



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2024

Annual Report 2024





ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Report of
Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann
Adoption Authority of Ireland
for 2024

To: Norma Foley, TD
Minister for Children, Disability and Equality
Department of Children, Disability and Equality

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Foreword from the Chairperson



I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI).

The Periodic Critical Review (PCR) of the AAI that the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) commenced at the beginning of 2024 was one of the first major pieces of work for the Board and the Executive. The AAI gathered documentation, engaged in interviews and participated in Steering Group meetings and meetings with the team of consultants procured to review and assess the external environment in which AAI is operating and its organisational structure, capacity and performance. The PCR report will be published in 2025.

In April, we welcomed a visit from the US State Department, with whom we have a state-to-state agreement regarding intercountry adoptions, and our Research team presented the findings of their 'Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' study at the meeting. This was the State Department's first visit to us since the outbreak of COVID.

In July, it was my pleasure to speak at the launch of the 'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022' research report, alongside AAI Research Officer Dr Judy Lovett, His Honour Judge Geoffrey Shannon SC and CEO Dr Lorraine Horgan. Minister Roderic O'Gorman provided a video address at the event which was held in the beautiful setting of the Museum of Literature Ireland on St Stephen's Green. One of the key findings of this important piece of research is that of the secrecy that has pervaded adoption and still pervades today. While the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA 2022) has gone a long way to dispelling this culture of secrecy, it is only a first step, and more work needs to be done.

Another large undertaking this year was the organisation-wide development of the AAI's next Strategic Plan for the period 2025–2027. A look-back review on the 2022–2024 strategy was initiated to inform the development process. Engagement with our main external stakeholders as well as our staff played an important role in the strategy development process. I express our gratitude to all the respondents whose voices have helped us identify improvements to our programmes and services to better meet the needs of our service users.

In November, we met with a delegation from UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) for an initial fact-finding meeting as part of a two-year project to develop a best practice framework to enable our government to reform the domestic adoption system to improve outcomes for all parties involved, especially children. The project, which is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, is led by the DCDE and implemented by UNICEF ECARO in cooperation with the European Commission's Reform and Investment Task Force (SG REFORM). We look forward to the formal launch of the project in mid-2025.

With regard to day-to-day business, the Statistics section of this report displays figures for operational matters in 2024 and previous years for all the key areas of work of the AAI. This data indicates how numbers of domestic adoption orders, intercountry adoptions, requests for birth information and release of same, applications to the CPR and matches between adopted persons and birth relatives have increased in 2024 compared with other years, as well as the number of Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information (FOI) and data protection requests the AAI processed.

By virtue of the BITA 2022, the AAI is designated as the place of safe deposit for all adoption records. The Board oversaw the refurbishment and fitting out of a specially adapted secure unit of the AAI's current premises, which now houses 109,213 case files, registers and bound volumes concerning adopted persons and persons in historic care arrangements.

As was the case in 2023, this year the Board again noted the increase in complexity in both the matters coming before it and the matters being referred to the High Court. There has been an increase in the number of birth parents, both consenting and objecting, coming to a Board hearing to voice their opinions on their child's adoption, and the Board welcomes this trend. However, a significant number of these parents articulated that, while they had no objection in principle to the adoption, they felt they were 'signing away their child'. This is due to the closed nature of our current adoption laws. The Board once again requests the government

to introduce a form of open adoption to allow access to continue post adoption. This would, we feel, be a further step in the removal of secrecy that still pervades adoption.

The Board were pleased to continue to hear the children in an age-appropriate manner, either in person or by way of letters or drawings, and with their permission anonymised versions of the letters from the children will be published on the AAI website, the current update of which will be completed in 2025.

In December 2024, we welcomed a delegation from the Philippines who visited the AAI in relation to their accreditation.

As the five-year term of this current Board comes to a close, I would like to extend my thanks to my Board colleagues for their time and expertise, their commitment and their dedication. The sheer hard work involved in making significant, life-changing decisions, 'without fear or favour', focusing on the best interests of the child, must be acknowledged.

The Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) also deserve credit for their ongoing support of the Board in its work to achieve the highest standards in adoption services.

For the remainder of this Board's term, I look forward to continuing to progress our mission 'to ensure the provision of the highest possible standards of adoption related services throughout the life-long adoption process with the best interests of the child and young person as the first and paramount objective' and, in this regard, to continue to deliver the goals and vision as set out in our Strategic Plan, 'to be recognised as the centre of excellence and principal authoritative source of information on all aspects of adoption and as a provider and regulator of high quality adoption services'.

Orlaith Traynor

Ms Orlaith Traynor
Board Chairperson



Key Activities and Achievements 2024



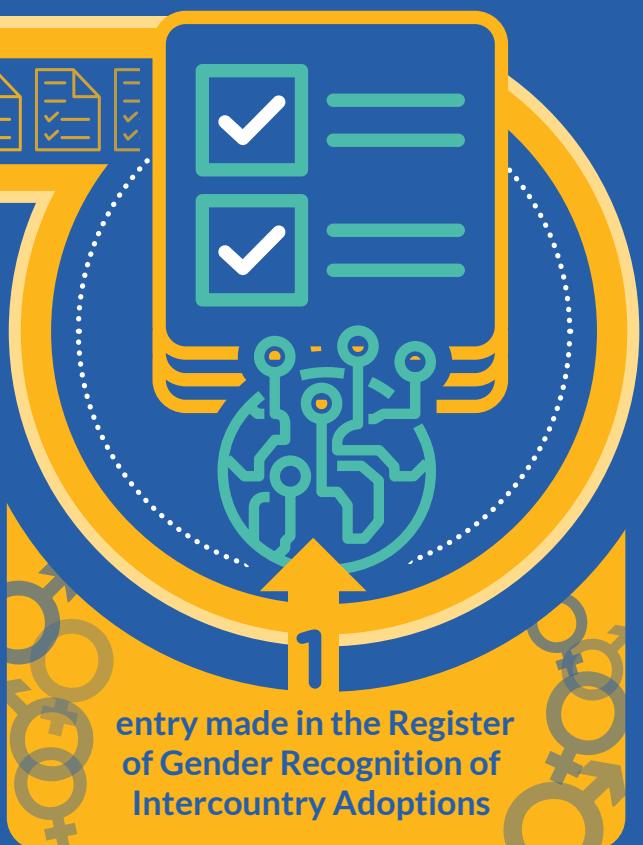
131 Adoption Orders granted
(41 more than last year)



208 entries made in the
Register of Intercountry Adoptions



1,264 applications received and completed for the release of information



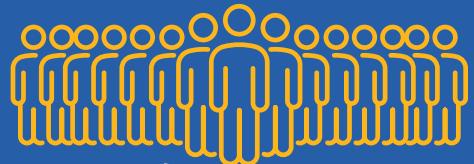
1 entry made in the Register of Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions



7,000+ case files and 1,700+ registers transferred to AAI

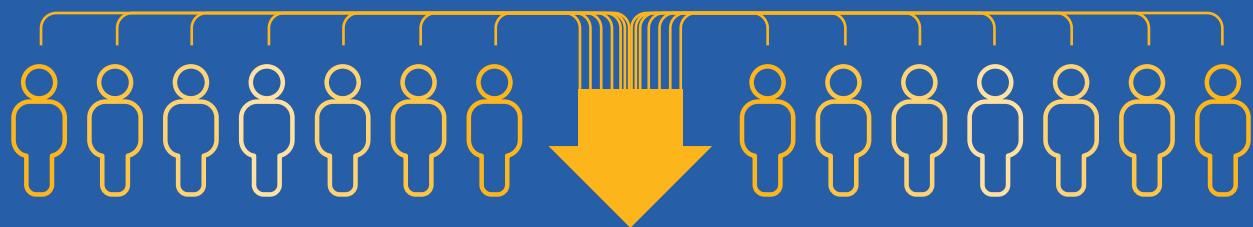
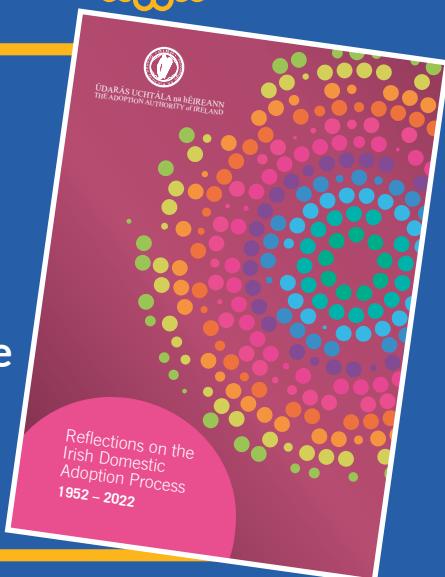


16
young people adopted
through intercountry
adoption seeking search
for origins



Major research report
**Reflections on the Irish
Domestic Adoption
Process 1952–2022**

launched at the Museum of Literature
Ireland and presented at the Eighth
International Conference on
Adoption Research in the USA.



New members recruited for the **Archives, Human
Resources, Corporate Services, Records, Domestic
Adoption and Intercountry Adoption** teams.

Overview of the Adoption Authority of Ireland



The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI), established on 1 November 2010 under the Adoption Act 2010, is an independent quasi-judicial body under the aegis of the DCDE. The AAI is also, in line with the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the 1993 Hague Convention), the Central Authority for intercountry adoption (ICA) in Ireland. The purpose of the Adoption Act 2010 is to improve standards in both domestic and ICA and to incorporate the 1993 Hague Convention into Irish law.

Legal adoption was first introduced in Ireland under the 1952 Adoption Act. The 1952 Act was enacted on 1 January 1953, and the Adoption Board was established under this Act. The Adoption Board had the sole right to grant or refuse to grant adoption orders. This right is now vested in the AAI under the current 2010 legislation, which repealed the Adoption Acts from 1952 to 1998.

The functions of the AAI are set out in Section 96 of the Adoption Act 2010. These include functions of an operational, judicial and quasi-judicial nature in relation to the adoption process itself, as provided for under the Act, but also relating to the AAI's designation as the Central Authority for the 1993 Hague Convention. In addition, the AAI has registration and regulatory functions, as well as reporting, advice and research functions.

The 2010 Act was amended on several occasions since its commencement by the following legislation:

- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011
- Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013
- Court of Appeal Act 2014
- Gender Recognition Act 2015
- Children and Family Relationships Act 2015
- Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017
- Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

The Adoption Amendment Act 2017 gave legislative effect to the Thirty-first Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Act 2012 ensuring that the best interests of the child were given paramount consideration in relation to any

matter and that the views of the child would be ascertained by the AAI or by the court, and given due weight, having regard to the age and maturity of the child. The 2017 Amendment Act also permitted the High Court to dispense with parental consent and authorised the AAI to make an adoption order in respect of that child and provided for the adoption of a child by civil partners and cohabiting couples and allowed for step-parent adoption without the requirement for the other parent to adopt his or her own child.

The Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA 2022) was signed into law on 30 June 2022. This landmark legislation provided a full and clear right of access to birth certificates and birth and early life information for all persons who were adopted, boarded out, nursed out or the subject of an illegal birth registration, or who otherwise have questions in relation to their origins. It also allowed for access to information by next of kin in certain circumstances.

The new law also established the Contact Preference Register (CPR) and a robust tracing service, as well as a range of new bespoke measures to address issues arising for people affected by illegal birth registration. It mandated the safeguarding of adoption records by the AAI.

Functions of the Adoption Authority of Ireland



The AAI's obligations span the following areas:

Domestic Adoption

Domestic adoption refers to the situation where a child who is resident in Ireland is adopted by a person or couple who is/are also resident in Ireland. The nature and effect of an Irish adoption order is that the child becomes the child of the adopter(s) as if born to them, with all the rights and duties of parent(s) and children in relation to each other. Irish adoption legislation only allows for the adoption of a child. A child is defined as a person who has not yet reached 18 years of age. There are four different types of domestic adoption – stepfamily, extended family/relative adoption, domestic infant adoption and long-term foster care to adoption.

Intercountry Adoption

Intercountry adoption refers to the situation where persons resident in Ireland decide to adopt a child who is resident in a country other than Ireland. The nature and effect of such an adoption is that the child becomes the child of the adopter as if born to her or him or to them, in the case of a qualified couple with all the rights and duties of parents and children in relation to each other. Intercountry adoption was given a statutory basis in 1991 with the passing of the Adoption Act in that year.

Access to Records

The AAI provides service users with retrieval and release of historical records services for those individuals who were adopted, fostered (in boarded-out or nursed-out arrangements) or formerly resident in a County Home institution, and in some limited cases for their next of kin. Under the BITA 2022, access to birth certificates; birth, care, early life information; and medical information is guaranteed by statute, where available and not prohibited by other enactments.

Contact Preference Register

The AAI maintains the statutory CPR. The main function of the CPR is to enable contact between people who have been affected by adoption, including those who were separated from their families by being boarded-out/nursed-out or whose births were illegally registered. The register is also a way to lodge a contact preference, including a request for privacy. Applicants to the register can also lodge an item, like a letter, photograph or other memento, for a specified person.

Safeguarding of Records

The AAI archives are the keeper of over 100,000 files created by itself, its predecessor bodies, associated adoption agencies and County Homes. These records form a unique collection documenting the experiences of adopted people and those in historic care arrangements, and their families, stretching back to 1877. The AAI archive's function is to acquire, protect, preserve and make available, within the bounds of legislation, these records.

Social Work

Social workers in the AAI understand that adoption is a life-long process that can generate a mix of emotions and needs for parties involved. It is the responsibility of the social work service in the AAI to provide a statutory tracing service for our clients. Further to this work, social workers also provide mediation, brief intervention and support and complete reviews of all current proposed adoptions.

Accreditation

In the context of adoption, accreditation means the formal evaluation by the AAI of certain bodies or persons, specifically bodies or persons who are involved in making arrangements for the adoption of a child or the provision of services such as tracing, counselling or mediation for adopted persons or relatives of adopted persons.

Research

As part of its statutory function, the AAI is required to undertake or assist in research projects and activities relating to adoption services. The AAI is committed to informing adoption policy and service delivery through provision of a comprehensive information, research and communications framework.

Statement of Mission, Vision and Values



Adoption Authority Mission



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

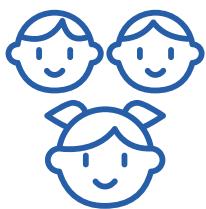
Adoption Authority Vision



To be recognised as the centre of excellence and the principal authoritative source of information on all aspects of adoption and as a provider and regulator of high quality adoption services.

Principles and Values

The AAI has adopted a set of principles and values which underpin its approach to its mission, vision, goals, objectives and daily operations. These are concerned with



CHILD-CENTEREDNESS

Focusing on the best interests of the child as paramount in the adoption process with consideration of their lifelong needs. Ensuring that the child's voice is heard and responded to meaningfully in the adoption process.



QUALITY SERVICES

Provide the highest quality services in adoption based on law and best practice, alongside developing and retaining experts in the field (including commitment to continuous improvement of services).



ACCOUNTABILITY

Through ethical practice and transparency; modus operandi which is open to scrutiny, distinguished by impartiality and equity and guided by honest, proper, accountable and ethical adoption practice. Committed to delivering services in an effective and efficient manner to achieve value for money.



RESPECT

Committed to treating all stakeholders in the adoption process or otherwise with dignity, respect and courtesy. Listening, learning and empowering organisation for all those working or affected by adoption services and listen to and respect staff ensuring the Authority remains a good place to work.

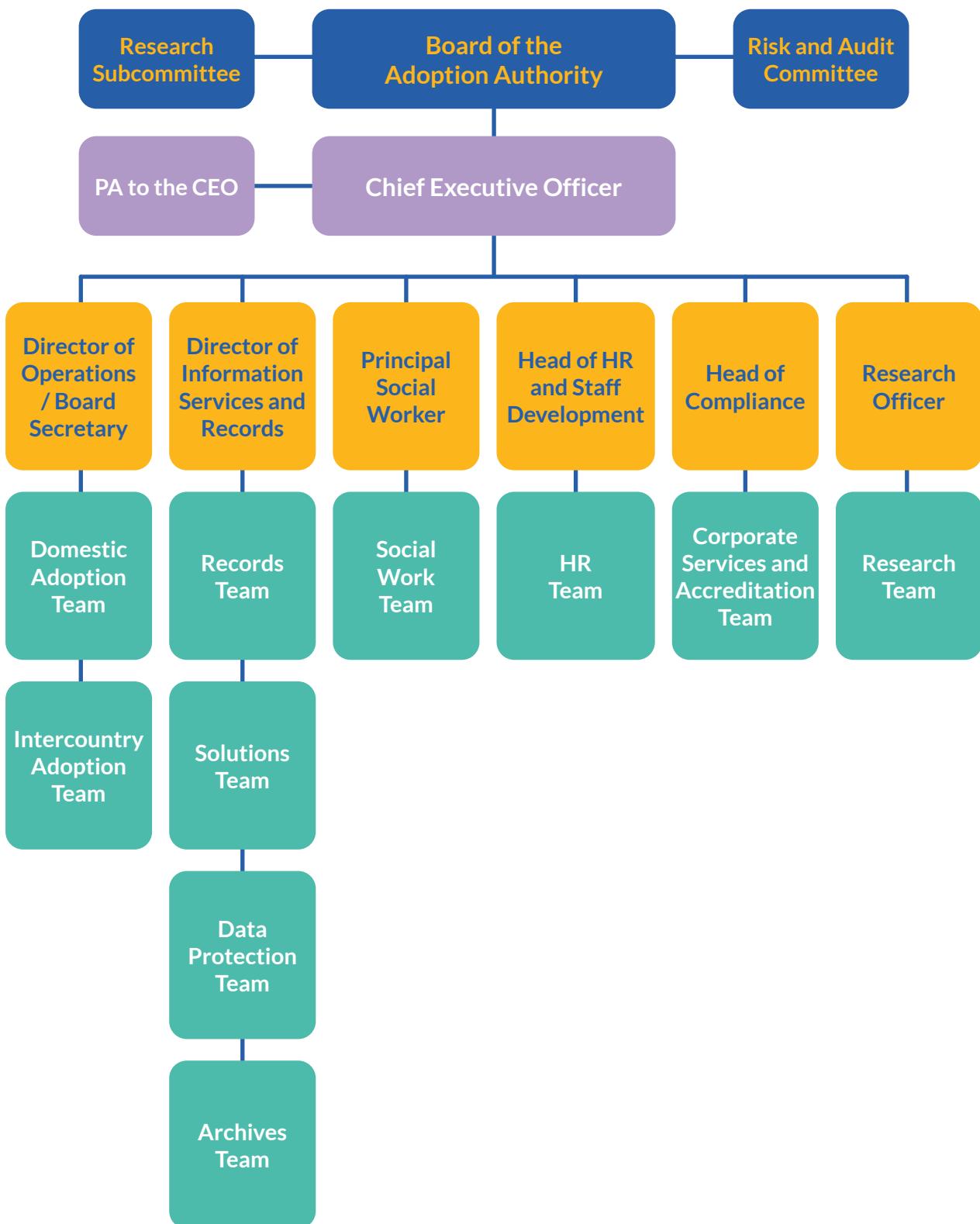
This Annual Report is a summary of the main pieces of work undertaken by the AAI in 2024. You can read and download information about our accounts and publications on www.aai.gov.ie.

