



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN  
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann  
The Adoption Authority of  
Ireland

Tuarascáil Bhliantúil  
Annual Report  
2016

Report of  
Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann  
Adoption Authority of Ireland  
for 2016

To: Dr Katherine Zappone T.D.  
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs,  
Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

# CONTENTS

Foreword	5
About the Adoption Authority	
Organisation & Management Structure	6
Board of the Authority	7
Review of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2016-2019	13
Review of the Authority's Business Plan 2016	17
The Year in Review	
Domestic Adoption	25
Information and Tracing	27
Intercountry Adoption	29
Corporate Services & Accreditation	33
Statistics	39
Corporate Governance	53

## Foreword

2016 was another productive year for the Adoption Authority. Key initiatives included the launch of a new website and the establishment of a Human Resources function. Preparatory work for the proposed legislation on Information and Tracing also commenced. The Year in Review section (pages 25 – 38) of the report provides details of these and other developments during the year. The statistics section starting at page 38 provides figures for operational matters in 2016 and comparative figures for previous years.

The Authority's new website provides clear and comprehensive information on the various functions of the Adoption Authority. The publication of a glossary of terms on the website serves to assist members of the public in understanding the terminology used by the Authority both on the website itself and in correspondence with its customers and stakeholders. The Authority was delighted to receive a Plain English award from the National Adult Literacy Association for the glossary.

The voluntary adoption contact register, the National Adoption Contact Preference Register ('NACPR'), which has been operated by the Authority since 2005 continues to grow. The application form was revised as part of the development of the website and the new format has made it easier to submit an application for inclusion in the Register. Almost one third of the 538 applications received in 2016 were submitted by email through the website. At the end of 2016, there were 12,959 people registered.

The Authority continues to highlight the rights and best interests of children, and seeks to ensure that the voice of the child is heard in all adoption matters. In this regard, a new protocol was developed for hearing children in adoption matters before the Authority. This protocol seeks to reflect the increased prominence to be afforded to children in hearings before the Authority when the Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2016 is enacted. Work has also commenced on the improvement of the reception and waiting areas of the Authority particularly for families attending for adoption order hearings. One of the waiting rooms will be specifically designed with young people in mind and a section of the website will be developed to provide information and support for young people as they go through the adoption process with their families.

Following the successful pilot inspection of an accredited body in 2015, the Authority conducted two inspections in 2016.

The Authority was pleased to welcome to Ireland representatives from the Chinese Centre for Children's Welfare and Adoption ('CCCWA') and officials from the Philippine Central Authority, ICAB, to Ireland to strengthen and develop our links. The Authority continues to work with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla on planning for the implementation of the proposed Information and Tracing legislation. The Authority plays an active role in the various cross-

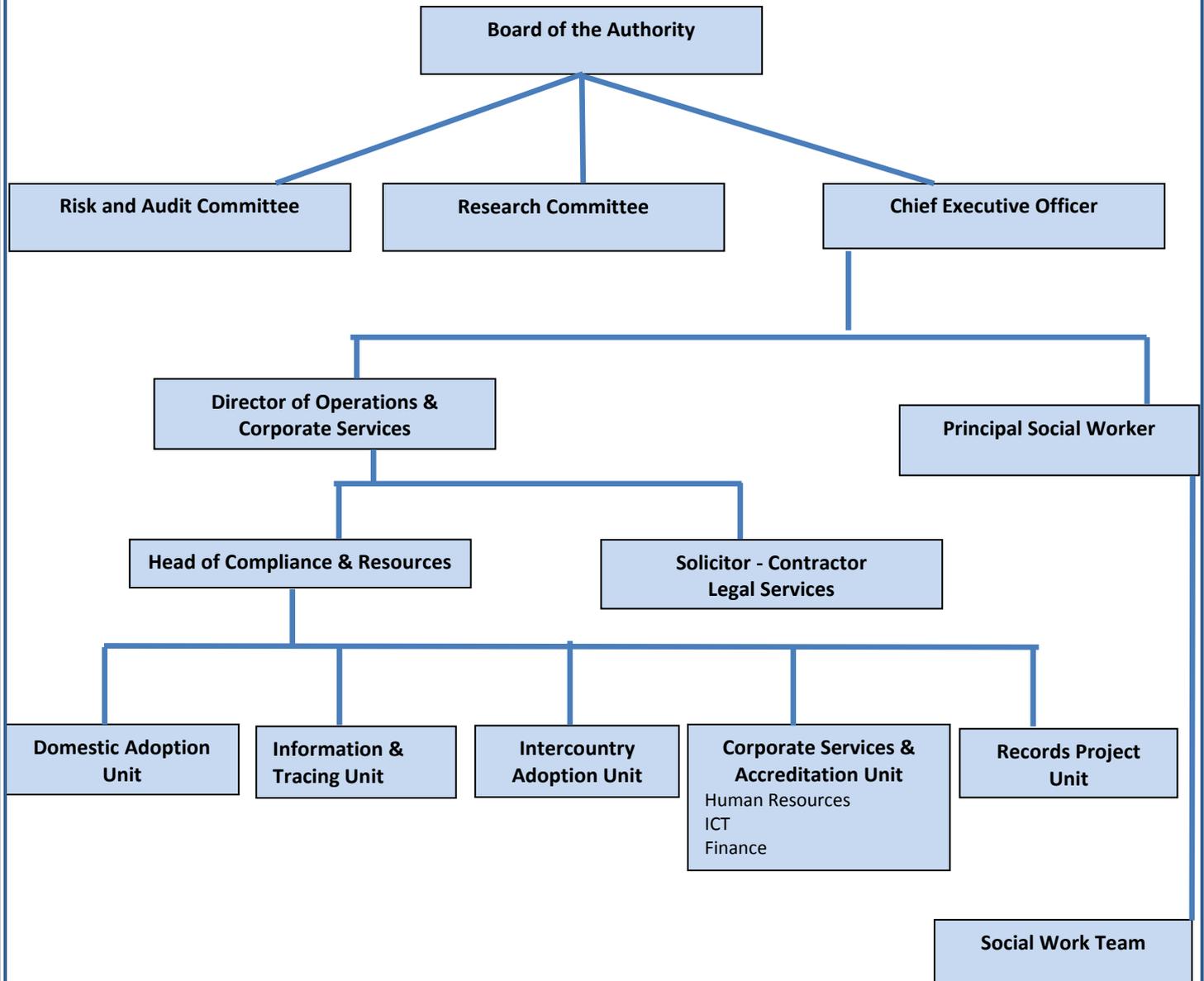
departmental groups which have been established to examine the collation and retention of records, requests for information, contact enquiries and the media campaign to support the new legislation.

We would like to thank the staff and board members of the Authority for their commitment and dedication to the work of the Authority. It is very much appreciated. We also wish to acknowledge the continued support and assistance of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the staff of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

***Dr Geoffrey Shannon***  
***Chairman***

***Ms Patricia Carey***  
***CEO***

# Organisation structure



## Chief Executive Officer and Senior Management Team 2016

Chief Executive Officer:	Patricia Carey
Director of Operations and Corporate Services:	Kiernan Gildea
Head of Operations:	Anthony Abbott King (to April 2016)
Head of Compliance and Resources	Fiona Farrell (from November 2016)
Principal Social Worker:	Celia Loftus

# Board of the Adoption Authority

## Membership of the Board - 2016

Dr. Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman  
Ms. Orlaith Traynor, Deputy Chairperson  
Prof. Helen Buckley  
Mr. Paul Harrison  
Judge Patrick McMahon (Retd.)  
Ms. Anne O'Flaherty  
Dr. Imelda Ryan

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010 The Authority shall consist of 7 members, being the chairperson, the deputy chairperson and 5 ordinary members, appointed by the Minister. The term of office of the Board is for a period not exceeding five years. An appointed member who completes a term of office is eligible for reappointment to the Authority, but may not serve as a member for more than 2 consecutive terms. The current Board was appointed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015.

The attendance of the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson and 2 ordinary members one of whom shall be a social worker shall constitute a quorum.

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010 the Board may appoint committees to advise it in relation to the performance of its functions as it thinks fit. During 2016 the Board approved the membership and terms of reference of the Research Committee.

