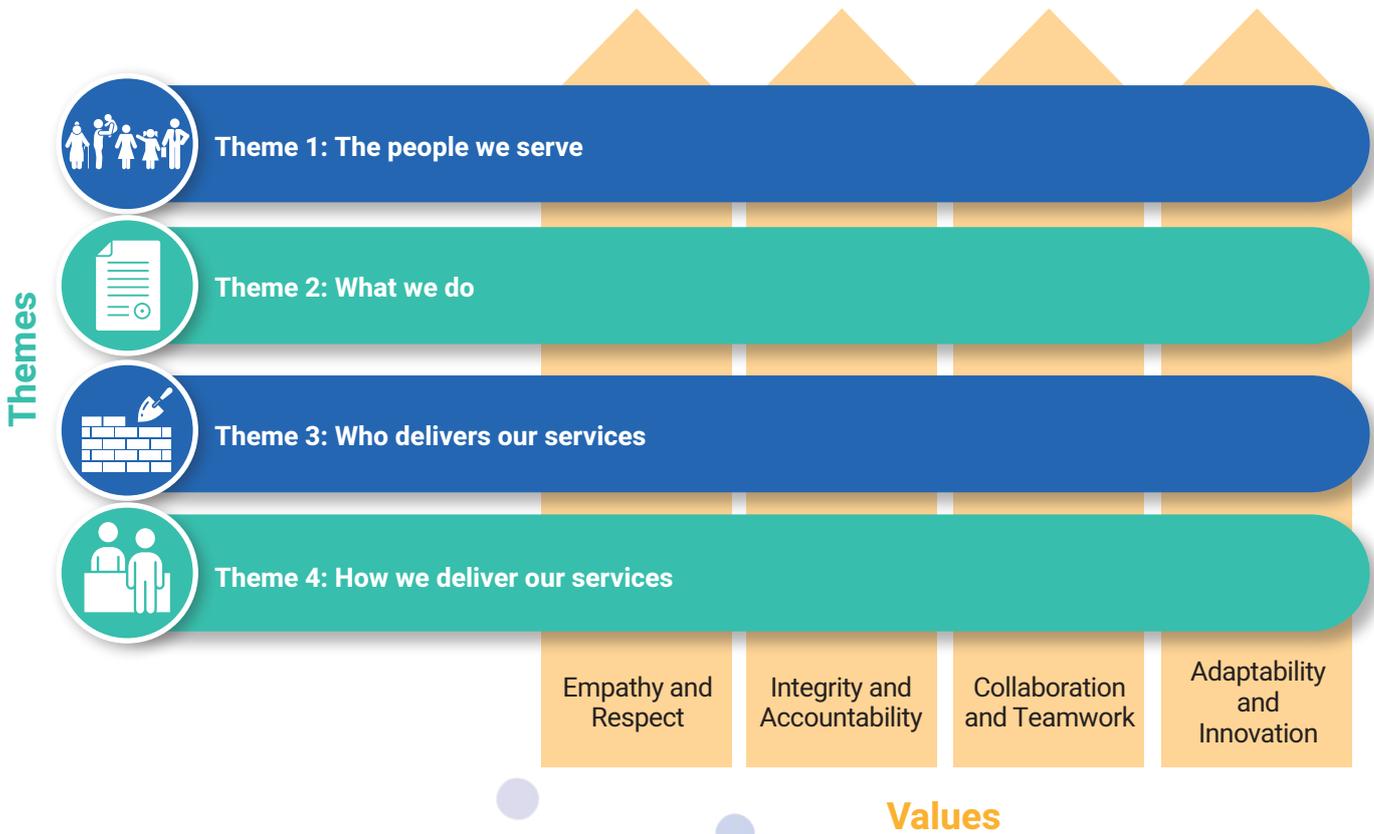
We embrace change and build the resilience of both our staff and the organisation so that we can respond and adapt to the ever-changing legal and societal environment. This is underpinned by a culture that fosters innovation and encourages ongoing quality improvement in the delivery of our functions and services.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



3.1 Overview

Our strategic objectives are set out under four themes, each playing a critical role in achieving our mission, delivering our vision and living our values.



3.2 Theme 1: The people we serve

3.2.1 Overview

We recognise the diversity of our service users. We will ensure that we will deliver our functions and services with the best interests of children and young people or service users at the core of our work and deliver the best outcome to meet those interests. We will do this by ensuring the unique needs and perspectives of our service users are at the heart of our work, and that they have a supported, positive user experience.

We recognise that adoption and post-adoption-related services affect people and families throughout our society, from children and young people to adults, birth families and adoptive families. In providing our range of services we will ensure that we always hold the interests of our service users, particularly children, at the heart of what we do.

As adoption forms one part of a wider ecosystem of family formation and social infrastructure in Ireland, we understand that openness and accessibility should be at the centre of our work.

The goals set out below are designed to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people and service-users and to enhance the experience of our service users in the process.