Organisation & Management Structure 2024



An overview of all sanctioned posts appears in [Appendix B](#) to this report.

The AAI's organisation and management structure is set out in the following diagram.



Board of the Adoption Authority of Ireland



Membership of the Board

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010, the Board consists of seven members – the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and five ordinary members – appointed by the Minister. The Board's term of office is for a period not exceeding five years. An appointed member who completes a term of office is eligible for reappointment to the Board but may not serve as a member for more than two consecutive terms.

Since 1 November 2020, the composition of the Board has remained the same.

- **Ms Orlaith Traynor**, Chairperson
- **Mr Sean O'Brien**, Deputy Chairperson
- **Dr Helen Buckley**
- **Mr Paul Harrison**
- **Judge Patrick McMahon** (Retired)
- **Dr Margo Anglim** (until 31 December 2024)
- **Prof. Sheila Greene**

Gender Balance

Throughout 2024, the Board had four (57%) female and three (43%) male members, with no positions vacant. The Board therefore meets the government target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender in the membership of State Boards.

Meetings of the Board

The attendance of the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson and two ordinary members constitutes a quorum.

The Adoption Act 2010 stipulates that the Board shall hold as many meetings as are necessary for performing its functions, but no fewer than 12 meetings per year. In 2024, the Board held 22 scheduled meetings and convened two extra meetings for the granting of urgent orders.

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. In general, the second meeting of the month is reserved for the granting of adoption orders and any other urgent business which may need to be dealt with on the day. In general, only a quorate Board is required to attend on the adoption order days and for other emergency hearings or additional meetings to grant emergency adoption orders, and this is

reflected in the attendance report in [Appendix A](#).

Risk and Governance is a standing agenda item at every monthly meeting; in addition to which the Board holds a minimum of one meeting each year for Governance matters.

At each Board meeting, the CEO Report provides information and updates to the Board on the operation of the AAI, the implementation of the annual Business Plan, expenditure and budgetary matters and other relevant issues and/or developments.

Part 4 of the Adoption Act 2010 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 form part of the agenda for meetings of the Board and are dealt with under the Domestic and Intercountry sections of the agenda. As required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, the Board met in the absence of the Executive (that is, the CEO, the Board Secretary and any other member of staff or management) when necessary in 2024.

Committees of the Board

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. The Board has appointed two committees:

Risk and Audit Committee

The Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) comprises two AAI Board members and two external independent members. The role of the RAC is to support the Board in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance. The RAC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. In particular, the RAC ensures that the internal control systems, including audit activities, are monitored actively and independently.

The members of the RAC in 2024 were

- **Ms Patricia Gilheaney** (Chair)
- **Ms Orlaith Traynor** (Chairperson of the AAI)
- **Mr Paul Harrison** (Board Member)
- **Mr John Buckley** (External member, commenced June 2024)

The RAC meets at least four times a year, with authority to convene additional meetings as circumstances require. The attendance of two non-executive committee members shall constitute a quorum. In 2024, the RAC met four times. The RAC invited members of the Executive, auditors or others to attend meetings and to provide pertinent information, as necessary. The CEO attended all meetings of the RAC in 2024. Crowley's DFK provides administrative support to the committee.

Research Subcommittee

The Research Subcommittee comprises four Board members, two independent external members and six staff members.

The main functions of the Research Subcommittee are to support the AAI in the development and delivery of a research strategy, to regularly review and advise on such projects as are proposed by the AAI and to consider and make recommendations on matters of policy relating to research to the Board.

The Research Subcommittee also advises on research commissioned by the Board, promotes the dissemination of any research that is completed and advises on the allocation of research funds.

The members of the Research Subcommittee in 2024 were

- **Dr Helen Buckley** (Board Member)
- **Ms Orlaith Traynor** (Chairperson of the Authority)
- **Prof. Sheila Greene** (Board Member)
- **Dr Margo Anglim** (Board Member)
- **Dr Claire McGettrick**, born Lorraine Hughes, Co-Director of the Clann Project (External Member)
- **Dr Richard Sullivan**, Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia (External Member)

- **Dr Lorraine Horgan** (CEO)
- **Dr Judy Lovett** (Research Officer)
- **Mr Darren Broomfield** (Principal Social Worker)
- **Mr Gordon Corrigan** (HEO Information and Records)
- **Mr Mark Kirwan** (Manager, Domestic Adoption Unit)
- **Ms Orla Bolger** (Manager, Intercountry Adoption Unit)

The Research Subcommittee met four times in 2024.

Governance

The Board of the AAI was established under the Adoption Act 2010, and its functions are set out in Section 96 of the Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and is responsible for ensuring good governance. It performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues.

The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the AAI are the responsibility of the CEO and the SMT. The CEO and the SMT must follow the broad strategic direction set by the Board and must ensure that all Board members have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between the Board and staff and management of the AAI.

Responsibilities

Board

The work and responsibilities of the Board are set out in the AAI's Code of Governance.

Section 112 of the Adoption Act 2010 requires the CEO of the AAI to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In considering these financial statements prepared by the CEO, the Board of the AAI is required to

- Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that it will continue in operation; and
- State whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board is responsible for overseeing that the CEO is keeping adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 112 of the Adoption Act 2010. The maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information on the AAI's website is the responsibility of the Board.

The Board is responsible for approving the annual Business Plan and budget and regularly evaluates the performance of the AAI by reference to the annual Business Plan and budget at Board meetings.

The Board is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, and through the Minister, to the government. It is also accountable through the CEO as Accounting Officer to the Oireachtas under the Committee of Public Accounts and other committees of the Oireachtas. The Board must submit an Annual Report and such other information as the Minister may require.

Chairperson

The primary role of the Chairperson is providing leadership to the Board and the AAI in discharging the responsibilities assigned to it under its establishment statute.

The specific duties of the Chairperson relate to managing the AAI by

- Appropriate agenda setting, management and support of Board meetings;
- Chairing Board meetings characterised by clear decisions and the balancing of contributions from Board Members and the CEO/Executive;
- Ensuring that the minutes of the meeting accurately record the decisions taken;
- Evaluating the Board's performance;
- Ensuring Board members understand their respective roles and responsibilities and that the Board works effectively and efficiently;
- Furnishing a Comprehensive Report to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality in conjunction with the AAI's Annual Report and financial statements in compliance with Financial and Reporting arrangements under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Managing key relationships/communications with

- The CEO;
- The Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and the DCDE;
- Other key external parties and by promoting the work and mission of the AAI;
- The Board, reflecting a tone of respect, trust and candour that allows for challenging questions and inputs;
- The appropriate Oireachtas Sub-Committee(s).

The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and is responsible for ensuring good governance. It performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues.

Chief Executive Officer

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

As well as keeping all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by the AAI, the CEO is also responsible for

- The implementation of policies approved by the Board;
- The day-to-day management of the staff;
- Carry on and manage and control generally the administration and business of the AAI;
- Preparation of the annual budget for approval by the Board and its submission to the DCDE;
- Providing updates to the Board, and other committees of the Board, in regard to the management of the AAI;
- The implementation of policy and progress on the Strategic Plan.

Board Stipend

An annual stipend of €7,695 is payable to Board members, 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 currently employed as public servants. From November 2020, in recognition of the quasi-judicial nature of the decisions and work of the AAI, the sum of €57,646 per annum is paid to the Chair. All payments are made quarterly in arrears.

Corporate Governance



The Adoption Act 2010 is the legislative basis for the establishment of the AAI.

The AAI 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 2016.

Financial Control

The budget of the AAI is allocated through the DCDE. The CEO is the Accounting Officer for the AAI. In 2024, the financial allocation of the AAI was €8,581,000.

As set out in Section 112 of the Adoption Act 2010, the CEO is responsible for preparing Financial Statements and for ensuring the regularity of the AAI's transactions.

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

The Financial Statements are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG). The OCAG audited and approved the 2023 Financial Statements, and they are published on the AAI's website.

Crowleys DFK Chartered Accountants provided accountancy services to the AAI during 2024.

Internal Financial Control

The Board has overall responsibility for the internal financial control of the AAI. It delegates responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of risk management and the internal control environment to the RAC. 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 AAI.

Budget Management

The CEO and the SMT prepare an annual budget based on the operational and developmental needs of the AAI. The CEO recommends the annual budget to the Board for approval. Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budget limits is assigned to the CEO and Head of Compliance with support from the AAI's outsourced finance consultants. Expenditure is monitored closely by the SMT and the CEO with

support from the outsourced finance consultants. Reports are furnished to the DCDE as part of the drawdown process.

Risk and Audit Committee

The RAC is chaired by an external person and includes the Chair of the Board, a member of the Board and one other external member with significant business expertise and experience within the public and/or private sectors (for membership see page 20). The CEO along with relevant members of the SMT attend all meetings of the committee. The RAC met four times during 2024 and met with representatives from the OCAG, as well as internal auditors. The RAC maintained minutes or other reports of its meetings and activities. In its Annual Report 2024, the RAC expressed satisfaction with the general financial control environment operating within the AAI.

The RAC plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the AAI 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 CEO as Accounting Officer on the following matters:

- The strategic processes for risk, internal control and governance;
- The accounting policies, the financial statements, including the process for review of the financial statements prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and management's letter of representation to the external auditors;
- The planned activity and results of both internal and external audits;
- Adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter of representation;
- Assurances relating to the management of risk and corporate governance requirements for the AAI;

- Proposals for tendering for either internal or external audit services or for purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services; and
- Anti-fraud policies, protected disclosure processes, and arrangements for special investigations.

The RAC periodically reviews its own effectiveness and reports the results of that review to the Board.

The RAC agenda in 2024 included

- Review of draft Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2023
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of the AAI's internal audit activities
- Review and approval of the 2024 Internal Audit Plan
- Review of the 2024–2026 Corporate Procurement Plan and quarterly updated on delivery of 2024 procurement plan
- Review of the 2023 Protected Disclosures Report
- Consideration of the AAI's progress in implementing cybersecurity recommendations
- Review of the findings of inspection of HHAMA
- OCAG Audit of 2023 Financial Statements
- Consideration of the results of the self-assessment review of effectiveness
- Review of quarterly management accounts including budget vs actual spend variance analysis
- Annual review of the Risk Management Policy
- Quarterly review of the Corporate Risk Register and annual review of all risk registers
- Review of revised Travel and Subsistence Policy for recommendation to the Board

The Board of the AAI approved the RAC Charter and Terms of Reference at the Board meeting held on 09 July 2024. The Chair of the RAC formally presented the 2023 Annual Report of the RAC to the Board at the 14 May 2024 Board meeting.

Risk Management

Effective risk management supports good governance. The AAI has a proactive management-led risk management process as part of its governance framework. The Board, supported by the RAC and the SMT, provides the leadership in promoting risk management. The risk management framework and policy of the AAI is approved by the Board. This provides for a planned and systematic approach to identifying and managing a range of risk categories: Financial, Compliance and Governance, Strategic, Operational, Stakeholder and Reputational.

The Chief Risk Officer is a member of the SMT and reports directly to the CEO, the RAC and the Board. The Corporate Risk Register sets out the major risks facing the AAI together with existing controls and actions to mitigate them, and identifies owners and target dates for completion. Risks are categorised High, Medium and Low. A report on the High Risk items was provided to the Board at each of its full meetings in 2024.

Internal Audit Function

Internal audit is an independent appraisal function whose role is to provide assurance to the Board, RAC, CEO and all levels of management as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems on governance, risk and internal controls operating within the AAI.

The internal audit function is outsourced. It operates in accordance with an audit charter approved by the Board and an annual audit plan approved by the CEO and the RAC. In carrying out audits, the contractor complies with the Institute of Internal Audit Standards, as adapted by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDR) for use in government departments.

Delivery of the three-year Internal Audit Plan covering the period 2023–2025 continued in 2024.

Procurement

The AAI operates under the Public Procurement Guidelines which provide the direction for all procurement policy activity and ensure that the objectives and key principles of competition, equality of treatment and transparency which underpin national and EU rules are complied with and observed.

The AAI avails of centralised managed contracts that have been put in place by the OGP, including the provision of stationery and office supplies, photocopying and foreign travel. The AAI continues to engage with the OGP for advice on current and future procurement requirements. In 2024, six contracts with a total contract value of over €25,000 were successfully procured in conjunction, where available, with the OGP in line with the AAI's 2024 Procurement Plan. The most significant procurement projects of 2024 related to the website integration and redevelopment project and the outsourced finance and accountancy services.

For the financial year ended 31 December 2024, the AAI can confirm that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with current procurement rules and guidelines.

Protected Disclosures

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014, as amended by the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022, 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.

The AAI's Protected Disclosures Policy is published on the AAI's website.

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires the publication of an Annual Report relating to the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year and any actions taken in response to such disclosures. Pursuant to this requirement, the AAI confirms that no reports were received and/or are under investigation in accordance with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended 2022) for the financial year from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024.

Ethics in Public Office

Under the provisions of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act 2001, AAI Board members and some AAI staff members are required to disclose material interests. Annual statements of interests are requested from all AAI Board members as, under ethics legislation, they are designated directors, and these annual statements must be submitted to the Standards in Public Office Commission. Any AAI staff member who is deemed to hold a designated position of employment is also required to complete a disclosure of interest statement if they have interests to disclose, both on appointment, and annually.

Board Evaluation

Under Section 4.6 of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016, there is a requirement for the Board of all State bodies to undertake an annual self-assessment evaluation of its own performance and that of its committees. The code requires that an external evaluation proportionate to the size and requirements of the State body should be carried out at least every three years. In 2024, via a competitive tender process, the AAI engaged Navigo Consulting Limited to conduct an external evaluation of the Board and its Committees. The report on the external evaluation was approved by the Board in December and submitted also to the Department.

Implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

All public bodies in Ireland have a statutory duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of their staff, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is an obligation originated in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) Act 2014. In the Strategic Plan for 2022–2024, the AAI commits to completing an assessment of the equality and human rights issues that are relevant to its purpose and functions, and this was progressed in 2024. The Board considered how the AAI meets its Public Sector Duty requirements under the IHREC Act 2014 at one of its governance sessions held in 2024.

Disability Act

The Disability Act 2005 places a statutory obligation on public service organisations to provide support and access to services and facilities for people with disabilities. In line with the obligation placed on all public bodies, we promote and support the employment of people with disabilities. In 2024, the AAI continued to make efforts to meet the minimum 3% target of employment for people with disabilities; to date the AAI has not met this requirement as declared by our staff. We will continue to promote our commitment to enabling all staff to carry out their work on an equal basis through the provision of all necessary supports and accommodations.

Children First Act

All staff within the AAI are expected to have an awareness of child safety matters. The AAI recognises that protecting children from harm is everyone's responsibility. All staff are required to undertake the Children First e-learning programme delivered by Tusla (the Child and Family Agency), and the Social Work team through the Relevant Person will update staff on any new issues or guidance in the area. The Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed and updated in 2024. The AAI is committed to responding to all matters of concern in a manner that is sensitive, empathetic, timely and in line with statutory guidelines. The AAI is fully committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures to support staff to keep children safe from harm. The AAI's Child Safeguarding Statement was reviewed and revised in 2024 and the revised version is published on the AAI website.

Official Languages Act

The AAI has a number of legal obligations which are set out under the Official Languages Act 2003 and the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. In line with these obligations, the AAI publishes public facing documents such as the Annual Report and vacancy advertisements in Irish. All queries, FOI requests, complaints and other communications received in Irish are responded to in the Irish language. All AAI branded stationery (e.g. letterheads) exhibits the AAI logo with the Irish language. Throughout 2024, the AAI continued our project of reviewing and updating all information provided through the Irish language.

The AAI is fully committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures to support staff to keep children safe from harm.

2022-2024 Strategic Plan



Section 108 of the Adoption Act 2010 requires the AAI to prepare and submit a three-year Corporate/Strategic Plan.

In 2024, the final year of the three-year strategic cycle, the 2022–2024 Strategic Plan that was launched in February 2022 continued to serve as the overarching guide for annual business planning and as the blueprint, outlining the key priorities, goals, objectives and actions, to enable the AAI to provide and ensure the highest possible standard of adoption services in Ireland.

During 2024, the AAI continued to deliver on our commitment to provide excellent adoption and birth information and tracing services to the public at all times and worked to further enhance

communication to the public and those involved in the adoption processes to encourage an improved awareness and understanding around adoption.

The 2022–2024 strategic priorities in Figure 1 below demonstrate the AAI's commitment to being recognised as the centre of excellence and principal authoritative source of information on all aspects of adoption and as a provider and regulator of high-quality adoption services in Ireland.

Figure 1: Strategic Priorities and Goals 2022–2024

Priority 1 The child is the foremost priority and their best interests should be pursued in all adoption cases.

Goals

- 1.1** The primary goal of all adoptions is that the best interests of the child/young person are heard throughout the adoption process and they are responded to in a timely and meaningful manner throughout.

Priority 2 Achieve the highest standards of adoption services.

Goals

- 2.1** Ensure that all relevant parties can exercise their right to be heard throughout the full adoption process and support legal aid applications where required for parents.
- 2.2** Achieve the highest standard in the regulation and operation of the adoption services provided directly by the AAI or by those agencies accredited by the AAI.

Priority 3 Effectively implement the BITA 2022.

Goals

- 3.1** Ensure that the BITA 2022 continues to be operationalised.
- 3.2** Develop an organisation that is ready to adapt quickly to changes in legislation.

Priority 4 Empower our people and deliver effective operations.

Goals

- 4.1** Build and maintain a workforce that has the capability, capacity and adaptability to achieve their career ambitions, and meet the changing needs of the adoption landscape.
- 4.2** Develop the AAI's organisation structure, its processes, and technology to enable the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

Priority 5 Attain robust governance and supportive stakeholder relationships.

Goals

- 5.1** Develop effective and accountable governance, risk management and compliance arrangements.
- 5.2** Progress strong working relationships and collaboration with adoption stakeholders.
- 5.3** Improve awareness and understanding of the adoption process among stakeholders and the wider public.

Priority 6 Foster a culture of innovation.

Goals

- 6.1** Build and maintain innovative methods to ensure that the adoption services provided by the AAI, and those agencies accredited by the AAI, are of world-class standard.
- 6.2** Extend and develop capacity of Research Unit to enable the AAI to show clear research leadership in its field.

2024 Business Plan

The key components of the Business Plan for 2024 were derived from the 2022–2024 Strategic Plan. Throughout 2024, we continued to deliver on our commitment to provide excellent adoption services to the public at all times, maintaining our focus on our key values of child-centredness, quality, accountability and respect. We worked closely with our line department (the DCDE), as well as key stakeholders.

We continued our focus to build our research capabilities through our Research team, delivering key objectives and projects identified in the Research Strategy 2023–2025.

Look-Back Review and Development of the Next Strategic Plan

In March and April, the AAI reviewed the current strategy and the methodology deployed in its development, implementation and delivery, with a view to identifying a set of lessons learned and recommendations relevant to developing the next three-year Strategic Plan 2025–2027.

Taking a 'lessons-learned' approach, the look-back sought key internal stakeholders' views on the current strategy and the extent of its continuing relevance to the AAI's evolving role and changes in the external environment. We also asked stakeholders to reflect on their experience of the current strategy's delivery through the annual business planning cycle and quarterly and monthly reporting rhythms.