## Committees of the Board

### Risk and Audit Committee

Ms. Claire Byrne (Chair)  
Mr. Aidan Browne, Member  
Dr. Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman of the Authority  
Judge Patrick McMahon (Retd.)  
Ms. Patricia Carey, CEO  
Mr. Vincent Teo (CrowleysDFK)

### Research Sub committee

Prof. Helen Buckley (Chair), Member of the Authority  
Ms. Orlaith Traynor, Deputy Chair of the Authority  
Ms. Anne O'Flaherty, Member of the Authority  
Professor Gordon Harold, Andrew and Virginia Rudd Chair in Psychology, University of Sussex  
Ms. Celia Loftus, Principal Social Worker, Adoption Authority

## Meetings of the Board of the Authority

This year for the first time in a number of years the board met outside of Dublin, in Sligo and Cork. As well as conducting the normal business of the Board, including making adoption orders, the Board met with representatives of adoption support groups and adoption service providers in the area, including Tusla- Child and Family Agency representatives.

One of the functions of the Board is to prepare a Corporate Plan which is submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for approval. The Minister must lay the plan, with or without amendments, before each House of the Oireachtas. The Board approved the Corporate Plan for the period 2016-2019 in December 2015 which was subsequently approved by the Minister.

The Board reviews and monitors the implementation of the Corporate Plan and approves an annual business plan to ensure a focussed approach to achieving the goals and objectives set out therein.

Other documents approved by the Board during 2016 included the Annual Report of the Authority for 2015 and the allocated budget for the Authority.

Standing items on the agenda for meetings of the Board include minutes of meetings and reports considered by committees of the Board, financial reports, reports from the Chief Executive Officer and reports from Chief Risk Officer. Part 4 of the Adoption Act the Board outlines the powers vested in the Board including:

- The power to issue Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to prospective adopters;
- Hearing applications in relation to adoption orders and making adoption orders;
- The power to recognise intercountry adoptions effected outside the State.

These matters also form part of the agenda for meetings of the Board.

The Board received regular reports from the Chief Executive Officer on the operation of the Authority, the implementation of Board policy, the implementation of the annual Business Plan, expenditure and budgetary matters and other relevant issues and/or developments. The Board also received regular reports in relation to the implementation of risk management in the organisation during the year.

Where functions of the Board have been delegated to the Executive of the Authority the Board regularly carries out 'spot checks' to ensure the accuracy and quality of the delegated decision making.

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010 the Authority shall hold as many meetings as are necessary for performing its functions but shall hold at least 12 meetings a year. The Board held 22 meetings during 2016.

In compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the frequency of meetings of the Board and its committees and the attendance of each Board member at Board meetings should be reported in the annual report.

Meetings of the Board are scheduled in such a way to facilitate one 'full' board meeting each month at which matters other than the granting of Adoption Orders are dealt with. The second meeting of the month is reserved for the granting of Adoption Orders and any other urgent business which needs to be added to the agenda. For the Adoption Orders meetings a quorate of the Board only is required.

#### Full Meetings of the Board

<b>Dates of Meetings 2016</b>	
13 <sup>th</sup> January	All members in attendance
9 <sup>th</sup> February	All members in attendance
1 <sup>st</sup> March	Mr Patrick Mc Mahon and Mr Paul Harrison not in attendance on this date
12 <sup>th</sup> April	All members in attendance
10 <sup>th</sup> May	All members in attendance
14 <sup>th</sup> June	Ms Anne O'Flaherty not in attendance on this date
12 <sup>th</sup> July	All members in attendance
20 <sup>th</sup> September	Dr Geoffrey Shannon and Mr Paul Harrison not in attendance on this date. Dr Shannon travelling on AAI business.
22 <sup>nd</sup> September *	*This was an additionally convened meeting to deal with a specific case. Quorate only – attendance of Mr Paul Harrison and Dr Imelda Ryan not required.
11 <sup>th</sup> October	All members in attendance
8 <sup>th</sup> November	Ms Orlaith Traynor and Mr Paul Harrison not in attendance on this date
13 <sup>th</sup> December	All members in attendance

Adoption Order hearings – quorate attendance only required.

<b>Dates of Meetings 2016</b>	
26 <sup>th</sup> January	All members in attendance
16 <sup>th</sup> February	Attendance of Ms Orlaith Traynor, Dr Imelda Ryan and Prof Helen Buckley not required
22 <sup>nd</sup> March	Attendance of Prof Helen Buckley and Dr Imelda Ryan not required
26 <sup>th</sup> April - Cork	Attendance of Ms Anne O'Flaherty, Ms Orlaith Traynor, Mr Patrick Mc Mahon not required
24 <sup>th</sup> May	Attendance of Ms Orlaith Traynor, Dr Imelda Ryan and Mr Paul Harrison not required
28 <sup>th</sup> June	Attendance of Prof Helen Buckley not required
26 <sup>th</sup> July	Attendance of Prof Helen Buckley not required
22 <sup>nd</sup> September	Attendance of Mr Paul Harrison and Dr Imelda Ryan not required
25 <sup>th</sup> October – Sligo	Attendance of Dr Imelda Ryan not required
22 <sup>nd</sup> November	Attendance of Ms Helen Buckley and Mr Patrick McMahon not required
20 <sup>th</sup> December	Attendance of Prof Helen Buckley and Dr Imelda Ryan not required

At 4 meetings during the year the Executive left the meeting for part of the day to allow the Board to hold their own meeting.

### **Committees of the Board**

#### Risk and Audit Committee

The Committee meets at least 4 times a year, with authority to convene additional meetings as circumstances require. The attendance of 2 non-executive committee members shall constitute a quorum. In 2016 the Committee met four times.

<b>Dates of meetings 2016</b>	
6 <sup>th</sup> April	Full Attendance
24 <sup>th</sup> May	Full Attendance
3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Full Attendance
22 <sup>nd</sup> November	Full Attendance

The Committee invited members of the Executive, auditors or others to attend meetings and to provide pertinent information, as necessary. Meeting agendas were prepared and provided in advance to committee members along with appropriate briefing materials. The Risk and Audit Committee maintained minutes or other reports of its meetings and activities and reports to the Board at least annually.

#### Research Committee

The Research Committee was established at the latter end of 2016 and met on two occasions on 5<sup>th</sup> October and 1<sup>st</sup> November.

<b>Dates of meetings 2016</b>	
5 <sup>th</sup> October	Ms Orlaith Traynor not in attendance on this date
1 <sup>st</sup> November	Full attendance

Secretarial support for the Research Committee is provided by Mr. Ronan Keegan, Social Worker, Adoption Authority

### **Board Stipend**

An annual fee is payable to Board members in the sum of €7,965 together with travel and subsistence expenses at rates sanctioned by the Department of Finance. In accordance with Department of Finance regulations, fees are not paid to Board members who are public servants. The Chairperson's stipend of €63,120 per annum is paid quarterly in arrears.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### Chairperson

The primary role of the Chairperson is providing leadership to the Authority in discharging the responsibilities assigned to it under its establishment statute. The specific duties of the Chairperson relate to:

Managing the Authority by:

- appropriate agenda setting, management and support of Authority meetings;
- chairing Authority meetings characterized by clear decisions and the balancing of contributions from Authority Members and the CEO/Executive;
- ensuring that the minutes of the meeting accurately record the decisions taken;
- conducting all meetings of the Authority in accordance with the Authority's Code of Business Conduct and appropriately evaluating the Authority's performance;
- ensuring Authority members understand their respective roles and responsibilities and that the Authority works effectively and efficiently.

Managing key relationships/communications with:

- the CEO; including performance evaluation of the CEO;
- the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Department of Children and Youth Affairs;
- other key external parties and by promoting the work and mission of the Authority;
- the Authority, reflecting a tone of respect, trust and candour that allows for challenging questions and inputs;
- the appropriate Oireachtas Sub-Committee(s).

### Chief Executive Officer

The Adoption Act 2010 provides that the Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer for the Authority and clearly defines the accountability framework in which the Authority operates. This is supported by the governance framework and corporate governance arrangements within the Authority.