3.2.2 Strategic Goals

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
1	Hear the views and acknowledge the interests of the child and young person in adoption matters	Keep the views of children to the forefront before and during all adoption processes. a Review and map the experience of children and young people as they engage with us and with adoption services, identifying critical points and opportunities for hearing the views and acknowledging the interests of the child or young person.	<i>Development and ongoing update of experience map.</i> <i>Identification of critical points and opportunities through the experience map.</i>
		b Establish a Children and Young People Advisory/Advocacy Board for the purpose of ensuring the views of children and young people are heard and their interests acknowledged in key activities and developments.	<i>Children and Young People Advisory Board established with Terms of Reference in place setting out roles, responsibilities and membership.</i> <i>Views of children and young people are heard and their interests acknowledged in all developments in adoption through the Children and Young People Advisory Board.</i>
		c Development of a Children and Young People Advisory Board Impact Report to assess the benefits of the establishment of the Board.	<i>Children and Young People Advisory Board Impact Assessment Report developed to assess the performance of the Board and the impact it has had, providing recommendations for the future.</i>

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
2	Improved public communications and public information about adoption and the AAI	a Devise a coordinated approach and strategy to develop the organisation's voice and efforts in public communications through a dedicated communication resource available to the organisation.	<i>Public communication strategy in place and operating.</i> <i>Appropriate evaluation of public sentiment or perspective around adoption rolled out.</i>
		b Review and assess our approach to formal engagement with, and the gathering of advice and input from, external stakeholders and partners. In particular, establish and formalise a suite of forums and advisory groups to facilitate a two-way flow of information between us and adopted people, birth families, adoptive families and others who fall under our remit as set out in the Adoption Act 2010 and the BITA 2022.	<i>Establishment of advisory group comprising representatives from our stakeholder groups including adopted people, birth families, adoptive families and others who fall under our legislative remit, with formal protocols in relation to engagement.</i> <i>Two to three engagements per annum with the advisory group and implementation planning and delivery of outputs from this group.</i>
		c Develop an integrated communications strategy, which addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Standard communications protocols for clear and consistent stakeholder interactions; ■ Social media strategy (and a strategic approach to any other relevant communications channels); ■ Media engagement strategy; ■ Comprehensive stakeholder/audience mapping; ■ A stakeholder sentiment assessment approach; and ■ Key messages and outcomes for the duration of the strategy. 	<i>Strategy developed and implementation in train ensuring standardised communication, thus increasing the public perception and understanding of the AAI.</i>
		d Promote and promulgate AAI's approach to, and model of, tracing to wider audiences.	<i>AAI's Tracing Model published and presented at conferences/forums as a means of disseminating good practice approaches and facilitating feedback and insights from practitioners and academics to enhance the Model.</i>
		e Ensure that AAI research reports and outputs are effectively disseminated to a wide audience of stakeholders through using innovative, accessible formats.	<i>All research material published in accessible formats and made available to the public and relevant stakeholders.</i>
3	Build our understanding of the experience and perspective of intercountry adopted persons	a Design and implement a process of meaningful engagement with Irish intercountry adopted persons, and build on them (through research and communication) in order to enhance our understanding of their perspectives and with a view to improving services for this important group.	<i>Establishment of an Intercountry Adoption Forum and agreed programme of engagement.</i>

3.3 Theme 2: What we do

3.3.1 Overview

We will continuously work to deliver our services efficiently, effectively and in line with our values. We will evaluate what we do and work to enhance the evidence base for how we carry out our functions.

For our service users, the quality and effectiveness of our services can have a significant impact on the course of their lives. We understand the importance of doing what we do well, and continuously working

to improve what we do and how we do it, working with our partners and service users to ensure that the experience of engaging with adoption and adoption-related services is as positive as it can be.

3.3.2 Strategic Goals

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
4	To effectively discharge our functions under our legislation, enhance the implementation of our functions and support legislative developments	Engage with the Department, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and other relevant stakeholders to continue to evolve and respond to the changing global trend in intercountry adoption, ensuring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A clear evidence base for our approach, including the consideration of alternative and sustainable models of intercountry adoption mediation services; ■ A consultative approach; and ■ The views are heard and the interests are supported of intercountry adopted people (linked to Action 4a). 	<p><i>Creation of the evidence base for our approach to responding to intercountry adoption and the identification of a sustainable model of intercountry adoption mediation services.</i></p> <p><i>Engagement with key stakeholders, including the Intercountry Adoption Forum.</i></p>
		Engage with the Department, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and stakeholders to explore how the AAI can support the Department’s consideration of a national approach to open or semi-open adoption, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assisting the Department to explore if and how a statutory basis for open or semi-open adoption might operate; ■ Supporting the Department through mechanisms which could include international benchmarking and/or research in the area. 	<p><i>Initial engagement on open adoption with key stakeholders, including the Department.</i></p> <p><i>Support the Department’s policy development on open or semi-open adoption through effective communication with key stakeholders and partners.</i></p>