The Lessons Learned report concluded with eight recommendations for the AAI to integrate within the development process for the next three-year plan. These can be summarised as follows:

- Commence a series of conversations and listening exercises with all key stakeholders.
- Include all the internal team at the AAI in the strategy conversation.
- Take a more holistic or higher-level perspective in the next strategy by identifying the outcomes and impacts that the AAI is working towards and thereby looking beyond granular tasks and outputs.
- Use the comprehensive and independently led board evaluation exercise carried out in 2024 to inform the Board transition in 2025.
- Work on the AAI's organisational voice as a learning exercise.
- Take the opportunity to critically review the AAI's structure to ensure that the structure fits the strategy.
- Update a skills and competencies analysis across the organisation.
- Continue to focus on being a research-informed and intelligence-led organisation.

Following a procurement process, external expertise was commissioned in Q3 to facilitate the development of the new three-year strategy and facilitation of the external stakeholder engagement. The consultants worked with the SMT and consulted widely with all staff as well as meeting with key external stakeholders that included the DCDE, the three accredited bodies, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and the Ombudsman for Children. A new three-year strategy was developed with a final draft nearing conclusion by end 2024.

Periodic Critical Review

In May, the PCR of the AAI carried out by the DCDE as required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies was commenced. The AAI Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, CEO and Director of Operations were members of the PCR Steering Group established by DCDE and met four times in 2024.

The AAI actively engaged in the PCR process which encompassed the collation and submission of requested documentation, interviews with each Board member and member of the SMT, workshops with the SMT, an all-staff survey and review of draft reports. The final version of the PCR report is anticipated in mid-2025.

During 2024, the AAI continued to deliver on our commitment to provide excellent adoption and birth information and tracing services to the public at all times and worked to further enhance communication to the public and those involved in the adoption processes to encourage an improved awareness and understanding around adoption.

Visits and Travel



The AAI hosted several overseas visitors and various staff members attended conferences in 2024 to gain and share knowledge and improve communications with other agencies and bodies. Participants reported points of note to AAI colleagues via our all-staff meetings. The following is an overview; further details are provided in the relevant sections of this Annual Report.

Central Authority Engagement

In April, the AAI hosted a meeting with representatives from the US Department of State accompanied by personnel from the US Embassy in Dublin. The participants discussed the respective Central Authorities' current activities and the operation of processes for ICA.

Also in April, the CEO and the Director of Operations travelled to Stockholm, Sweden, for the first Intercountry Adoption Network (ICAN) meeting of 2024. At these regular meetings, delegates from the 12 Central Authority members of ICAN provide updates and engage in discussion on matters of mutual interest over 1.5 days. The Director of Operations attended the second ICAN meeting of the year in Brussels, Belgium, in November.

Two members of the accrediting team from the National Authority for Child Care (NACC) – the Philippines Central Authority – visited Ireland in December to review the intercountry adoption programme between Ireland and the Philippines. The AAI invited the families of children who have been adopted into and settled in Ireland from the Philippines to meet the NACC delegation and AAI staff over afternoon tea at Shelbourne House.

UNICEF

Ireland is one of four EU countries taking part in a multi-country Technical Support Instrument project funded by the European Commission. This project is led in Ireland by the Adoption Policy Unit (APU) of the DCDE and supported by the Child Protection Section of UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in cooperation with the European Commission's Reform and Investment Task Force (SG-REFORM). In November, a London-based representative from UNICEF travelled to Dublin on a scoping and fact-finding mission to commence the two-year project, which aims to develop a best practice framework and reform roadmap to enable the government of Ireland to reform its domestic adoption system to improve

outcomes for all parties involved, especially the child. In the course of the fact-finding mission, the AAI hosted a meeting at which staff from the AAI engaged with the UNICEF delegate and APU and delivered a number of well-received presentations

Research and Social Work

In April, three Social Work team members, alongside the Research Officer, attended the EurAdopt 2024 conference in Cambridge, UK.

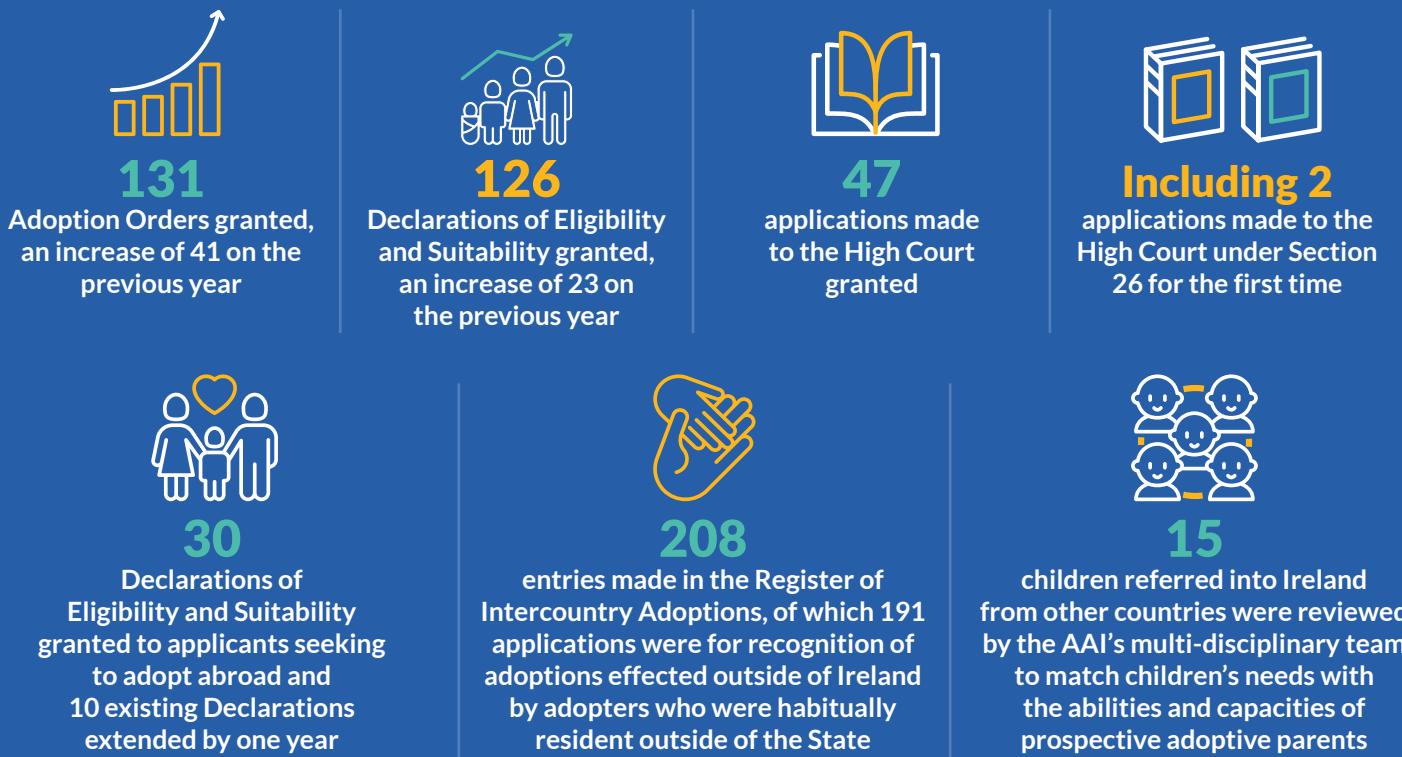
The AAI launched 'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022' at the Museum of Literature Ireland on St Stephen's Green in July. Later in July, the Research Officer and the Research Assistant presented the report, alongside two other presentations about the AAI's research work, at the Eighth International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR-8) at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

In August, the Principal Social Worker attended the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) congress held in Uppsala, Sweden.

The AAI hosted several overseas visitors and various staff members attended conferences in 2024 to gain and share knowledge and improve communications with other agencies and bodies.

Adoption Operations





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. In total, 126 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted in 2024, an increase of 23 from the previous year. The expiration dates of 22 Declarations were extended in 2024, an increase of five from the previous year. In most cases, Declarations were granted within three to four weeks of receipt of the application.

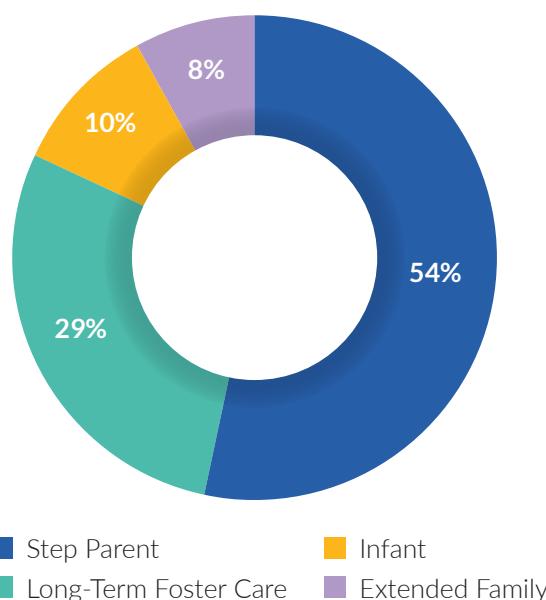
Of the Declarations granted, 111 were granted in respect of married persons or couples, eight in respect of co-habiting persons or couples, one in respect of a civil partnership and six in respect of single applicants.

Adoption Orders

The AAI received 143 adoption applications in 2024, and 131 Adoption Orders were granted during the year. This is an increase of 41, from 90 granted in the previous year. The majority of orders granted were in respect of step-parent adoptions, which totalled 71. The number of

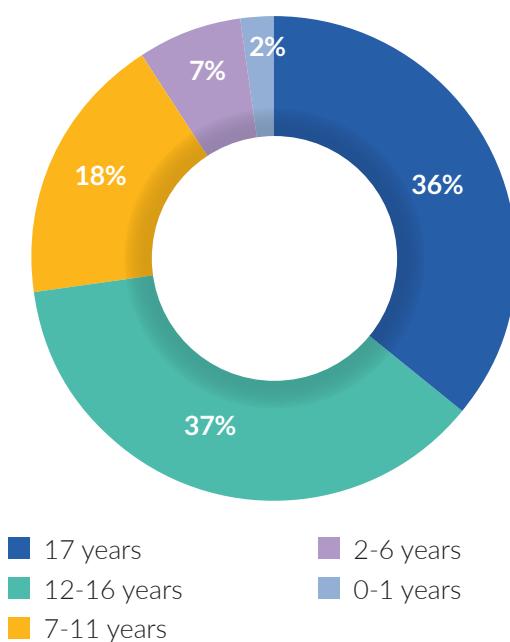
adoption orders made for children who had been in long-term foster care in 2024 was 45. The remainder consisted of five infants placed from birth for the purpose of adoption, and 10 cases of children living with extended family members.

Figure 2: Adoption Orders Granted 2024



Adoption Orders cannot be granted once a child turns 18 years of age and is legally considered an adult. Of the 131 Adoption orders granted in 2024, in 47 cases the child was 17 years of age; in 49 cases they were aged between 12 and 16 years, in 23 cases they were aged between seven and 11 years, in nine cases they were aged between two and six years, and in three cases they were one year old.

Figure 3: Domestic Adoptions by Age of Child Granted in 2024



The majority of applications, 103, were assessed and facilitated by the adoption services of Tusla. The remaining 28 applications were assessed and facilitated by the accredited agency PACT.

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

The AAI must make an application to the High Court seeking to dispense with birth father notification and consultation in the following instances:

- Where the AAI does not know the identity of the birth father, or
- Where the AAI has been unable to locate the birth father in order to notify and consult him, or

- Where due to the nature of the relationship between the birth mother and father it would be inappropriate to notify and consult the birth father.

In 2024, 20 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. All 20 applications were granted.

Of these applications, nine orders were made by the High Court in circumstances where it was deemed inappropriate or not possible to notify and consult with the birth father. The remaining 11 orders were made in circumstances where the identity of the birth father was unknown.

In 2024, four applications were made to the High Court under Section 18 of the Act. This is required in circumstances where the birth father cannot be consulted regarding his child being placed for adoption shortly after birth. In two cases, the identity of the birth father was unknown, and in two cases the mother would not identify the birth father. All four of these orders were granted.

Two cases were also taken under Section 26(1)(b) of the Act for the first time. This section can be employed in cases where the guardian of a child cannot be located. Both of these orders were granted.

To allow the AAI to make an adoption order, Tusla (or in certain instances, the applicants), must make an application to the High Court under Section 54 in the instances

- Where parental consents are not forthcoming,
- Where there is an issue with regard to the circumstances of the placement of the child with the prospective adoptive parents,
- and it can be demonstrated that the parent(s) have failed in their duty to their child and adoption is in the child's best interests.

In 2024, 21 applications were made to the High Court under Section 54 of the Act. These 21 applications were granted in 2024. In all of these cases, the birth mother or guardian's consents could not be obtained.

Please see [Statistics](#) section for further information.

Intercountry Adoption

Activity Analysis

Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability

The AAI granted 30 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability in 2024 to applicants seeking to adopt abroad and extended 10 existing Declarations by one year.

Register of Intercountry Adoptions

In 2024, 208 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA) on foot of applications for recognition of adoptions. Of this number, 191 applications were for recognition of adoptions effected outside of Ireland by adopters who were habitually resident outside of the State.

Matching of Children

The Intercountry Adoption team collaborate with the Social Work team and a medical advisor, to advise on the matching of children's needs with the abilities and capacities of prospective adoptive parents. In 2024, 15 children were referred into Ireland from other countries. All referrals of children for adoption are reviewed by the AAI's multi-disciplinary team, which comprises the Principal Social Worker, the Medical Advisor and the Manager of the Intercountry Adoption team.

This year, 17 entries were in respect of intercountry adoptions of children into Ireland by adopters habitually resident in the State.

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 RICA may apply to the AAI for an entry in the Register of Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions (GRICA).

Applications should be made in writing to the AAI 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).

One entry was made in the GRICA in 2024, compared with two in 2023.

A Central Authority under the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption

The AAI is designated a Central Authority under the Adoption Act 2010. In its role as a Central Authority, the Manager of the Intercountry Adoption team is the designated contact for all matters pertaining to The Hague Convention.

Engagement – Intercountry

A majority vote from all participants saw the biannual Anglophone Teleconference revised to an annual meeting in 2024. The meeting took place online in September 2024 in respect of intercountry adoption matters and was hosted, on this occasion, by Australia. The meeting was, as always, informative and valuable. It is a good opportunity to connect with our colleagues in other Central Authorities, to maintain relationships and keep up to date with current intercountry adoption issues/trends.

Please see [Statistics](#) section for further information.

The Intercountry Adoption team collaborate with the Social Work team and a medical advisor, to advise on the matching of children's needs with the abilities and capacities of prospective adoptive parents.

Information Services and Records





1,264
applications received and completed for the release of information



7,234
checks of parents' preferences on the CPR completed



24
data subject access requests



44
FOI requests



1,224
ICT requests



7,000+
case files and 1,700+ registers transferred to AAI

Records

Information Release under Parts 2–4 of the BITA 2022

Between 1 January and 31 December 2024, the AAI received 1,264 valid applications, all of which were completed in 2024, for the release of information, with an average of 112 received per month.

Location of Applications

A total of 1,026 applications were received from within the Republic of Ireland, which represents 82% of all applications. The next most significant jurisdiction for applications was the United Kingdom with 126 applications, representing 10%, with Northern Ireland making up 16 of these applications.

The balance of applications, other than from Ireland or the United Kingdom, of 102, were received from 15 different jurisdictions. These represented 8% of all applications.

A total of 1,026 applications were received from within the Republic of Ireland, which represents 82% of all applications. The next most significant jurisdiction for applications was the United Kingdom with 126 applications, representing 10%, with Northern Ireland making up 16 of these applications.

Category of Applicants

Table 1

Category*	Definitions	Number of Valid Applications received and completed
Relevant Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an adopted person; • a person who is, or who has reasonable grounds for suspecting that he or she is, the subject of an incorrect birth registration;** or • a person who has been, or who has reasonable grounds for suspecting that he or she has been, at any time in the period following his or her birth and ending on the date on which he or she attained the age of 18 years; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ resident in an institution specified in the Schedule of the BITA 2022, or ◦ the subject of a nursed-out arrangement or a boarded-out arrangement. 	1,196
Qualifying Person	The son or daughter of a relevant person is termed a 'qualifying person'.	63
Qualifying Relative	<p>The next of kin of a relevant person is termed a 'qualifying relative' under the Act who may make an application for information if the relevant person died as a child in an institution.</p> <p>For the purposes of an application, 'next of kin' can mean one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a deceased relevant person's mother or father; • the relevant person's brother(s) or sister(s), if the deceased relevant person's parents are deceased the relevant person's uncle or aunt, if the relevant person's parents and siblings (if any) are deceased; • the relevant person's niece(s) or nephew(s), if the relevant person's parents, siblings (if any), and aunts and uncles (if any) are deceased. 	5
Total***		1,264
<p>*As indicated by applicant</p> <p>**42 applicants within the Relevant Persons category indicated that they were, or had reasonable grounds for suspecting that they were, the subject of an incorrect birth registration.</p> <p>*** 12 Supplementary releases of records were also completed in 2024, all for relevant persons.</p>		

Format of information release requested

A total of 445 (35%) of relevant persons requested the release of their information via hardcopy posted to their address, and 819 (65%) requested their information digitally.

Check of the CPR for a parent's Contact Preference under Sections 7 (1), 8 (2), 9 (4), and 10 (4) of the BITA 2022 and Section 2.3.2.5 of the BITA 2022 – Policy Guidelines

The AAI completed 3,695 checks of parent's preference on the CPR in 2024, 1,264 of which related to the release of records by the AAI itself, while 2,395 related to the release of Information by Tusla (the Child and Family Agency). All requests for checks of the CPR by Tusla were completed within the mandatory three-working-day timeframe.

Applications for Release of Genetic Medical Information under Section 16 of the BITA 2022

A total of 484 applicants nominated a Medical Practitioner in their application for the sharing of genetic medical information of a relevant person. One applicant stated that they did not currently have a medical practitioner while two declined to nominate a medical practitioner.

Information Sessions under Section 17 (2) of the BITA 2022

Where a 'no contact' preference is recorded against a birth parent's entry on the CPR, the AAI is required to conduct an information session conveying the text set out in Annex 1 of the protocol¹ with any applicant who is requesting their birth certificate, birth information, early life information, care information, medical information or provided items under the BITA 2022.

Ten information sessions were completed with applicants over the age of 18 for information under Part 2 of the BITA 2022. No information sessions were refused by applicants in 2024. All 10 information sessions took place via a telephone call with a designated person, as defined Annex 2 of the protocol. In nine out of 10 applicants, only the initial contact was required to arrange an information session. In

the one additional case, a second communication was required to agree a date for the information session with the applicant. Four of the applications were for information release by the AAI, while the remaining six were for the release of information by Tusla (the Child and Family Agency).

Release of Information with reference to Section 19 (7) of the BITA 2022

By 31 December 2024, 1,264 applications were completed and information released to applicants. All applications were acknowledged within the mandatory five-day period.

Table 2

Category*	Records released within one month	Records released within three months	Total
Relevant Person	1,194	2	1,196
Qualifying Person	63	0	63
Qualifying Relative	5	0	5
Total	1,262	2	1,264

Reviews under Section 2.7 of the BITA 2022 – Policy Guidelines

The Authority received 26 requests for reviews in 2024.