The Authority is accountable to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and through the Minister, to the Government. It is also accountable through the Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer to the Oireachtas under the Committee of Public Accounts and other committees of the Oireachtas. The Authority must submit an annual report and such other information as the Minister may require.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for

- the implementation of policies approved by the Board;
- the day-to-day management of the staff;
- administration and business of the Authority;
- preparation of the annual budget for approval by the Board and its submission to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs;
- providing updates to the Board, and other committees of the Board, in regard to the management of the Authority;
- implementation of policy and progress on the corporate plan.

# **REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S CORPORATE PLAN - 2016-2019**

**Principles**

The Authority identified four key principles which would guide its mission, its high level goals, its objectives and the work that was to be carried out. By applying these principles, the Authority would ensure that all of its decisions had the welfare of the child as its first and paramount consideration, in accordance with Section 19 of the Adoption Act 2010. The four principles identified were -

- *Child - Centeredness*
- *Quality Services*
- *Accountability through Ethical Practice and Transparency*
- *Respect*

**Goals**

Five key goals and a number of specific objectives were identified to capture the focus of the Authority’s efforts over the coming three year period.

**Goal #1 - “To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland.”**

<p>To support and oversee the development of comprehensive, high quality and integrated adoption services with our key statutory and non-statutory partners.</p> <p>To engage effectively with service users and their advocates, service providers, policy makers and the Government to bring about continuous quality improvements in our adoption services.</p> <p>Reaccredit and register against approved regulations, all agencies providing adoption services.</p> <p>Monitoring and inspection role of Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaccreditation process was established and implemented</li> <li>• Website was redesigned and launched</li> <li>• Inspection format was designed and implemented</li> <li>• Scheduled inspections were completed</li> <li>• Stakeholder consultation took place on the redesign of the website.</li> <li>• Board went on circuit to Sligo and Cork and met local stakeholders</li> <li>• CEO consulted regularly with stakeholders</li> <li>• Forms were redesigned based on legislation passed and pending</li> <li>• Accredited Bodies self-reporting alarm system was implemented</li> <li>• Two inspections of accredited bodies completed</li> </ul>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Goal #2 - “To apply informed and balanced decision-making in adoption services, in accordance with national and international law and evidence-based best practice.”**

<p>Maintain informed and timely decisions regarding 1) the granting of declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt 2) the making of adoption orders 3) the recognition of intercountry adoption orders 4) Article 17 referrals.</p> <p>Maintain all Registers.</p> <p>To make decisions regarding the release of identifying information to adult adoptees and birth parents.</p> <p>To maintain our good relationships and develop new national and international relationships that promote excellence in adoption and adoption related services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations manual was updated</li> <li>• CEO regularly met with the Child and Family Agency</li> <li>• All statutory Registers were maintained</li> <li>• Delegated decisions were made within six weeks</li> <li>• ‘Identifying information’ was defined and presented to Board</li> <li>• The Authority continued to maintain contact and relationships through strategic visits with foreign National Central Authorities</li> </ul>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Goal #3 - “To inform adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework.”**

<p>Engage proactively with all stakeholders</p> <p>Develop and maintain an effective Communications Strategy</p> <p>Use website as a prime source of information for all stakeholders and the public at large.</p> <p>Maintain statistical information and planning/development aspects of service provision.</p> <p>Continue to undertake and promote research opportunities and research capacity.</p> <p>Support Government Departments in the development of adoption related policy and legislation.</p> <p>Promote informed and considered analysis and debate on adoption issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of forums and conferences took place in 2016</li> <li>• Structured engagement plans designed</li> <li>• New website designed and launched. Webmaster appointed.</li> <li>• Monthly statistics published online</li> <li>• ICGP research published</li> <li>• Post-adoption services directory published</li> <li>• Research Sub-Committee established</li> <li>• Annual Report 2015 published on time</li> <li>• Press Book circulated each week</li> <li>• Staff informed of and invited to attend adoption related events.</li> <li>• Board informed of all issues arising from legislation and policy</li> <li>• Board submitted recommendations for changes to policy and legislation.</li> <li>• All Departmental requests were responded to in a timely manner</li> </ul>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Goal #4 - “To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes”**

<p>Be prepared and be able to adapt to 1) Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 2) Adoption (Amendment) Bill, 3) Information and Tracing Bill 2015, in all areas of AAI work affected.</p> <p>Be prepared for any potential changes in statutory function of the Authority through any further legislative changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes arising from the passing of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015 and Marriage Act 2015 implemented.</li> <li>• Possible consequences of the passing of the Adoption (Amendment) Bill 2016 and Information and Tracing Bill 2016 considered.</li> <li>• Ongoing discussions took place with the Child and Family Agency.</li> </ul>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Goal #5 - “To maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation.”**

<p>Ensure full compliance with Code of Practice for the Governance of state bodies.</p> <p>Maintain robust Risk Management Framework.</p> <p>Maintain highest standards in data confidentiality and data integrity.</p> <p>Authority to maintain a learning environment where competencies and training requirements are fully met.</p> <p>Maintain Succession Plan</p> <p>Ensure full value for money in discharge of allocated resources.</p> <p>The Authority maintains, and actively engages with, an independent Internal Audit Function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Register maintained</li> <li>• Full compliance with Children First Guidelines achieved</li> <li>• Unique network domain acquired</li> <li>• Learning environment maintained</li> <li>• Succession Plan prepared</li> <li>• Variance Analysis report sent to Department monthly</li> <li>• Procurement policy adhered to and reviewed annually and subjected to Internal Audit Check</li> <li>• Internal Audit Charter approved and implemented</li> <li>• Internal Audit Plan approved by RAC and implemented</li> <li>• Annual RAC Report sent to Board</li> <li>• Corporate Plan reviewed</li> </ul>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# **REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S 2016 BUSINESS PLAN**

**Goal #1 - “To achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of adoption services in Ireland.”**

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>KPIs / Outputs</b>
Inspection Visits	Complete two further inspections based on the Cunamh pilot	Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency (HHAMA) and PACT were inspected.
Review the Suitability and Eligibility Assessment Standardised Framework	Establish Review Group	Review Group established in late 2016.
Reaccredit and re-register all agencies providing adoption services	Issue guidelines to all current agencies advising them of the reaccreditation process and the time frames for responding  Provide monthly reports to the Board of the Authority on the status of accredited bodies	All agencies which applied for reaccreditation had their applications processed in a timely manner.  Board of the Authority were fully informed at all times of any issues arising in respect of the accredited bodies
Accredit new applicant agencies	For new agencies seeking accreditation, issue guidelines on the accreditation process, assist them with their application and submit application to the Board in a timely manner	Agencies applying for accreditation for the first time had their applications processed in a timely manner and were issued with a decision as soon as possible. (St. Brigid's Information and Tracing Service was accredited in 2016)
Consultation with stakeholders	Board Circuits to meet with local service providers and support groups.	Consultations meetings took place in Cork and Sligo.

**Goal #2 - “To apply informed and balanced decision-making in adoption services, in accordance with national and international law and evidence-based best practice.”**

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>KPIs / Outputs</b>
Engaging with Hague Convention National Central Authorities in accordance with the Corporate Plan.	Identify new states	Negotiations continued with regard to adoptions from Haiti and Kazakhstan.
Consolidate agreement with the USA	Visit the USA and liaise with all relevant stakeholders	Clear guidelines were established with US Adoption Service Providers (ASPs).

Continue to implement the FOI Acts	Staff training Publish request outcomes	Staff training continued. Requests were dealt with in accordance with statutory provisions. Results were published on the Authority's website.
Continue to implement the Data Protection Acts	Draft and publish protocols	Routine requests were dealt with in accordance with statutory provisions.
Establish integrated document management system, incl. National Adoption Contacts Preference Register, Register of Intercountry Adoptions, Birth Father Register, Gender Recognition Register (ICA).	Research systems used in other similar bodies  Provide training on document management/ data protection and project management to relevant staff	Work commenced on scoping the feasibility of a single document management system.