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
4	To effectively discharge our functions under our legislation, enhance the implementation of our functions and support legislative developments	<p>Subject to the emerging outputs and recommendations of the Review of Domestic Infant Adoption (see item 5d below), work with our partners and service users to explore the development of National Domestic Adoption Standards to underpin the delivery of domestic adoption services, and to explore enshrining these standards in statute or regulation.</p> <p>c</p>	<i>Engagement and outcomes achieved relating to the decision on the development of National Domestic Adoption Standards.</i>
5	Contribute to the development of policy and legislation relating to adoption and family formation	<p>Conclude the research project looking at the impact of the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2024 on adoption legislation and disseminate the findings in relation to the effect this emerging law and regulation for surrogacy and assisted human reproduction may have on the AAI and on extant law and regulation for adoption and adoption-related services.</p> <p>a</p>	<i>Published research report and recommendations disseminated and discussed with relevant parties.</i>
		<p>Offer advice and expert input into the ongoing review of relevant legal and regulatory frameworks for family formation, focusing on increasing transparency, person-centredness, release of records and alignment with effective practice internationally.</p> <p>b</p>	<i>Contribution to all relevant legislative and regulatory reviews, where requested.</i> <i>Formal engagement mechanisms in place.</i>
		<p>Continue our active participation in the statutory review of the BITA and deliver on the recommendations applicable to the AAI.</p> <p>c</p>	<i>Contribution complete and published.</i> <i>Implementation of recommendations from the review applicable to the AAI.</i>
		<p>Continue our involvement in the EU programme (Technical Support Instrument) supported by DG Reform of the European Commission, working in partnership with the Department and UNICEF, on the review of domestic infant adoption in Ireland.</p> <p>d</p>	<i>Implementation of recommendations relevant to the AAI.</i>
6	Review the current AAI Research Strategy and develop a successor strategy	<p>The current AAI Research Strategy concludes during the first year of this Strategic Plan. Conduct a review of the outcomes of this strategy to inform the development of a successor strategy aligned with this strategic planning cycle.</p> <p>a</p>	<i>Assessment of the AAI Research Strategy to inform the development of future iterations.</i> <i>Development of a new AAI Research Strategy to promote the AAI as a leader in the field of Irish adoption research, aligning with the strategic planning cycle.</i>
		<p>Explore the scope for, and implications of, the use of AAI data to support our research function, and whether legislative change is required to enable the most impactful use of this data.</p> <p>b</p>	<i>Agreed position/proposed legislative derogations under GDPR (Art. 89) for the use of AAI data.</i>
		<p>Commence research into the trajectory of children from long-term foster care into adoption, to provide an evidence base around the mechanisms, influences and potential delays in this system.</p> <p>c</p>	<i>Brief report addressing children's pathways into adoption from long-term foster care, outlining any challenges/obstacles encountered.</i>

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like	
7	Implement a culture of continuous improvement in the delivery of our services	a	Dedicated Strategy for the Acquisition, Retention and Safeguarding of Relevant Records developed for Board approval and implementation commenced.	<i>Strategy in place and in process of implementation.</i>
		b	Reexamine completed information releases under BITA Parts 2–4 to applicants against records acquired subsequently by AAI for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ additional relevant records; and ■ complete supplementary information releases for such applicants. 	<i>300 completed cases reviewed per annum for each year of strategy.</i>
		c	Complete AAI obligations under Theme 3, Action 6 of the 'Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions'.	<i>Transfer of selected records to the National Centre for Research and Remembrance (NCRR) completed.</i>
		d	Timely compliance with Sections 22 and 24 of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme 2022 to the Office of the Chief Deciding Officer (OCDO) required for the administration/implementation of the Redress Payment Scheme.	<i>Sharing of digital surrogates and access to original relevant records facilitated in line with AAI-OCDO (Department) agreements.</i>
		e	Engage with relevant stakeholders to identify and develop new approaches in working with birth mothers following the introduction of the BITA, ensuring the inclusion of the views and the experiences of birth mothers.	<i>New approaches identified, piloted and evaluated.</i>
		f	Engage with relevant stakeholders and community-based organisations to continue developing creative approaches to support intercountry adoptees in their search for origins in their country of birth.	<i>New approaches identified, piloted and evaluated.</i>
		g	Explore with the Department, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and other stakeholders, the AAI's capacity, and the relevant associated required governance structures, to undertake adoption assessments.	<i>Potential new area of practice evaluated.</i>
8	Leverage the use of technology to support service delivery	a	Deliver consolidated archival access points from across the AAI's records for our current and historic services users, in digital form to ensure timely, efficient and accurate information retrieval and release.	<i>80% of all accessioned records indexed within AAI information management systems.</i>
		b	Scope the introduction, from our ICT providers, of online tools that allow for more secure document handling and information dissemination in the provision of our services.	<i>Functional and non-functional requirements assessed against suite of products, DPIA conducted and pilot completed.</i>
		c	Ensure the AAI is prepared for the transition to becoming an AI augmented organisation by enhancing our data readiness in a manner that protects the fundamental rights of service users.	<i>Fundamental Rights Impact Assessment (FRIA) process developed and deployed.</i> <i>Compliance with EU Artificial Intelligence Act (EU/2024/1689) implementation milestones, 2025, 2026 and 2027.</i>

3.4 Theme 3: Who delivers our services

3.4.1 Overview

We will make the AAI an excellent place to work, supporting our staff to develop and grow within their roles and within the organisation. We will ensure that the AAI has the right mix of skills, experience and culture to allow the organisation to thrive.