CPR under Part 6 of the BITA 2022

On 1 July 2022, the CPR came into existence on a statutory footing under Part 6 of the BITA 2022.

The main function of the CPR is to enable contact between family members affected by adoption. The register also serves as a way to lodge a contact preference, including a request for privacy. Applicants have the option to share information that could be beneficial to a family member such as medical or background information.

¹Communication Protocol Between the Adoption Authority of Ireland ('The Authority') and the Child and Family Agency – Tusla ('The Agency') regarding Chapter 2 of the Policy Guidelines made by the Minister for Children, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Youth under Sections 19, 25 and 31 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022.

Applicants to the register can lodge an item (letter, photograph, etc.) for a specified person, which will be given to the specified person if they join or have previously joined the register.

Number of Applications for Registration

In 2024, the AAI received 362 applications from adoptees, 44 applications from parents and 117 applications from other relatives to the CPR. It should be noted that a portion of these, numbering 168, represented updates to existing entries on the CPR, for example change of contact details and/or updating of contact preferences.

Category of Registrants

Category of Registrant	Count of Registration Type
Adoptee	362
Adoptive Parent	0
Aunt/Uncle	11
Birth Father	11
Birth Mother	33
Cousin	15
Friend/Relative of adopted person who is deceased	5
Grandparent/Grandchild	0
Niece/Nephew	5
Son or daughter of an adopted person	19
Sibling	62
Unknown	1
Total	524

Location of Registrants

Two hundred and seventy-five unique entries on the register were from within the Republic of Ireland, which represents 77% of all entries. The next most significant jurisdiction for entries on the register was the United Kingdom with 45 entries, which represented 13% of all entries. Northern Ireland made up nine of these entries.

The balance of entries, other than from Ireland or the United Kingdom, were from nine different jurisdictions, namely, Australia, Bermuda, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States. These represent 10% of all entries.

Lodging of information and Items under Section 39 of the BITA 2022

Sixty provided items were lodged with the AAI, and six released, in 2024.

Provision of assistance under Section 63 (2) (a) of the BITA 2022

In 2024, the AAI provided support for 53 relevant persons in the interpretation and understanding of records released under Parts 2–4 of the BITA 2022. This represented 1.6% of all queries (3,392) dealt with by the Records team in 2024.

Information and Communications Technology Solutions

In 2024, the Solutions team managed projects ranging from installing and upgrading software tools to providing infrastructure to manage newly acquired data and information sets. In addition, many process improvement reviews took place resulting in changes to how we manage and store our data as it passes through the live-to-historic journey. Giving AAI staff software tools they need to continue to provide our service users with a robust, timely and high-quality service, all projects were carried out underpinning our principles of

- robust data security
- good data governance
- data future proofing
- improved search and retrieval functionality.

Of the 38 projects/activities undertaken in 2024, an illustrative cross-section is described below.

County Home Volumes and Register – Data Input Project

Supporting the AAI's line department (the DCDE) in the implementation of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023, the AAI have acquired 'relevant records' under Part 7 of the BITA 2022. The Solutions team have built electronic data management system (eDMS) infrastructure to allow search and retrieval of relevant register volumes. Furthermore, the information pertinent to individuals' relevant records is being transcribed and stored on our eDMS. ICT infrastructure with search and retrieval facilities developed in-house will ensure that the AAI are able to provide service users

with the fullest possible information, where it exists, about their early life. This is a major project and is expected to run until 2027.

Ticketing System for AAI Corporate team

Our Corporate Services team requested a better solution to manage the number and variety of requests received into the AAI Corporate team. The solution provisioned an internal form, available to all AAI users and owned by the Corporate team, where users can log a ticket, get a numbered receipt and be assured that their request is queued with the correct staff member. The tool allows for an easier and concise way of managing user tickets, which could range from simple housekeeping matters to building security or finance. Requests are now easily tracked, and performance metrics are available to management. Reporting and root cause analysis, in some circumstances, prevents issues from escalating and impacting the entire organisation.

Installation of MS Teams as a platform

As tenants of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Microsoft Teams as a platform was introduced to the AAI. This meant a variety of upgrades needed to be carried out, in collaboration with OGCIO and our user base. Teams as a platform replaced older instant messaging, meeting and conferencing technologies. Over the course of three months, the upgrades and training were carried out using agile methodologies making for a very smooth transfer of technologies from old to new. The new technology gives a more modern feel to our technology infrastructure and enhances our communications tools.

Introduction of Secure File Transfer technology tool

As a tenant of OGCIO, we abide stringently by the security arrangements the OGCIO has put in place to protect us and their wider tenancy. Sometimes moving files securely between agencies was fraught with difficulties and proved time consuming. To overcome this problem in respect of providing support to the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme, we introduced a Secure File Transfer (SFT) tool hosted by OGCIO. Our file transfer process has been hugely speeded up as a result, and the digitised copies can be readily accessed by the DCDE staff administering the Redress Scheme.

During 2024, the Solutions team managed 1,224 user requests, up 8% on last year. Requests were categorised as Business as Usual (BAU) or Project. Of the 1,224 requests, 1,186 were categorised as BAU and 38 were classed as projects. Of the 1,186 BAU calls received, 1,034 were resolved on the same day. Some of the requests took longer to resolve, requiring some back and forth with the user or providers. We used priority levels to determine request urgency and schedule our work.

Table 3: User requests received in 2024

Priority Level	Priority Level Definition	Number received
1	No Service/All Users Impacted	0
2	Impacts One Team	42
3	Impacts Only Staff Member	393
4	Development or Change Requests	334
5	Amendment of Minor Data Errors	455
Total		1,224
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No priority 1 calls were recorded in 2024, meaning that our OGCIO hosted service was uninterrupted. • Priority 2 is used where an entire team is impacted. This generally relates to urgent development requests where there is a requirement for something new. • Priority 3 generally relates to user issues with permissions, equipment or tool settings. These may be raised where something has gone wrong or where a piece of training is required. • Priority 4 generally denotes some kind of development. Many of these were reasonably minor and required changes to data validations. Other development requests were large or complex enough to warrant business analysis and solution design and development. Many projects are managed in-house but there are occasions where we engage with our third-party vendors to provide a full or partial solution. • Priority 5 are normally quick fixes and resolved on the day of receipt. 		

Table 4: Categories of requests from users submitted to the ICT Helpdesk in 2024

Requests by Category	Request Count
e-DMS	853
Office Tools	73
Network Service	56
User Profile	84
Forms	37
Intranet	60
Communications	25
Printing	18
PDF Tool	15
Training	3
Total	1,224

A total of 181 requests could not be resolved in-house and were passed on to our network hosts, OGCIO. These tickets predominantly related to user access requests; account creation; and joiners, movers and leavers processes.

The knowledge and expertise of the four Solutions team members allowed progression and guidance on several e-DMS related projects. Finding more innovative ways of working with digitised material, encouraging user opinion and providing our clients and stakeholders with a better and fuller service remained paramount.

Advances in the digitisation programme continued to allow the AAI to move forward with replacing existing document images with 300DPI HD standard images. The results are seen in the superior visual quality brought to impaired historic document images, thus minimising physical handling of these fragile items.

The digital signature, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to be useful where there is a requirement for digital documents to be signed and passed between parties. The time-saving element is significant particularly with a blended work model, allowing decisions, agreements and contracts to be formally signed off. The digital signature is fully integrated in our document editing package.

The year 2024 saw no changes to our third-party e-DMS support supplier. Our online web-forms and white board tool providers also remained the same.

Archives

National Archives Act 1986–2018

The AAI continued to fulfil its obligations under the National Archives Acts 1986–2018 with regard to records management by continuing to collaborate with teams across the AAI in relation to their internal record-keeping practices, inclusive of records audits. The AAI also engaged with and participated in four Network of State Archivist and Records Managers meetings in 2024.

Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

Part 7 of the BITA 2022 makes provision for the retention, maintenance and safeguarding of 'relevant records'. The Act enables 'information sources' to transfer 'relevant records' into the AAI's care. This legislative provision ensures that important historic records relating to adoption, boarded out or nursed out arrangements, alleged illegal birth registrations and County Home Institutions are safeguarded.

In 2024, the Board of the AAI approved two directions under Section 48 of the BITA 2022 for the transfer of relevant records by an information source:

Direction Issued to	Relevant Records
Roman Catholic Diocese of Cork and Ross	Records of St Anne's Adoption Society (Registration No. R1/54) – including case files, appointment diaries and associated records.
Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency	HHAMA Case files – 52 bankers' boxes

To effectively manage records transferred into the AAI's care, the Archives team undertook a programme of archival processing on several collections received from a number of information sources on foot of earlier Section 48 directions.

This work entailed the arrangement and detailed description of c. 1,700 County Home volumes for institutions operational in counties Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork (South), Cork (West), Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Tipperary (North), Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

The AAI also took in a collection of c. 7,000 inspection files from the Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC) along with associated index books. Cataloguing was undertaken to ensure that 'relevant records' were discoverable and accessible to the AAI to enable it to discharge its statutory functions under the BITA 2022.

The AAI has published an updated guide to *Who Holds What Records* on its website.

Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023

Sections 22 and 54 of the 2023 Act empowers the Office of the Chief Deciding Officer (OCDO), based in the DCDE, to inspect relevant records for the purposes of administering the scheme.

To effectively support the OCDO, the Archives team set up a reference service enabling designated OCDO officers to manually search relevant records, not yet digitised, to allow them to verify time spent in specific County Home institutions by applicants to the scheme.

Reading Room: Reference Service Statistics March 2024–December 2024

Number of research visit(s)	Preparation & Supervision (time)
25	290 hrs

Digitisation

The Archives team collaborated with the Solutions team and AAI third-party vendors to facilitate the targeted digitisation of County Home records to

- Deliver sustainable in-house access to 'relevant records' for AAI staff to support them in the administration of the AAI's statutory functions under the BITA 2022; and
- Deliver sustainable access to digitised records to support the OCDO in the administration of its statutory functions under the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Act 2023.

County Home Digitisation Statistics

Total no. vols assessed	Total no. vols in scope	Total of in scope vols scanned
1,760	1,241	400 (32.2%)
Total High Priority vols ²	High Priority scanned	
400	400 (100%)	
Total Medium Priority vols ³	Medium Priority scanned	
163	Nil (0%)	
Total Low Priority vols	Low Priority scanned	
678	Nil (0%)	

Freedom of Information Requests

The AAI publishes details of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received, in accordance with the requirements of the DPENDR Code of Practice for Freedom of Information for Public Bodies.

In 2024, the AAI received 44 requests under the Freedom of Information Acts.

- 29 were granted/part granted;
- eight were declined;
- two were transferred;
- five were handled outside of FOI;
- four were appealed and required Internal Reviews.

The reason for the decision to decline in the case of three of the requests was that the FOI 2014 Act designates the AAI 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'. In the case of the other five declined requests, the information was either not available or it is already in the public domain.

²400 high priority items were dimensionally in scope for scanning by AAI contractors.

³163 medium priority items were dimensionally in scope for scanning by AAI contractors.

The two requests that were transferred were referred to Tusla and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The five handled outside of FOI were advised to submit a Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) under GDPR or to apply under Parts 2-4 of the BITA 2022 as appropriate. The four Internal Reviews were upheld.

Data Protection

Data Subject Access Requests

In 2024, the AAI observed a decline in the number of incoming DSARs. Twenty-four requests were received, representing a 17% decrease on the previous year (29).

Since the commencement of BITA 2022, the Data Protection team has seen a decline in requests from adopted persons. The majority of the requests that the Data Protection Officer (DPO) receives relate to birth mothers seeking information for the first time about themselves or their relatives who are affected by the adoption process.

Typically, the AAI receives DSARs relating to legal process of the adoption. However, the AAI holds the records relating to the social work element of the adoption process for the following agencies:

- Bethany House
- Cúnamh, formerly the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland (CPRS)
- Denny House
- Fairfield Children's Home
- Family adoptions
- Here2Help, including pre-2010 PACT (Protestant Adoption Society) files
- Private adoptions from 1952 to 1991
- Private placements
- St Brigid's Adoption Society
- St Therese Adoption Society
- The Magdalen Home
- The Nursery Rescue Society.

Since the commencement of BITA 2022, the Data Protection team has seen a decline in requests from adopted persons. The majority of the requests that the Data Protection Officer receives relate to birth mothers seeking information for the first time about themselves or their relatives who are affected by the adoption process.

In some instances, responses to applications could not be provided within the statutory timeframe of 30 days, as a result of resource constraints or due to the complexity of records to be reviewed. In these circumstances, applicants were notified of this and provided with a revised timeframe for a full response.

Of the 24 applications, 23 were valid applications. One was rejected due to no identification being provided following a request for same.

There were no appeals lodged to the Data Protection Commission (DPC) in 2024.

	Number of DSARs Received	Number of DSARs Refused /Declined	Appeals to DPC	Decision of DPC
2013	10	0	0	n/a
2014	7	0	0	n/a
2015	8	2	0	n/a
2016	8	2	0	n/a
2017	6	0	0	n/a
2018	3	1	0	n/a
2018*	12	5	0	n/a
2019	26	5	1	Awaiting decision
2020	32	3	0	n/a
2021	97	9	1	Records released with redactions on foot of DPC decision
2022	73	10	0	0
2023	29	3	0	n/a
2024	24	1	0	n/a

*After the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was introduced 25 May 2018

Data Protection Awareness

In 2024, the Data Protection Office of the AAI has put great emphasis on raising data protection awareness within the AAI. This has been delivered through providing business units with bespoke training to each team focusing on how data protection applies to each function specifically. This, in turn, ensures the AAI is complying with our obligation under data protection legislation and underpins best practice in the field of data protection and the AAI commitment to service users in our business plan. One third-party data breach was reported to the DPC in 2024.

Social Work





403
tracing cases received and 324 allocated



Feedback form
launched for
Tracing Service
Applicants



16
young people adopted through
intercountry adoption seeking
search for origins



49
brief interventions completed



306
files reviewed as part of current adoption processes

Introduction

The AAI's Social Work Service has continued to build upon its statutory responsibilities throughout 2024, enhancing our commitment to delivering compassionate and empowering support to the individuals and families we serve. This year, we have deepened our focus in the areas of tracing, mediation and brief intervention. As we navigate this important work, we remain mindful of the lasting impact our work has on the lives of those we support, seeking to be responsive to the individual stories and experiences of our clients.

Our social work approach remains flexible, incorporating various models that allow us to meet the needs of those we work with. We place a strong emphasis on a narrative approach, valuing each client's story as a vital guide to understanding their needs.

Rooted in systems theory, we recognise the crucial interconnections between individuals, families and communities, supporting the creation of a network of care and collaboration. These models, coupled with our staff's expertise in digital tools and research, continue to enhance the effectiveness of our tracing efforts.

As we continue to fulfil our social work role, we remain conscious of the history of social work in adoption in Ireland. It is this recognition of the past that drives our ongoing commitment to respecting and learning from each client's journey. It is in that spirit that we were proud to develop and launch our Client Feedback Form which we have launched in 2024 and are pleased

to report on some of the feedback we have received below.

Core Functions

The Social Work Service in the Adoption Authority has continued to

1. Provide a tracing service under Part 5 of the BITA 2022 (where we hold the agency file).
2. Work with persons matched on the CPR under Part 6 of the BITA 2022.
3. Provide support and brief intervention to people affected in some way by the delivery of services under the BITA 2022 (where we hold the agency file).
4. Review parts of current domestic and intercountry adoptions completed under the Adoption Act 2010.
5. Be responsive to queries from the public and professionals on adoption, tracing and the BITA 2022.

Structure

In 2024, the Social Work Service comprised of a Principal Social Worker, a Team Leader, five Senior Social Work Practitioners and four Social Workers. Seven social work staff have responsibility for operationalising the Tracing Service for domestic adoptions. From the remaining three social work staff, one has responsibility for work pertaining to the CPR, one delivers the service's Brief Intervention work and the remaining social worker delivers on the service's responsibilities in Intercountry Adoption Tracing.

Tracing Service

The AAI is committed to providing an accessible, fair and person-centred tracing service. Each application received is considered important, as every request represents a deeply significant step for the individual involved.

In order to manage demand and respond to the most urgent cases in a timely way, applications are categorised into tiers. This system allows us to ensure that those with the greatest and most immediate needs are prioritised, while still progressing all applications as efficiently as possible.

The tiers are as follows:

- **Tier 1** – Exceptional Health Circumstances (or other exceptional need): Applications where there are urgent health or exceptional circumstances requiring immediate attention.
- **Tier 2** – Parent/Child Tracing Request: Applications made by a parent or a child seeking direct contact with one another.
- **Tier 3** – Sibling Tracing Request: Applications where the request relates to tracing a brother or sister.
- **Tier 4** – Other Family Relationships: Applications for tracing wider family members beyond the above categories.

This approach reflects our recognition that while all tracing requests matter, some circumstances demand faster progression due to urgency or the closeness of the relationship being sought.

The Social Work Service received 403 referrals for tracing and allocated 324 cases.

Tracing	Received	Allocated
Tier 1	2	2
Tier 2	317	271
Tier 3	61	41
Tier 4	23	10
Total	403	324

Learning from Tracing

Tracing Outcomes

In 2024, the Social Work Service continued to collate statistics on the outcomes of tracing cases which were closed during the year (201).

The AAI strongly believe that it is vital that the outcomes of services provided under the BITA 2022 are made as widely available as possible by those providing services. It is hoped that publishing these outcomes enhances the evidence base for adopted people and their families and strengthens social work accountability.