**Goal #3 - "To inform adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework."**

Tasks	Actions	KPIs / Outputs
Clarity of communication with the public & stakeholders to include a corporate identity.	Evaluate current oral, written and electronic communication. Prepare a strategy to address deficiencies including engagement with NALA.	Engaged with NALA regarding the use of plain English in various publications.  Standardised the use of the logo in all documentation.
Compile post adoption services directory	Consult with Accredited Bodies and Support Groups	Directory compiled and published in hardcopy and on website.
Develop and maintain the website as a primary resource of information for all stakeholders and the public at large	Establish new website  Have content reviewed by NALA to ensure information is understandable and consistent  Liaise with accredited bodies and other stakeholders to ensure accuracy and validity of information  Set up monthly internal	New website is available and contains up to date and accurate information in a plain English format  Content is updated as required – statistics are published in timely manner  Staff can refer callers to the website in the knowledge that the information is accurate, up to date and easily understood.

	review of content and of the comments sent in through the contact us section	Website review group meets regularly.
Undertake and promote research opportunities	<p>Launch ICGP/AAI research.</p> <p>Consultation with stakeholders and training to raise awareness of issues specific to adoption and the use of post adoption services.</p> <p>Continue to organise professional Forum groups in the areas of medical, social work and tracing service provision.</p> <p>Information and Tracing project designed</p>	<p>Launched and published on the Authority's website.</p> <p>Conferences took place and post-adoption services directory was published</p> <p>Four forums held during 2016.</p> <p>Research Sub-Committee established and project being considered.</p>
Support DCYA in the development of adoption related policy and legislation	Continue to provide statistics and submissions as requested.	Statistics and opinions regarding new legislation was provided.

**Goal #4 - "To plan and implement the changes required in organisation policies and operational procedures in line with emerging legislative changes"**

Tasks	Actions	KPIs / Outputs
Adoption (Amendment) Bill	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation when enacted	Processes, procedures and forms revised and updated as required.
Information and Tracing Bill	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	Bill published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Working Groups established to identify potential implications and to plan strategy in the event of the Bill being passed.
Children and Family Relationships Act	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	Processes, procedures and forms revised and updated as required.

Marriage Act	Disseminate to all stakeholders the implications of the new legislation	Processes, procedures and forms revised and updated as required.
Establish a robust HR function in the Authority	Engage consultants to assist with this  Have comprehensive procedures on recruitment  Obtain direct recruitment licence from CPSA  Draw up succession plan  Have functional database to allow accurate recording of personnel data as required under Civil and Public Service Regulations and Employment Law Regulations  Staff in HR to undergo training in various HR functions	Filling of vacancies and recruitment process met appropriate standards.  Done  Recruitment Licence obtained.  Schedule of planned departures drawn up.  The Authority is compliant with all relevant legislation.  Staff in HR unit are now conversant with issues which may arise for staff and are in a position to deal with them promptly and effectively

**Goal #5 - "To maintain an efficient, competent, accountable and learning organisation."**

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>KPIs / Outputs</b>
Maintain learning environment where competencies and training requirements are fully met	Carry out survey of staff to establish database of staff qualifications and experience  Draw up training programme to fill 'gaps' in skills and competence across all areas  Support professional	Staff were provided with training as requested. Performance Review forms identified further requirements which will be addressed in 2017.  Staff are trained at appropriate levels to be able to carry out their functions and ensure Authority's compliance with legislation such as data protection, health and safety  Staff are supported by the

	memberships/CPD for relevant staff	organisation and continue to update their professional training
Ensure full value for money in discharge of allocated resources	AAI staff involved in expenditure are trained in correct procurement procedures and legislation.  Information on same is disseminated to all staff	The Authority is in compliance with procurement legislation  Management Accounts / Variance Analysis reports are reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee and subsequently by the Board.  Internal Financial Controls Report 2016 was reviewed by the Board.  Variance Reports to DCYA monthly to secure drawdown of allocation.  Independent internal and External Audits were completed.
Maintain highest standards in data confidentiality and data integrity	Staff trained and informed on standards required in respect of Data Protection, Records management, confidentiality and data integrity	Data Protection requests were dealt with in accordance with Data Protection legislation.  FOI requests were dealt with in accordance with FOI legislation.  Operations Manual includes procedures for processing request.  Appropriate staff training was provided.
Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies	Full compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies May 2009  All actions from the revised (May2015) Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies currently at draft stage	Annual statement of interests for all Members and designated employs (Code of Practice & Ethics Legislation) was completed.  Revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was published in August 2016. New areas of compliance were noted and work commenced on their implementation.
	Review and up-date Risk Register	Four meetings of the AAI Risk & Audit Committee took place.

	<p>Implement of 3 year draft internal audit plan to be agreed with the Risk &amp; Audit Committee Q1</p>	<p>Internal Audit Reports were presented to the Risk and Audit Committee. Financial controls audit at the April meeting and Core Business Process Audit presented at November meeting.</p> <p>Draft format and content of the Risk and Audit Committee's Annual Report was agreed at the November meeting.</p> <p>The revised Risk Register was presented at the April meeting.</p>
--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

# DOMESTIC ADOPTION

## Activity Analysis

### Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability

In all adoption cases it is a requirement that the applicants have a valid Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability. 88 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted in 2016. In most cases Declarations were granted within 3-4 weeks of receipt of the application.

Standards and guidelines produced by the Authority for use by the various stakeholders are informed by trends compiled from reviews of all applications for Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability. They are also informed by best practice nationally and internationally; and by the Adoption Act 2010; statutory regulations' Hague Convention standards in adoption; and international research such as that of the International Social Services.

### Adoption Orders

95 Adoption orders were granted in 2016, no adoption orders were declined in the period. The majority, 65, were made in stepfamily adoptions. There was an increase in the number of adoption orders made in respect of children who had been in long term foster care - 19 in 2016 from 13 in 2015. The balance (11) was made up of a combination of adoptions of infants placed for adoption in Ireland (5), the formalisation of adoptions in respect of children who were placed in the care of Irish couples from the Philippines (3) and Libya (1), and 2 situations where the child had been placed privately.

Adoption Orders cannot be granted once a child turns 18 years of age and is legally considered an adult. Of the 95 Adoption orders granted in 2016, in 24 cases the child was 17 years of age. In 38 cases they were aged between 12 and 16 years, in 15 cases they were aged between 7 and 11 years, in 15 cases they were aged between 2 and 10 years, and in 3 cases the child was 1 year old.

6 of the orders granted in 2016 were from applications assessed and submitted by the accredited agency, PACT. The remaining 89 were assessed and submitted by the various local adoption offices of Tusla, The Child and Family Agency.

## **Applications to the High Court**

Under the Adoption Act 2010, the Authority is obliged to obtain a High Court order before certain adoptions can proceed.

The Authority must make an application to the High Court seeking to dispense with birthfather notification and consultation in the following instances –

- where the Authority does not know the identity of a birth father, or
- where the Authority has been unable to locate the birth father in order to notify and consult him in relation to the placement of his child for adoption, or to an application for the adoption of his child.

Other instances where the Authority must seek the approval of the High Court to make an adoption order include, where the child is a child of marriage or where there is an issue with regard to the placement of the child with the prospective adoptive parents.

In 2016, 7 applications were made to the High Court under Section 18 of the Act to allow an infant to be placed for adoption without consultation with the birth father. The 7 applications were granted. Many of these cases required, or will require, a subsequent order under Section 30 to proceed to Adoption Order.

In 2016, 13 applications were made to the High Court under Section 30 of the Act to allow an adoption application to proceed without consultation with the birth father. The 13 applications were granted.

To allow the Authority to make an adoption order, the Child and Family Agency (or in certain instances, the applicants), must make an application to the High Court in the following instances –

- where parental consents are not forthcoming and/or
- where it can be demonstrated that the parent(s) have failed in their duty to their child, and
- adoption is deemed to be in the child's best interests,

In 2016, 17 applications were made to the High Court under Sections 53/54 of the Act. The 17 applications were granted in 2016.

# INFORMATION and TRACING

## Activity Analysis

### Requests for the release of Birth Certificates

In 2016, the Authority received 70 requests from adopted persons for the release of their birth certificate and these are being actively considered.

