



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Adoption Authority of Ireland Press Release

'Adoption Practice in the Aftermath of the Adoption Amendment Act'

Thursday, 30 November, 2017

Venue: Adoption Authority of Ireland, Shelbourne House, Dublin 4

Seminar: 10am – 1pm

Today Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, **Dr Katherine Zappone**, addresses a Conference organised by the Adoption Authority of Ireland on the impact of the new Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017. Speakers include **Judge Rosemary Horgan**, President of the District Court, **Dr Geoffrey Shannon**, Chair of the Adoption Authority, and **Dr Niall Muldoon**, Ombudsman for Children.

At the conference, family rooms and information leaflets and videos for children being adopted will be launched by Adoption Authority Chairman Dr Shannon.

The Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 places the best interests of the child and the voice of the child at the centre of adoption legislation. It acknowledges today's experience of family life, by allowing single, co-habiting and married adults to adopt. It gives effect to a father's connection to his children, regardless of his marital status, and allows him to be fully involved in any adoption process about his child. It provides a clear legal framework that will allow the adoption of children of marriage where this is in the children's best interests. This is likely to have the effect of raising the number of children adopted from long term foster care in Ireland.

Speaking at today's event, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD said: I view the provisions of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 as a very positive and progressive step forward. While the provisions of this Act were long awaited, they were unquestionably needed to bring our adoption legislation in line with our changing family make-up. Getting information out about the modernisation of our adoption laws to children, young people and families is key. I welcome the leadership of the Adoption Authority of Ireland is ensuring people are fully aware of their rights.

Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman of the Adoption Authority said: The Authority promotes the voice of the child in all adoption matters. Children need clear information about any process affecting them. The Chairman's comments were made when promoting the Authority's new video infographic, information leaflets and family friendly rooms for children. On the issue of the adoption of children from long-term foster care, Dr Shannon said: The adoption of children in long-term foster care offers some children a second chance to enjoy the stability and permanence of a caring and loving family.

Norah Gibbons, Chair of Tusla Child and Family Agency, **Tanya Ward**, Children's Rights Alliance CEO, and **Orlaith Traynor**, Adoption Authority Board member, will also address the Conference. The range of speakers will give voice to the various aspects of adoption, in relation to hearing the voices of children, and the rights of all parents and guardians in adoption.

Main Provisions of the Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017

- All children can now be considered equally in terms of their eligibility for adoption. The fact that they were adopted previously or born to married parents is no longer an automatic restriction.
- The best interests of the child are recognised as the most important consideration in any adoption application. There is a detailed list of considerations in the amendment to be applied when judging the best interests of the child. These focus on how an adoption will likely affect the child and it also makes it clear that the child's own opinion is very important.
- A distinction about a child being over or under 7 years of age when being adopted has been removed. Now the only legal distinction about a child's age is that he/she still must be under 18 years of age.
- Any couple living together in a Civil Partnership or co-habiting together for at least 3 years can now apply to adopt a child. Previously only married couples or individual applicants could apply to adopt.
- Step-parents can now apply to adopt their partner's child without that partner (who is already the parent of the child) also applying to adopt the child.
- 'Relevant non-guardians' are now recognised in the Act. The definition of relevant non-guardian is broad but in basic terms is a person who is recognised as the parent of a child but is not a guardian, or is a type of guardian who doesn't have the right to consent to an adoption. They have a right to be consulted about the adoption of the child, similar to what fathers (without guardianship rights) already had under the previous version of the Act.

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