We recognise that in order to deliver this strategy, we will need a culture where we all live our values, and where we all feel empowered to deliver high quality public services. We want the AAI to be an exciting and

challenging place to work, and for our staff to have opportunities to grow and develop through formalised career development pathways.

3.4.2 Strategic Goals

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
9	Design and roll out 'One AAI', a programme designed to build cohesion and engagement among our staff	a Development and roll-out of the AAI's first HR strategy, incorporating a well-being pillar.	<i>Design and implementation of an AAI HR Strategy that has been developed in conjunction with our staff and that meets their needs and those of the organisation.</i>
		b Develop and roll out a series of AAI-wide events to enhance and improve employee interaction and engagement, this could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lunch-and-learn sessions; ■ Townhalls and feedback sessions; ■ Staff endeavour recognition events and celebration of key deliverables ■ All staff surveys, including an annual employee engagement survey; and ■ social and charitable events. 	<i>Development and implementation of a shared schedule of monthly lunch-and-learn and other types of staff sessions available on the staff intranet.</i> <i>Scheduling of quarterly townhall sessions for all staff, providing an open forum for staff to raise questions.</i>
		c Develop a programme of internal communication and knowledge sharing about the AAI for staff, to include basic onboarding information and detailed information about the work and structures of each part of the organisation as well as improved two-way information flows.	<i>Programme for internal communication and knowledge sharing developed and its ongoing communication with staff.</i> <i>Understanding and information about the AAI shared with all staff resulting in a universal understanding of processes and structures.</i>
		d Ensure that each department in the AAI has access to relevant research to help enhance their service delivery, with support and guidance from the Research team as required.	<i>All research material made available to staff in the organisation in an accessible format.</i>

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
10	Develop and implement a Strategic Workforce Plan	a Conduct a workforce analysis, mapping knowledge, skills, competence and capacity across the organisation.	<i>Organisation-wide skill and capacity matrix developed to inform the Strategic Workforce Plan.</i>
		b Assess the anticipated future workforce needs of the AAI and conduct a gap analysis against the existing workforce analysis.	<i>Future workforce needs assessment and gap analysis completed.</i>
		c Engage with staff, partners and the Department in relation to current and future workforce needs and create a comprehensive Strategic Workforce Plan for the AAI.	<i>Development of a Strategic Workforce Plan enabling the AAI to achieve the goals set out within this Strategic Plan.</i>
		d Submit relevant business cases for any new posts that may be identified in the Strategic Workforce Plan for consideration by Department for sanction.	<i>Business case submitted for all new posts identified in the Strategic Workforce Plan.</i>
		e Recruitment to new posts in line with AAI's recruitment policy and procedures.	<i>All recruitment to new posts conducted in line with the AAI's recruitment policy and procedures.</i>
11	Review the existing structure and ensure the design of the organisation can ensure we are the right shape and the right size to deliver on our purpose and functions	a Review organisation and management structure in dialogue with the Board and all staff, which will involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishment of the AAI's Target Operating Model (TOM). ■ Mapping of the new organisation structure to reflect the TOM. 	<i>Seamless transition to the TOM identified within the Strategic Workforce Plan.</i>
		b Revise as required roles and role descriptions in dialogue with representative bodies and staff to ensure full collaboration for effective implementation.	<i>Revised organisation structure is designed and implemented that enables the strategy and our statutory functions to be optimally delivered.</i>
		c Conduct a change readiness and impact assessment to determine the organisational needs in respect of organisational, cultural and structural change arising from the TOM and revised structure roll-out.	<i>Change plan including change readiness and impact assessment completed.</i>
12	Establish an employee-wide learning and development (L&D) programme to support professional and personal development for our staff	a Design, procure or promote available all-staff L&D opportunities in topics of relevance to all of our staff to reflect the findings of the strategic workforce planning exercise.	<i>Programme of L&D opportunities developed and communicated to staff, and staff supported to avail of ongoing professional and personal development.</i>
		b Create a bespoke professional development framework for all employees to allow for individuals to undertake L&D programmes of relevance to their roles and their career development aspirations.	<i>Professional Development Framework developed and implemented.</i>

3.5 Theme 4: How we deliver our services

3.5.1 Overview

We will ensure that our governance, management and organisational enabling mechanisms are fit for purpose, and we will work to continuously improve them.

In order to deliver the highest possible standards of support for our service users, we understand the importance of having appropriate systems, processes and governance in place within the organisation. In

doing so, we aim to ensure that our staff are aligned with the needs of our service users and the delivery of our services is conducted in a manner to have the greatest impact.