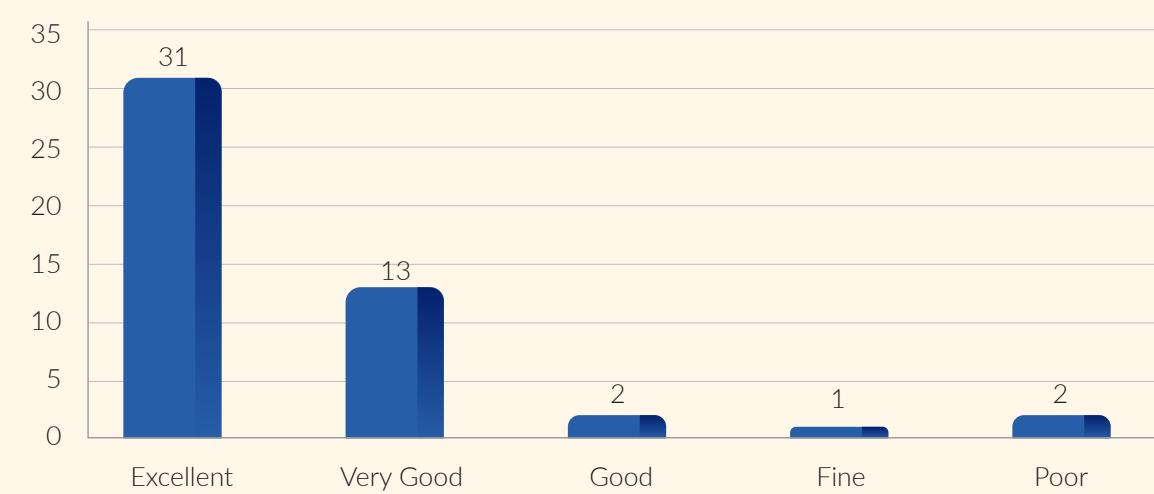
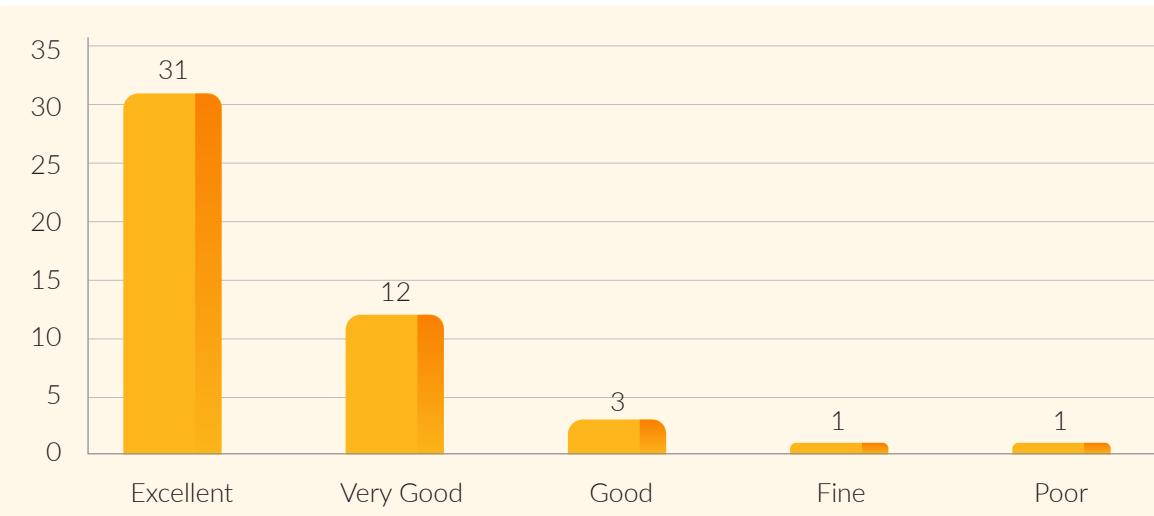
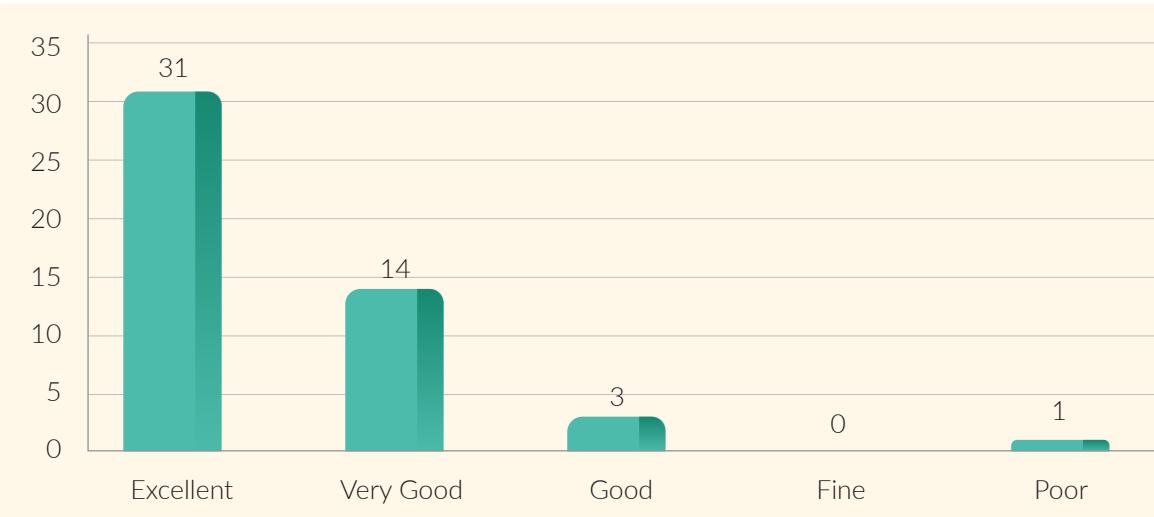
A breakdown of these outcomes is provided in the [Statistics](#) section.

Lessons from Service User Feedback

During 2024, the AAI's Social Work Service launched a Feedback Form for clients who had requested a service under the BITA 2022. The AAI is committed to better understanding how tracing services are experienced by clients and how services can be further developed. Three key features of the feedback received to date were as follows: that clients value having a positive working relationship with their allocated social worker; that clients generally experienced the process of tracing as positive, even where the outcome was not one they hoped for; and that there is an ongoing need to be clear on what the possible outcomes of tracing might be.

Feedback was sought under the following categories:

- My social worker explained the service very clearly to me
- It was easy to contact my social worker
- My social worker discussed a plan for my case with me
- My social worker considered my wishes as part of our discussion
- My social worker listened to me, and I felt understood
- My social worker regularly kept me up to date with developments in my case
- My social worker provided the level of support I needed
- I was clear when my case was closed on the work that had been completed

1. My social worker explained the service very clearly to me**2. It was easy to make contact with my social worker****3. My social worker discussed a plan for my case with me**

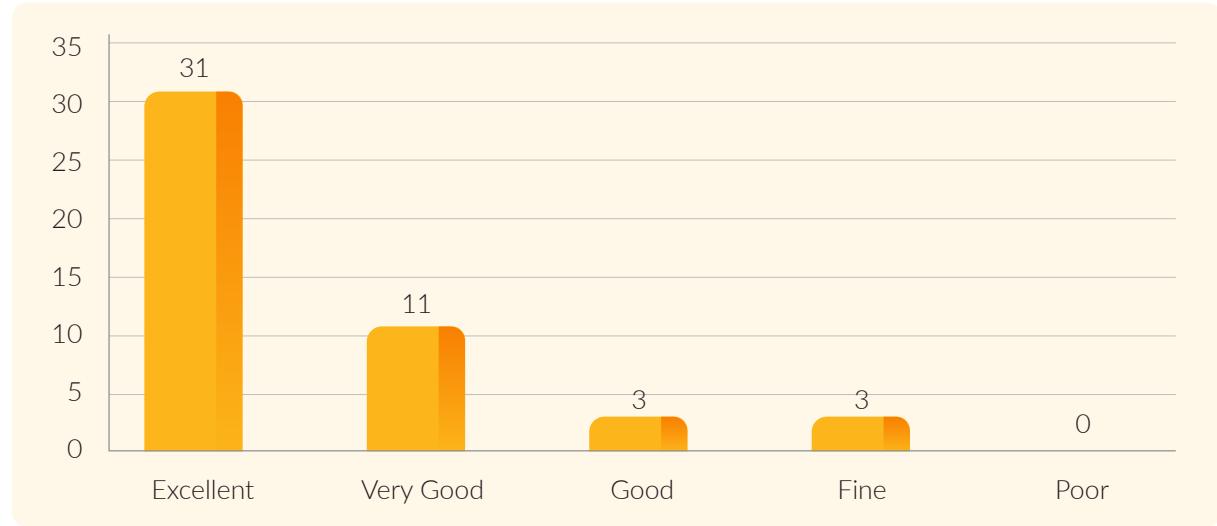
4. My social worker considered my wishes as part of our discussion



5. My social worker listened to me and I felt understood



6. My social worker regularly kept me up to date with developments in my case



7. My social worker provided the level of support I needed



8. I was clear when my case was closed on the work that had been completed



Hearing directly from those who use our service is central to understanding what we do well and where we can improve. The feedback below reflects the personal experiences of individuals who have engaged with tracing through the AAI.

It highlights the positive impact that compassionate support can have, while also reminding us of the importance of clear communication and managing expectations in what is often a very sensitive process.

'No need to comment as such; but then. X is an exceptional individual; a genuine person and an absolute credit to the AAI. X spared no effort and bent over backwards to solve my case; kept in contact regularly and in the end closed some important ends (mysteries) for me. There is nothing I would change about her approach; she is a very kind, considerate, hard working individual. I have nothing but the height of respect for her and all the time in the world'.

- Service User 1

'I think there needs to be clearer communication regarding what exactly the boundaries are from the birth parents from the start and this should be clear. I was given a false sense of hope and I believe that my birth father was curious and never had any intention of taking things further. It was a little cruel. I do not blame X at all for this she was amazing and very empathetic to my case'.

- Service User 2

Contact Preference Register Mediation

The year 2024 was one of learning for the Social Work Service in relation to the CPR. There continues to be a trend of matches between people who have joined the register years apart. Social work staff have continued to undertake significant work in locating and supporting parties to move into contact. The Social Work Service received 75 referrals relating to CPR matches in 2024 and allocated 55 cases to a social worker in 2024.

Social Work Tracing for Intercountry Adoptees

We have continued to develop our thinking and learning in relation to tracing in intercountry adoption. These efforts are happening in a rapidly changing global environment pertaining to intercountry adoption marked by decreasing numbers of adoption, the closure of some intercountry adoption programmes and the uncovering of historic illicit practices.

It is in shadow of these trends that many Central Authorities throughout Europe, including the AAI, are seeking to develop services for those impacted by intercountry adoption.

In 2024, the AAI worked with 16 persons adopted through intercountry adoption who were seeking to trace their family of origin in their country of birth.

The challenges of tracing in intercountry adoption have been a marked feature of our work in 2024.

The BITA 2022 provides a right for persons born outside of Ireland and adopted in Ireland to trace. In theory, this provides intercountry adoptees with the same right to trace as domestic adoptees.

However, in practice intercountry tracing involves tracing cross border, in social and legal systems that are distinct from our own and involves engaging with professionals and families who may not speak English. These wider challenges occur alongside the widely accepted emotional and practical experiences of adopted people seeking to trace.

It is widely recognised that when tracing in intercountry adoption, there is a need for a professional on both sides and to have a person 'on the ground' in the sending country. We are exceptionally grateful to our colleagues in the Romanian Central Authority with whom we have formed a positive working relationship. There is a need to develop a range of models in other sending countries to support Irish citizens seeking to trace in their countries of birth.

Brief Intervention Social Work

Brief intervention social work provides targeted, solution-focused support to individuals navigating immediate challenges. Rooted in strengths-based and trauma-informed principles, this approach fosters empowerment, resilience and early problem resolution, reducing the risk of crisis escalation. By delivering timely, goal-oriented interventions, social workers can enhance client autonomy and well-being while promoting sustainable change

In 2024 the social work team received 49 brief intervention referrals. These included some of the following scenarios:

- clients referred by the AAI's Records unit when processing information requests;
- clients receiving emotional support due to potentially sensitive information recorded in their files;
- clients seeking clarity on how to interpret some of the information they have received;
- persons seeking guidance on how to respond to an approach from a relative.

Social Work Reviews

Reviewing assessments in adoption aims to ensure that all prospective parents and proposed adoptions are assessed within a clear, evidence-based model. In 2024, the Social Work team reviewed 255 domestic and 56 intercountry files. These reviews were completed by all social work staff in addition to their statutory functions.

Building Our Knowledge

Training and Education

Continuous professional development is essential to the growth and effectiveness of the Social Work Service. Ongoing learning keeps social workers informed, sharpens their skills and deepens their understanding. It also promotes adaptability, enabling them to respond effectively to clients' needs and navigate evolving policies and practices. By prioritising training and education, the AAI reinforces its commitment to excellence in professional practice, ultimately enhancing the quality of service provided to individuals, families and communities.

In 2024 Social Work Service staff completed training in the following areas:

- Two-day mediation training which was facilitated by Ber Barry-Murray, an accredited Advanced Mediator with the Mediators' Institute of Ireland;
- Understanding Narcissism – Theory and Practice;
- Working with Resentment;
- Irish Council of Social Workers in Adoption (ICSWA) training events.

On 17 and 18 April 2024, three social work staff attended the EurAdopt 2024 conference in Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge University, UK, entitled 'The Generational Impact of Adoption'. On 18-21 August, the AAI's Principal Social Worker attended the ISPCAN 2024 Conference in Uppsala, Sweden, entitled 'Working Together in Times of Crisis'.

Social Work Placements

Social work practice placements act as a vital bridge, seamlessly connecting academic learning with real-world application. They provide students with the opportunity to translate theoretical knowledge into practical skills, while simultaneously nurturing professional growth. These placements also strengthen collaboration between academic institutions and practice settings, fostering a dynamic exchange of innovative ideas and evidence-based best practices. This synergy not only enhances the learning experience for students but also contributes to the ongoing development of the social work profession as a whole.

In 2024, the AAI's Social Work Service continued to provide placements to social work students. It is envisaged that offering social work placements will now be a standard part of the Social Work Service. Providing placements to students is invaluable to the AAI as students bring new and innovative ways of working and understanding our work. Additionally, it is hoped that exposing students to the area of adoption social work will provide new social work recruits in the future.

Ongoing learning keeps social workers informed, sharpens their skills and deepens their understanding. It also promotes adaptability, enabling them to respond effectively to clients' needs and navigate evolving policies and practices.

Research



Overview

Under the Adoption Act 2010, the functions of the AAI include

- Undertaking or assisting in research projects and activities relating to adoption services;
- Compiling statistical information and other records as to the proper planning, development and provision of those adoption services.

A Research Subcommittee was appointed as a subcommittee of the Board of the AAI in 2016 to consider how best to meet this legal requirement. By 2024, the Research team established in the AAI in 2019 consisted of a Research Officer and a Research Assistant.

The AAI's Research Ethics Committee (REC) was established in 2020 to oversee the ethical considerations of large research studies. It consists of two AAI Board members and one external advisor from the DCDE. The REC meets as required, when a study design is presented by the Research team for review and approval.

Activities 2024

In 2024, the Research team's main objective was the publication and dissemination of the 'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022' report, followed by the final analysis and write-up of the Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption study.

The team delivered three oral presentations at the Eighth International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR-8) in Minneapolis in July 2024, and one further presentation at the Psychological Society of Ireland Graduate Group conference. The team also disseminated research findings directly to a number of different stakeholder groups throughout the year. Having presented at the conference in Minneapolis, we were invited to submit two papers about our research for consideration in a special edition of the US-based journal Adoption Quarterly. Two external research studies were put out to tender in 2024, and these will be managed by the Research Officer.

The Research Subcommittee met on four occasions in 2024, with support provided to the subcommittee Chair by both members of the Research team. The Research Officer also chaired

two meetings of the Adoption Research Network of Ireland (ARNI).

Core Research Studies

'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022' Study

The central focus for the Research Team in 2024 was the publication, launch and dissemination of the 'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952–2022' report, which is now available on the AAI website. Interviews had been conducted with a number of professionals and advocates who had worked in Irish domestic adoption for an extended period of time during these years. Key findings from the report included the all-pervasive, persistent culture of secrecy in Irish domestic adoption, the power of information, and the capacity of individuals to effect real change.

The report was designed and printed in the early part of the year and launched in July 2024 with an event at the Museum of Literature Ireland. The event was attended by over 60 invited guests representing a variety of stakeholder groups. At the event, the report's key findings were presented by the Research Officer. A video address was provided by Dr Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, and followed by in-person discussion of the findings from His Honour Judge Geoffrey Shannon SC, AAI Chairperson Ms Orlaith Traynor, and AAI CEO Dr Lorraine Horgan. A number of media outlets reported on the event.

A week after the initial launch, the Research team presented the findings in person to members of the global research community at the Eighth International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR-8), held in Minneapolis, MN, in July 2024. This generated useful engagement and discussion of the findings from an international perspective. Later in the year, the team also presented the findings directly to the Irish Council for Social Workers in Adoption, the Tusla Adoption Managers, and Tusla North-Dublin, at their office in Dublin 8. Each of these sessions generated discussion about how the findings compared to current social worker experiences. In late 2024, the decision was taken to increase accessibility of the report by creating audio recordings of individual chapters, which will be made available online. This will be progressed in 2025.

'Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' Study

The 'Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' study was designed to include data collection with three cohorts: intercountry adopted adults, teenagers and children.

Adult intercountry adopted cohort (18+)

Between 2022 and 2023, the Research team had gathered data via interviews about the Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland from 11 adult participants. The findings from the interviews were written up in a detailed report in Q3 and Q4 of 2024. Early findings were presented directly to the APU of the DCDE, and to a visiting delegation from the US Department of State. This report was approved by the Research Subcommittee in December 2024 and subsequently sent to the Board for approval to publish.

A short survey for a wider group of intercountry adopted participants was developed, based on the early findings from the interviews. It was advertised through key stakeholder groups and contacts, all of whom were invited to share the link to the survey. It yielded responses from approximately 50 adult participants, all of whom had been adopted into Ireland as children. These findings were analysed in 2024. Interim findings were presented to delegates at the ICAR-8 and were well received. The report is scheduled for publication in 2025.

Teenage cohort (13-17 years)

A study for intercountry adopted teenagers was designed in 2023. This design was presented via an oral presentation at the ICAR-8 in 2024, and was very well received, generating useful discussion with delegates. It is scheduled for implementation by the research team in 2025.

Child cohort (0-12 years)

Following a competitive tendering process in Q2 of 2024, the AAI commissioned an external research team to conduct a study into the Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption for 0-12-year-olds. This study commenced in Q4 and will involve interviews with adoptive parents and arts-based research with intercountry-adopted children.

Research Resources

All staff and Board members have online access to the library catalogue and journal database at any time.

In 2024, the Research team continued the practice of highlighting recent, relevant Irish and international adoption research through drafting and circulating 'Quick Reads' to all AAI staff. Each Quick Read is a summary of a journal article, conference presentation or podcast/video. The purpose of these Quick Reads is to ensure that all staff are aware of the latest developments in adoption research and are research-informed when interacting with service users. In 2024, a selection of these Quick Reads was shared with the APU at the DCDE.

Conferences and Networking

In 2024, members of the Research team attended three conferences: the Euradopt conference in Cambridge, entitled 'The Generational Impact of Adoption', the Psychological Society of Ireland Early Graduate Group Conference and ICAR-8, which took place in Minneapolis in July 2024. After a competitive submissions process, the team were invited to give three presentations at ICAR-8, relating to the 'Reflections on the Irish Domestic Adoption Process 1952-2022' study, and the 'Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' study adult and teenage cohorts, respectively. All presentations were well received by attendees. During the same trip, the Research Assistant on the team also attended the one-day early career adoption research institute meeting, also held in Minneapolis.

The Research Officer chaired two meetings of the Adoption Research Network of Ireland (ARNI) in 2024, at which new developments in global and Irish adoption research were discussed. ARNI now comprises 19 individuals from the Irish adoption research arena.

External Communications

Throughout 2024, the Research team received occasional requests from external parties seeking statistics or other information relating to adoption research. Where possible and practical, the team always sought to provide assistance and support to these parties.

Human Resources and Staff Development



Overview

The AAI's dedicated Human Resources and Staff Development (HRSD) function oversees succession planning, training and staff development to build on the skills and corporate knowledge in our organisation.

In 2024 the HRSD team finalised a number of policies to support staff in carrying out their daily functions and balancing work and life, including the Adverse Weather and Emergency Events Protocol, the Transition Year Student Work Experience Policy and the Domestic Violence Workplace Policy. All policies are drafted in consultation with the AAI's union partners represent public service employees.

In October, all staff in the AAI were offered a free flu vaccination at a local pharmacy.