During the year, 23 birth certificates were released and 15 requests were refused. Of the 23 birth certificates released some were in respect of requests made prior to 2016. 8 of the requests which were refused were in respect of requests received before 2016.

With regard to the 15 requests which were refused, the Adoption Authority declined these requests having regard to the current legislative framework.

### National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR)

In 2016, 538 new applicants were added to the National Adoption Contact Preference Register. In 102 cases the Authority identified a match between the new applicants and family members who had joined the Register previously. The Adoption Authority has operated and maintained the NACPR since 2005 and has worked with external consultants to upgrade the system and, in particular, to improve the reporting capacity. The NACPR remains a critical tool in enabling agreed contact between adopted persons and birth relatives. At the end of 2016 there were 12,959 people registered with the NACPR.

### Social Work Team

The Authority's Social Work Team dealt with 303 new referrals for information, counselling and tracing services. With regard to the National Adoption Contact Preference Register, social workers contacted people in 99 matches, including 43 sibling matches. Through the social work day duty phone, a further 199 people sought information and advice on tracing in 2016.

### Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2016

The Authority is actively planning for the impact which this impending legislation will have on the functions of the Authority. The Information and Tracing unit will be particularly affected by the changes envisaged in the Bill. In preparation for the responsibility of holding, preserving and conserving all adoption records the

Authority is leading the Adoption Records Working Group (ARWG) which includes members from the Adoption Authority, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla- Child and Family Agency.

# INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

## Activity Analysis

### Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability

The Authority granted 72 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability in 2016 to applicants seeking to adopt abroad and extended 49 existing Declarations by one year.

### Register of Intercountry Adoptions

A total of 214 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions in respect of all relevant sections of the Adoption Act 2010. Of these, 50 entries were in respect of adoptions into Ireland carried out under the terms and conditions of the 1993 Hague Convention.

### Matching of children

Social workers work with administrative staff and a medical advisor, to advise on the matching of children's needs with the abilities of prospective Irish parents. In 2016, 54 children were referred into Ireland from other countries. All referrals of children for adoption are reviewed by the Authority's multi-disciplinary team which comprises the Principal Social Worker, the Medical Advisor and the Manager of the Intercountry Adoption Unit.

In countries where Ireland does not have an accredited agency in operation, for example the Philippines and Thailand, social work staff from the Authority contacted the prospective parents to discuss their ability to meet the specific children's needs.

### Country Specific Issues

**Bulgaria:** In 2016, 9 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in Bulgaria; 8 Agreements to Place were granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention).

**China:** In 2016, 12 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in China; 12 Agreements to Place were granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention) and 7 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions.

A delegation from the China Centre for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA) visited Ireland in July 2016 and met with the Authority on 26 July. The delegation

included Deputy Director-General of CCCWA, Ms Guo Meng and other senior official in CCCWA. Senior officials from Jiangxi Province and Shandong Province were also part of the delegation. They were met by Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Patricia Carey, CEO and Kiernan Gildea, Director of Operations and Corporate Services in the Adoption Authority and administrative and social work staff from the Intercountry Adoption Unit in the Authority. During the meeting the parties discussed the profile of applicants from Ireland, child protection system in Ireland and the number of children from China to Ireland to date as well as China's Special Needs programme and general information on CCCWA and links to Ireland.

Between 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September Dr. Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Patricia Carey, CEO and Kiernan Gildea, Director of Operations and Corporate Services in the Adoption Authority visited China. They met with Embassy officials including Ambassador Paul Kavanagh and visited Fengtai Children's Welfare Institution which works closely with CCCWA. The delegation also met with the Deputy Director General of CCCWA, Chu Xiaoming with other senior officials of CCCWA. A meeting also took place with UNICEF China who advised that improvements have occurred and that there are some more challenges to be met.

**Haiti:** In 2016, 1 Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability was granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in Haiti.

**India:** in 2016, 5 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in India.

**Philippines:** In 2016, 1 Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability was granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in the Philippines; 1 Agreement to Place was granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention). Under current arrangements, Filipino children may be subsequently adopted in Ireland.

In August 2016 the Authority met in Dublin with representatives from the Philippine Central Authority. ICAB Board Member Ms Maria Gabriela Concepcion, Attorney, on behalf of the Philippines Central Authority, signed the administrative arrangement together with Dr Shannon, Chair of the Authority, in the presence of ICAB Executive Director Ms Bernadette Abejo and the Adoption Authority's CEO, Ms Patricia Carey.

Section 72 of the Adoption Act 2010 permits the Adoption Authority to enter into "administrative arrangements" with a contracting state. The administrative arrangements set out in detail how intercountry adoption will operate between the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Philippines Intercountry Adoption Board (ICAB). The arrangement provides a clear roadmap as to how the intercountry adoption process will operate between the two Central Authorities.

**Poland:** In 2016, 1 Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability was granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in Poland; 1 Agreement to Place was granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention).

**Thailand:** In 2016, 5 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in Thailand; 8 Agreements to Place were granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention) and 4 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions.

**United States of America:** In 2016, 13 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in the U.S.A.; 14 Agreements to Place were granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention) and 14 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions.

Between 30 March and April representatives of the Authority visited the USA. The delegation travelled to San Francisco, Washington, New York and Philadelphia and met with adoption agencies, the US State Department, the Irish Embassy in Washington and Irish Ambassador Anne Anderson.

Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Patricia Carey, CEO and Kiernan Gildea, Director of Operations and Corporate Services in the Adoption Authority of Ireland met with Ambassador Susan Jacobs, Special Advisor on Children's issues, Henry Hand, Director of the Office for Children's Issues and Carine Rosalia, Advisory Counsel.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review the operation of the Administrative Agreement on Intercountry Adoptions between Ireland and the US which was signed in September 2013.

The delegation also met with UNICEF to outline the agreement between Ireland and the United States. UNICEF noted that this agreement was a model of the highest standard and had no matters of concern to raise with the delegation.

**Vietnam:** In 2016, 24 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted to prospective adoptive parents proposing to adopt in Vietnam; 17 Agreements to Place were granted (Article 17 of the Hague Convention) and 21 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions.

Following the visit to China on 12<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September the delegation from the Authority Dr. Geoffrey Shannon, Chairman, Patricia Carey, CEO and Kiernan Gildea, Director of Operations and Corporate Services in the Adoption Authority visited Vietnam and met with Ambassador Cáit Moran. The delegation held meetings with the Director General and senior officials involved in domestic and intercountry adoption at the Ministry of Justice and with two senior officials from UNICEF. UNICEF officials advised that there have been great improvements in adoption and child protection in Vietnam since 2011.

**Kazakhstan:** Efforts continued during 2016 to instigate discussions on the possibility of entering into administrative arrangements with the authorities in Kazakhstan. (At the time of going to press in 2017, Helping Hands adoption Mediation Agency had applied for, and been denied, an accreditation licence in Kazakhstan).

**REGISTER OF GENDER RECOGNITION of INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS**

Persons holding a valid Certificate of Gender Recognition issued by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) and whose adoption is registered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions (RFA) or the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA) may apply to the Authority for an entry in the Register of Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions.

Applications should be made in writing to the Authority and should be accompanied by

- The original copy of the Gender Recognition Certificate as issued by the DSP.
- A copy of the notification letter from the DSP which accompanied the Gender Recognition Certificate.
- A copy of the entry in the RFA or the RICA (if available).

There were no entries made in the Register in 2016.

# **CORPORATE SERVICES AND ACCREDITATION UNIT**

# ACCREDITATION

## Activity Analysis

The maintenance of a 'Register of Accredited Bodies' by the Authority is provided for under Section 126 of the Adoption Act 2010.

At the end of 2016, the following was the status of the ten registered accredited bodies:

### Functioning:

- International Adoption Association (Reaccredited 7 March 2016)
- PACT (Reaccredited 10 March 2016)
- Cúnamh (Reaccredited 7 March 2016)
- Barnardos Post Adoption Service (Reaccredited 7 June 2016)
- St. Mura's Adoption Society (Reaccredited 19 July 2016)
- Clarecare (Reaccredited 7 June 2016)
- Arabella Counselling, t/a Here2Help (Reaccredited 18 October 2016)
- Helping Hands Adoption Facilitation Agency t/a Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency (Accredited to 11 June 2017)
- St. Brigid's Information and Tracing Agency (Accredited 1/12/2016 – 30/11/2021)

### Not active:

- Families for Children Adoption Agency Ltd. (Reaccredited 7 June 2016)

## Inspection

In addition to the six-monthly self-assessment reports submitted by all accredited bodies during 2016, the Authority conducted on-site inspections with two Accredited Bodies, Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency and PACT.