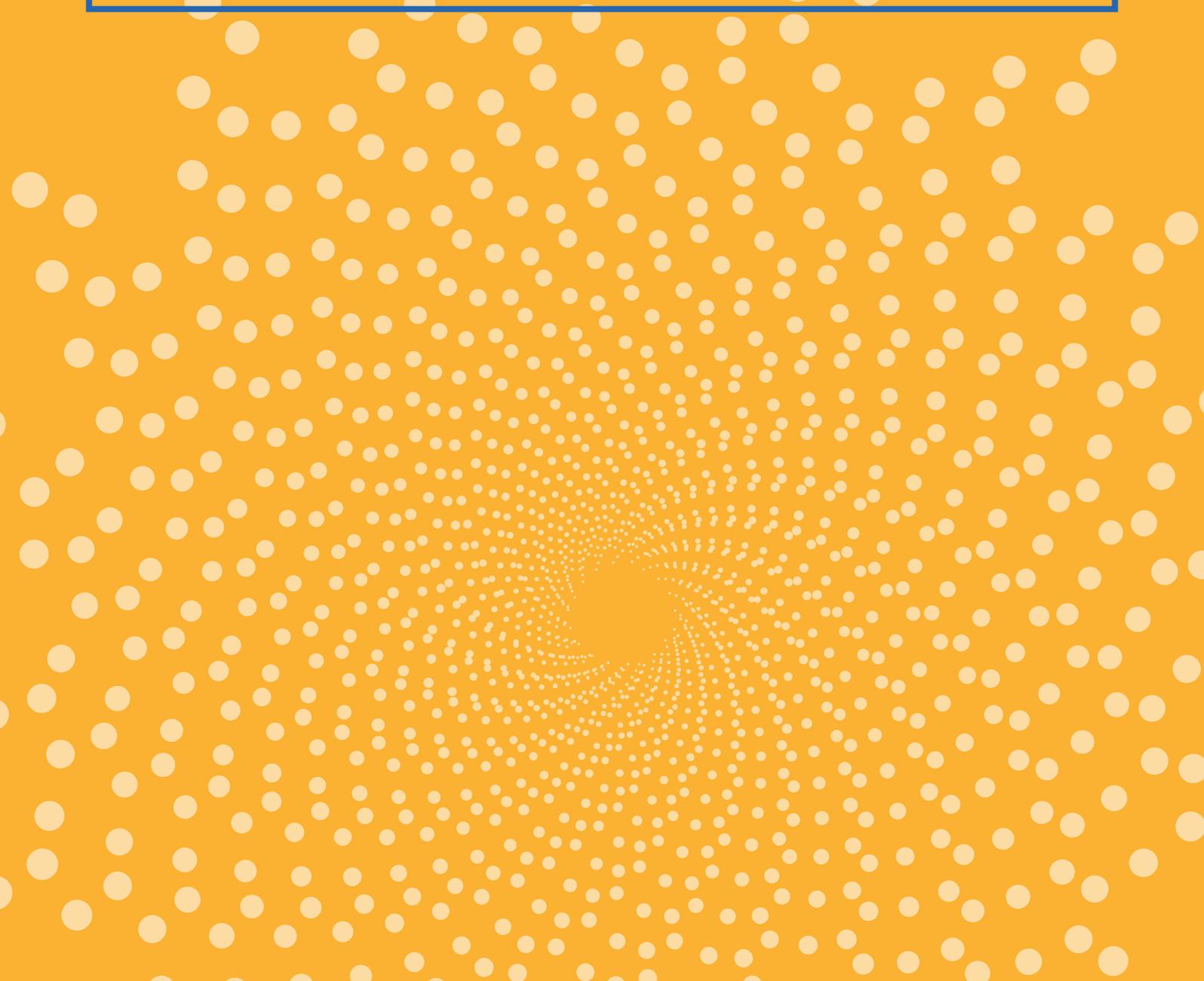
3.5.2 Strategic Goals

The strategic goals and associated actions and performance indicators under this theme, which addresses our systems, processes and governance, are

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
13	Evaluate and enhance our services functions	a Evaluate our capacity to deliver effective service in-house rather than on an outsourced basis, particularly in the finance, legal and communications fields, to ensure that our 'corporate spine' is fit for purpose and future proofed.	<i>Assessment of the AAI's corporate services functions against relevant benchmarks to ensure the resourcing of these services and related processes are fit for purpose, and functions and activities that can be delivered in-house, subject to the requisite resourcing, are established in-house.</i> <i>Implementation of recommendations relating to the corporate spine of the AAI arising from the Department's Periodic Critical Review (PCR) and the Strategic Workforce Plan.</i>
		b Conduct a comprehensive review and update to our suite of HR policies and procedures.	<i>New Employee Handbook approved and in operation.</i> <i>Revised HR Policy suite operating transparently and consistently for all employees, and made available in an accessible format for all staff.</i>
		c Design and implementation of a new, deeper comprehensive and uniform staff induction programme for all new staff joining the AAI.	<i>Staff induction programme designed and implemented for all new employees.</i>