The team revitalised support across the AAI teams for the Wellbeing Committee and developed terms of reference in preparation for the relaunch of the committee in 2025.

Recruitment

Following recruitment competitions conducted for the respective vacancies under the guidance of the DCDE and the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA), the AAI hired an Archivist Grade II and an Archivist Grade III and new members for the Human Resources, Corporate Services, Records, Domestic Adoption and Intercountry Adoption teams.

One member of staff at Assistant Principal level resigned to take up a post in another public service body, and the vacancy in AAI was advertised as a closed competition.

Pension/Retirements

The majority of staff in the AAI are members of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme (SPSPS). Annual Benefit Statements were provided to all members of the SPSPS as required under the legislation. AAI met its legal obligation to submit periodic data for all SPSPS members for year 2023 to SPSPS Databank, in timeframe provided by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform.

Time and Attendance

The HRSD team continued to liaise with the AAI's time management system provider on behalf of the staff to address some functional issues.

Training and Professional Development

The HRSD team supported staff participation in a range of training and upskilling courses and seminars, many of which were conducted remotely. The HR team also facilitated onsite training, targeted at the appropriate levels of MS Office for each staff member. With the launch of a new Domestic Violence Policy, staff training was completed in collaboration with Woman's Aid.

Two members of staff are trained Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs).

Employee Assistance Programme

The AAI continues to encourage and promote the services of our dedicated EAP which is available to all staff members as required. Each employee has access to a 24-hour telephone support line, case management assessment and up to six one-hour confidential counselling sessions free of charge.

The AAI's dedicated Human Resources and Staff Development (HRSD) function oversees succession planning, training and staff development to build on the skills and corporate knowledge in our organisation.

Corporate Services and Accreditation



Website and Communications

In 2024, the AAI undertook a major project to develop a new, modernised website, which includes the amalgamation of its two existing websites (www.aai.gov.ie and www.birthinfo.ie) into a single streamlined platform. The project continues into 2025 and aims to enhance user experience, improve accessibility and provide a more comprehensive source of information and services. This redevelopment reflects the AAI's commitment to delivering efficient, user-friendly digital services to service users.

Press/Media

Throughout the year, the AAI responded, via our public affairs and communications service provider, to media queries on various topics, including BITA 2022 statistics, the CPR, tracing applications from the UK, AAI Board composition

Irish Examiner

Regulator launches survey to improve adoption standards

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) has launched its first ever survey appealing for feedback from adoptees, parents, and adoptive parents.

RTÉ

Surge in applications to adoption authority in 2023

In 2023, there were 1,641 applications from people for the release of their information.

IrishCentral

Adoption report details "culture of secrecy" in Irish adoption history

Pictured at launch of The Adoption Authority of Ireland research report.

Irish Examiner

Unmarried Irish mothers in UK 'relieved baby was getting a good home' — adoption report

'Few, if any of the long birth certificates had fathers' names on them — it was generally just the mother's name.'

Dublin People

Adoption Authority of Ireland seeks input from people in Dublin City and County

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) has announced the commencement of a public consultation process to inform the development of their new strategic plan to cover the period 2025–2027.

radiokerry.ie

Kerry people urged to take part in Adoption Authority of Ireland public consultation

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) are seeking submissions from Kerry people on its strategic plan.

Irish Post

People affected by adoption in Ireland urged to have their say

THE IRISH TIMES

Surge in applications to adoption authority for birth information and to trace relatives

Authority says it processed more than 3,500 applications for birth information last year

and remuneration, the 'Reflections' research report and Ireland's intercountry adoption programmes.

We also issued press releases to highlight the opening of the online consultation on the AAI's next strategy and to launch the 'Reflections' report, both of which attracted media interest.

At the end of 2024, the AAI CEO recorded an interview with Clare FM about the role of the AAI and tracing, as part of a radio documentary scheduled to be broadcast in mid-2025.

The AAI procured a new media monitoring service in 2024 to keep up to date with developments in adoption-related matters reported in the local, national and international media.

Parliamentary Questions

In total, the AAI received and responded to 13 Parliamentary Questions in 2024.

Energy Management and Climate Action

In February 2024, the AAI procured the services of an SEAI accredited energy auditor to conduct its first energy audit. The energy audit identified objectives and projects to support the sustainability agenda for the 2024 roadmap and beyond.

One of the recommendations of the audit was for a Green Team to be established. In May 2024, the AAI established its first Green Team, comprising of volunteer representatives from different sections of the organisation. The representatives serve as climate action ambassadors with the purpose of informing and educating staff of its climate action obligations.

In December 2024, the Board approved the 2024 Climate Action Roadmap, the organisation's second such roadmap. The AAI is committed to reducing its carbon emissions targets by 51% by 2030.

The AAI identified collaboration as the core theme for the second iteration of our Climate Action Roadmap and is committed to strengthening engagement with and understanding of climate action and energy management throughout the organisation.

Facilities Management

Following the reconfiguration of the AAI's third-floor office space in 2023, additional works were completed in 2024. Three storage rooms were refurbished into additional meeting rooms, enhancing the office's capacity for team collaboration and making way for two new senior management offices on the third floor as well as a new reception room on the fourth floor.

An extensive remodelling of the office's window blinds was completed, improving both functionality and aesthetics across the workspace. The upgrade included the installation of modern thermal roller blinds designed to enhance the natural light control, energy efficiency and overall comfort for staff. This refurbishment forms part of the ongoing commitment to creating a more productive and comfortable working environment.

The AAI will continue to update and improve the current office configuration moving into 2025.

Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

As an employer, the AAI is committed to ensuring the safety, health and welfare at work of all its employees, contractors, visitors and others, who share or visit our workspace. The Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act 2005 strongly emphasises the need to provide employees with instruction, information and training necessary to ensure their health and safety when carrying out their work activities.

To support staff with carrying out duties in a safe and informed manner, the AAI's staff underwent the following training in 2024:

Manual Handling	16
Fire Warden	0
First Aid	0
Display Screen Unit Risk Assessor	55 (including Working From Home assessment)
Certificate in Health, Safety and Welfare at Work	0
Safety Representative	0

The AAI continued to support safe blended working arrangements for all staff by engaging an external Health and Safety partner to confirm remote workstations were appropriate and advise on suitable actions where gaps were identified. Health and Safety training is reviewed throughout the year, with training scheduled as required to ensure ongoing compliance.

Accredited Bodies

Inspection of Accredited Bodies

The AAI conducted an inspection of the accredited body HHAMA in accordance with S133 of the Adoption Act 2010 and S.I. 154 of 2010 (Adoption Act 2010) (Accredited Bodies) Regulations 2010.

The inspection found that HHAMA was fully compliant with the requirements set out in the 2010 Act and Regulations. The AAI Board approved the Inspection Report in September 2024.

Register of Accredited Bodies

The AAI maintains a 'Register of Accredited Bodies', as set out in legislation.⁴ The initial registration is valid for a period of five years, and renewals shall not exceed three years.⁵ In 2023, no new applications were received and no renewals were processed.

There were three registered accredited bodies by 2024 year-end.

Table 5: Register of Accredited Bodies 2024

Accredited Body	Date of Accreditation
PACT 18D Nutgrove Office Park Rathfarnham Dublin 14	Reaccredited 22 June 2022
Barnardos Post Adoption Service 23/24 Buckingham Street Dublin 1	Reaccredited 07 September 2022
Helping Hands Adoption Facilitation Agency t/a Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency The Loft, Bessboro Centre Blackrock Road, Cork Cork	Reaccredited 07 March 2023

Accreditation Procedures

In line with statutory requirements, the AAI continued to actively engage with all accredited bodies throughout 2024. The Executive submitted a monthly report to the Board of the AAI detailing activity and engagement with the accredited bodies.

Accredited bodies are required to submit activity reports on a bi-annual basis. In 2024, all relevant bodies submitted two six-monthly reports. Each report was summarised by the Executive and presented to the Board of the AAI. Audited accounts for the year ending 31 December 2023 were also submitted by all relevant accredited bodies.

Cessation of Accredited Bodies

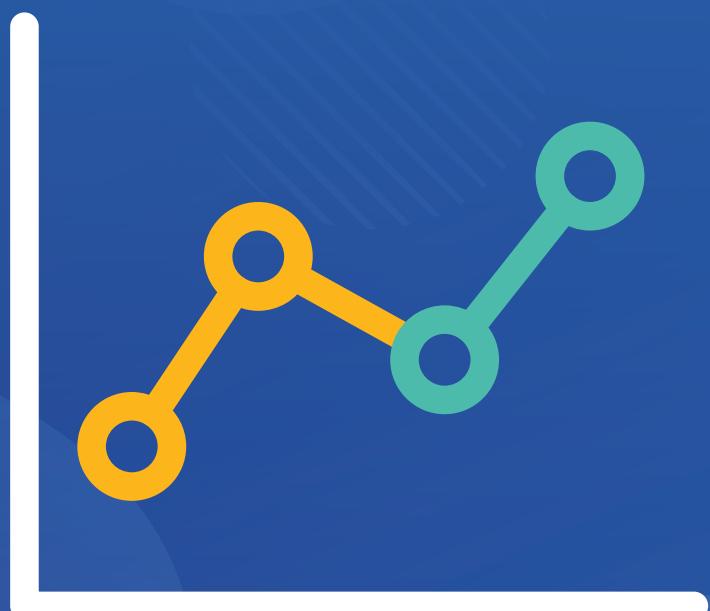
No accredited bodies were formally deregistered in 2024.

The Executive submitted a monthly report to the Board of the AAI detailing activity and engagement with the accredited bodies.

⁴ The maintenance of a 'Register of Accredited Bodies' by the AAI is provided for under Section 126–135 of the Adoption Act 2010 and S.I. No. 524 of 2010, Adoption Act 2010 (Accredited Bodies) Regulations 2010.

⁵ As per Section 128 of the Adoption Act 2010.

Statistics



Domestic Adoption Statistics

Table 6: Domestic Adoption Statistics 1953–2024

Year	No. of Adoptions	Year	No. of Adoptions
1953	381	1990	648
1954	888	1991	590
1955	786	1992	523
1956	565	1993	500
1957	752	1994	424
1958	592	1995	490
1959	501	1996	405
1960	505	1997	422
1961	547	1998	400
1962	699	1999	317
1963	840	2000	303
1964	1,003	2001	293
1965	1,049	2002	266
1966	1,178	2003	263
1967	1,493	2004	273
1968	1,343	2005	253
1969	1,225	2006	222
1970	1,414	2007	187
1971	1,305	2008	200
1972	1,291	2009	190
1973	1,402	2010	189
1974	1,415	2011	39
1975	1,443	2012	49
1976	1,104	2013	116
1977	1,127	2014	112
1978	1,223	2015	94
1979	988	2016	95
1980	1,115	2017	72
1981	1,191	2018	72
1982	1,191	2019	79
1983	1,184	2020	81
1984	1,195	2021	101
1985	882	2022	102
1986	800	2023	90
1987	715	2024	131
1988	649	Total	45,187
1989	615		

Table 7: Domestic Adoptions by type 2020–2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Step Parent	58	65	60	47	71
Long-Term Foster Care	16	24	31	30	45
Infant	5	2	9	8	5
Foreign to Domestic	0	5	0	0	0
Extended Family	2	5	2	5	10
Total	81	101	102	90	131

Table 8: Domestic Adoptions by Age of Child 2020–2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
17 Years Old	40	36	36	37	47
12–16 Years Old	23	45	33	27	49
7–11 Years Old	13	16	23	16	23
2–6 Years Old	3	7	8	4	9
0–1 Years Old	2	1	2	6	3
Total	81	101	102	90	131

Table 9: High Court Orders Granted in Respect of Domestic Adoption Applications 2020–2024

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Section 18	3	2	1	1	4
Section 26	0	0	0	0	2
Section 30	15	19	24	18	20
Section 54	11	14	18	12	21
Total	29	35	43	31	47

Intercountry Adoption Statistics

Table 10: 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, 2010–2024 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).

Country	No. of Entries*	Country	No. of Entries*
Russia	1,631	South Africa	2
Vietnam	954	El Salvador	2
Romania	808	Jersey	2
China	432	Kenya	2
Ethiopia	308	Lithuania	2
Kazakhstan	151	Peru	2
Belarus	145	Poland	3
Thailand	146	Rwanda	2
United States of America	129	Scotland	2
Mexico	113	Sri Lanka	2
Ukraine	100	Uzbekistan	2
Bulgaria	32	Bolivia	1
India	27	Bosnia Herzegovina	1
Taiwan	22	Haiti	2
Colombia	19	Hong Kong	1
England	19	Malawi	1
Brazil	17	Zimbabwe	1
Paraguay	7	Moldova	1
Cambodia	4	Total	5,099
Philippines	4		

*The implementation of a new database has allowed for more accurate reporting of figures. Some statistics published in previous years have been adjusted accordingly.

Table 11: Entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions, pursuant to Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010, for 2024 only (applicants habitually resident in Ireland holding a valid Declaration of Eligibility & Suitability at the time of effecting the intercountry adoption).

Country	No. Entered in the Register in 2024
Vietnam	9
Thailand	6
USA	2
Total	17

Table 12: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised in 2024, 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).

Country where the adoption was effected	No. entered on Register in 2024	Country where the adoption was effected	No. entered on Register in 2024
Australia	2	Papua New Guinea	1
Canada	4	Philippines	1
China	15	Russia	13
England	66	Scotland	8
Ethiopia	2	Sierra Leone	2
Guatemala	6	South Africa	8
Haiti	1	Thailand	2
Hong Kong	5	Turkey	1
India	2	Uganda	1
Italy	1	Ukraine	1
Malaysia	3	USA	31
Netherlands	2	Wales	2
Northern Ireland	11	Total	191

Table 13: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 2014 and 2024,* 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 refer).

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Bulgaria	4	8	4	8	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
China	0	15	7	10	4	3	1	0	0	0	0
England	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ethiopia	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haiti	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
India	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Lithuania	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	5	11	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Peru	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Russia	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thailand	6	1	4	2	8	0	4	2	3	2	6
USA	4	6	12	9	7	10	1	4	2	7	2
Vietnam	4	32	23	22	20	18	9	8	13	12	9
Moldova	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	32	83	55	53	41	33	21	16	18	25	17

*The implementation of a new database has allowed for more accurate reporting of figures. Some statistics published in previous years have been adjusted accordingly.

Table 14: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2024 (All Sections).

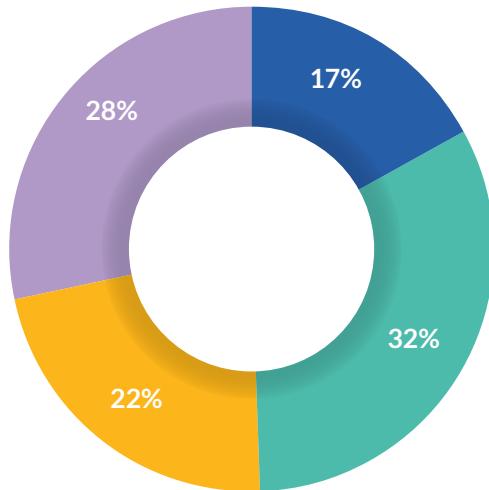
Year	Number Recognised*
1991	58
1992	305
1993	59
1994	64
1995	93
1996	117
1997	149
1998	260
1999	284
2000	324
2001	284
2002	439
2003	460
2004	484
2005	443
2006	409
2007	439
2008	488
2009	395
2010	290
2011	342
2012	242
2013	141
2014	106
2015	160
2016	214
2017	324
2018	313
2019	386
2020	184
2021	136
2022	170
2023	209
2024	208
Total	8,979

Social Work Tracing Statistics

A total of 201 traces were conducted in 2024.

Percentage of Total Traces by Quarter

- Q1 (n=35)
- Q2 (n=65)
- Q3 (n=45)
- Q4 (n=56)

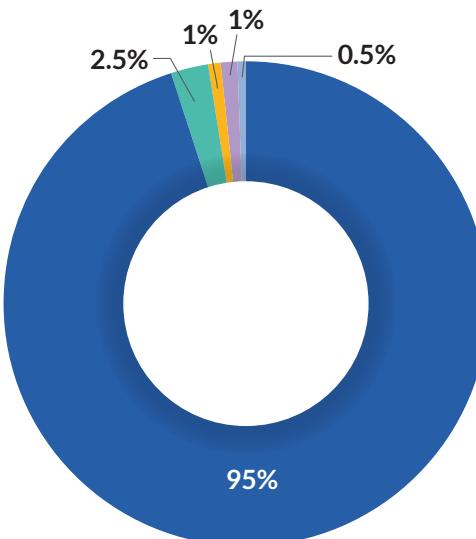


*Percentages are approximations and have been rounded up and down where appropriate.

Who applied for a trace?

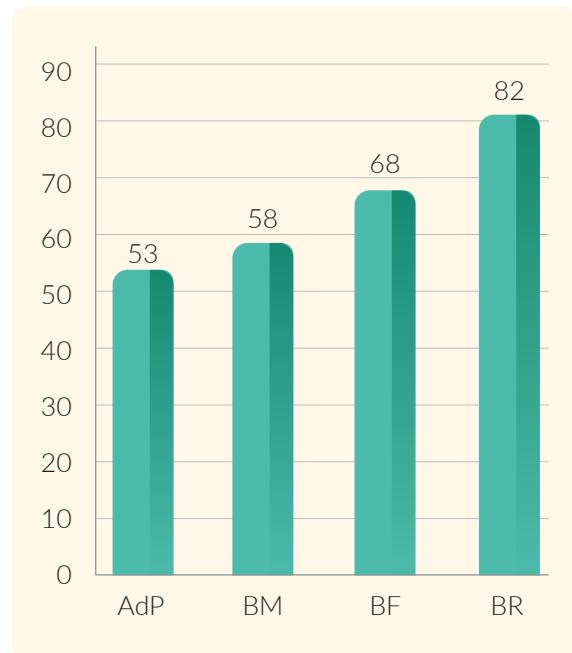
Percentage Breakdown of Applicants

- Adopted Person (n=191)
- Birth Mother (n=5)
- Birth Father (n=2)
- Birth Relative (n=2)
- Other (n=1)



Average Age of Applicants

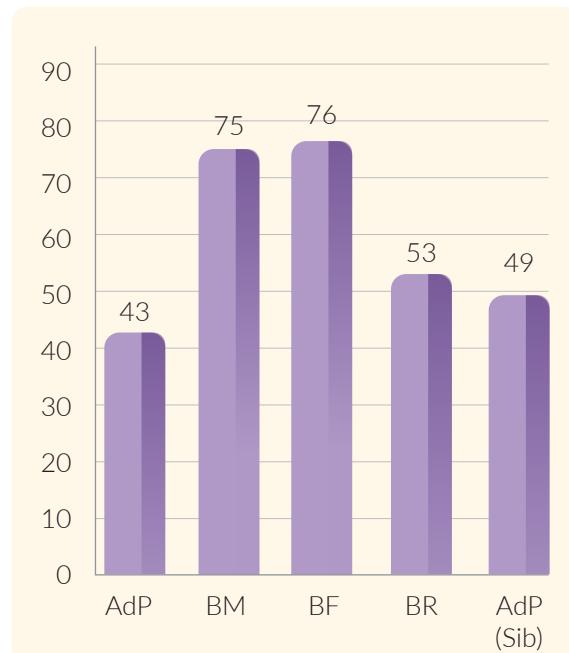
The overall average age of applicants is 54.



*Other excluded due to small sample.

Average Age of Subject of Trace

Overall average age of traced is 71.



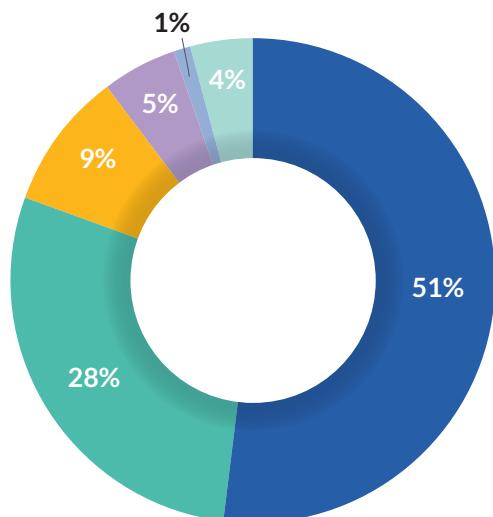
*In 31 cases the age of the subject of trace was unknown.

**Other excluded as ages unknown.

Who did applicants wish to trace?

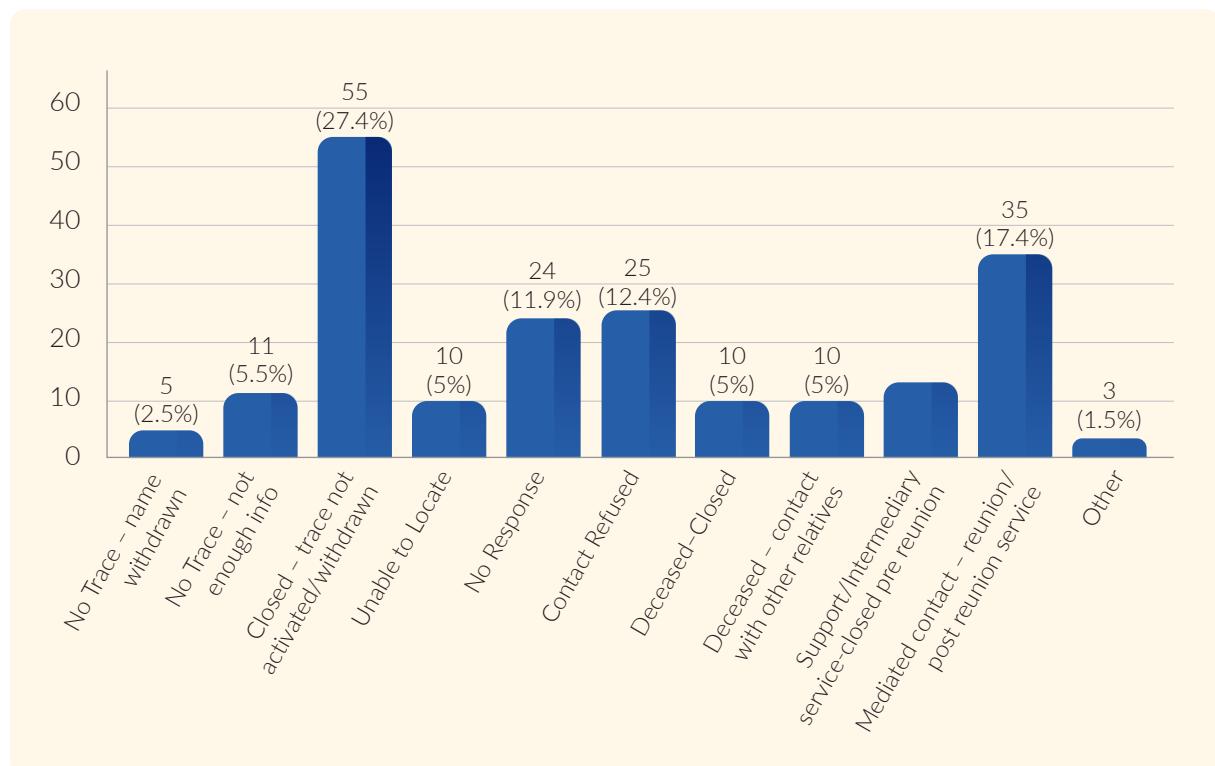
Percentage Breakdown of Subject of Trace

- Birth Mother (n=103)
- Birth Father (n=56)
- Birth Relative (n=19)
- Adopted Person (Sibling) (n=11)
- Other (n=3)
- Adopted Person (n=9)



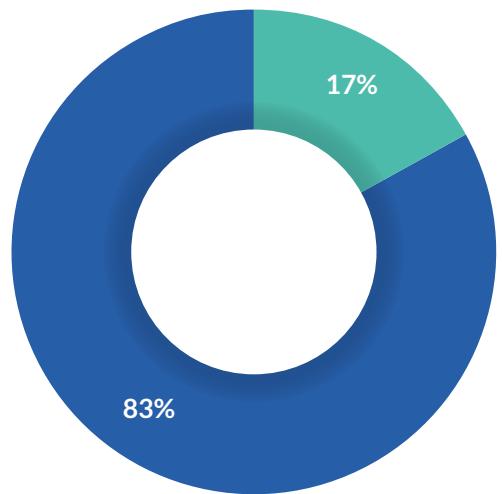
*Percentages are approximations and have been rounded up and down where appropriate.

Overview of Total Outcomes



How many applicants had a reunion with the person traced?

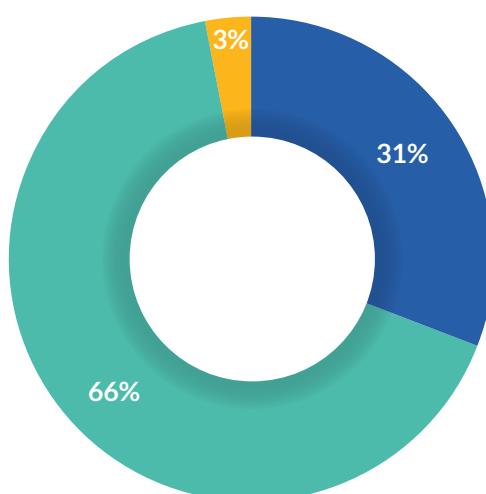
Percentage Breakdown of Total Reunions



■ No Reunion (n=166) ■ Reunion (n=35)

Did the reunion take place on-site or off-site?

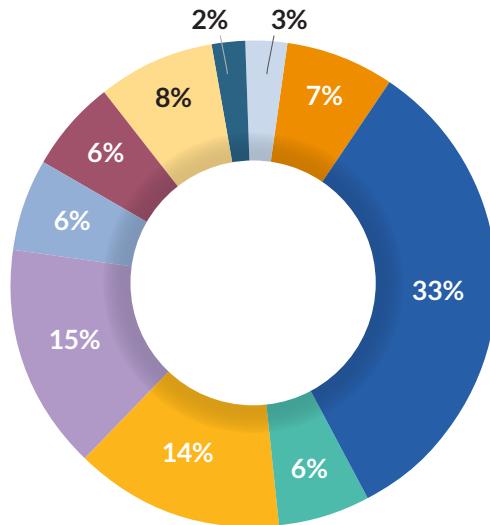
Percentage Breakdown of Reunion Location



■ On-site (n=11) ■ Off-site (n=23) ■ Unknown (n=1)

Percentage Breakdown of Outcomes when there was no reunion

- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=55)
- Unable to locate (n=10)
- No response (n=24)
- Contact refused (n=25)
- Deceased – closed (n=10)
- Deceased – contact with other relatives (n=10)
- Support/intermediary service – closed pre reunion (n=13)
- Other (n=3)
- No trace – name withdrawn (n=5)
- No trace – not enough info (n=11)



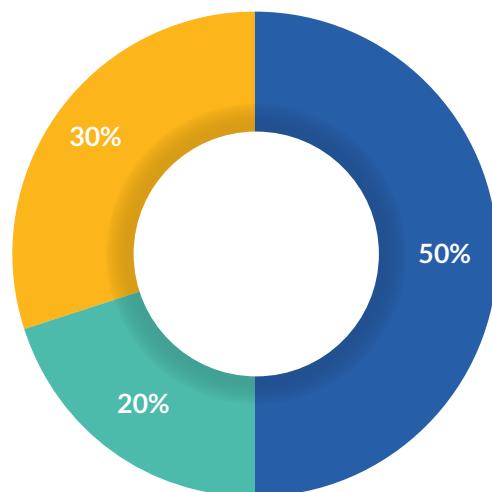
*This chart is a breakdown of the 166 cases (83% of total sample) where there was no reunion.

Expanding on Outcome: Deceased – contact with other relatives

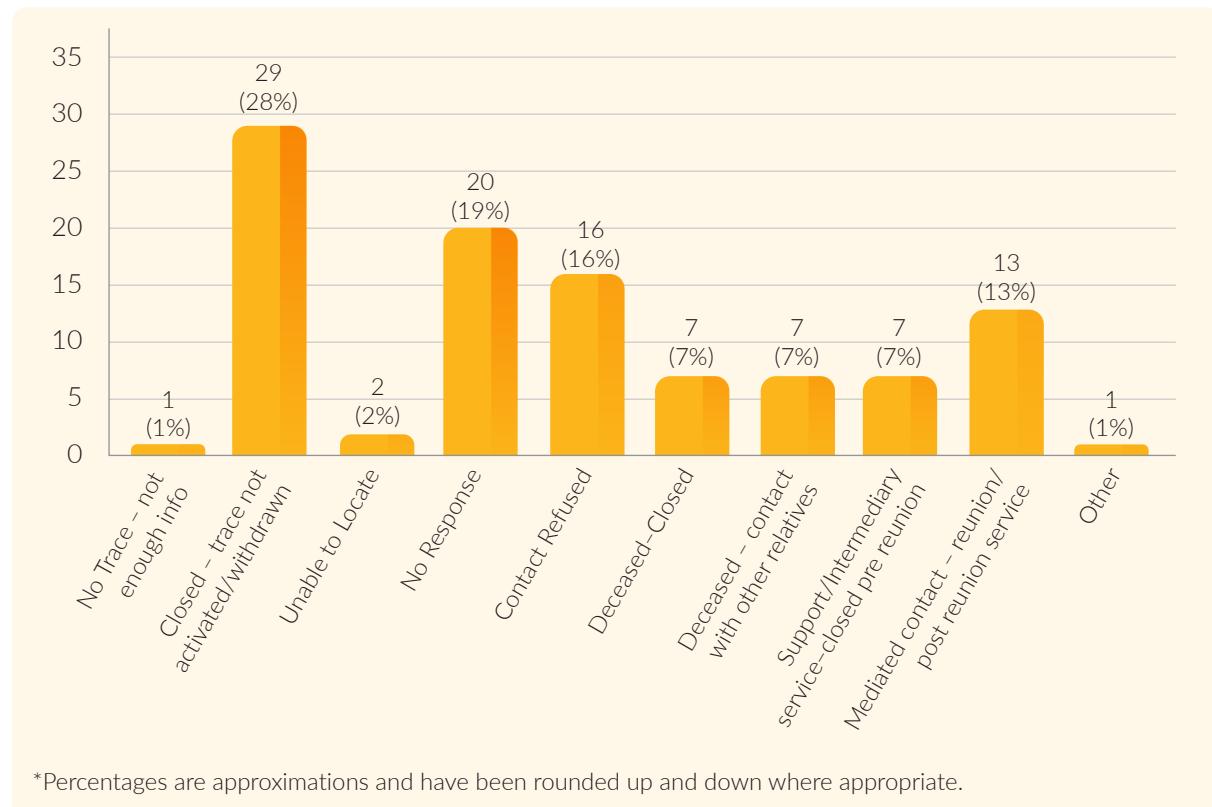
In 10 cases the outcome was 'deceased contact with other relatives'. In all cases the applicant went on to contact birth relatives (BR).

Percentage Breakdown of Outcomes: Deceased – contact with other relatives

- Reunion
- Direct Contact
- Info Exchange via SW

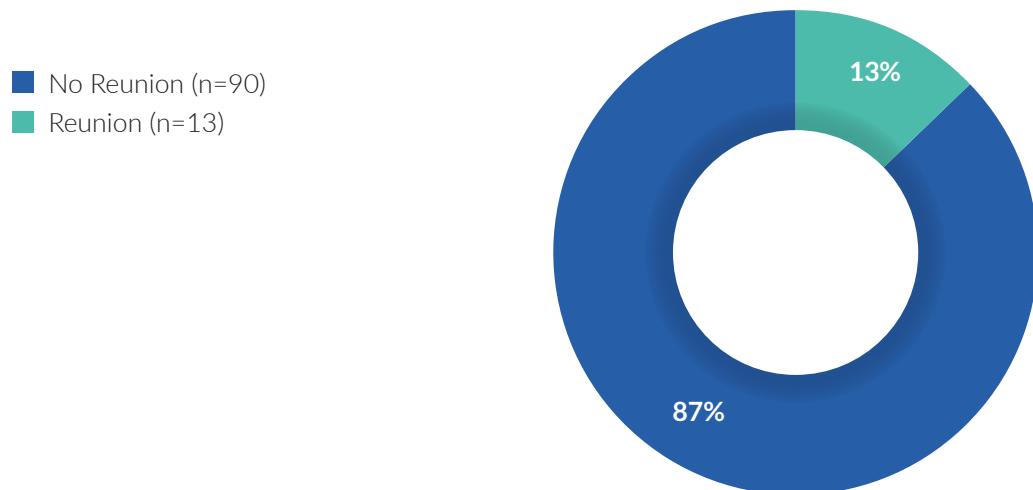


Birth Mother Trace Outcomes



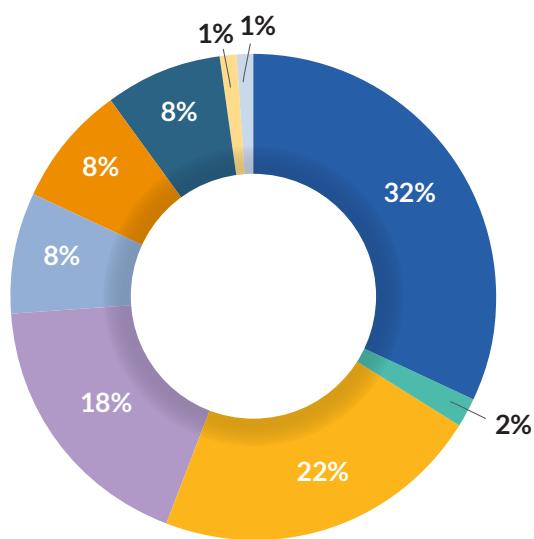
When a Birth Mother was traced, did a reunion take place?

Birth Mother Reunion

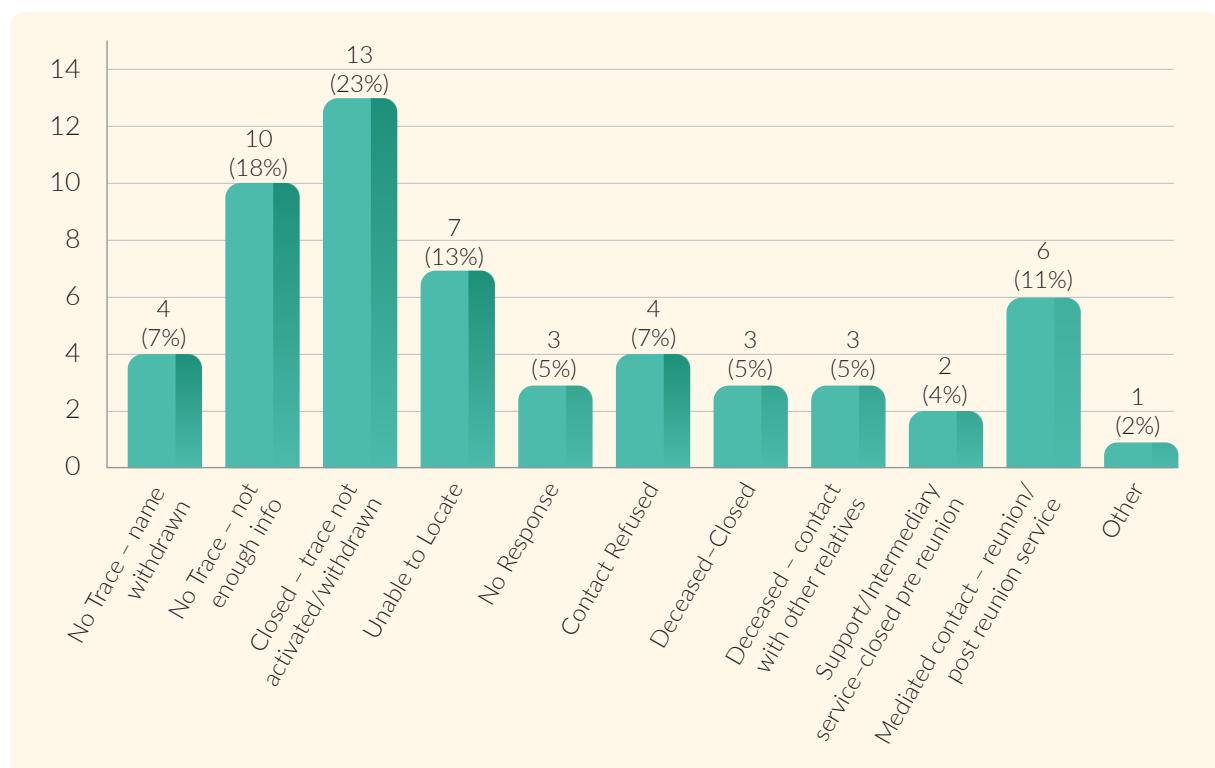


Percentage Breakdown of Birth Mother Outcomes, when there was No Reunion

- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=29)
- Unable to locate (n=2)
- No response (n=20)
- Contact refused (n=16)
- Deceased – closed (n=7)
- Deceased – contact with other relatives (n=7)
- Support/intermediary service – closed pre reunion (n=7)
- Other (n=1)
- No trace – not enough info (n=1)



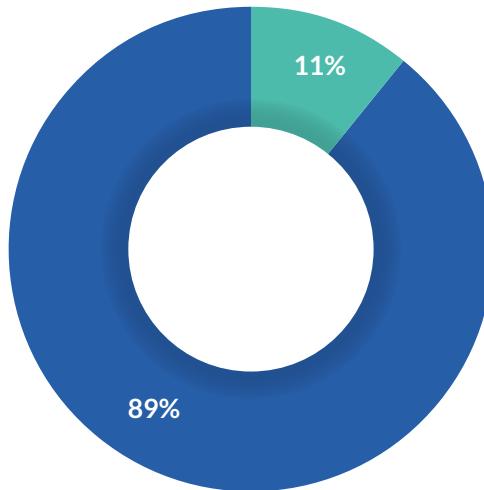
Birth Father Trace Outcomes



When a Birth Father was traced, did a reunion take place?

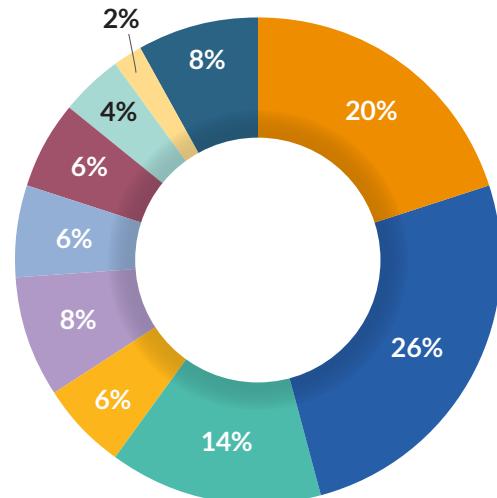
Birth Father Reunion

- No Reunion (n=50)
- Reunion (n=6)

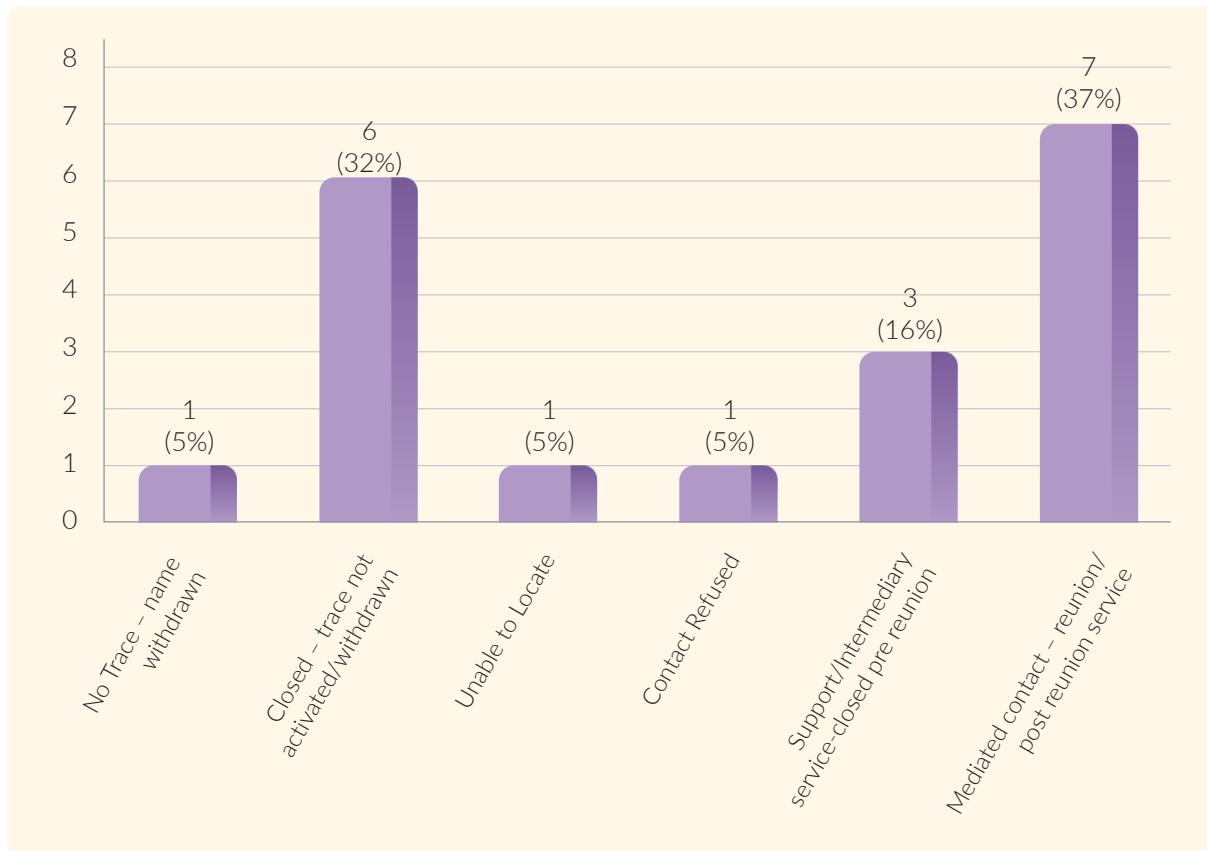


Percentage Breakdown of Birth Father Outcomes, when there was No Reunion

- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=13)
- Unable to locate (n=7)
- No response (n=3)
- Contact refused (n=4)
- Deceased – closed (n=3)
- Deceased – contact with other relatives (n=3)
- Support/intermediary service – closed pre reunion (n=2)
- Other (n=1)
- No trace – name withdrawn (n=4)
- No trace – not enough info (n=10)



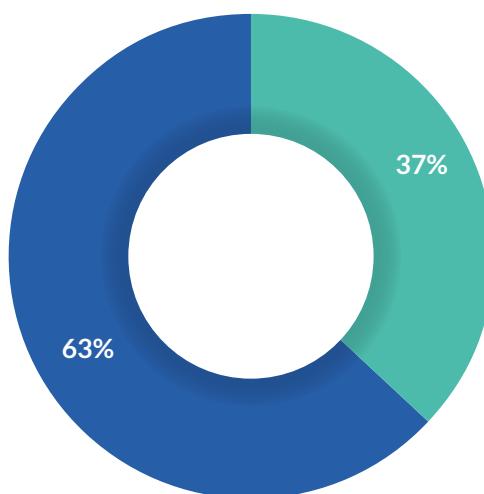
Birth Relative Trace Outcomes



When a Birth Relative was traced, did a reunion take place?

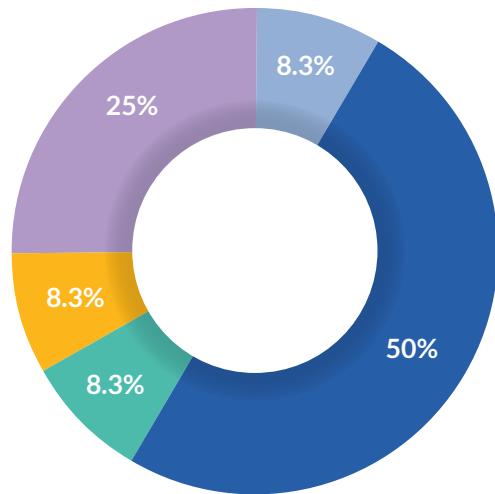
Birth Relative Reunion

- No Reunion (n=12)
- Reunion (n=7)

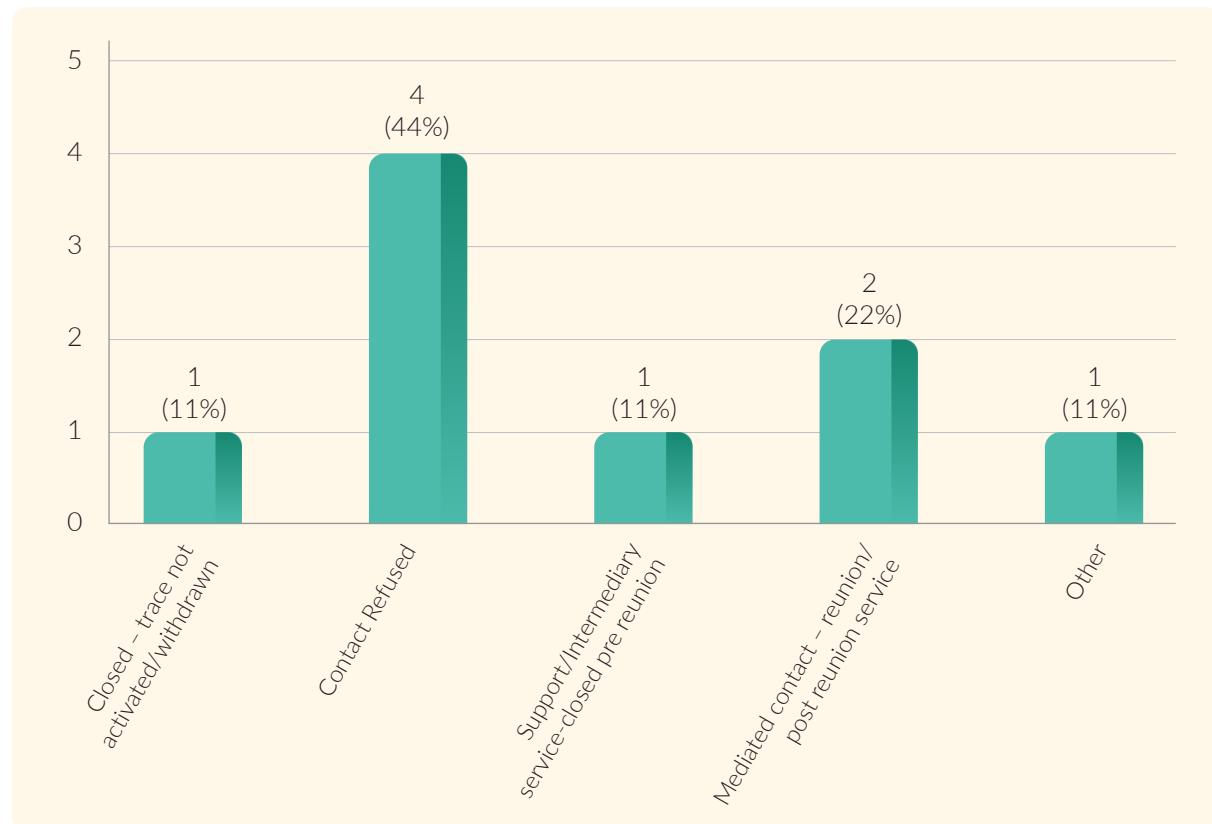


Percentage Breakdown of Birth Relative Outcomes, when there was No Reunion

- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=6)
- Unable to locate (n=1)
- Contact refused (n=1)
- Support/intermediary service – closed pre reunion (n= 3)
- No trace – name withdrawn (n=1)



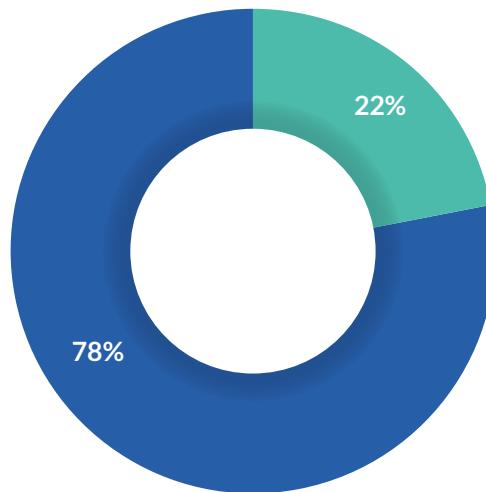
Adopted Person Trace Outcomes



When an Adopted Person was traced, did a reunion take place?

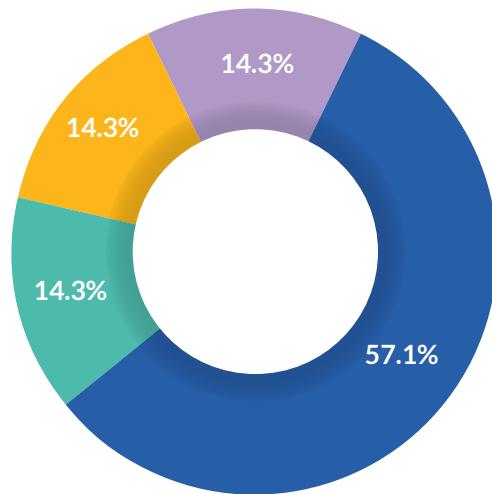
Adopted Person Reunions

- No Reunion (n=7)
- Reunion (n=2)

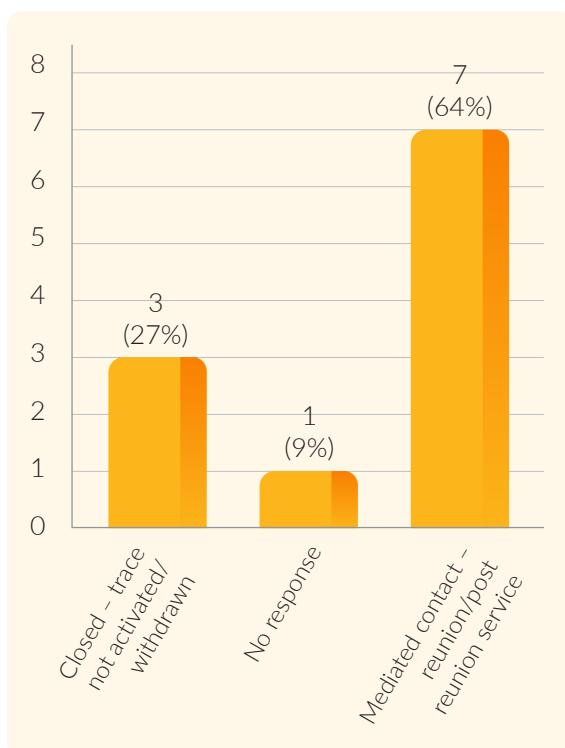


Percentage Breakdown of Adopted Person Outcomes, when there was No Reunion

- Contact refused (n=4)
- Support/intermediary service – closed pre reunion (n=1)
- Other (n=1)
- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=1)

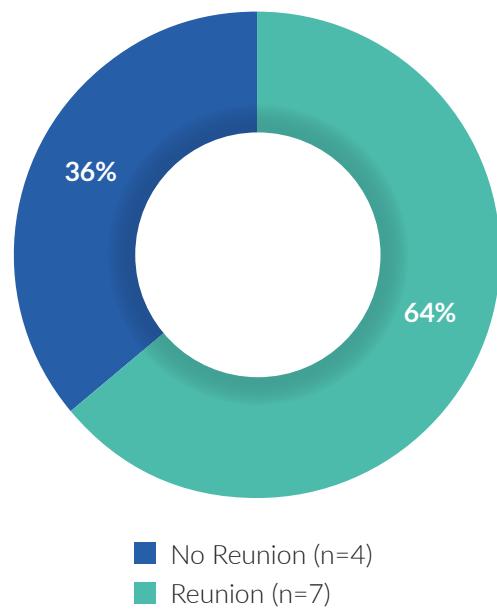


Adopted Sibling Trace Outcomes



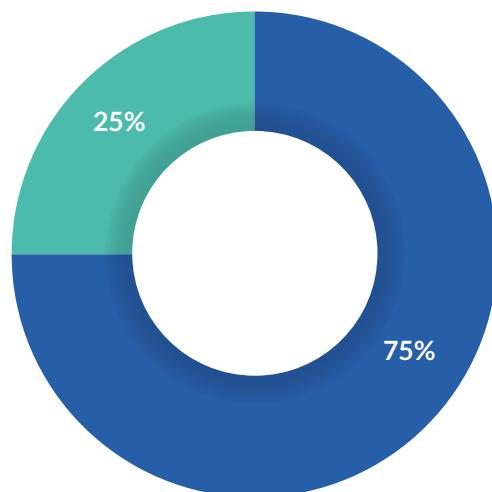
When an Adopted Sibling was traced, did a reunion take place?

Adopted Sibling Reunion

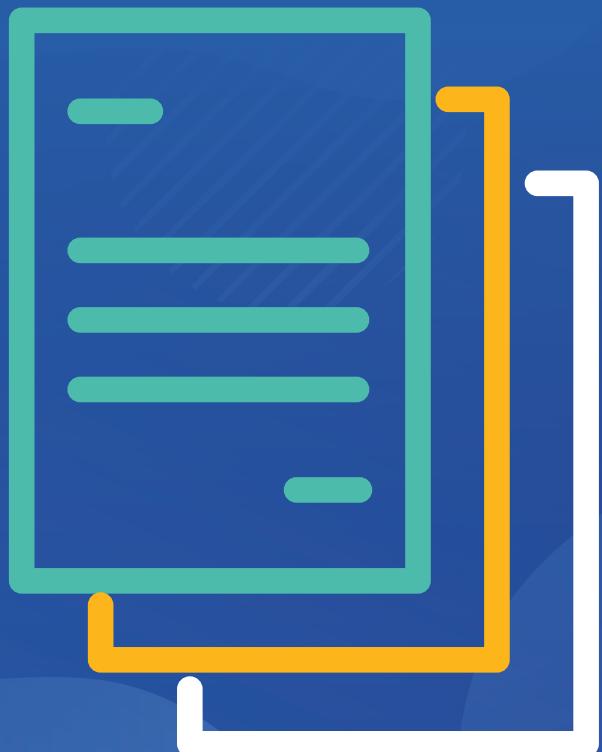


Percentage Breakdown of Adopted Sibling Outcomes, when there was No Reunion

- Closed – trace not activated/withdrawn (n=3)
- No response (n=1)



Other Information



Websites

- www.aai.gov.ie
- www.birthinfo.ie

Solicitors

- **Mason Hayes Curran LLP**
South Bank House
Barrow St
Dublin 4
- **Matheson LLP**
Sir John Rogerson's Quay
Dublin 2

Auditors

- **Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General**
Treasury Block, Lower Yard
Dublin Castle, Dublin 2
- **(Internal Audit) ASM**
20 Rosemary Street
Belfast BT1 1QD

Appendix A

Summary of all Board meetings in 2024 and attendance.

Meeting Date 2024	Meeting Type	Board of the AAI Attendees
09 January	Full	All members
23 January	Orders	S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Prof. S. Greene
13 February	Full	All members
05 March	Full	All members
19 March	Orders	S. O'Brien, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene, P. Harrison, Judge P. McMahon
16 April	Full	All members
30 April	Orders	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Prof. S. Greene
14 May	Full	All members
28 May	Orders and Governance	O. Traynor, Dr H. Buckley, Prof. S. Greene, Dr M. Anglim (pm)
11 June	Full	All members
18 June	Strategy (Governance)	All members
09 July	Full	O. Traynor, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley, Judge P. McMahon, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene
23 July	Orders	S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Dr M. Anglim
06 August	Emergency Order	S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Judge P. McMahon
03 September	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene
24 September	Orders	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene, P. Harrison, Judge P. McMahon
08 October	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene, P. Harrison, Judge P. McMahon
09 October	Emergency Order	O. Traynor, P. Harrison, Judge P. McMahon
21 & 22 October	Circuit	O. Traynor, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley
05 November	Full	All members
26 November	Orders	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley
03 December	Full	O. Traynor, Dr M. Anglim, Prof. S. Greene, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley
17 December	Orders	All members

Appendix B

Number of sanctioned posts by unit/team and grade at 31 December 2024.

AAI Unit	Team	Grades													
		Director	Principal Officer	Assistant Principal	Principal Social Worker	Social Work Team Lead	Senior Social Worker	Professionally Qualified Social Worker	Engineer Grade II	Engineer Grade III	Administrative Officer	Higher Executive Officer	Executive Officer	Clerical Officer	
Office of the CEO		1										1	2		
Adoption Operations			1										1		
	Domestic										1	2	1	4	
	Intercountry										1	1	2	4	
Social Work				1	1	4	6							12	
Information Services and Records			1											1	
	Digital Solutions			1							2	1	4		
	Archives							1	1		1	1		4	
	Records			1							1	5	4	11	
	Data Protection										1		1	2	
Research				1						1				2	
HR and Staff Development				1							1	1	1	4	
Compliance, Corporate Services and Accreditation				1							1	3	1	6	
Total		1	2	5	1	1	4	6	1	1	2	6	16	11	57

Notes

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ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

The Adoption Authority of Ireland
Shelbourne House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
DO4 H6F6

+ 353 1 2309 300 | aai.gov.ie