Number of applications for registration of accredited bodies received in 2016	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Brigid's Information and Tracing Service</li> </ul>	1
Name and address of the accredited bodies entered in the Register of Accredited Bodies in 2016	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Brigid's Information and Tracing Service</li> </ul>	1
Name and address of each Accredited Body removed from the Register in 2016	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arc Adoption Ltd., 17 Prospect Court, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16</li> <li>• St. Patrick's Guild, 203 Merrion Road, Blackrock, Dublin 4</li> <li>• St. Attracta's Adoption Society, St. Mary's Sligo</li> <li>• Family Bridge Adoptions Ltd., 5 Deerhaven Crescent, Clonee, Dublin 15</li> <li>• Pathways to Adoption, 3 Church Lane, Rathmines, Dublin 6</li> </ul>	5

## Human Resources

In 2016 the Authority established its Human Resources function. A comprehensive Employee Handbook was compiled and provided to all staff. The handbook will be updated on an on-going basis subject to any changes in employment law or Department of Public Expenditure and Reform policy changes.

The Authority now has a dedicated Employee Assistance Service which is available to all staff and family members as required.

The Performance Management System was reviewed and re-launched and there was 100% compliance with the system.

To supplement the Employee Handbook training was provided for managers to ensure they understood their roles in respect of performance management and day to day HR issues that might arise.

The Adoption Authority obtained its own Recruitment Licence from the Commission for Public Appointments. Using the licence the Authority filled a vacancy at Assistant Principal Officer level.

## Training

Lunch and Learn sessions took place on 7 occasions during the year. Staff in each of the four operational units provided a presentation to their colleagues on the work and responsibilities of their particular unit. A presentation was made following attendance by one staff member at the Euroadopt Conference in the Netherlands. The title of the conference was *The Relevance of Adoption - Improving life for children who cannot live with their family*. The Special Olympics Eurasia Office who share the building with the Authority provided a presentation on their organisation. The last Lunch and Learn was our contribution to the centenary commemoration of 1916 with a presentation from one of the staff on the battles which took place and in the environs of where our offices are now based.

Training was also provided in the following areas

- Plain English NALA
- Manual Handling
- Occupational First Aid
- EU General Data Protection Regulations
- Procurement – full tender process
- Data Protection in the Workplace
- Data Protection and Records Management
- New Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies
- Audit Committees

**Website**

The Adoption Authority launched its new website in September after many months of reviewing material and consultation with stakeholders.

As well as providing general information about domestic and intercountry adoption and information and tracing services, the website also provides information about the Board and Senior Management team in the Authority. A new Post Adoption Services Directory has been published on the website and, where possible, direct links to websites of our stakeholders and other adoption related bodies have been added. The Authority will continue to develop the website to include more statistics and support information throughout 2017. There is a section on the website which allows users to provide feedback to the Authority.

**Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

During the year, the Authority worked with the Department of Health to establish a LAN link to enhance the connectivity with the Department of Health. An enhanced wi fi system was also installed to support the on-going development of a paperless system for Board meetings.

A second ICT project to improve security of the Authority network commenced in December and will be complete by end of Q1 in 2017.

**Parliamentary Questions (PQs)**

20 PQs were directed to the Authority. In the majority of cases the question came through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Authority provided material for the Minister to respond accordingly.

**Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)**

In 2016 the Adoption Authority received 17 requests under the Freedom of Information Acts

- 10 Declined
- 1 partially granted
- 1 withdrawn
- 5 granted

The reason for the high rate of declined requests is that the 2014 Act designates the Adoption Authority of Ireland as a 'Partially Included Agency'. This means that the Freedom of Information Acts do not apply to 'records concerning, or arising from, the making of an adoption order or in the recognition of an intercountry adoption effected outside the State, within the meaning of the Adoption Act 2010'.

### **Data Protection Requests**

In 2017 the Authority received 8 Data Protection requests and all were responded to. Only one request was declined as the request was not in respect of 'personal information' as defined in the Acts.

### **Seminars**

On 14<sup>th</sup> April the Authority hosted a seminar on the Children and Family Relationships Act entitled '*Families & Children – the Changing Landscape in Ireland.*' There was a keynote address from Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chair of the Authority. Other speakers on the day included Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, Orlaith Traynor, Deputy Chair of the Authority and Mr Kiernan Gildea, Head of Operations and Corporate Services at the Adoption Authority.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December a seminar entitled *Implications for Children – Adoption Amendment Bill - Foster Care to Adoption – A New Era* took place. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Dr Katherine Zappone addressed the seminar, and other speakers on the day included, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chair of the Authority, Catherine Bond, Irish Foster Care Association, Siobhan Mungan, National Director of Adoption, Tusla – Child and Family Agency and Orlaith Traynor, Deputy Chair of the Authority.

### **Social Work Team**

The social work team organises four professional development forums each year. The Forums are open to social work teams and medical advisors working in the Tusla Child and Family Agency and accredited bodies adoption services nationally. Expert national and international speakers address the Forums and the topics covered in 2016 included attachment, loss, therapeutic parenting and infectious diseases. In 2016, the Forums were held on 19 and 28 April, and on 3 and 15 November in 2016.

The purpose of the forums is to :

- provide current information on issues in Information and Tracing work, and on medical issues related to adults and children in adoption
- achieve professional and best practice consensus from in-depth discussion on ethical dilemmas in assessment and support services
- share professional practice experience and form connections with social workers and other professionals in the area of adoption work
- offer continuous professional development opportunities for practitioners in adoption

### **Consultation with young people about Adoption Order Hearings**

During 2016, the Authority and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) collaborated in designing, planning and implementing a consultation with young people. The consultation was held at the Authority in November and supported young people to express their views and ideas on the following issues relating to Adoption Order hearings:

- what steps, if any, the Authority might take to make the rooms and areas used by young people and their families when they attend an Adoption Order hearing more child- and youth-friendly;
- what information, if any, the Authority should give to young people before they attend an Adoption Order hearing with their families and what formats this information should be presented in;
- what additional steps, if any, the Authority might take to further support young people to express their views on their prospective adoption, both in advance of the Adoption Order hearing and during the hearing itself; and
- what, if anything, the Authority might give to or do for children and young people to acknowledge and mark the occasion of their Adoption Order being granted.

The OCO and Authority staff co-facilitated the consultation and used a range of activity-based methods to support participating young people to express their views and ideas.

Following the consultation, the Authority reviewed the young people's recommendations and identified which recommendations it could work towards implementing in the short-term and in the medium-term. In its feedback to the young people, the Authority explained which of their recommendations it could work to implement and when. The Authority has already taken several steps to improve the process and areas used for Adoption Order hearings, in line with the viewpoints shared by young people.

# STATISTICS

## INDEX OF STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1	Birth and Domestic Adoption Trends in Ireland 1953-2016
Table 2	Domestic Adoption Orders granted 2016 / Accredited Bodies concerned
Table 3	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2016, where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the adoption. (Section 5, Adoption Act 1991 and Section 57(2) (b) (ii) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers).
Table 4	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised in 2016, where the adoptions were effected <b>after</b> the enactment of the Adoption Act 2010 and where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the adoption. (Section 57(2) (b) (ii) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers).
Table 5	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised in 2016, where the adoptions were effected <b>prior</b> to the enactment of the Adoption Act 2010 and where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability from the Adoption Authority of Ireland at the time of effecting the adoption. (Section 57(2) (a) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers).
Table 6	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 2012 and 2016, where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the adoption. (Section 5, Adoption Act 1991 and Section 57(2) (b) (ii) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers).
Table 7	Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2016 (All Sections)
Table 8	Total number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the (former) Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991 for intercountry adoptions.
Table 9	Total number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Authority of Ireland under the Adoption Act, 2010 for intercountry adoptions.

**Table 1. Birth and Domestic Adoption Trends in Ireland 1953-2016**

Year	Total Births	Non-Marital Births	% of Total Births	No. of Adoptions
1953	62,558	1,340	2.14	381
1954	62,534	1,310	2.09	888
1955	61,662	1,234	2.00	786
1956	60,740	1,173	1.93	565
1957	61,242	1,032	1.69	752
1958	59,510	976	1.64	592
1959	60,188	959	1.59	501
1960	60,735	968	1.59	505
1961	59,825	975	1.63	547
1962	61,782	1,111	1.80	699
1963	63,246	1,157	1.83	840
1964	64,072	1,292	2.02	1,003
1965	63,525	1,403	2.21	1,049
1966	62,215	1,436	2.31	1,178
1967	61,307	1,540	2.51	1,493
1968	61,004	1,558	2.55	1,343
1969	62,912	1,642	2.61	1,225
1970	64,382	1,709	2.65	1,414
1971	67,551	1,842	2.73	1,305
1972	68,527	2,005	2.93	1,291
1973	68,713	2,167	3.15	1,402
1974	68,907	2,309	3.35	1,415
1975	67,178	2,515	3.74	1,443
1976	67,718	2,545	3.76	1,104
1977	68,892	2,877	4.18	1,127
1978	70,299	3,003	4.27	1,223
1979	72,539	3,337	4.60	988
1980	74,064	3,723	5.03	1,115
1981	72,158	3,914	5.42	1,191
1982	70,843	4,358	6.15	1,191
1983	67,117	4,552	6.78	1,184
1984	64,062	5,116	7.99	1,195
1985	62,388	5,282	8.47	882
1986	61,620	5,946	9.65	800
1987	58,433	6,347	10.86	715

Year	Total Births	Non-Marital Births	% of Total Births	No. of Adoptions
1988	54,600	6,483	11.87	649
1989	52,018	6,671	12.82	615
1990	53,044	7,767	14.64	648
1991	52,718	8,912	16.91	590
1992	51,089	9,211	18.03	523
1993	49,304	9,826	19.93	500
1994	47,928	9,904	20.66	424
1995	48,530	10,788	22.23	490
1996	50,390	12,484	24.77	405
1997	52,311	13,892	26.56	422
1998	53,551	15,133	28.26	400
1999	53,354	16,461	30.85	317
2000	54,239	17,235	31.78	303
2001	57,882	18,049	31.18	293
2002	60,521	18,815	31.09	266
2003	61,517	19,313	31.39	263
2004	61,684	19,935	32.32	273
2005	61,042	19,528	32.00	253
2006	64,237	21,295	33.15	222
2007	70,620	23,170	32.81	187
2008	75,065	24,844	33.09	200
2009	74,728	24,532	32.82	190
2010	73,724	24,860	33.72	189
2011	74,650	25,157	33.70	39
2012	72,225	25,344	35.10	49
2013	68,930	24,393	35.40	116
2014	67,462	24,514	36.30	112
2015	65,909	23,990	36.40	94
2016	Not available at	time of printing		95
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>44,459</b>

Sources: Statistical Abstracts, (various years) C.S.O.

**Table 2. Domestic Adoption Order granted / Accredited Bodies concerned**

Health Service Executive / Child & Family Agency / Tusla	All
----------------------------------------------------------	-----

**Table 3.**

Entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions, 1991-2010, entered pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act 1991 **and** in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions, 2010-2016 pursuant to Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010. (Applicants habitually resident in Ireland holding a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the intercountry adoption).

<b>No</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>No of Children</b>
1	Russia	1607
2	Vietnam	838
3	Romania	786
4	China	411
5	Ethiopia	302
6	Guatemala	176
7	Kazakhstan	149
8	Belarus	145
9	Thailand	117
10	Ukraine	99
11	Mexico	107
12	United States of America	87
13	India	51
14	Colombia	19
15	Taiwan	19
16	Brazil	17
17	Paraguay	16
18	Philippines	11
19	Bulgaria	23
20	Peru	7
21	Cambodia	4

**Table 3. contd.**

Entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions, 1991-2010, entered pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act 1991 **and** in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions, 2010-2016 pursuant to Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010. (Applicants habitually resident in Ireland holding a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the intercountry adoption).

22	Uganda	2
23	Uzbekistan	2
24	United Kingdom	7
25	El Salvador	2
26	Chile	1
27	Israel	1
28	Japan	1
29	Lebanon	1
30	Bolivia	1
31	Sri Lanka	1
32	Venezuela	1
33	Zambia	1
34	Kenya	1
35	Zimbabwe	1
36	Morocco	1
37	Bosnia Herzegovina	1
38	Malawi	1
39	Libya	1
40	South Africa	1
41	Lithuania	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5021</b>

**Table 4**

Entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions, pursuant to Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010, for 2016 only. (Applicants habitually resident in Ireland holding a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the intercountry adoption )

<b>Country</b>	<b>2016</b>
Bulgaria	4
Ethiopia	1
China	7
Lithuania	1
Russia	2
Thailand	4
United States of America	14
Vietnam	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>

**Table 5**

Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised in 2016, where the adoptions were effected by adopters who were habitually resident abroad. (Sections 57(2)(a) & 57(2)(b)(i) of the Adoption Act 2010 refer).

<b>Country of residence at time of adoption</b>	<b>2016</b>
Australia	4
Cambodia	2
Canada	5
China	6
Colombia	1
Ethiopia	2
Germany	1
Hong Kong	6
Kenya	1
Liberia	2
Malawi	1
Northern Ireland	26
Romania	1
Russia	3
South Africa	5
Sri Lanka	3
Thailand	7
United Kingdom	59
United States of America	25
Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>

**Table 6**

Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 2012 and 2016, where the adopters were habitually resident in Ireland and held a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the adoption). (Section 5, Adoption Act 1991 and Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010 refers).

<b>Country</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Bulgaria	0	1	4	8	4
China	1	3	1	15	7
Ethiopia	32	26	0	0	1
India	10	10	3	0	0
Lithuania	0	0	0	1	1
Mexico	1	0	5	11	0
Russia	49	17	4	2	2
Thailand	2	5	6	1	4
United States of America	19	7	5	6	14
United Kingdom	0	0	2	5	0
Vietnam	0	0	4	31	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>54</b>

**Table 7**

Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2016 (All Sections)

Year	Number
1991	58
1992	305
1993	59
1994	67
1995	90
1996	117
1997	148
1998	260
1999	284
2000	323
2001	285
2002	440
2003	487
2004	486
2005	439
2006	406
2007	436
2008	490
2009	394
2010	288
2011	342

**Table 7 contd.** Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2016 (All Sections)

2012	244
2013	145
2014	104
2015	160
<b>2016</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6858</b>

**Table 8**

Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991 in respect of intercountry adoptions.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Declarations Granted</b>	<b>Number of Declarations Refused</b>
1991	4	1
1992	40	1
1993	54	6
1994	63	3
1995	109	4
1996	117	5
1997	176	1
1998	206	3
1999	242	1
2000	282	1
2001	391	1
2002	399	1
2003	468	0
2004	461	0
2005	403	3
2006	400	3
2007	452	5
2008	494	1
2009	391	1
2010	423	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,575</b>	<b>40</b>

**Table 9**

Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability (Intercountry) granted and refused by the Adoption Authority of Ireland from 2010-2016 under the Adoption Act 2010 in respect of intercountry adoptions.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Granted</b>	<b>Refused</b>
2010	20	0
2011	205	0
2012	164	2
2013	266	1
2014	106	4
2015	86	1
2016	72	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>8</b>

# Corporate Governance

## **General**

The Adoption Act 2010 is the legislative basis for the establishment of the Authority. The Authority operates in accordance with best practice corporate governance principles in line with the Adoption Act 2010 and, where applicable, the guidelines as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (CPGSB).

The CPGSB, published by the Department of Finance, provides a framework for the application of best practice in corporate governance by both commercial and non-commercial bodies. A new framework document was published in September 2016. The Board has considered the changes in the new code and in early 2017 will update the current governance framework for the Authority and monitor its implementation.

## **Code of Governance**

The Authority's Code of Governance which was first adopted in 2013 has been complied with. The Code is available to all staff and Board members in the Authority's operations manual. Following the publication of the new Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies in September 2016 the existing Code was reviewed. A gap analysis will be presented to the Board in early 2017 with proposals on how to bridge any such gaps as may be identified as well as proposed amendments to the Code of Governance to ensure full compliance with the new Code of Practice by 1 September 2017.

## **Financial Control**

The budget of the Adoption Authority of Ireland is allocated through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. In 2016 the financial allocation of the Adoption authority was €3.4 million.

As set out in Section 112 of the Adoption Act 2010 the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for preparing Financial Statements and for ensuring the regularity of the Authority's transactions.

The functions underpinning these responsibilities include authorising and monitoring payments for goods and services, tendering processes and compilation of monthly returns.

The Financial Statements are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The audit of the 2016 accounts has not yet taken place. Financial Statements for a particular year are generally not audited at the time of the relevant annual report's publication. Once approved by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General the 2016 Statements will be published on the Authority's website.

Crowley's DFK Chartered Accountants provided accountancy services to the Authority during 2016.

**Internal financial control**

The Board has overall responsibility for the internal financial control of the Service. It delegates responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of risk management and the internal control environment to the Risk and Audit Committee. The committee receives regular reports from management, the Chief Risk Officer, internal audit, and external auditors. Such arrangements are designed to manage rather than eliminate the risks facing the Authority.

**Budget management**

The Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management Team prepare an annual budget based on the operational and developmental needs of the Authority. The annual budget is recommended for approval by Chief Executive Officer to the Board. Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budget limits is assigned to CEO and Head of Compliance and Resources with support from the Authority's finance consultants Crowley's DFK. Budgets are monitored closely with monthly reports furnished to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the CEO.

**Risk and Audit Committee**

The Risk and Audit Committee is chaired by an external person and includes the Chair of the Board, the Chief Executive officer, a member of the board and members with significant business expertise and experience within the public and private sectors. The Committee plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the Authority functions according to good governance, accounting and auditing standards and adopts appropriate management and risk arrangements. It does this by overseeing and advising the Board and the Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer on matters relating to financial reporting and budgeting process, financial and operational risks, the effectiveness of internal controls and risk management, the effectiveness of internal and external audit functions, the adequacy of governance procedures and value for money issues.

The committee held four meetings in 2016 at which it reviewed and considered a wide range of reports.

The Chief Executive Officer and the Head of Compliance and Resources attend all meetings of the committee. During 2016, the committee met with representatives from the Comptroller and Auditor General and external auditors. In their Annual Report 2016 the committee expressed satisfaction with the general financial control environment operating with the Authority.

**Internal audit function**

Internal audit is an independent appraisal function whose role is to provide assurance to the Board, Risk and Audit Committee, Chief Executive Officer and all levels of management as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems on governance, risk and internal controls operating within the Authority.

The Internal Audit function in the Authority is outsourced. It operates in accordance with an audit charter approved by the Board and an annual audit plan approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Risk and Audit Committee. In carrying out audits, the contractor complies with the Institute of Internal Audit Standards, as adapted by the Department of Public Reform and Expenditure for use in government departments. All audit reports are submitted directly to the Chief Executive Officer and to the Risk and Audit Committee who also receive periodic reports showing progress against the plan. The internal auditors completed 2 audits during the year. An audit of Internal Financial controls was carried out in March 2016 with the Authority being rated satisfactory. A number of recommendations were made and have been implemented. The second audit was carried out in November 2016 in respect of internal business processes. The Authority was rated satisfactory rating with one recommendation which has been addressed.

### **Risk management**

Effective risk management supports good governance. The Authority has a proactive management-led risk management process as part of its governance framework. The Board, supported by the Risk and Audit Committee and the Senior Management Team, provides the leadership in promoting risk management. The risk management framework and policy of the Authority is approved by the Board. This provides for a planned and systematic approach to identifying and managing a range of risk categories: financial, service delivery, infrastructure (buildings and ICT), people, compliance and governance, and projects.

The Chief Risk Officer is a member of the Senior Management Team and reports directly to the Audit Committee and the Board. The Authority maintains a Risk Register which is reviewed regularly by the Chief Executive Officer, Senior Management Team, Risk and Audit Committee and the Board. The register is linked to the annual business planning process and is a key document in enabling the Authority deal with the challenges it faces. The Register sets out the major risks facing the Authority together with existing controls and actions to mitigate them, and identifies owners and target dates for completion.

### **Procurement**

The Authority operates under the Public Procurement Guidelines which provides the direction for all procurement policy activity and ensures that the objectives and key principles of competition, equality of treatment and transparency which underpins national and EU rules are complied with and observed. The Authority avails of centralised managed contracts that have been put in place by the Office of

Government Procurement including the provision of stationery and office supplies, photocopying, and foreign travel. The Authority continues to engage with the Office of Government Procurement for advice on current and future procurement requirements.

#### **Protected Disclosures Act 2014**

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 facilitates workers in raising a concern regarding wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing in the workplace by providing them with certain forms of protection from action which might be taken against them for so doing.

The Act provides for different methods of protected disclosure depending on the circumstances and protects disclosures by workers including current or former employees, contractors, consultants, trainees agency staff and interns.

A policy on protected disclosures is published in the Authority's operations manual which is available to all staff. Information on the policy is also provided in the Employee Handbook.

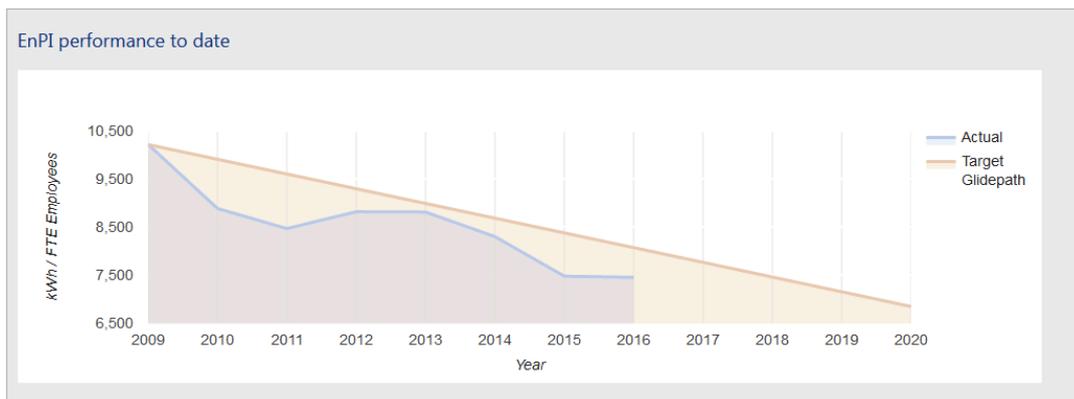
There were no protected disclosures made to the Authority in 2016

### **Energy Management**

#### **Overview of Energy Usage in 2016**

Ireland's third National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP 3), published in 2014, reaffirmed Ireland's commitment to delivering a 20% reduction in energy demand across the whole of the economy by 2020, along with a 33% reduction in public sector energy use.

The EnPI (Energy Performance Indicator) that the Authority use for its energy consumption is kWh/FTE (full time equivalents). In 2015, this was 7,472 kWh/FTE. In 2016 there was a slight improvement to 7,448 kWh/FTE. This represented a 0.3% improvement. Despite this small improvement we are still well on track to meeting our 2020 target of a 33% improvement in energy usage. Compared with our baseline level of energy usage in 2009, we have improved by 27.1%. A further improvement of 8.1% is required in the next 4 years.



**Website:** The website of the Adoption Authority can be accessed at [www.aai.gov.ie](http://www.aai.gov.ie)

**Solicitors**

Matheson  
 Sir John Rogerson’s Quay  
 Dublin 2

**Auditors**

The Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General  
 Treasury Block  
 Lower Yard  
 Dublin Castle  
 Dublin 2

ASM  
 20 Rosemary Street  
 Belfast  
 BT1 1QD  
 (internal audit)