Ref	Strategic Goal	Key Actions	What Success Looks Like
14	Ensure a timely and smooth Board transition up to and beyond November 2025	a Design and roll out a new Board Member Induction programme, and an ongoing learning and development programme for the Board.	<i>Board Member Induction programme, and ongoing learning and development programme for Board members developed and implemented.</i> <i>Seamless Board transition in 2025 in line with the Induction Programme.</i> <i>Ongoing learning and development of the Board in line with the learning and development programme and annual Board evaluation process.</i>
		b Continually review and evaluate the Board governance architecture and policy frameworks.	<i>Annual review of Board governance architecture and policy frameworks completed, ensuring ongoing alignment with best practice.</i>
		c Implementation of the relevant recommendations contained in the Department's PCR report and other governance evaluations.	<i>All recommendations of the PCR report and Effectiveness Review relating to the Board implemented.</i>
		d Promote the smooth transition of new members on to the Risk and Audit Committee and the Research Subcommittee, concurrent with the appointment of the new Board in 2025.	<i>Smooth transition, to include induction and learning and development programme planning, of new members on to the Board's subcommittees, aligning with the Board transition in 2025.</i>
15	Evaluate and enhance our regulatory oversight functions	a In partnership with stakeholders, conduct a review of our approach to the monitoring, oversight and inspection of the bodies accredited by the AAI to ensure that are regulatory approaches are fit for purpose and seek to ensure value for money for all parties concerned.	<i>Revised oversight procedures in place that meet the statutory requirements and that are aligned with contemporary regulatory oversight mechanisms.</i>
16	Foster the AAI's culture of innovation in how we carry out our work	a Promote opportunities for our staff to explore and test new ways of working.	<i>Continuous improvement and innovative practices are shared across the organisation.</i>
		b Deliver commitments under Theme 1, Digital and Innovation at Scale, under the 'Better Public Services – Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy'.	<i>Delivery of a new integrated AAI website which provides a near seamless user experience.</i> <i>90% of applicable AAI services available are consumed online.</i>

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY AND MONITORING PROGRESS



4.1 Implementation

The work of the AAI is overseen by the Board and its subcommittees, supported by the CEO and the Senior Management Team (SMT). Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2025–2027 will be the predominant focus of our work during this period, in addition to maintaining and indeed enhancing our normal service levels in the delivery of our statutory functions and services.

Our strategy will be implemented over the course of three-year period from January 2025 through to December 2027. As the strategy represents an integrated three-year programme of work some goals and actions will take more than a single calendar year to achieve results, and others may not begin until later in the lifecycle of the strategy.

The achievement of our goals and actions is integrated into the day-to-day work of the AAI and is set out in annualised format within our annual business planning process.

A high-level overview of delivery of the key actions across the three years of this strategy is set out in Appendix C.

4.2 Annual Business Planning

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010 (as amended), the AAI will publish an annual Business Plan, following approval by the Department, for each of the years covered by this Strategic Plan. Within the annual Business Plan, we will set out the specific strategic actions to be achieved within that year, alongside the delivery of planned business activities (business-as-usual – BAU – objectives) on a function-by-function basis for the coming calendar year.

The annual Business Plan also sets out the resourcing, budgetary and other planning considerations for the delivery of the year's objectives.

Through the annual business planning process, we will be able to chart the delivery of the strategy on an annual basis, adapting and adjusting as required to our changing operating environment and working with the Department and other stakeholders to support delivery.

4.3 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring the delivery of the Strategic Plan will be a combined effort of the entire organisation, overseen and managed by the CEO, reporting to the Board with the assistance of its subcommittees. The Board will receive regular updates from the CEO and the SMT on progress and issues relating to the delivery of the AAI's strategic goals and actions.

Progress will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the SMT, and a report will be presented to the Board twice per year to indicate progress. In addition, the four Strategic Themes will form the basis of public-facing annual reporting and internal risk management approach.

We will track and report on our progress through the following:

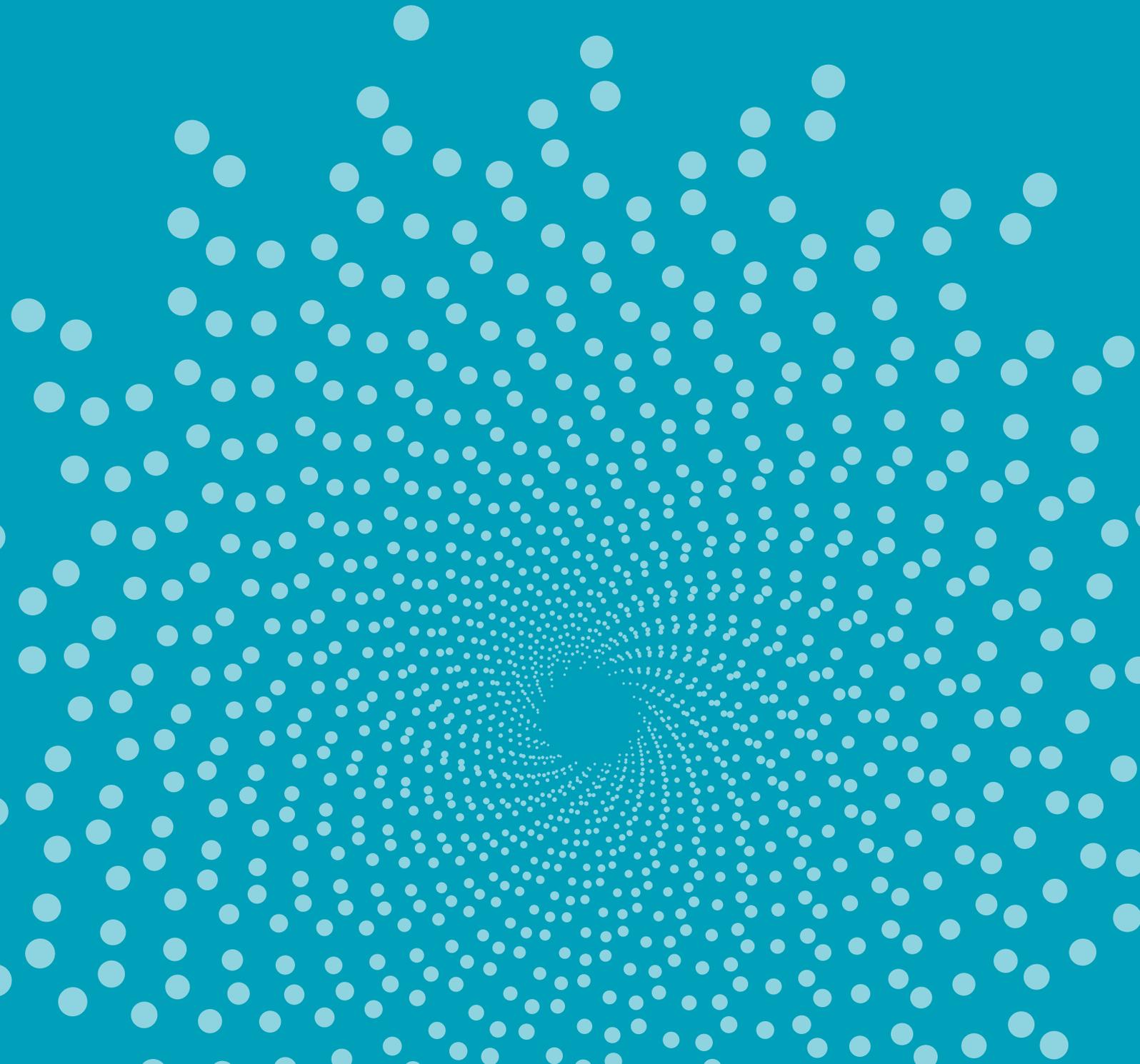
- Annual business plans aligned with the AAI's Strategic Themes, Goals and Actions;
- Regular updates to the Board of the AAI on Strategic and Business Plan targets;
- Oversight and Assurance Agreement between the AAI and its parent department;
- Our Annual Reports, and our Annual Financial Statements;
- Updating stakeholders at meetings, forums, seminars and other engagements; and
- Through the publication of public notices and other information on our website.

4.4 Mid-point and End-point Review

We will conduct a mid-point review of the achievement of the Strategic Plan in the middle of 2026, assessing the effectiveness of implementation to this date, and recommending adjustments and refinements to our Goals and Actions for the remainder of the strategy's lifecycle.

At the end-point of the Strategic Plan in December 2027, we will conduct a look-back review of the success of implementation over the entire duration of the Strategic Plan.

APPENDIX



Appendix A: STEEPLE Analysis

Social Factors

- Increasing complexity of adoption
- LGBTQ+ considerations
- Social attitudes towards family formation and adoption
- Social trauma from adoption history

Technological Factors

- Blended working technological evolution
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Economic Factors

- Dependency on government funding
- Restrictions on ability to seek additional funding
- Funding for additional posts
- Labour market considerations

Environmental Factors

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Public Sector Climate Action Strategy and Action Mandate
- Green Public Procurement
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021
- National Adaptation Framework

Political Factors

- Surrogacy and Assisted Human Reproduction
- Political relationships between countries
- 2024 General Election
- Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions

Legal Factors

- Adoption Act 2010 and Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017
- Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022
- National Archives Act 1986
- The Hague Convention
- Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023
- Child and Family Relationship Act 2015
- Assisted Decision Making

Ethical Factors

- Ethical adoption processes focused on ensuring the best interests of the child and young person
- Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Appendix B:

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Overview

As outlined in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act 2014, the Public Sector Duty mandates public bodies, including the AAI, to integrate equality and human rights considerations into their core functions. This duty requires the AAI to eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunity and protect human rights in its services and employment practices.

Reviewing this duty, the AAI believes it already institutes many practices aligned with the three-step approach of assess, address and report outlined in the guidance note published by the IHREC (2019). The practices to which the AAI commits are as follows:

Assessment

Issue identification: The Board is always mindful of human rights and equality issues in all matters before it. Based on these issues, the Board reviews the legislative requirements, consults with relevant stakeholders and analyses relevant data and evidence to understand the impact of its functions on various groups. In addition, the Board uses the strategy development process of consultations and engagement to surface issues relevant to staff and other stakeholders.

Evidence gathering: The Board uses available data from internal and external sources, including employee surveys (AAI's first employee engagement survey to be initiated in 2025), service user feedback, research reports and national statistics, to inform the assessment process and prioritise issues that arise. The robustness of this process will be reviewed as part of the new strategy development.

Prioritise Actions: The Board determines which issues require immediate attention and which can be addressed over a longer term, ensuring a strategic approach to addressing identified gaps. Relevant issues of a risk nature may be passed to the Risk and Audit Committee for its consideration.

Addressing Issues

Develop Actions: Based on the assessment process, the AAI Board allocates responsibility to the SMT to develop specific actions to address the identified equality and human rights issues. These actions are incorporated into the organisation's strategic plan and work programmes.

Implement Policies: The AAI Board directs the Risk and Audit Committee and/or relevant executives within the SMT to establish or enhance policies, plans, and practices to promote equality and protect human rights. This includes updating existing policies or creating new initiatives tailored to address the identified issues.

Allocate Resources: The Board ensures that adequate resources, including budget, headcount and staff responsibilities, are allocated to implement the planned

actions effectively. Where an appropriate solution to a complex issue is not readily available, the research function at the AAI may be engaged to develop the evidence base for an innovative approach.

Reporting

Monitor Progress: The Board regularly reviews and monitors the implementation of equality and human rights actions as part of its meeting cycle and overseen by the Chair. This includes setting clear targets and indicators to measure progress and to enable accountability.

Annual Reporting: The Board oversees reporting on developments and achievements in the AAI's annual report, making this information accessible to the public. This transparency helps demonstrate the AAI's

commitment to upholding human rights and equality while being open to scrutiny.

Continuous Improvement: The Board and the SMT together use the insights gained from monitoring and reporting to inform the AAI's future strategic plans, ensuring ongoing improvement in promoting equality and protecting human rights.

Conclusion

By systematically assessing, addressing and reporting on human rights and equality issues, the AAI commits to fulfilling its public sector duty under the IHREC legislation, while enhancing service delivery and fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment for both service users and staff.

Appendix C: High-level implementation plan for the AAI's Strategic Plan 2025–2027

Ref	2025	2026	2027
1a	To complete by Q4		
1b	To commence for completion in a subsequent year	To complete in 2026	
1c	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
2a	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
2b	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence with implementation ongoing	Ongoing
2c	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
2d	To complete by Q3	Ongoing	Ongoing
2e	To complete by Q3	Ongoing	Ongoing
3a	To commence for completion in a subsequent year Report on 18+ ICA lived experience published in Q2	To complete in 2026	Ongoing
4a	To complete by Q4	Ongoing	Ongoing
4b	To commence	Ongoing	Ongoing
4c	To commence in 2025	Will commence in 2026	Ongoing
5a	To complete in 2025		
5b	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
5c	To complete in 2025	Ongoing	Ongoing
5d	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
6a	To complete by Q4		
6b	To commence for completion in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
6c	To commence in 2025 for completion in a subsequent year	To complete in 2026	Dissemination in 2027
7a	To complete by Q2 2025	Implementation ongoing	Ongoing
7b	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually

Ref	2025	2026	2027
7c			Likely timeframe
7d	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually
7e	To commence for completion in a subsequent year	Evaluation completed by Q4	Ongoing
7f	To commence for completion in 2026	Ongoing	Evaluation completed by Q2
7g	To complete by Q2		
8a	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually
8b	To commence for completion in subsequent year	Evaluation concluded	Roll-out completed
8c	Will commence	Ongoing	Deployed
9a	To complete by Q4	Ongoing	Ongoing
9b	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually
9c	To complete by Q4	Ongoing	Ongoing
9d	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually
10a	To complete by Q2		
10b	To complete by Q3		
10c	To complete by Q3		
10d	To complete by Q4		
10e	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually	Ongoing Annually
11a	To commence for completion in a subsequent year	To complete in 2026	
11b	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
11c	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
12a	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence in 2026	Ongoing
12b	To complete by Q4		
13a	To complete by Q3		
13b	To commence for completion in a subsequent year	To complete in 2026	
13c	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	
14a	To complete by Q3		
14b	To complete by Q3		
14c	To complete by Q4	Ongoing	Ongoing
14d	To complete by Q4		
15a	To complete by Q3	Implementation ongoing	Ongoing
16a	To commence in a subsequent year	To commence for completion in 2026	Ongoing
16b	To complete by Q2		

Appendix D:

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

List of Acronyms used throughout this document:

AAI	Adoption Authority of Ireland
BAU	Business-as-usual
BITA	Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CPR	Contact Preference Register
Department	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
FOI	Freedom of Information
FRIA	Fundamental Rights Impact Assessment
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HR	Human Resources
ICA	Intercountry Adoption
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
L&D	Learning and Development
NCRR	National Centre for Research and Remembrance
OCDO	Office of the Chief Deciding Officer
PCR	Periodic Critical Review
SMT	Senior Management Team
TOM	Target Operating Model
Tusla	Child and Family Agency



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND