



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann
Adoption Authority of Ireland

Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2022
Annual Report 2022





**Report of
Údarás Uchtála na hÉireann
Adoption Authority of Ireland
for 2022**

**To: Roderic O’Gorman
Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**

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**Board
Chairperson
Statement**

I am pleased to present the 2022 Annual Report for the Adoption Authority of Ireland. This was a very eventful year for the Authority. As our world returned to normal after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, and having continued to operate a full service by way of Zoom meetings throughout the pandemic, the Board, supported by the Executive, resumed in-person meetings in April.

The Board warmly welcomed the introduction of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 which commenced on 1 July for applications to the Contact Preference Register (CPR) and 3 October for applications for information release. The Authority, having been actively engaged in at all stages in the drafting and roll out of this important legislation, undertook an intensive information and media campaign which involved the delivery of a leaflet to every household, nursing home and residential institution in Ireland. The Authority also collaborated with Irish Embassies abroad to ensure that the information campaign had targeted international reach.

The new legislation represented a seismic change in our adoption landscape and was enthusiastically greeted by the Board. For many years, people adopted here in Ireland were denied access to their birth and early life information. A High Court ruling some 25 years ago held that an adopted person's right to information had to be balanced against a parent's right to privacy. This, in effect, meant that adopted people who wanted access to their birth information could be denied it on the basis that it would infringe their parent's right to privacy. The new legislation, however, confirmed the right of adopted people to be provided with information as to their birth and early life circumstances. It also placed the CPR, which has been in existence for a number of years, on a statutory footing. The Board welcomed the significant numbers of applications received, which was greater than anticipated.

The staffing levels in the Authority increased from 29 to 59 during the year to fulfil both existing and new functions under the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. I was also very happy to note that the Social Work team had increased to its full complement of 12 practising professionals.

The Authority was pleased with the appointment of Ross Higgins as Director of Information Services and Records. In addition to his role overseeing information systems and the release of information under the new

legislation, Ross continued the important work in the digitisation of adoption records which will assist greatly in the provision of information under the new legislation. In tandem with this appointment, the Authority secured additional storage space in its current location, where adoption records will be stored.

Research Officer Dr Judy Lovett progressed her dedicated research throughout 2022, publishing the third and fourth in a series of five planned country specific briefings, these latest reports investigating the adoption of children from Romania and China into Ireland. A working group was formed to define key areas of focus of legal research.

In December, the Authority said a sad farewell to Patricia Carey, our CEO of eight years' standing. Patricia, through her boundless energy, enthusiasm, dedication, wisdom and insight, made an enormous contribution towards growing the Authority to the successful organisation it is today.

The statistics section displays figures for operational matters in 2022 and previous years for all the key areas of work of the Authority. 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 in 2022 compared with other years, and how many Parliamentary Questions and Data Protection Requests the Authority processed.

The Board has noted the increase in complexity of both the matters coming before it and the matters being referred to the High Court.

I would like to express my appreciation for my Board colleagues for their time and expertise, their commitment, dedication and sheer hard work involved in making significant, life-changing decisions, 'without fear or favour', focusing on the best interests of the child.

I would also like to thank the Executive and senior management team who, week after week supported the Board in its endeavours to achieve the highest standards in adoption services.

Furthermore, I express my thanks and appreciation to the Minister, Roderic O’Gorman, and the staff of the Adoption Policy Unit in the Department for their continued support and assistance.

I look forward to continuing to progress our mission ‘in ensuring the highest possible standards of adoption related services throughout the life-long adoption process with the best interests of children as the first and paramount objective’ and, in this regard, to continue to deliver the goals 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’.



Ms Orlaith Traynor
Board Chairperson





**Chief
Executive
Officer
Foreword**

The year 2022 was extraordinary in the history of the Adoption Authority as it was granted a wide range of new functions under the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. These new functions were to be implemented alongside the existing work under the Adoption Act 2010, bringing the Authority into a relatively unique position simultaneously implementing two government Acts.

The new legislation breathed new energy into the work of the Authority and set a tone of expectation and excitement about the year ahead. The Authority planned an extensive public relations and communications campaign ensuring that Ireland's citizens and the Irish diaspora worldwide would be fully aware about this far-reaching legislation and its implications for those who were adopted, nursed or boarded out, or were the subject of illegal or false birth registrations.

On 1 July, the Contact Preference Register (CPR) came into existence on a statutory footing, replacing the voluntary National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) created by the Authority in 2005. Within one month, almost 900 adopted persons and birth parents had registered contact preferences and with the transfer of records from the previous NACPR register, the CPR held over 16,000 records by year end.

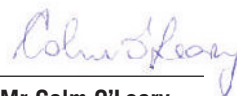
The Authority worked together with Tusla to implement an extensive public relations plan, including a public information campaign, raising awareness amongst the general population of the new services arising from the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. The information campaign involved the delivery of information booklets to households nationwide and abroad, the implementation of a new website – birthinfo.ie alongside a national advertising campaign involving local and national newspapers, radio and television and social media advertisements.

The advertising campaign was a resounding success and before long both the Authority and Tusla received large numbers of applications for birth and early life information and applications for tracing. The surge of applications and the complexity and extent of the information involved created challenges for staff in providing information within the required timescales and the staff of the Authority have continued to work tirelessly to respond to information requests as promptly as possible. Released information led to an unexpected number of additional queries which further slowed the work of information release.

The Authority, supported by the Adoption Policy Unit in DCEDIY, continued to build on its previous successes in the digitisation agenda and migrated many records from distributed sources onto a single industry-standard repository. Support services such as ICT, Archives and Records were staffed more appropriately, enabling the Authority to be more effective and efficient in its work. The Authority also embarked on a process to develop a culture of innovation and improvement, empowering and encouraging staff to improve processes and systems where possible.

Throughout the year, the Authority continued to deliver on its routine work in domestic and intercountry adoptions, social work, provider accreditation, research and archives alongside its work in ensuring that the Authority remains a good place to work. Staff well-being continued to be a priority during 2022, and the Authority will continue its work on this aspect throughout 2023.

I wish to express my appreciation and admiration of the Board for its diligence and unfailing efforts, making difficult decisions in the best interests of the child. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the senior management team and to the entire staff of the Authority for their continued dedication and perseverance in progressing the sensitive and important work of the Authority.



Mr Colm O'Leary
Interim CEO



**Key
Activities and
Achievements
2022**

Infographics

Upward trend in key adoption decisions

	2020	2021	2022
Domestic Adoption Orders	81	101	102
Entries on the Register of Intercountry Adoptions	184	136	170



February 2022 the Authority launched its 2022-2024 Strategic Plan



Intercountry Adoptions recognised in 2022 (RICA entries) – Adopters habitually resident in Ireland

- USA - 13
- Vietnam - 3
- Thailand - 2

Top Countries for adoptions recognised in 2022 (RICA Entries) - Adopters habitually resident abroad

- England - 52
- Northern Ireland - 28
- USA - 19
- Scotland - 8



2023-2026 Research Strategy produced

Declarations of Eligibility granted to Prospective Parents

DECs Granted	2020	2021	2022
Domestic	93	121	100
Intercountry	35	41	22



Board Meetings



2020	24
2021	24
2022	25

High Court Orders for Domestic Adoption Applications



	2020	2021	2022
S18 ↓	3	2	1
S30 ↑	15	19	24
S54 ↑	11	14	18

File Reviews carried out by AAI Social Work Team



	2020	2021	2022
Domestic files	175	121	121
Intercountry files	57	41	23

Other requests for data and information



	2020	2021	2022
Subject Access Requests	32	97	73
Parliamentary Questions	15	34	37
Freedom of Information Requests	11	34	26

The Authority reviewed its Social Work practices and implemented a Social Work Practice Framework.



BIRTH INFORMATION & TRACING

1 July 2022 the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA) was enacted



TV Campaign Reached

3.4 Million Viewers



Info Booklets
2 Million Information Booklets

delivered to households and Public buildings and provided online for download



BITA YouTube videos
3.7 Million Views



Interviews
30 TV and Radio Interviews
by CEO and provided online for download



Radio Campaign Reached
981,000 Listeners

Printed Media
76 Adverts
on **39 printed titles** in Ireland



Birthinfo Website Hits
129,000 Page Views
by 31K persons

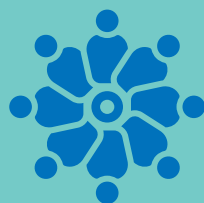


Between Oct and Dec; **2570 Applications** for Birth Information

& **11** information sessions were held with applicants regarding the data they requested

Staff Increase

32 - 52
(up 62.5%)
31 Recruitment Competitions



Deregistered Agencies

- St Brigid's Information and Tracing Agency
- Cunamh
- Arabella t/a Here2Help





**Overview of
the Adoption
Authority of
Ireland**

The Adoption Authority of Ireland, established on 1 November 2010 under the Adoption Act 2010, is an independent quasi-judicial body under the aegis of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). The Authority is also, in line with The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the ‘Central Authority’ for intercountry adoption in Ireland. The purpose of the Adoption Act 2010 is to improve standards in both domestic and intercountry adoption.

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 Authority under the current 2010 legislation which repealed the Adoption Acts from 1952 to 1998.

The functions of the Authority 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 Authority’s designation as the Central Authority for the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. In addition, the Authority 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 Adoption Authority 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 Authority 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 stepparent adoption without the requirement for the other parent to adopt his or her own child.

The Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA) 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 Contract 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 Authority.



Functions of the Adoption Authority of Ireland

The services that the Authority provides to the public 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.

Information Services and Records

The Information Services and Records Unit assists with post-adoption information and services such as access to records. The Birth Information and Tracing Act was passed in July 2022, meaning that the Contact Preference Register is open for applications. Access to birth, care and early life, medical information, information relating to illegal birth registrations and provided items is now available, as well the option to apply for tracing services. This unit is also responsible for data protection, Freedom of Information (FOI), digital ICT and historical Archives that fall under the National Archives Act 1986–2018.

Social Work

Social workers in the Adoption Authority 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 Adoption Authority 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 Adoption Authority of Ireland 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 Authority is required to undertake or assist in research projects and activities relating to adoption services. The Authority 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 Authority 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:

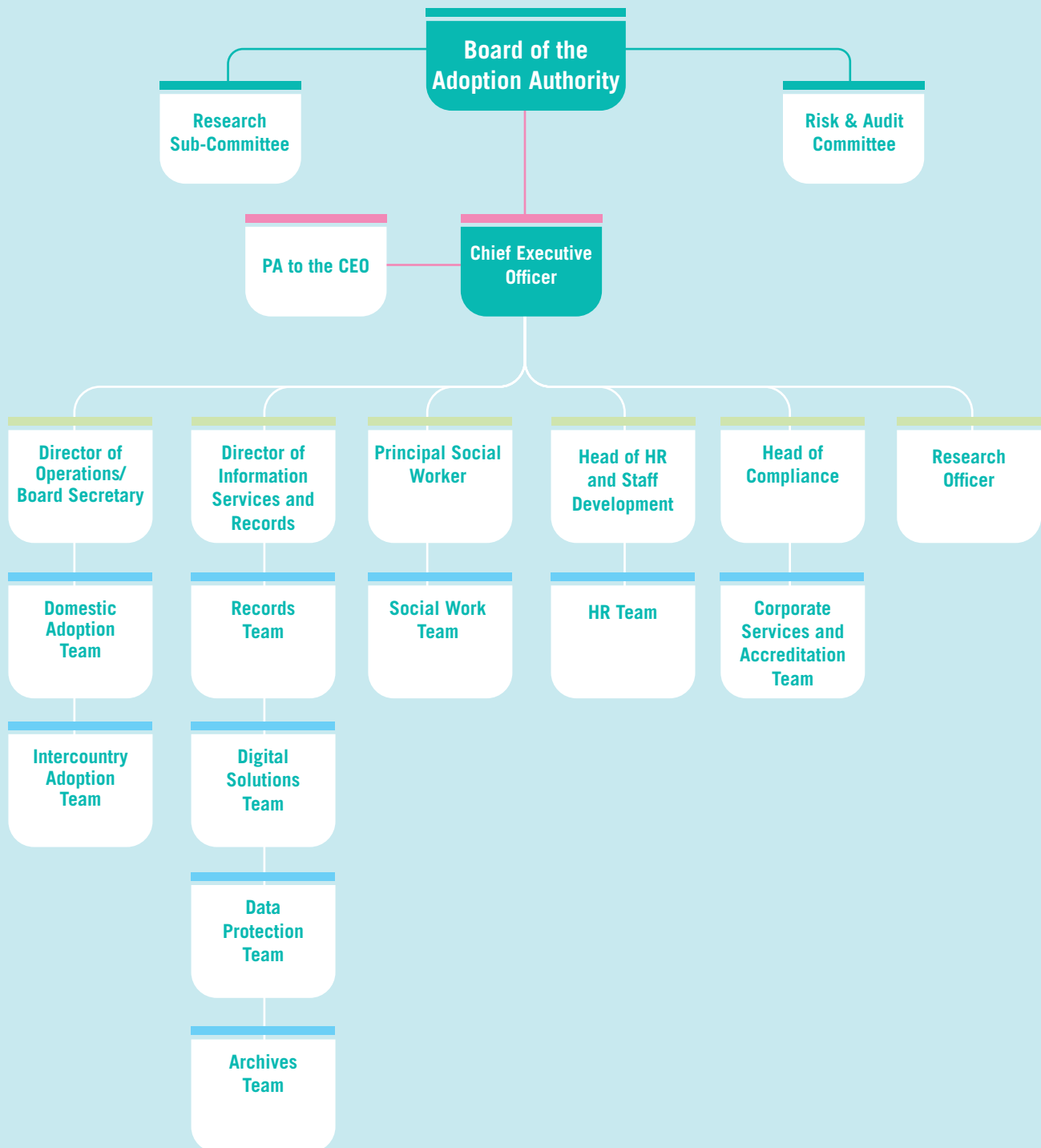
Committed to treating all stakeholders in the adoption process or otherwise with dignity, respect and courtesy. Listening, learning and empowering organisation for all those working or affected by adoption services and listen to and respect staff ensuring the Authority remains a good place to work.

This Annual Report is a summary of the main pieces of work undertaken by the Adoption Authority of Ireland in 2022. You can find further information about the Authority, its publications and financial accounts on www.aai.gov.ie.



**Organisation &
Management
Structure 2022**

Organisation & Management Structure 2022





**Board of
the Adoption
Authority of
Ireland**

Membership of the Board

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010, the Board shall consist of seven members, being the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson and five ordinary members, appointed by the Minister. The term of office of the Board is for a period not exceeding five years. An appointed member who completes a term of office is eligible for reappointment to the 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
Prof Sheila Greene

Gender Balance

As at 31 December 2022, 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, one of whom shall be a social worker, shall constitute a quorum.

In accordance with the Adoption Act 2010, the Board shall hold as many meetings as are necessary for performing its functions, but shall hold at least 12 meetings a year. The Board held 17 scheduled meetings and eight additional meetings during 2022.

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.

The Board passed a resolution to have a minimum of one meeting each year for governance matters only. Two governance meetings were held during 2022, on 24 May and 22 November. At each Board meeting, the CEO report provides information and updates to the Board on the operation of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, the implementation of the annual Business Plan, expenditure and budgetary matters and other relevant issues and/or developments. Part 4 of the Adoption Act 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 without the Executive (that is, the CEO, the Board Secretary and any other member of staff or management) on two occasions in 2022; these meetings were conducted in the absence of the Executive. On each of the 'full' Board meeting dates the Board met without the Executive from 9.45am for such period as was required to discuss matters. This practice will continue in 2023.

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, and there are two committees which have been appointed by the Board:

Risk and Audit Committee

The Risk and Audit Committee (RAC) comprises of two Authority members and two 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 to 14/07/2022 were

Ms Claire Byrne (Chair),
 Ms Orlaith Traynor (Chairperson of the Authority),
 Mr Paul Harrison (Board Member) and
 Ms Tara McDermott (External Member).

The members of the RAC from 25/10/2022 were

Ms Patricia Gilheaney (Chair),
 Ms Orlaith Traynor (Chairperson of the Authority),
 Mr Paul Harrison (Board Member) and
 Ms Tara McDermott (External Member).

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 2022, 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 and the Head of Compliance attend all meetings. Secretarial support is provided by Crowleys DFK.

Meeting agendas were prepared and provided in advance to committee members along with appropriate briefing materials. The RAC maintained minutes or other reports of its meetings and activities. Audits commissioned by the RAC included a review of the effectiveness of internal financial controls, a review of the Authority's approach to ensuring it achieves Value for Money, a follow-up review in respect of certain previous internal audit recommendations made to the Authority and finally, an audit of the Authority's approach to Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning. The 2022 Annual Report of the RAC was formally presented to the Board at their meeting on 9 May 2023.

Research Subcommittee

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

The main functions of the Research Subcommittee are to support the Authority in the development of a research strategy, to regularly review and advise on such projects as are proposed by the Authority 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 are

Dr Helen Buckley (Board Member);
 Ms Orlaith Traynor (Chairperson of the Authority);
 Prof Sheila Greene (Board Member);
 Dr Margo Anglim (Board Member);
 Ms Claire McGettrick, UCD (External Member);
 Dr Richard Sullivan, Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia (External Member);
 Ms Patricia Carey (CEO) (to 20/12/2022);
 Dr Judy Lovett (Research Officer);
 Mr Darren Broomfield (Head of Social Work);
 Mr Gordon Corrigan (HEO Information and Records);
 Mr Mark Kirwan (Head of Domestic Adoption) and
 Ms Orla Bolger (Head of Intercountry Adoption).

The Research Subcommittee met three times in 2022.

Governance

The Board of the Adoption Authority of Ireland was established under the Adoption Act 2010. The functions of the Board are set out in Section 96 of this Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth 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 Adoption Authority of Ireland are the responsibility of the CEO and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team 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 Adoption Authority of Ireland.

Responsibilities

Board

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

Section 112 of the Adoption Act 2010 requires the Board of the Authority keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), all proper and usual accounts of money received and expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, the Board of the Authority 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 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 Authority's website is the responsibility of the Board.

The Board is responsible for approving the annual business plan and budget. Evaluation of the performance of the Authority by reference to the annual Business Plan and budget is regularly considered 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

Chairperson

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

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

- Appropriate agenda setting, management and support of 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;
- Conducting all meetings of the Board in appropriately and 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in conjunction with the annual report and financial statements of the State body 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, including performance evaluation of the CEO;
- The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the DCEDIY;
- Other key external parties and by promoting the work and mission of the Authority;
- The Board, reflecting a tone of respect, trust and candour that allows for challenging questions and inputs;
- The appropriate Oireachtas Sub-Committee(s).

Chief Executive Officer

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

The Board is accountable to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 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.

The CEO is responsible for

- The implementation of policies approved by the Board;
- The day-to-day management of the staff;
- Administration and business of the Adoption Authority of Ireland;
- Preparation of the annual budget for approval by the Board and its submission to the DCEDIY;
- Providing updates to the Board, and other committees of the Board, in regard to the management of the Adoption Authority of Ireland;
- Implementation of policy and progress on the Strategic Plan.

Board Stipend

An annual fee is payable to Board members in the sum of €7,965 together with travel and subsistence expenses at rates sanctioned by the Department of Finance. In accordance with Department of Finance regulations, fees are not paid to Board members who are currently employed as public servants. From November 2020, in recognition of the quasi-judicial nature of the decisions and work of the Authority, 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 Authority.

The Authority operates in accordance with best practice corporate governance principles in line with the Adoption Act 2010 and, where applicable, the guidelines as set out in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.

Financial Control

The budget of the Authority is allocated through the DCEDIY. The CEO is the Accounting Officer for the Authority. In 2022, the financial allocation of the Adoption Authority was €7,557,000.

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 Authority'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 DCEDIY.

The Financial Statements are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG). Financial Statements for a particular year are generally not audited at the time of the relevant Annual report's Publication. The audit of the 2022 accounts commenced in April 2023. Once approved by the OCAG, the 2022 Statements will be published on the Authority's website.

Crowleys DFK Chartered Accountants provided accountancy services to the Authority during 2022.

Internal Financial Control

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

Budget Management

The CEO and the senior management team prepare an annual budget based on the operational and developmental needs of the Authority. The annual

budget is recommended for approval by CEO to the Board. Day-to-day responsibility for managing expenditure within budget limits is assigned to the CEO and Head of Compliance with support from the Authority's finance consultants Crowleys DFK. Budgets are monitored closely with monthly reports furnished to the DCEDIY and the CEO.

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 private sectors. The CEO and the Head of Compliance attend all meetings of the committee. The RAC sat four times during 2022 and met with representatives from the OCAG, as well as internal auditors. In their Annual Report 2022, the RAC expressed satisfaction with the general financial control environment operating with the Authority.

The RAC plays a fundamental role in ensuring that the Authority functions according to good governance, accounting and auditing standards and adopts appropriate management and risk arrangements. It does this by overseeing and advising the Board and the 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 audit;
- 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 Adoption Authority of Ireland;
- Proposals for tendering for either internal or external audit services or for purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services;
- Anti-fraud policies, protected disclosure processes, and arrangements for special investigations; and
- The RAC periodically reviews its own effectiveness and reports the results of that review to the Board.

The Committee's agenda in 2022 included

- Review of draft Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021;
- Discussion and approval of the Internal Audit Plan and Internal Audit Charter;
- Approval and review of 2022 Procurement Plan;
- Draft Governance Statement and Board Members' Report;
- Draft Statement of Internal Control 2021;
- OCAG Audit of 2021 Financial Statements;
- COVID-19;
- Accredited Bodies;
- 2022 Budget and draft 2023 Budget;
- Review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial controls;
- Checklist of Internal Controls;
- Results of the self-assessment review of effectiveness;
- Review year to date budget vs actual variance analysis;
- Discussion and approval of Risk Management Policy and Risk Register;
- Draft RAC Annual Report to the Board.

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 Adoption Authority of Ireland.

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 DPER for use in government departments.

All audit reports are submitted directly to the CEO and to the RAC who also receive periodic reports showing progress against the plan. The internal auditors completed a review of review of the effectiveness of internal financial controls, a review of the Authority's approach to ensuring it achieves Value for Money, a follow-up review in respect of certain previous internal audit recommendations made to the Authority and finally an audit of the Authority's approach to Business

Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning. The audits resulted in 'satisfactory' ratings. Recommendations made were accepted. The Authority procured for Internal Audit services in 2019 through the Office of Government Procurement using their established framework for accountancy and auditing services. This contract will run until the end of 2023.

Procurement

The Adoption Authority of Ireland 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 Authority avails of centralised managed contracts that have been put in place by the Office of Government Procurement including the provision of stationery and office supplies, photocopying, and foreign travel. The Authority continues to engage with the Office of Government Procurement for advice on current and future procurement requirements. In 2022, a number of contracts were successfully procured in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement in line with the Authority's 2022 Procurement Plan. A significant number of procurement projects during 2022 related to the public relations and communications campaign launched to raise awareness of the new services arising from the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022.

Risk Management

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

The Chief Risk Officer is a member of the senior management team and reports directly to the CEO, RAC and the Board. The Corporate Risk Register sets out the major risks facing the Authority together with existing controls and actions to mitigate them, and identifies owners and target dates for completion. Risks are categorised High, Medium and Low. A report on the High Risk items was provided to the Board each month in 2022.

Protected Disclosures

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

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

A policy on protected disclosures was approved by the Board at their meeting in May 2017. The policy was brought to the attention of all staff; it is published in the Authority's Operations Manual, and information on the policy is provided in the Employee Handbook.

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 requires the publication of an Annual Report each year 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 Adoption Authority of Ireland confirms that no reports were received and/or are under investigation in accordance with the provisions of the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 for the financial year from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

Board Evaluation

Under Section 4.6 of the 2016 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. The Authority completed an external review in 2020 and has implemented the majority of the recommendations arising from that report. The Authority completed its annual self-assessment for 2022 at the beginning of 2023. The next external evaluation of the Board and its Committees is due for completion in 2024.

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 Act 2014. In the Strategic Plan for 2022-2024, the Authority commits to completing an assessment of the equality and human rights issues that are relevant to its purpose and functions.



**Birth
Information
and Tracing
Act 2022**

The planning for and implementation of The Birth Information and Tracing Act (2022) resulted in the most significant workforce changes for the Authority since its foundation in 2010. Significant changes were made to the Authority's organisational structure at the beginning of 2022. Most notably, the Information Services and Records Unit was established to assist stakeholders with post-adoption information and services. Staffing requirements to support the planning and implementation of the Act were identified, and the Authority's staff increased significantly throughout 2022.

History and Context of the Birth Information & Tracing Act 2022

In 1984, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Barry Desmond TD, established a review committee on adoption services. One of its main recommendations was for a right of access for adopted persons to their birth certificate on condition that they receive counselling before the certificate was released.

In 2001, the then Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, Mary Hanafin TD, sought to publish heads of Bill for the release of adoption information. Those heads provided for access to a birth certificate subject to the completion of counselling; the recipient, however, was to be required to sign an undertaking that he or she would not seek contact with those identified in the birth certificate. The undertaking had criminal penalties attached if it was breached. This draft legislation never reached publication stage.

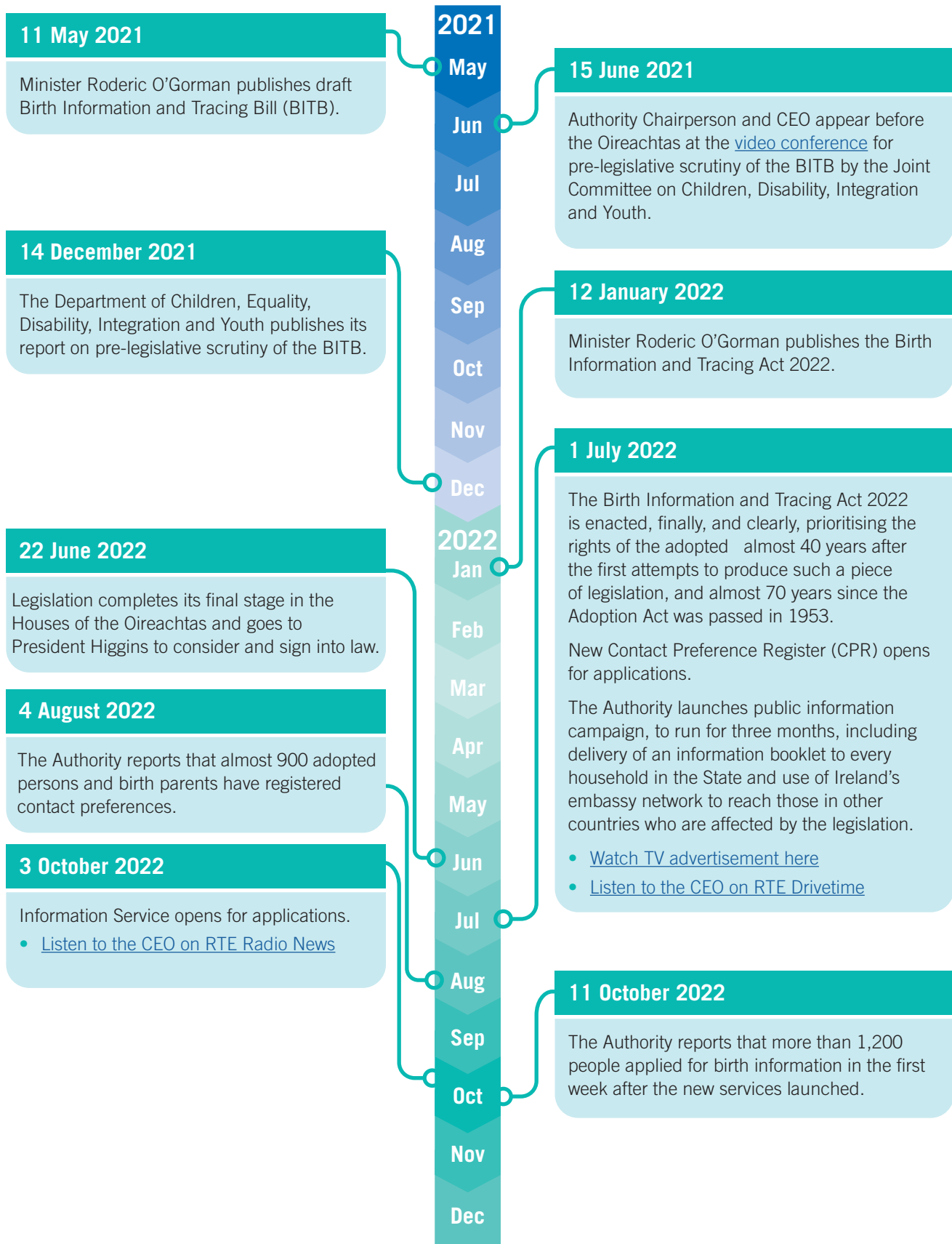
Brian Lenihan TD, as Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, also made a similar attempt to legislate for the release of information. In 2014, a Private Members' Bill was initiated by then Senators Averil Power, Jillian van Turnhout and Fidelma Healy-Eames. This Bill allowed for the release of birth certificates with a mandatory information session to be held with a social worker before release, in all cases. This Bill fell with the dissolution of the government of that time.

The Adoption (Information and Tracing) Heads of Bill were developed and brought to the government in 2015 by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, James Reilly TD. His successor as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone TD, continued this work and published the Bill in 2016. The balancing provisions in that Bill were known as 'compelling reasons and the undertaking'. The 'compelling reasons' test was to be applied in circumstances where a parent objected to the release of information, and it involved an

application to the Circuit Court to determine if a threat to life was present and, therefore, justified the refusal of information. These provisions were rejected, and an alternative approach was developed and proposed by the then Minister Zappone in May 2019. This provided for situations where a parent objected to the parent's information being released, and both the parent and the adopted person were given an opportunity to state their case to the Adoption Authority, which would adjudicate. This Bill reached Committee Stage in the Seanad in June 2019 and lapsed with the dissolution of the Seanad in February 2020.

In June 2022, almost 70 years since the Adoption Act was passed in 1953, the Oireachtas passed the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022, enshrining in law the importance of knowing one's identity while balancing rights to privacy. The Adoption Authority continues to play a key role as an implementer of this historic legislation.

Timeline for the Implementation of the Birth Information & Tracing Act 2022 (BITA)



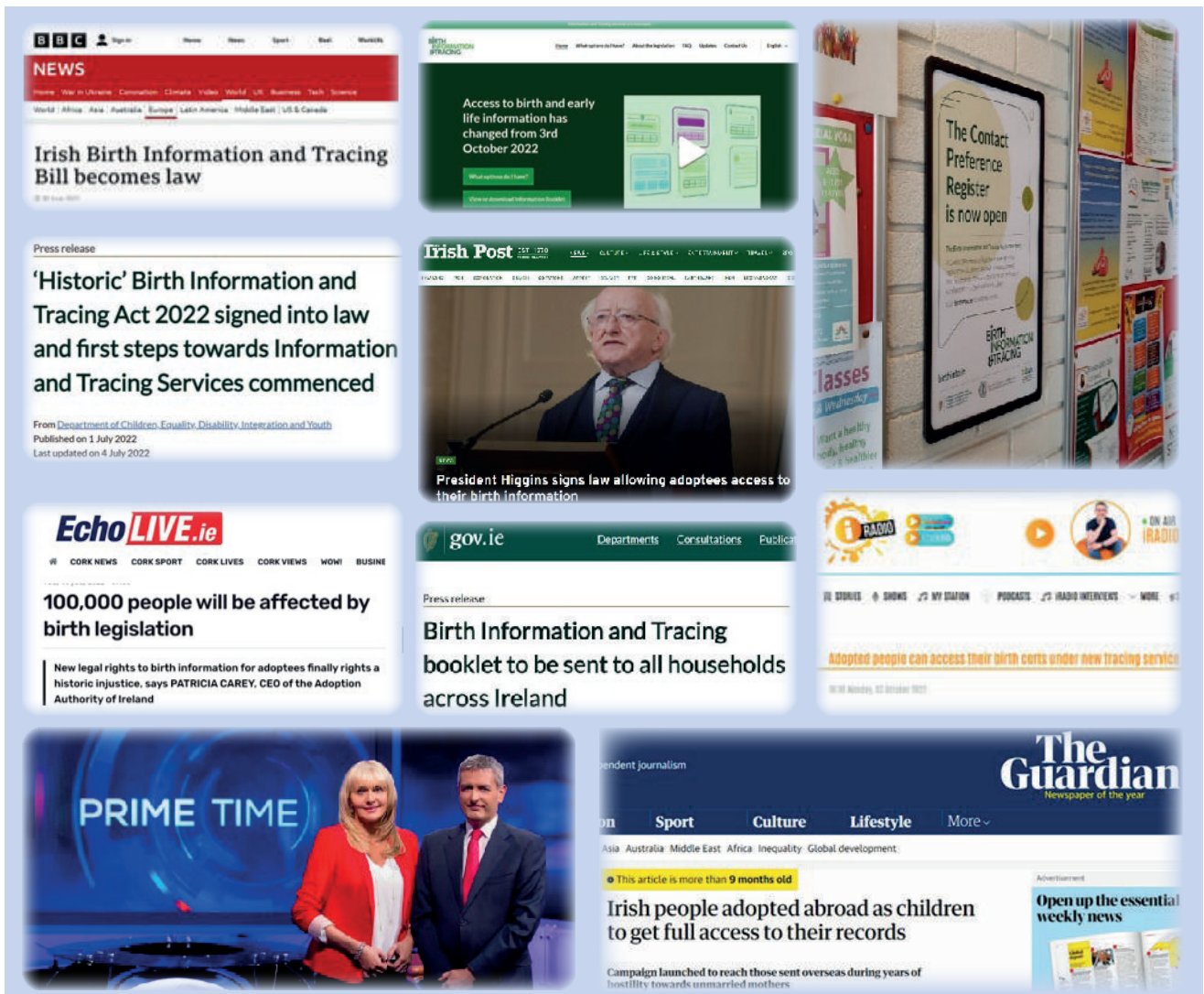
Public Relations and Communications

Section 60 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act, 2022 mandated the Authority to hold a public information campaign to promote awareness among the public and, in particular, parents and relevant persons (including parents and relevant persons residing outside the State) of the new services arising from the Act. An extensive public relations plan was developed and wide-reaching public information campaign launched in July 2022.

As information relating to birth and early life is located with both Tusla and the Authority, there was a requirement for a coordinated approach between DCEDIY, Tusla and the Authority in the management and dissemination of information into the public arena and subsequently to assist persons through the provision of guidance on how they can access their personal information across the Authority and Tusla.

A multi-media campaign across a number of different platforms was launched in July 2022. A television campaign, run over six weeks, was seen by 3.4 million adults. This level of viewership was helped by strong programme access (tailored advertisements were played in 12 of the top 20 shows for the target audience of older adults during the period) and quality airtime (advertisements were shown first, second or last during an advertisement break, were shown during an advertisement break in the middle of a programme and during programmes aired during optimum airtime from 17:30-22:59).

The video element of the campaign was viewed over 3.7 million times. On YouTube, over 2 million adults were exposed to at least one advertisement relating to the new Act. The audio campaign was split in two ‘bursts’, where burst one included a general announcement and burst two focused on the CPR. The total digital reach for the audio campaign was estimated at 980,624 adults.



As part of this large-scale campaign, discrete reach at community level was achieved with specially built poster units. There were display units that were custom-made to provide access in discreet, community level areas including libraries, medical/ parish offices, community centres. This bespoke campaign accessed community locations across the country – including libraries, medical centres, parish offices and community centres.

In conjunction with An Post's Publicity Post service, the Authority implemented a nationwide delivery of information booklets to all Irish households outlining the new Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. The Authority also distributed thousands of additional booklets to other facilities nationwide such as libraries, nursing homes and government offices, and overseas through Embassy networks. In total, 2 million booklets were distributed.

Between 4 July and 13 August, 16 advertisements across 11 national press titles were published, as well as two advertisements in the following magazines Ireland's Own and Irish Catholic. As regards regional press, 76 advertisements were published across 39 printed titles, and a bespoke advertisement was on the home page of 30 regional newspapers websites over that same period.

Finally, as part of this far-reaching campaign, the Authority (in collaboration with Tusla and the DCEDIY) designed and launched www.birthinfo.ie, which was a crucial component of the public relations plan. Search and social media advertisements assisted in directing people directly to this new website.

Birthinfo.ie received 111,428 unique visits from 31,268 users in 2022. 87.07% of these users were from Ireland, 6.19% from the United Kingdom, 2.86% from the United States and 3.88% from the rest of the world.





**2022-2024
Strategic Plan**

The Authority is required under Section 108 of the Adoption Act 2010, to prepare and submit a three-year Corporate/ Strategic Plan. In February 2022, the Authority launched its 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. The Plan is the blueprint for the Authority to continue to provide the highest possible standard of adoption services in Ireland, and it outlines the key priorities, goals, objectives and actions to enable this.

The 2022-2024 strategic priorities in Figure 1 below demonstrate the Authority'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. During this strategic period, the Authority will look to further enhance communication to the public and those involved in the adoption processes to encourage an improved awareness and understanding around adoption.

Figure 1: Strategic Priorities and Goals 2022-2024

Priorities	Goals
1. The child is the foremost priority and their best interests should be pursued in all adoption cases.	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.
2. Achieve the highest standards of adoption services	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 Authority or by those agencies accredited by the Authority.
3. Effectively implement the Birth Information and Tracing Act.	3.1 Ensure that the Birth Information and Tracing Act continues to be operationalised. 3.2 Develop an organisation that is ready to adapt quickly to changes in legislation.
4. Empower our people and deliver effective operations.	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 Authority's organisation structure, its processes, and technology to enable the delivery of the Strategic Plan.
5. Attain robust governance and supportive stakeholder relationships.	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.
6. Foster a culture of innovation	6.1 Build and maintain innovative methods to ensure that the adoption services provided by the Authority, and those agencies accredited by the Authority, are of world-class standard. 6.2 Extend and develop capacity of Research Unit to enable the Authority to show clear research leadership in its field.

2022 Business Plan

The 2022-2024 Strategic Plan serves as the overarching guide for annual business planning throughout this period. The key components of the Business Plan for 2022 were derived from the Strategic Plan, while several other unplanned activities also took place throughout the year.

The year 2022 proved to be a challenging one for the Authority, but also a period of significant growth. It marked the full return to the workplace for employees following significant COVID-19 restrictions, and the signing of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 into law. These events, along with others, significantly shaped the Authority's commitments for the year, and the response to these changes showed adaptability and resilience throughout the organisation.

Throughout 2022, the Authority continued to deliver on its commitment to provide excellent adoption services to the public at all times, maintaining focus on the key values of child-centredness, quality, accountability and respect. The Authority performed a review of our Social Work practices with the implementation of our Social Work Practice Framework, which will continue into 2023.

An extensive information security review was conducted, which identified a number of areas for improvement. These will be progressed during 2023.

The Authority continued to work closely with our line department as well as key stakeholders during 2022 on a number of initiatives, most notably the operationalisation of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 and the associated communications and media campaign which was led by the Authority.

The digitisation of the Authority's adoption records continued and extensive work on the organisation's document management system was completed. This work is will be a key feature for 2023 and beyond.

The design and deployment of the Contact Preference Register was also a key deliverable for the Authority during 2022.

Significant recruitment initiatives and organisation restructuring was completed during 2022 in response to the implementation of the Birth Information and Tracing Act. Sanction for a number of positions was sought and granted from our line department. The well-being of staff

was a key objective for 2022, a well-being committee was formed and a number of well-being initiatives organised.

In 2022, the Authority published the third and fourth of our five background reports on Inter-country Adoption (ICA), and commenced a recruitment drive for a new study to document the experience of ICA in Ireland. The Authority concluded its data collection and analysis for a study on the Irish domestic adoption process, and completed various requests for rapid research by the Authority's CEO and Board.

The Authority continues to develop and promote its internal library, and facilitate its greater use by staff. The Authority presented research at two Irish conferences, and the Research Officer (RO) continued in her role as Chair of the Adoption Research Network of Ireland.

A new three-year Research Strategy for 2023-2026 was also drafted and agreed during 2022.

The 2022 Business Plan was reviewed periodically and updated as required. Business Plan reviews and updates were submitted to the DCEDIY on a quarterly basis in 2022 in compliance with the Authority's Performance Delivery Agreement with its line department.

Events and Travel 2022

In 2022, after two years of video conferences held amid the prevailing pandemic situation, the Authority, along with the rest of the world, returned to in-person meetings.

On 12 April, the Authority hosted the launch of former Chairman Dr Geoffrey Shannon's new book, *Child and Family Law, Third Edition*, with Attorney General Paul Gallagher SC as special guest speaker.

The ICA Unit manager represented the Authority at two meetings of the Inter-Country Adoption Network (ICAN), including all European Central Authorities plus guest countries: 19-20 May in Rome and 23-25 November in Madrid.

The Hague international conference on the Adoption Convention, which is held every five years but did not take place in 2020 due to COVID-19, returned in remote format on 4-8 July. The Authority's Chairperson, CEO and ICA Unit manager attended the Fifth Meeting of the Special Commission on the 1993 Adoption Convention

via Zoom, together with the Central Authorities designated under the 1993 Adoption Convention and representatives of each government signatory, and Observer organisations.

The Principal Social Worker and ICA Unit manager travelled to Copenhagen for the Euradopt Conference on 1 and 2 September. The conference, entitled *Sustainability of Intercountry Adoption from Different Perspectives*, had three parts: Evaluation of Intercountry Adoption as a Child Protection Measure, Cooperation and Sustainability of Intercountry Adoption and Post Adoption Services.

On 17 November 2022, the Authority CEO, by invitation, spoke about the Authority to the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) seminar on 5 October, and delivered a presentation, 'Irish Legal and Medical Challenges in Intercountry and Domestic Adoptions', to the Medico-Legal Society of Ireland.



Adoption Operations



The Authority restructured its operational teams prior to the enactment of the Birth Information and Tracing Act. A new Unit was established to oversee the operationalisation of this new Act. As a result of this restructuring, domestic and intercountry adoption operations were overseen by a separate Principal Officer who also fulfils the function of Board Secretary.

Domestic Adoption

Structure

During 2022, the Domestic Adoption Team comprised of one Administrative Officer, two Executive Officers and one Clerical Officer.

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, 100 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability were granted in 2022, a decrease of 21 from the previous year. The expiration dates of nine Declarations were extended in 2022, a decrease of 10 from the previous year. In most cases, Declarations were granted within three to four weeks of receipt of the application.

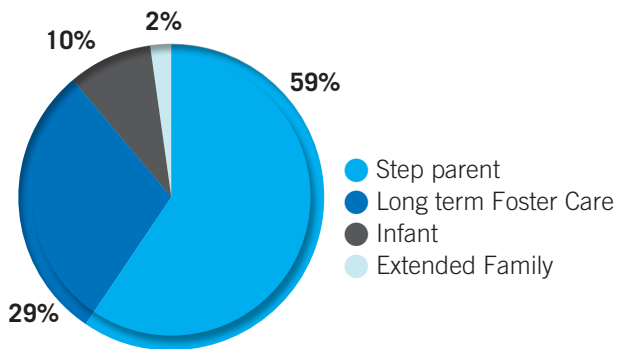
Of the Declarations granted, 84 were granted in respect of married persons or couples, 11 in respect of co-habiting persons or couples, two in respect of civil partnerships, and three in respect of single applicants.

Adoption Orders

The Authority received 110 adoption applications in 2022, and 102 Adoption Orders were granted during the year. This a slight increase from 101 granted in the previous year. The majority of orders granted were in

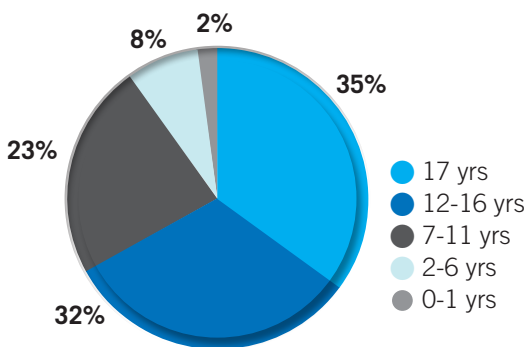
respect step-parent adoptions which totalled 60. The number of adoption orders made for children who had been in long-term foster care in 2022 was 30. The remainder consisted of ten infants placed from birth for the purpose of adoption, two cases of children living with extended family members.

Figure 2: Adoption Orders Granted 2022



Adoption Orders cannot be granted once a child turns 18 years of age and is legally considered an adult. Of the 102 Adoption orders granted in 2022, in 36 cases the child was 17 years of age; in 33 cases they were aged between 12 and 16 years, in 23 cases they were aged between seven and 11 years, and in 10 cases they were aged between one and six years.

Figure 3: Domestic Adoptions by Age of Child granted in 2022



The majority of applications were assessed and facilitated by the adoption services of Tusla. In four applications, the assessments were facilitated by the accredited agency PACT.

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

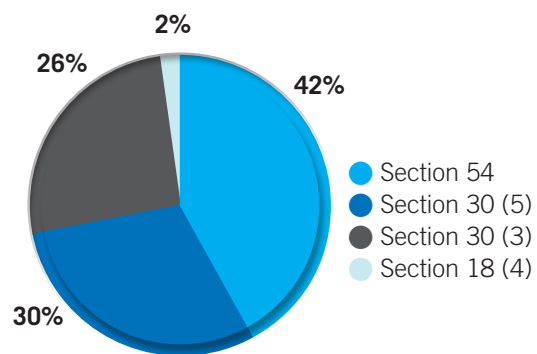
The Authority must make an application to the High Court seeking to dispense with birth father notification and consultation in the following instances:

- Where the Authority does not know the identity of the birth father, or
- Where the Authority 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 2022, 24 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 24 applications were granted.

Of these applications, 11 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 13 orders were made in circumstances where the identity of the birth father was unknown.

Figure 4: Applications to the High Court under Section 30 of the Act



To allow the Authority 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 2022, 18 applications were made to the High Court under Section 54 of the Act. These 18 applications were granted in 2022. In all of these cases, the birth mother or guardian's consents could not be obtained.

In 2022, one application was 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 this matter, the identity of the birth father was unknown and the order was granted.

Please see statistics section for further information.

Intercountry Adoption

Structure

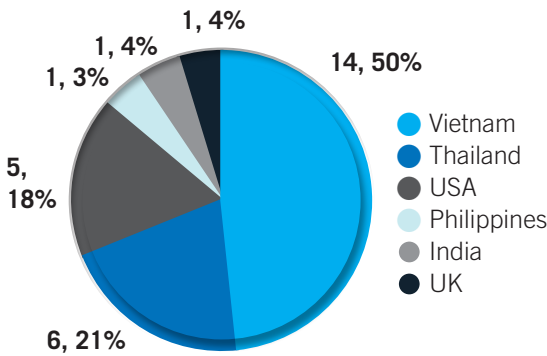
Throughout 2022, the Intercountry Adoption Team comprised of one Higher Executive Officer, one Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer.

Activity Analysis

Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability

The Authority granted 28 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability in 2022 to applicants seeking to adopt abroad and extended 17 existing Declarations by one year (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted in 2022



Register of Intercountry Adoptions

In 2022, 170 entries were made in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions on foot of applications for recognition of adoptions. Of this number 152 applications were for recognition of adoptions effected outside of Ireland by adopters who were habitually resident outside of the State (Figure 6).

Matching of Children

Social workers collaborate with administrative staff and a medical advisor, to advise on the matching of children's needs with the abilities of prospective adoptive parents. In 2022, 17 children were referred into Ireland from other countries. All referrals of children for adoption are reviewed by the Authority's multi-disciplinary team, which comprises the Principal Social Worker, the Medical Advisor and the Manager of the Intercountry Adoption Unit.

This year, 18 entries were in respect of intercountry adoptions of children into Ireland by adopters habitually resident in the State (Figure 7).

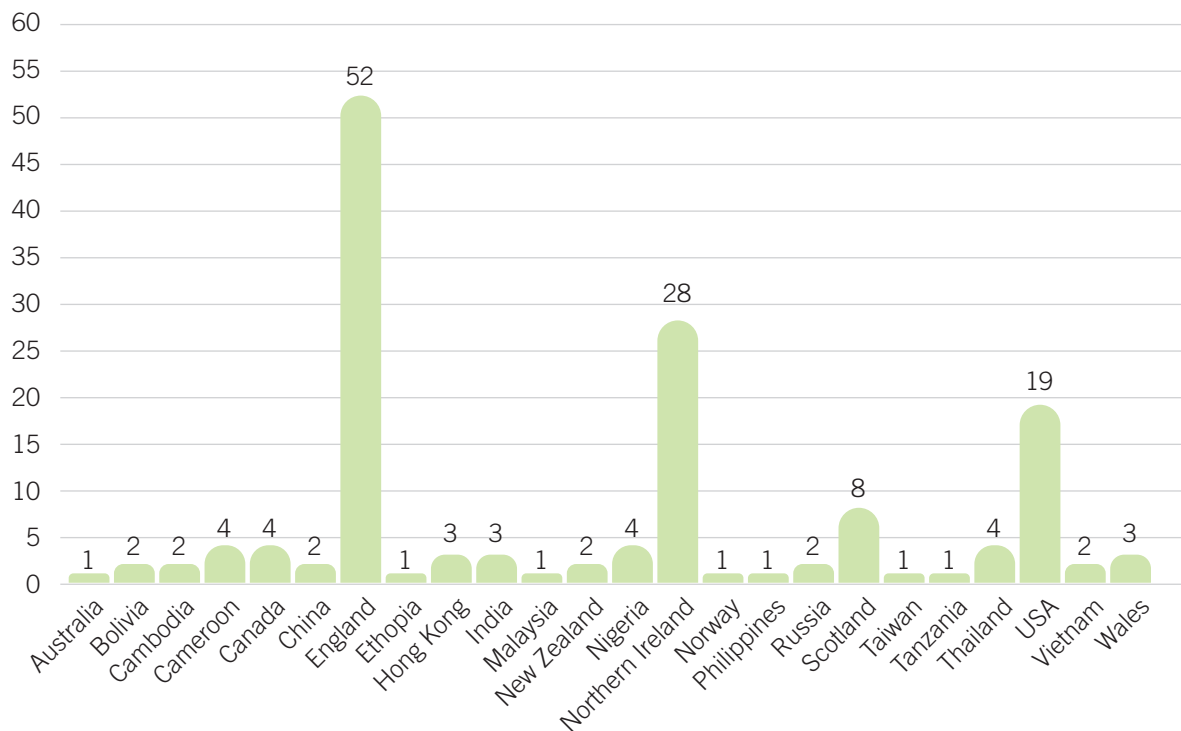
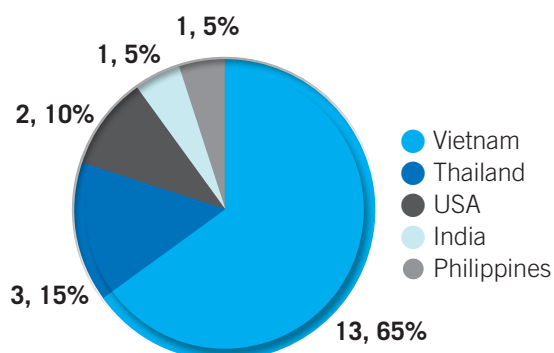


Figure 6: Intercountry adoptions recognised in 2022 where the adoptions were effected by adopters habitually resident outside of the State

Figure 7: Entries granted into the register of Intercountry Adoptions (RICA) for adoptions into Ireland in 2022



Register of Gender Recognition of Intercountry Adoptions

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

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

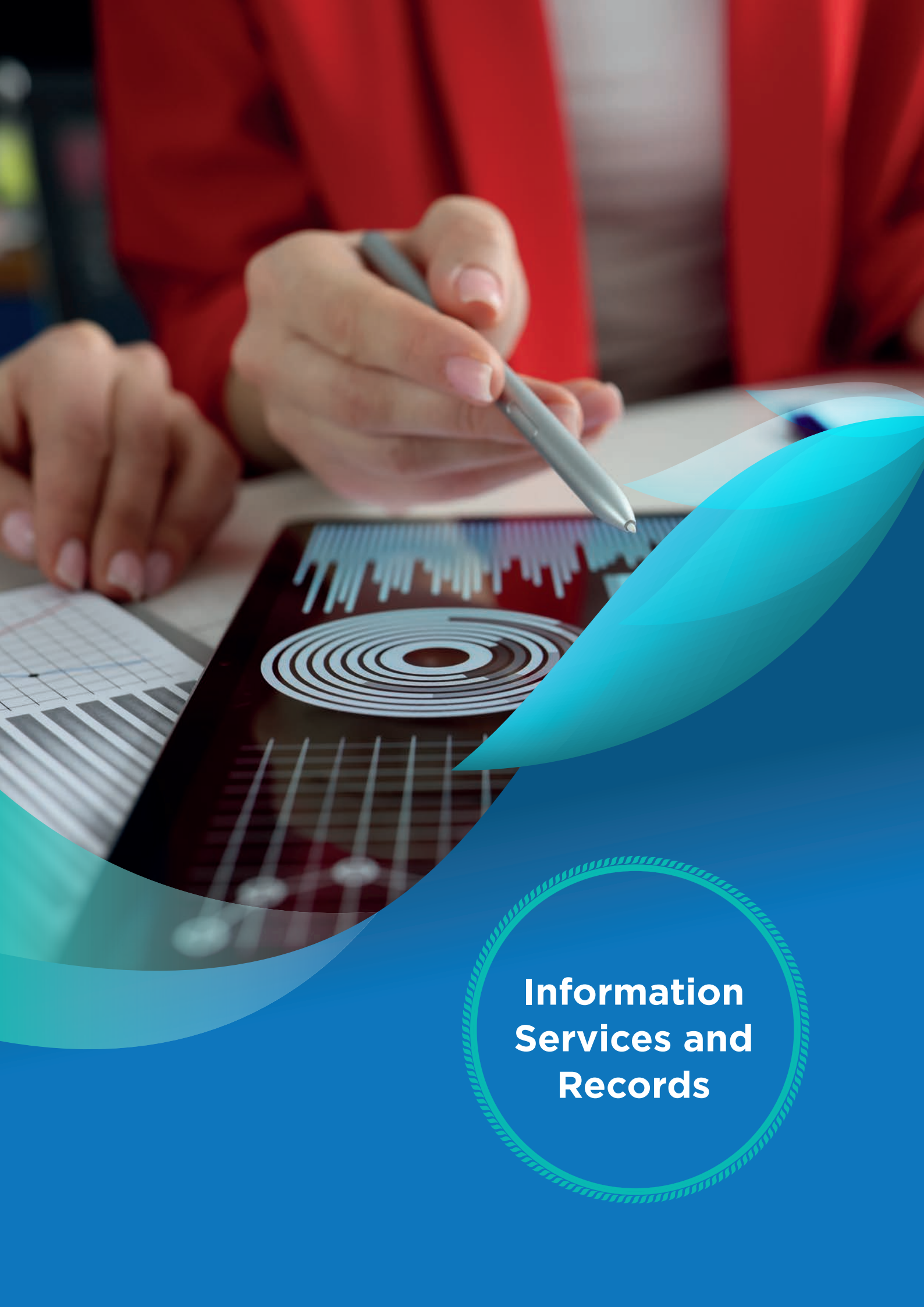
- The original copy of the Gender Recognition Certificate as issued by the DSP;
- A copy of the notification letter from the DSP which accompanied the Gender Recognition Certificate;
- A copy of the entry in the RFA or the RICA (if available).

Three entries were made in the Register in 2022.

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

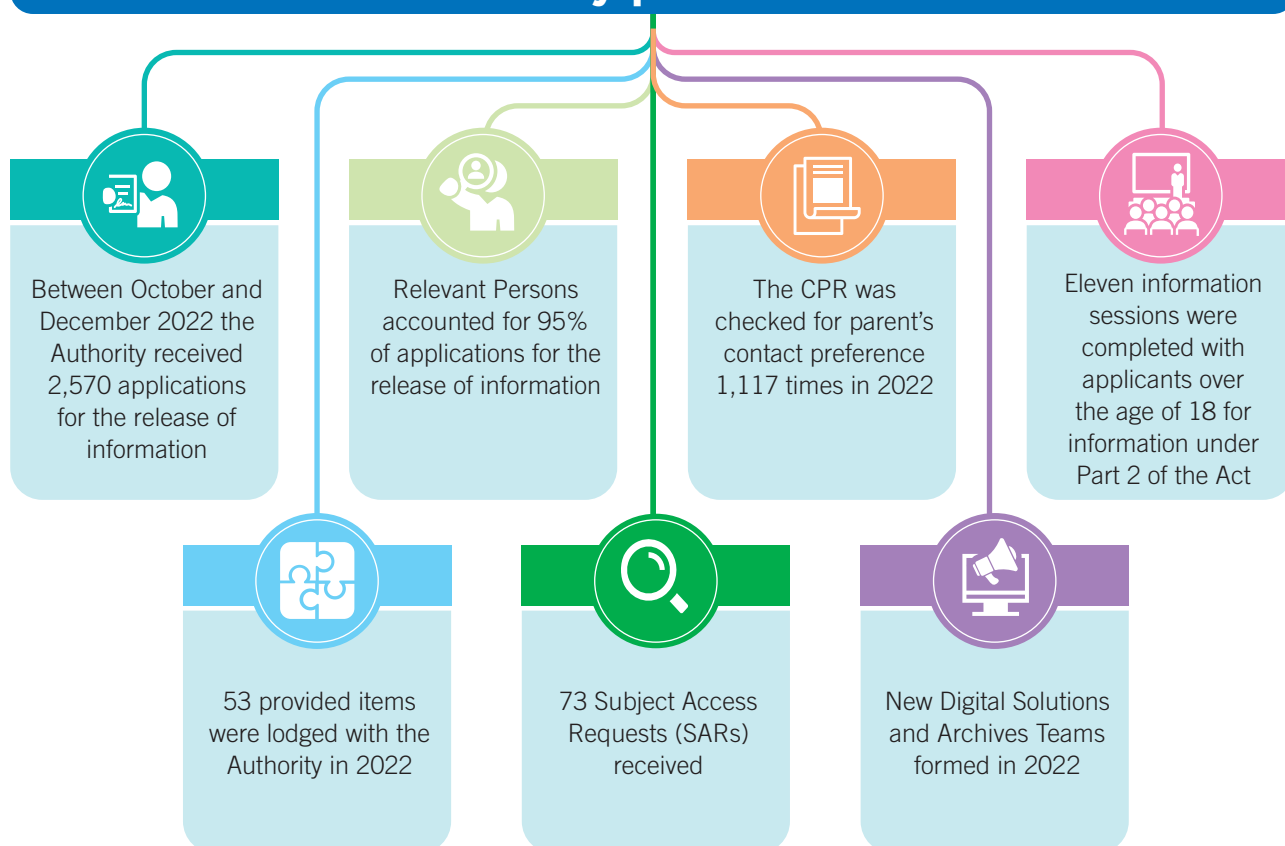
The Adoption Authority is designated a Central Authority under the Adoption Act 2010. In its role as a Central Authority, the Manager of the Intercountry Adoption Unit is a member of the Hague working group on Addressing and Preventing illicit Practices in Intercountry Adoptions. The Manager also attended the fifth meeting of the Special Commission on the practical operation of the 1993 Convention.

Please see statistics section for further information.



**Information
Services and
Records**

Key points



In 2022 a new Information Services and Records Unit was established in preparation of the enactment of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. This new Unit was critical to the successful implementation of the Birth Information and Tracing during 2022. The Unit is overseen by a Principal Officer who has responsibility for Records, Data Protection, Digital Solutions, Archives and Freedom of Information activities.

Records

Structure

At the start of 2022, prior to the Birth Information and Tracing legislation being enacted, there were five staff members in the Records team. In April 2022, the Authority received approval from the External Human

Resources Division of the DCEDIY, the line department to which the Authority is accountable, for an increase of nine staff in the Records team. These new staff members were on-boarded between May and August of 2022. In November 2022, the Authority approved the transfer of an additional three staff members to work in the Records Team from another business area in the Authority to attempt to mitigate the delays in processing applications under Parts 2-4 of the 2022 Act.

At the end of 2022, the records team was made up of one Assistant Principal Officer, one Higher Executive Officer, two Executive Officers, four Clerical Officers, two Temporary Executive Officers and three Temporary Clerical Officers.

Information Release under Parts 2–4 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

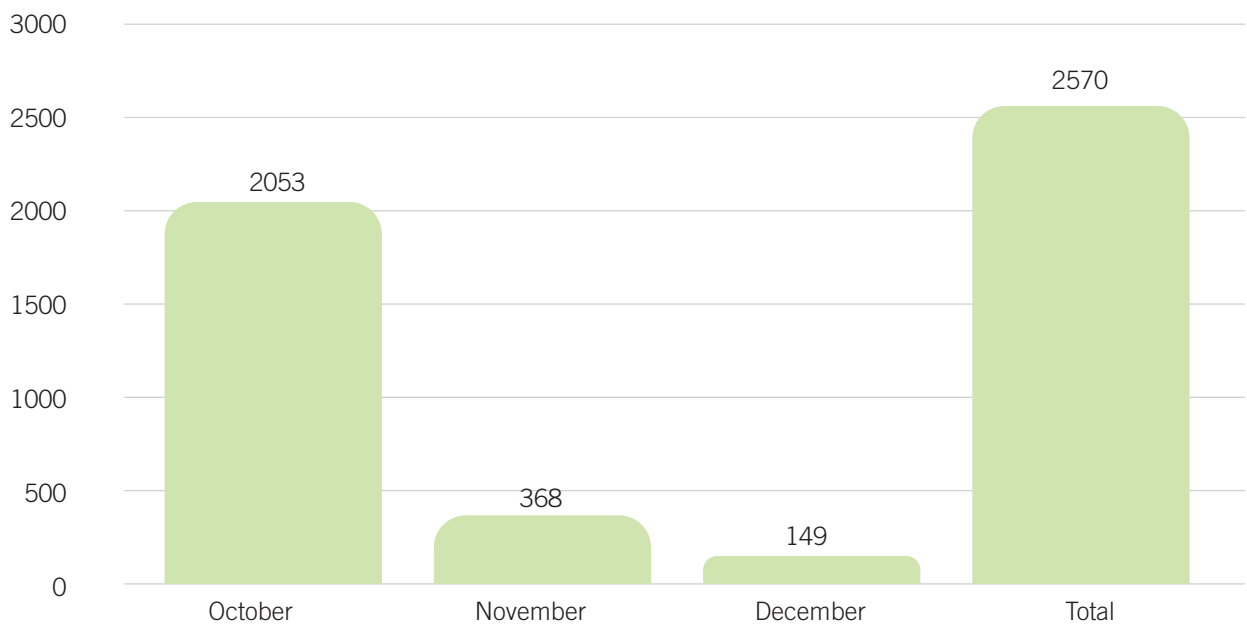
Number of Applications

Between the commencements of Parts 2-4 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 on 3 October 2022 and year end, the Authority received 2,570 applications for the release of information; with 2,053 in October, 368 in November and 149 in December of 2022. See Figure 8 below.

Location of Applications

A total of 2,272 applications were received from within the Republic of Ireland, with the largest number from County Dublin and the smallest number of applications from County Leitrim. These represent 88.4% of all applications. For a county-by-county breakdown, see Figure 9.

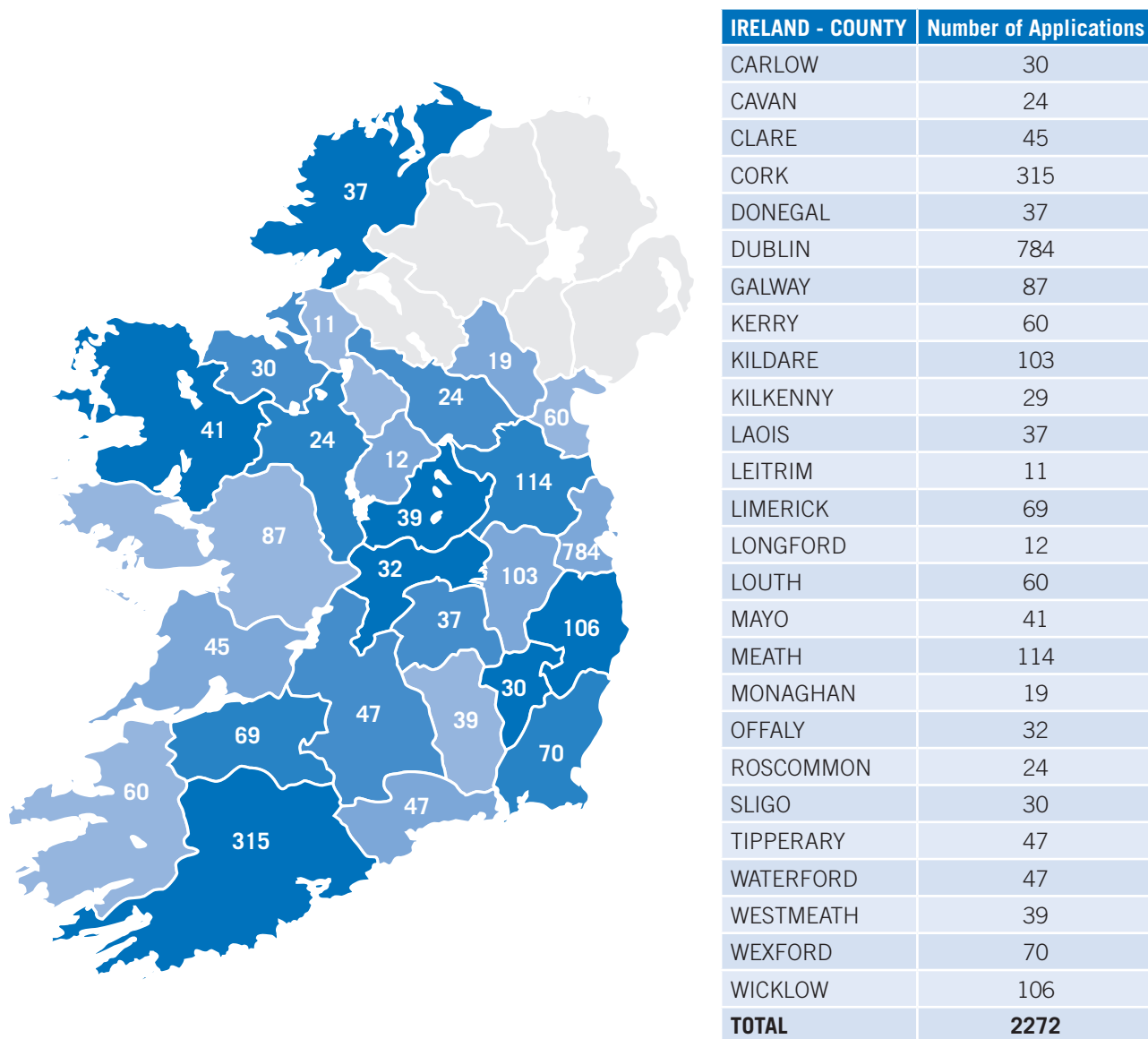
Figure 8: *Number of applications for the release of information*



Location of Applications

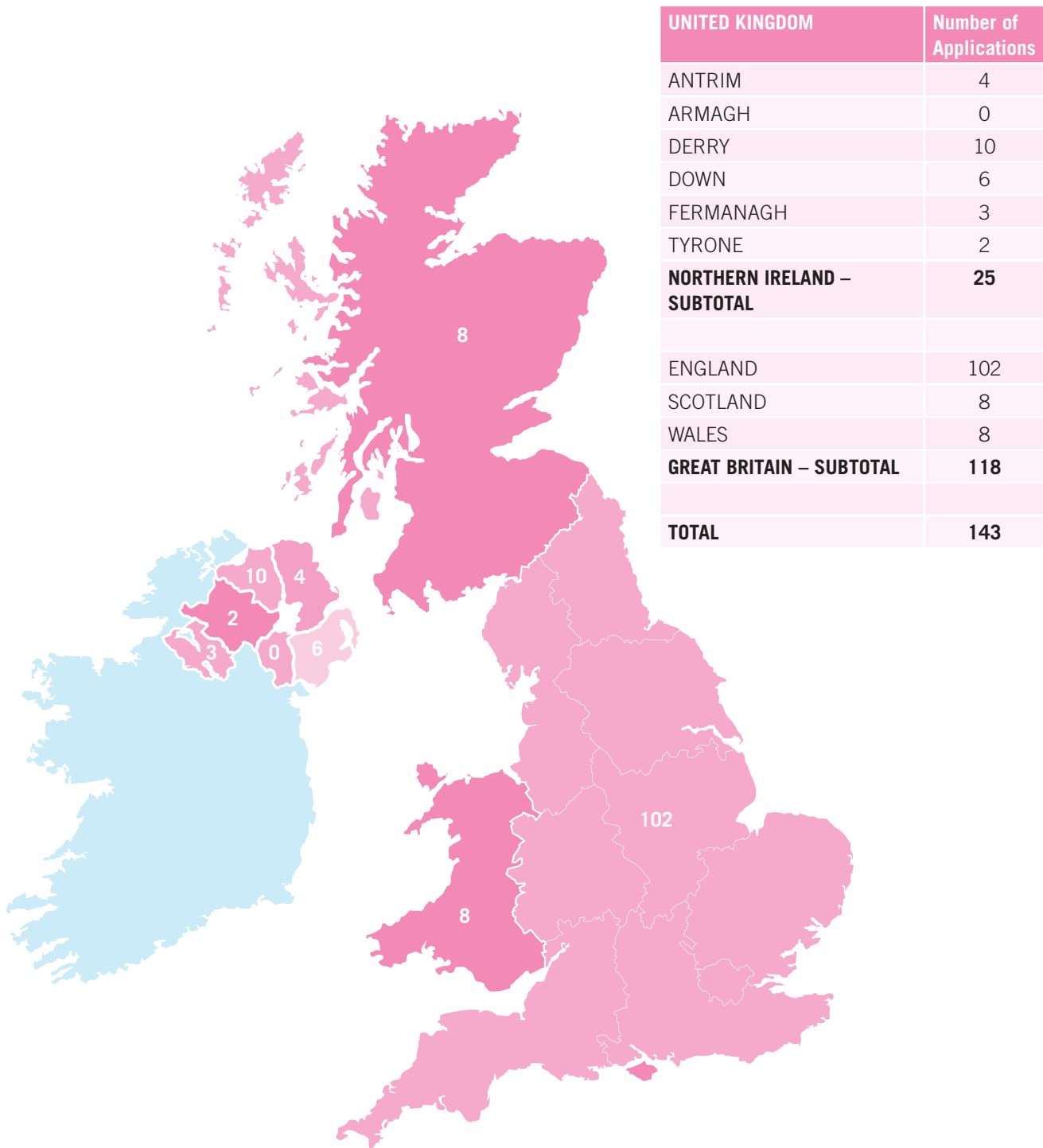
A total of 2,272 applications were received from within the Republic of Ireland, with the largest number from County Dublin and the smallest number of applications from County Leitrim. These represent 88.4% of all applications.

Figure 9: Location of Applications



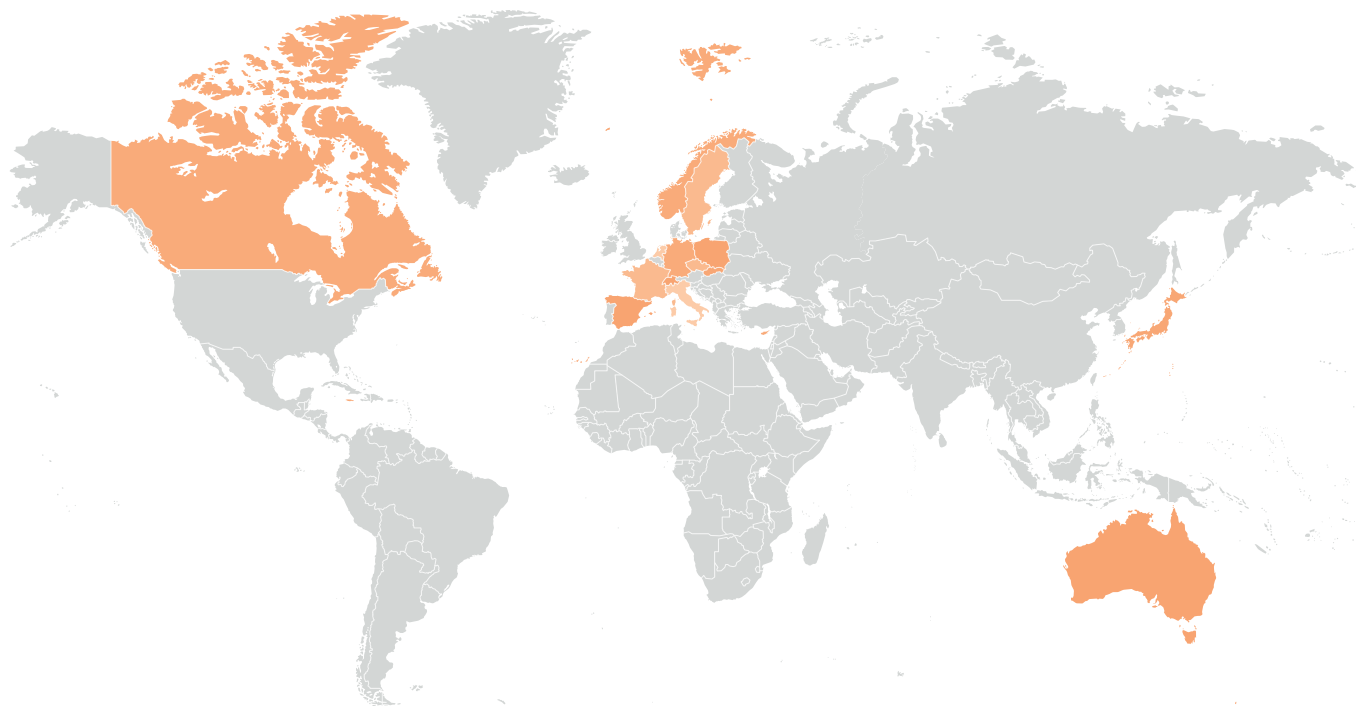
The next most significant jurisdiction for applications was the United Kingdom. A breakdown of figures from the United Kingdom between England, Scotland, Wales and the individual counties of Northern Ireland can be seen in Figure 10. This represents 5.6% of all applications.

Figure 10: Location of applications across the United Kingdom



The balance of applications other than from Ireland or the United Kingdom were from 24 different jurisdictions. These represent 6% of all applications. A breakdown of the applications from these jurisdictions can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Location of applications outside Ireland and the United Kingdom



Jurisdiction	Number of Applications
AUSTRALIA	31
AUSTRIA	2
CANADA	4
CYPRUS	1
CZECH REPUBLIC	1
FRANCE	5
GERMANY	10
GREECE	1
HONG KONG SAR	1
ITALY	1
JAMACIA	1
JAPAN	2
NETHERLANDS	1
NEW ZEALAND	5

Jurisdiction	Number of Applications
NO ADDRESS PROVIDED*	2
NORWAY	2
POLAND	1
SPAIN	6
SWEDEN	1
SWITZERLAND	1
THE NETHERLANDS	7
TURKEY	1
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	1
UNITED STATES	67
TOTAL	155

*Applicants did not provide a postal addresses – just email addresses or nominated the addresses of close friends rather than their own

Category of Applicants

See Table 2 below for a breakdown of applications by category.

Table 2: *Category breakdown of applications*

Category	Definitions	Number of Applications
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 Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022, or the subject of a nursed out arrangement or a boarded out arrangement 	2432
Qualifying Person	The son or daughter of a relevant person is termed a “qualifying person”	77
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, 	44
TOTAL		2553
*72 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.		

Format of information release requested

In total, 855 (33%) requested the release of their information via hardcopy posted to their address and 1,715 (67%) requested their information electronically via email.

Check of the Contact Preference Register for a parent’s Contact Preference under Sections 7 (1), 8 (2), 9 (4), and 10 (4) of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 and Section 2.3.2.5 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 – Policy Guidelines

The Authority completed 1,117 checks of parent’s preference on the CPR in 2022, 460 of which related to the release of records by the Authority itself, while 657 related to the release of Information by Tusla. All requests for checks of the CPR by Tusla were completed within the mandatory three-working-day timeframe.

Release of Genetic Medical Information under Section 16 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

In all, 1,371 applicants nominated a Medical Practitioner in their application for the sharing of genetic medical information of a relevant person. Nine applicants stated that they did not currently have a medical practitioner, while 11 declined to nominate a medical practitioner.

Information Sessions under Section 17 (2) of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

Where a ‘no contact’ preference is recorded against a birth parent’s entry on the CPR, the Authority is required to conduct an information session conveying the text set out in Annex 1 of the protocol, with any applicant who is requesting their Birth Certificate, Birth Information,

Early Life Information, Care Information, Medical Information or Provided Items under the 2022 Act.

Eleven information sessions were completed with applicants over the age of 18 for information under Part 2 of the 2022 Act. The first session was conducted on 11 November 2022 and the last on 22 December 2022. No information sessions were refused by applicants. All 11 information sessions took place via telephone call with a designated person, as defined in Annex 2 of the protocol. In the vast majority of cases, a single contact was all that 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. Six of the applications were for information release by the Authority, while the remaining five were for the release of information by Tusla.

Release of Information with reference to Section 19 (7) of Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

A total of 460 applications were completed and information released to applicants by 31 December 2022. All applications were acknowledged within the mandatory five-day time period. In all, 1,810 applicants were advised that the release of their records would take up to the 90-day statutory limit for release of information or potentially longer by the Chief Executive of the Authority on 9 December 2022.

Table 3: Information released to applicants

	Records released within one month	Records released within three months	TOTAL
Relevant Person	34	386	420
Qualifying Person	0	26	26
Qualifying Relative	0	4	4
TOTAL	34	416	460

Reviews under Section 2.7 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 – Policy Guidelines

The Authority appointed a Review Officer for the purposes of Section 2.7 of the Policy Guidelines on 1 December 2022. The Authority received ten requests for reviews between 7 November 2022 and 29 December 2022.

Contact Preference Register (CPR) under Part 6 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

On 1 July 2022, the CPR came into existence on a statutory footing under Part 6 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. It replaced the National Adoption

Contact Preference Register (NACPR) which was voluntary non-statutory register created by the Authority in 2005.

The main function of the CPR is to enable contact between family members affected by adoption. The CPR 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.

Applicants to the CPR 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 CPR.

There were 134 entries made on the National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) from 01 January 2022 to the 30 June 2022. The entries and preferences on the NACPR were transferred to the CPR under Section 41(1) of the 2022 Act and the NACPR was deleted in line with Section 42(3) of the 2022 Act.

Number of Applications to CPR

Between the commencements of Part 6 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 on 1 July of 2022 and year end, the Authority received 2,563 applications from adoptees, 158 applications from parents and 253 applications from other relatives to the CPR. It should be noted that a portion of these represented updates to existing entries on the NACPR e.g. change of contact details and updating of contact preferences, etc.

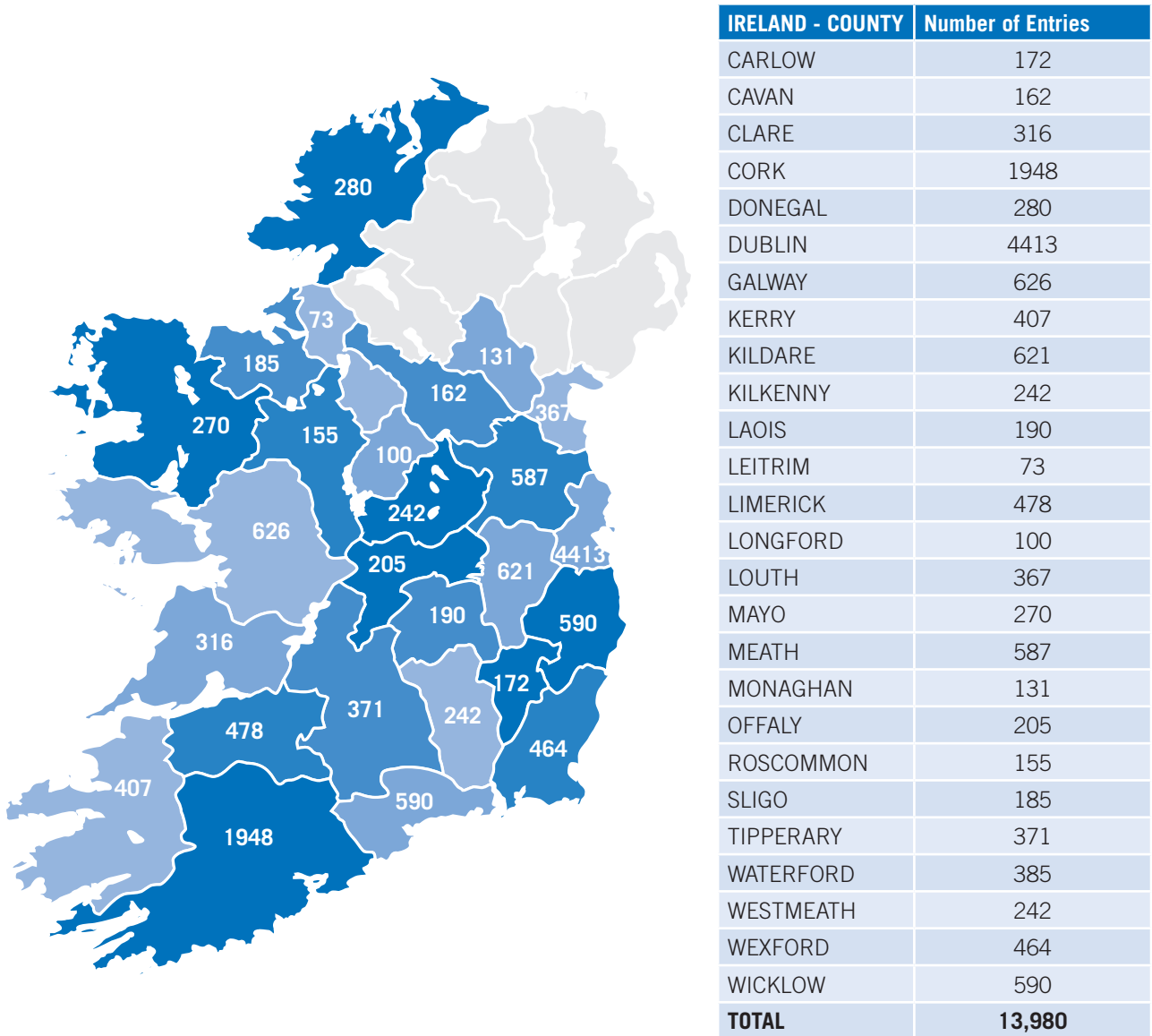
Table 4: Category of Registrants

Category of Registrant	Count of Registration Type
Adoptee	11,246
Adoptive Parent	1
Aunt/Uncle	347
Birth Father	506
Birth Mother	2675
Cousin	181
Friend	3
Grandparent/Grandchild	177
Niece/Nephew	37
Other	71
Sibling	960
Unknown	13
TOTAL	16,217

Location of Registrants on CPR

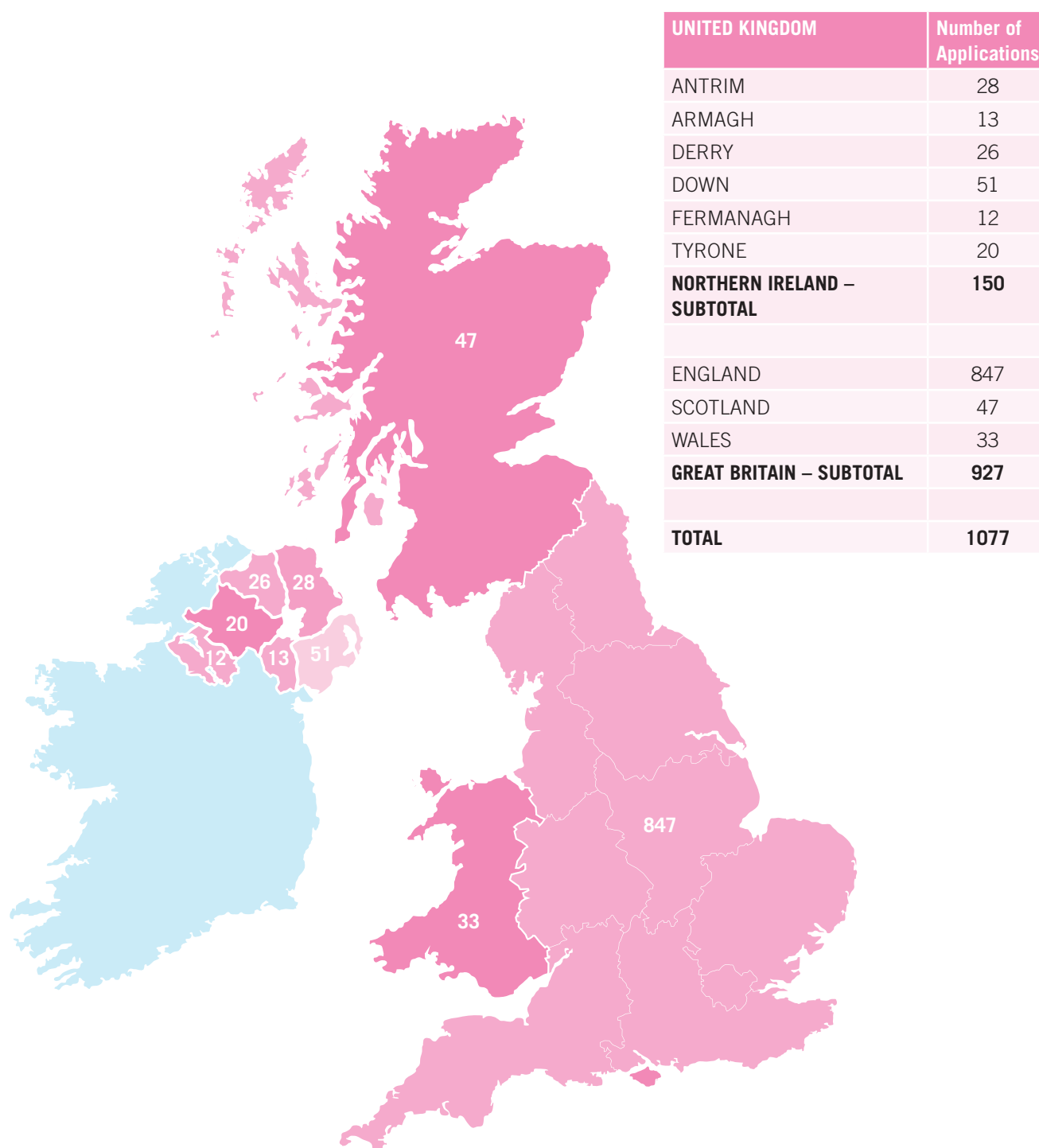
In all, 13,980 entries on the register are from within the Republic of Ireland, with the largest number from County Dublin and the smallest number of entries from County Leitrim. These represent 86% of all entries. For a county-by-county breakdown see Figure 11.

Figure 11: *Location of registrants on CPR*



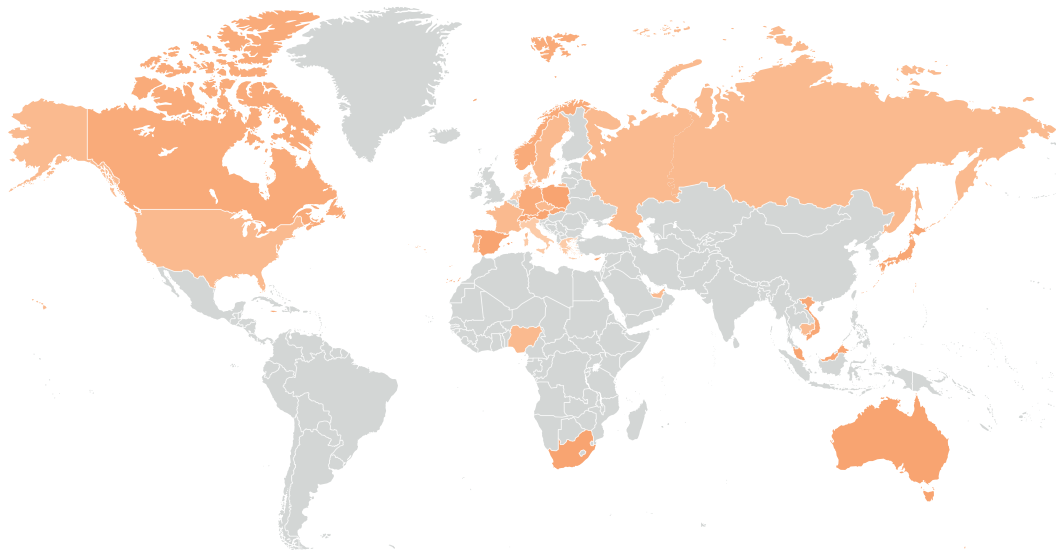
The next most significant jurisdiction for entries on the register is the United Kingdom. A breakdown of figures from the UK between England, Scotland, Wales and the individual counties of Northern Ireland can be seen in Figure 12. These represent 6.6% of all entries.

Figure 12: Location of registrants on CPR across the United Kingdom



The balance of entries, other than from Ireland or the United Kingdom, are from 42 different jurisdictions. These represent 7.4% of all entries. A breakdown of the entries from these jurisdictions can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Location of registrants on CPR outside Ireland and the United Kingdom



Jurisdiction	Number of Applications
Australia	193
Austria	5
Belgium	12
Bermuda	1
Cambodia	1
Canada	77
China	1
Cyprus	1
Czech Republic	2
Denmark	7
France	44
Germany	45
Greece	1
Hong Kong SAR	1
Iceland	1
Italy	13
Jamaica	1
Japan	3
Luxembourg	3
Malaysia	1
Malta	1
Netherlands	27
New Zealand	25
Nigeria	1
NO ADDRESS PROVIDED*	223
Norway	5

Jurisdiction	Number of Applications
Philippines	1
Portugal	1
Russia	1
San Marino	1
Singapore	1
Slovakia	1
South Africa	3
Spain	25
Sweden	6
Switzerland	7
Taiwan	1
Thailand	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Turkey	1
United Arab Emirates	9
United States	471
TOTAL	1227

**Applicants did not provide postal addresses – just email addresses or nominated the addresses of close friends rather than their own*

Lodging of information and Items under Section 39 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

In total, 53 provided items were lodged with the Authority in 2022.

Data Protection

Structure

During 2022, the Data Protection Team consisted of one Higher Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer.

Subject Access Requests

In 2022, the Authority received a high volume of Subject Access Requests (SARs). Seventy-three (73) requests were received, representing a 25% decrease on the previous year (97).

A number of factors contributed to a high volume of requests, such as

- The statutory publicity campaign mandated under Section 60 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022; and
- The commencement of the CPR under S.I. 321/2022 and information release provisions under S.I. 496/2022.

These factors raised the awareness of adoption in Ireland. In some cases, this prompted adopted persons, or family members of adopted persons, to consider seeking information for the first time about themselves or their relative.

The Authority typically receives SARs relating to the legal process of the adoption. However, the Authority 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 (CPRSI);
- Denny House;
- Fairfield Children's Home;
- Family adoptions;
- Arabella t/a Here2Help, including pre-2010 PACT (Protestant Adoption Society) files;
- Private adoptions from 1952–1991;
- Private placements;
- St Brigid's Adoption Society;
- St Therese Adoption Society;
- The Magdalen Home; and
- The Nursery Rescue Society.

There were instances where responses to applications could not be provided within the statutory timeframe of 30 days, as a result of resource issues 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 73 SAR applications, 63 were valid applications. Six were rejected as no identification was provided following a request for same. Four applications were withdrawn and dealt with by an area with the relevant expertise within the Authority.

There was one appeal lodged to the Authority's Data Protection Appeals Officer.

Table 6: *Subject Access Requests 2013–2022*

	Number Received	Number Refused /Declined	Internal Appeals received	Appeals to Data Protection Commissioner	Decision of Data Protection Commissioner
2013	10	0	0	0	n/a
2014	7	0	0	0	n/a
2015	8	2	0	0	n/a
2016	8	2	0	0	n/a
2017	6	0	0	0	n/a
2018	3	1	0	0	n/a
2018*	12	5	0	0	n/a
2019	26	5	5	1	Awaiting decision
2020	32	3	6	0	n/a
2021	97	9	5	1	Document released with redactions on foot of DPC decision
2022	73	10	1	0	0

*after GDPR was introduced 25 May 2018

Policies and Procedures

In 2022, the Adoption Authority of Ireland continued to review and develop policies, in light of the Authority's new remit under the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. A Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) between the Authority and Tusla relating to data sharing for services provided by the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 was made and entered into effect on 16 December 2022.

Digital Solutions

Structure

The Digital Solutions Team oversees the Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) function at the Authority. This team was newly formed in 2022 as part of an organisational restructuring to ensure the effective implementation of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. During 2022, the team comprised of one Assistant Principal Officer, one Higher Executive Officer, two Executive Officers and one Clerical Officer.

Work completed in 2022

The Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 was enacted on 30 June 2022. In order that the Authority to comply with this legislation, the Solutions team developed methodologies to capture, collate and maintain 'contact preference register' application data and 'birth information' application data. Utilising an online form development application, the Solutions team built a suite of forms enabling applications data to be captured, acknowledged and imported into our Electronic Data Management System (e-DMS) for processing, in the shortest possible time.

The Authority connected to the GN Network (Government Network) in 2022. This ensures robust WiFi services for all staff, allowing connection to the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) build to share host and other internet services.

Such connectivity enables staff to carry out Authority business efficiently and securely. This connectivity also permitted the Authority to increase headcount without the need for additional IT infrastructure. It has been considered to be a positive step by all staff, allowing better use of meeting rooms and other shared areas to meet, present and share work items.

During 2022, the Solutions team managed 416 user requests in house. Most of these calls were received and resolved on the same day. Tickets were categorised as follows:

Where requests could not be resolved in house, our e-DMS third-party support provider assisted with 63 requests, and our network hosts assisted with 244 incidents and 450 change requests. The majority of requests passed on to OGCIO covered account creation, user permissions and joiners/movers/leavers processes.

There were no changes during the year to our third party e-DMS supplier but new online web forms and whiteboard tools were introduced during the year. Our online web-forms and whiteboard tools were new to the Authority in 2022.

Table 7: Requests for assistance to Digital Solutions Team

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	5	Total	
Priority Level Definition	No Service All Users impacted	Impacts one Team	Impacts only staff member	Development or change Requests	Amendment of minor Data errors		
Number of Requests	0	45	142	70	159	416	
Requests Category by Software	ICT Network	Document Storage	Web-Forms	e-DMS	MS Office Suite	Digital Whiteboard	Document Editing
Number of Requests	52	1	15	313	29	2	4

Archives

Structure

During 2022, the Adoption Authority appointed a Senior Archivist (Grade II), an Archivist (Grade III) and an Executive Officer to discharge its obligations under the National Archives Acts 1986-1918 and the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022.

National Archives Acts 1986–2018

Section 71 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 added the Authority to the Schedule of the National Archives Acts 1986 -2018. Thus, records of the Authority which are over 30 years of age are now departmental records for the purposes of Section 2 of the National Archives Act 1986. The Authority appointed one Certifying Officer under Sections 7(4), 8(2), 8(4), 8(6) and 10(5) of the National Archives Act 1986 and two Requisitioning Officers under Section 8(9) of the National Archives Act. The Authority also took part in four meetings of the Network of State Archivists and Records Managers in 2022.

Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022

Part 7 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act provides for the safeguarding of records. It provides for immediate safeguarding on commencement (which was completed by means of S.I. No. 448/2022 - Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2022), and also enables the transfer of records to the Adoption Authority of Ireland, under a direction of the Authority. The purpose of these legislative provisions is to ensure the safeguarding of important historic and relevant records in relation to adoption, boarded out or nursed out arrangements, illegal birth registrations, and Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. In 2022, the Board of the Adoption Authority approved two directions under Section 48 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 for the transfer of relevant records by information sources.

National Centre for Research and Remembrance

The Authority was represented at and participated in three meetings of the Archives Sub-Group of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance (NCRR) Steering Group in 2022 as provided for by Action 6 of the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. The Authority also completed an initial survey of its records for the National Archives with reference to the NCRR.

Freedom of Information Requests

Overview

At the end of 2022, responsibility for the administration of FOI requests was transferred to the Director of Information Services and Records' remit to ensure a coordinated response to information release across the Authority.

Requests received in 2022

The Authority publish details of FOI requests received, in accordance with the requirements of DPER's Code of Practice for Freedom of Information for Public Bodies.

In 2022, the Adoption Authority received 26 requests under the Freedom of Information Acts.

- 17 were declined;
- eight were granted/part granted; and
- one was withdrawn.

In the case of four of the declined requests, the scope of the request was too broad and the requestor failed to refine the scope. In one case, the Authority declined the request as the information was not available. In the remaining 12 cases, the reason for the request being declined was that the 2014 Act designated the Adoption Authority of Ireland as a 'Partially Included Agency'. This meant that the Freedom of Information Acts did 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'.



**Social
Work**

Overview

The Social Work Service in the Adoption Authority of Ireland is unique in that it combines digital social work with traditional social work practice models. Social workers in the Authority are required to regularly deliver interventions through telephone calls and online meetings given that clients are located across the country and world. Further, the work of locating relatives for clients requires both desk and online research using digital databases which necessitates staff to develop skills outside of the traditional social work models. The primary models used within the Authority's social work service are client-centred, trauma-informed and narrative- and solution-focused.

Social work within the Authority has four main functions:

- Tracing
- CPR Support
- Brief Intervention
- Reviewing current adoption assessments.

Structure

During 2022, the Social Work Team comprised of a Principal Social Worker, a Team Leader, five Senior Social Work Practitioners and three Social Workers.

Tracing

Provision of a tracing service is a long-standing practice in the area of adoption both nationally and internationally. In turn, it has been a function of the Adoption Authority in various forms throughout the years. The year 2022 saw tracing become a new statutory function under Part 5 of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. In providing a tracing service, social workers in the Authority provide a unique social work service that combines elements of digital research and social work practice models to assist people make contact with family members.

This year saw a significant transition for social work in the Authority as staff were required to manage and complete interventions with clients that pre-dated the Birth Information and Tracing Act and begin to deliver interventions under the Act.

Tracing applications made under the Birth Information and Tracing Act began in October 2022 and the Authority received 108 applications in the last three months of the year, of which 81% were allocated to a social worker by the end of the year. The majority of all applications (88) received in 2022 were applications for adopted people seeking to trace one of their birth parents. Seventeen people made applications to trace their sibling, and three people made applications to trace a family member to whom they had another relationship.



Tracing Case Study

These names in this case study are fictional. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased) is intended or should be inferred.

Chris, who was placed for adoption in 1982, applied to trace his birth mother under the Birth Information and Tracing Act. Chris had no prior information about his birth mother and he had never tried to trace his birth mother previously. Chris lived in Manchester, so the initial meeting with his assigned social worker was held on Zoom. The purpose of this meeting was to provide Chris with an opportunity to discuss what his wishes were, to ask any questions he had and discuss any issue of concern in relation to tracing his birth mother. Further, the social worker clarified her role and outlined broadly what steps would be taken in tracing and some of the possible outcomes.

After the meeting, the social worker began a comprehensive review of any information on adoption files relating to Chris' birth family that would assist in starting a trace. The social worker used this review to identify any possible historic information that could assist at locating the birth mother in the present. In turn, this information was used to inform the social worker's utilising of available digital resources, databases and records. In using these databases and resources, the social worker was required to continually cross-reference the historic information in order to identify current information. In doing this, the social worker was required to repeatedly build out and test possible connections to and from the birth mother to indicate where she may be located.

Parallel to the social worker's digital work, they are available to provide the service user with updates subject to the client's needs. In all tracing cases, it is vital that service user feels empowered to seek information as needed. In this case, Chris had asked only for an update when the social worker had located his birth mother (Sandra).

When Sandra was located by the social worker he was advised of this and, in line with the principle of client self-determination, the next steps were agreed. The social worker wrote to Sandra advising who she was and seeking contact in relation to a tracing query. Chris and the social worker agreed on

a period of time (in this case eight weeks) to allow Sandra to receive and consider the letter. If there was no response within the eight weeks, a further letter would be sent.

One month after the letter was received, Sandra made contact with the social worker. The social worker advised Chris of this contact. Sandra and the social worker had a supportive initial conversation where Sandra was afforded space to sequence the discussion as she wished. She spoke of her experiences of placing a child for adoption in the early 80s, her family's reaction to her pregnancy, and some of the emotions she had then that she has held with her during her life. In a follow up conversation, Sandra and the social worker spoke about the future – Sandra's desire to share information with Chris. Sandra and Chris independently decided to share some information about their lives through the social worker. Sandra sought some assistance from the social worker in writing a letter to Chris which was provided. The social worker began discussing with Chris and Sandra the possible next steps of either moving into contact directly with each other or having a reunion with their social worker's support. Sandra felt she would benefit from a supported meeting and while Chris welcomed either approach he was happy to follow Sandra's lead. A date was agreed where Chris would travel from Manchester to Dublin for a reunion.

A reunion took place between Sandra and Chris where they were provided with a space to be by themselves and discuss what they wished. The meeting lasted for almost two hours. In the time after the reunion, Chris and Sandra both made contact with their social worker to discuss how the reunion had been for them and what their next steps might be.

Contact Preference Register Support

The launch of the Contact Preference Register (replacing the previous National Contact Preference Register) in July 2022, resulted in an increase in matches on the register. There were 133 matches made on the register between July and the end of December 2022.

The majority of matches were between siblings (87) with either or both having been adopted. Matches between a birth parent and an adopted person accounted for 31 matches. The remainder (15) were matches between adopted people and another family member.

The re-launch of a register for those impacted by adoption created a significant number of matches between people who had joined the register in 2005-2007 and those who joined in the summer of 2022.

There was a range of outcomes from these matches including clients moving into direct contact with each other, the exchange of letters and information through social workers and making the decision not to initiate contact. In recognition that some of those matched on the CPR were requesting social work support, a new social work post was established in order to provide support and brief intervention.



Contact Preference Case Study

These names in this case study are fictional. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased) is intended or should be inferred.

Mary joined the then called National Adoption Contact Preference Register in 2005 seeking contact with her daughter, Faye, whom she placed for adoption in the late 1970s. Between 2005 and 2022, Faye did not join the register or seek a trace of Mary. In 2022, Faye became aware of the Birth Information and Tracing Act through the national advertising campaign and made a decision to join the new CPR.

This decision triggered a match between Mary and Faye. As Mary was first to join the register (17 years previously), the social worker made contact with Mary (the earliest joined) first. The social worker was conscious that Mary's wishes may have changed, her health may have deteriorated or that she may no longer be living at the address provided.

The morning Mary received the social worker's letter advising she had been matched with her daughter she made contact with the social worker. Mary was provided with an opportunity to discuss her feelings about the match and her experiences of adoption. She recounted placing Faye for adoption as a difficult decision for her that she felt she had no choice in. Mary discussed her fears that Faye would be angry with her or that her own sons would be angry with her. The social worker supported Mary to tell her story as she needed to. The social worker empathically acknowledged that she may not have had choice in the past but she did now. Mary was reassured that she could speak to her own sons or communicate with Faye when the time was right for her. Mary made a decision to get support from her husband who was aware of Faye's birth to speak to her sons and then she would make further contact

with the social worker.

A number of weeks later, Mary got in contact with the social worker to tell her that she had spoken with her sons and they were very supportive of her. She had made a decision that she would like to enter into communication with Faye directly but would respect if Faye did not want this.

In turn, the social worker advised Faye of the match. Faye was surprised that a match, from her perspective, had happened so soon, and the social worker explained how the match had come about. Faye decided to take a day or two to reflect on the match before sharing any contact details. A week later Faye made contact with the social worker asking that her details would be shared. The social worker rang Mary to tell her that a joint letter would issue with each other's details.

Some months later, Mary left a message asking the social worker to ring her about the match. She advised that her and Faye had been exchanging correspondence and some photographs and had built a connection. They had collectively decided that the time was right for them to meet and Faye had asked could she also meet her half-brothers. Faye and her boyfriend travelled to meet at Mary's home and met Mary and her family. Both Mary and Faye described this as a really positive experience and knew that they could continue to communicate as and how they wished. Both Mary and Faye were made aware that they could access the social work service in the future should they need arise for either of them.

Brief Intervention

Outside of the social work team's statutory functions under the Birth Information and Tracing Act, there remained a group of clients who would make contact with the Authority for social work support or advice. These requests previously came from people who had hitherto been traced or been matched with family members and were seeking guidance on re-opening that connection.

The Authority was conscious that some of those receiving early life and birth information may wish to access support in relation to material they read. A decision was taken that responding to this need would be best through a brief intervention approach. Brief intervention is a short-term intervention focused on assisting a client on regaining a sense of autonomy over their own situation and assisting them with finding their own solutions.

It is envisaged that an additional social worker dedicated to the area of tracing will be employed in early 2023.

Reviewing Current Adoption Assessments

Reviewing all assessments for current adoptions as part of the multi-disciplinary team, both domestic and intercountry, has remained a significant piece of work in 2022. In 2022, the social work team developed a Review Template in an effort to increase the consistency with which assessments were reviewed.

In 2022, the Team reviewed 121 domestic adoption and 23 intercountry adoption applications for a Declaration of Eligibility and Suitability.

External Social Work Review

A full external review of social work services in the Adoption Authority of Ireland was completed in 2022. On foot of the recommendations of the review, social work managers will work with the reviewers to complete a suite of social work policies and developing a standardised format for interventions across all areas of social work delivery.



Research

Overview

Under the Adoption Act 2010 (96[1]), the functions of the Adoption Authority 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 sub-committee of the Board in 2016, to consider how best to meet this legal requirement. A Research Unit was established in the Adoption Authority of Ireland in 2019, with the employment of a Research Officer on a temporary contract. In 2022, the Authority received sanction from the DCEDIY to create a permanent Research Officer position. The recruitment process began in early Q2, and the permanent role commenced at the end of May 2022. A research assistant provided support to the Research Officer on a contract basis throughout 2022.

Structure

The Research Officer is an Assistant Principal who reports directly to the CEO, and acts as secretary to the Research Subcommittee. The role of the Research Subcommittee is to support the development of the research strategy, and to regularly review and advise on projects proposed by the Authority. It consists of four Authority Board members, the CEO, representatives from the Intercountry Adoption, Domestic Adoption, Social Work and Records teams, and two external expert advisors – one international.

The Authority's Research Ethics Committee (REC) was established in 2020 to oversee the ethical considerations of large research studies. It consists of two Authority Board members and one external advisor from the DCEDIY.

Activities 2022

The year 2022 was a busy one for the Research Unit, working through the final year of the revised three-year Research Strategy 2019-2022, while developing the next strategy, 2023-2026.

Core Research Studies

'Reflections on Domestic Adoption 1952-2021':

Recruitment and data collection for this study completed in Q2 of 2022, with 14 participants having been interviewed, in depth, about their own experiences of working on a professional or voluntary

basis in domestic adoption during this period of time. The resultant data were analysed thematically in Q3, the findings were written up, and a detailed report was drafted and presented to management in Q4 for comments/queries.

'The Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland':

Individual country briefings were completed on China and Romania in 2022, and these were shared on the Authority's website. They contain general contextual information about adoptions from these countries, alongside information on the current profile of each cohort. We anticipate that, alongside the already-published briefings on Vietnam and Russia, they will be of use to a wide variety of stakeholders. They have been used by the Authority to help inform the development of Intercountry Adoption Information and Tracing supports.

Ethical approval was received in 2022 for the commencement of the fieldwork phase of this study. Its aim is to explore, through qualitative focus groups, the lived experience of growing up in Ireland as an intercountry adopted person, from the perspective of a small sample of 13-40 year olds. All materials were designed by the research unit and professionally typeset, including posters, information leaflets, consent forms and website notices. Recruitment for this study commenced in October, with the study being advertised among key adoption stakeholders, including DCEDIY, Tusla, accredited bodies and country-specific support groups. The study was also advertised on the Authority's website and on social media. The first focus group was held in December, participant feedback was very positive, and recruitment will continue in 2023. We anticipate that the findings from this study will be used to directly inform service development in this area.

Two infographics entitled 'Simple Ways to be Adoption Aware' were developed by the research unit for use in primary and secondary schools. Their purpose is to provide teachers with adoption friendly/adoption positive phrases and ideas for inclusive class assignments, in order to support their adopted students.

Internally Requested Reports

The *'International Practice in the Provision of Intercountry Adoption Information and Tracing Services'* report was finalised in 2022. The purpose of this study was to investigate how other countries resource and manage the area of Intercountry Adoption Information and Tracing. Surveys were designed and sent to 14 countries. The results were collated, analysed and

written up to form the basis of a detailed report, which was shared with the Authority's Board and Executive, and also with a limited international audience, including all participating countries, key national and international stakeholders such as government departments, central authorities, accredited bodies, non-governmental organisations and research organisations. This report has been used by the Authority to help inform the development of Intercountry Adoption Information and Tracing supports.

An internal report on domestic infant adoption trends 2011–2022 was prepared for the Board and shared with Tusla and the DCEDIY. It included a brief analysis of the ages at which this relatively small number of children were placed, the locations (by county) and family composition of their placements, and the ages at which they were adopted. Its aim was to help identify patterns and trends to ensure that we continue to meet our requirements and standards in this area.

Research Subcommittee

The Research Subcommittee met on three occasions in 2022. Various members of the subcommittee provided advice to the Research Unit as required outside of these meetings. The subcommittee completed a self-assessment in December 2022.

A key task of the Research Subcommittee throughout 2022 was to develop and agree upon the aims of a new Research Strategy, 2023–2026. Members of the Executive were invited to submit proposals for topics to be researched, based on their observations of gaps in the evidence base, and their own research needs, and with reference to the goals outlined in the wider Strategic Plan 2022-2024. All ideas were given consideration, and following detailed discussion of each suggestion, the Subcommittee agreed on three key areas of focus for the new strategy, which were presented to the Authority's Board. They include research into adoption from long-term foster care, adoption assessments, and adoption-related legislation.

An internal Research Strategy 2023–2026 document was drafted by the research officer to help guide the work of the Unit, detailing the wider context of the strategy, and the challenges/questions underpinning each outlined area of focus. The strategy is purposefully flexible, to allow for new or reactive projects as different priorities emerge over the three-year period.

Research Ethics Committee

The Authority's REC met on two occasions in 2022 to discuss the application, by the Research Subcommittee, regarding 'The Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' study. They approved the application in June 2022.

Research Resources

Research resources were expanded in 2022 to include access by all staff to the Trinity Information Service – a service operated by TCD's library whereby Authority staff and Board members can access the library database and borrow books, search digital databases, journals and so on.

A number of new titles were added to the Authority's library in 2022, and the Research unit circulated an information leaflet to all staff re how to access and utilise our research resources, including the library and EBSCO journal database. All staff and Board members have online access to the library catalogue and journal database at any time.

Conferences and Networking

The Research unit presented at two conferences in 2022: the Psychological Society of Ireland's (PSI) annual conference in Portlaoise, and the Children's Research Network CHILD-RC conference, held in UCD. Two presentations were made to delegates at the PSI conference. The first included statistics to illustrate the changing pattern of domestic adoption in Ireland, and methodological considerations when conducting in-depth research into Ireland's domestic adoption history. The second considered intercountry adoption in Ireland, presenting a summary of the Authority's published intercountry adoption trends, and an outline of 'The Lived Experience of Intercountry Adoption in Ireland' research design and method. The CRN presentation comprised a poster outlining Irish intercountry adoption trends and patterns. The Research Officer continued to chair the Adoption Research Network of Ireland in 2022, and joined the Research Managers' Network, a peer support group of research managers within state bodies.

External Communications

Throughout 2022, the Research unit received occasional requests from external parties seeking statistics or other information relating to adoption research. Where possible and practical, the unit always sought to provide assistance and support to these parties.



**Human
Resources**

Overview

This was the busiest year for HR since the establishment of the Adoption Authority in 2010. To facilitate the implementation of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022, the Authority secured sanction to increase the staffing complement in 2022. At the start of 2022 there were 32 staff employed in the Authority; at the end of 2022 this has increased to 52, with a small number of vacancies to be filled in early 2023. This increase in staffing required the expansion of the HR team. In May 2022, a Higher Executive Officer and an Executive Officer joined the Assistant Principal Officer and Clerical Officer to bring the HR team up to four. This facilitated an acceleration of recruitment and allowed the Authority to manage the on boarding of the additional staff while maintaining a full suite of services and support to all staff and managers.

Structure

The HR team is overseen by the Head of HR and Staff Development at Assistant Principal Officer grade. During 2022, the team comprised of one Higher Executive Officer, one Executive Officer and one Clerical Officer.

Recruitment

In 2022, the Authority conducted 31 recruitment competitions, including six confined competitions. The Authority conducts all its own recruitment under licence from the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) and this year HR worked with Lex Consultancy and Lansdowne Executive Search to back-fill vacancies where staff were promoted or resigned and to fill the newly created posts. The former Information and Tracing Unit, which had a staff of three persons, was subsumed into the new Information Services and Records Unit. This new Unit is headed by a Principal Officer who was recruited at the end of 2021 and took up the post in February 2022. With a total of 25 staff ranging from Clerical Officer to Assistant Principal Officer, this unit is now the largest in the Authority.

New permanent posts included

- HEO and EO in HR Unit;
- Archivists Grade II and Grade III;
- Permanent Research Officer;
- Social Work Team Lead;
- Professionally Qualified Social Workers for Intercountry Adoption tracing and Brief Interventions;
- Assistant Principal Officers x 2 for Records and Digital Solutions Units.

Pension/Retirements

The majority of staff in the Authority (75%) 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.

HR organised pension information sessions for all staff in June 2022. This provided staff with details of the benefits of their respective pension schemes and also afforded them an opportunity to have one to one session with the pension experts to discuss their own personal circumstances and options.

There was one retirement in 2022.

Blended Working Policy

Following the success of the Blended Working Pilot Scheme which operated from September 2021, the Authority continued to offer blended working to staff in 2022. Throughout 2022, blended working was monitored by HR to see how it was working. Using DPER Blended Working Guidelines as a template, a Blended Working Policy for the Authority was developed. The HR team contacted the FORSA union and requested that it review the Blended Working policy and it is expected that a meeting will be scheduled in early 2023 to agree the contents in full and roll out the Authority Blended Working Policy formally in the Authority.

Each team in the organisation has one anchor day in the week where all team members are required to work in the office. The majority of staff who avail of blended working, work from home two days a week, a small number work at home three days a week and a similar number work full time in the office.

Induction programme

The induction of new staff was the primary focus of the HR team in 2022. The frequency of new starters provided an opportunity to develop a more structured induction programme in conjunction with unit managers and the Corporate Services and Digital Solutions Teams. This ensured that staff settled in as quickly as possible and became familiar with ICT equipment and software packages for their respective roles to allow them to commence blended working at the earliest opportunity if they so wished.

Training and Professional Development

The HR team enabled staff to participate on a range of courses and seminars, many of which were conducted remotely. Topics covered included

- Pension Administration Foundation level
- Competency Based Interview Preparation
- Managing HR Investigations
- Teastas sa Ghaeilge Ghairmiúil – Leibhéil 5
- HR and Employment Law
- Building Blocks of Record Management
- Certificate in Freedom of Information
- Introduction to Data Protection and GDPR
- People Management
- Key Performance Indicators
- Competency Based Interviews - Shortlisting Preparation
- Grade training at Executive Officer level

Employee Assistance Service

The Authority continued to provide a dedicated Employee Assistance Service which is available to all staff and their family members as required. The Authority's service provider adapted their services to facilitate phone and video conference calls for those who availed of the service.

Well-being Committee

The Well-being Committee held its first meeting in June 2022 with a group of representatives from across the Authority.

This initiative came from HR who were eager to bring new ideas that could be introduced around well-being for staff, building on the pre-existing "lunch and learn" model run previously.

The CEO and senior management team agreed a modest annual budget to support the running of activities, talks and events promoting staff well-being and developing and foster a sense of community within the Authority.

In 2022, the Well-being Committee ran a number of events including a Read, Listen, Watch session, a table tennis tournament, a step challenge, a self-defence demonstration, a card-making workshop and Adrian's Laminate Christmas Desk Decorating challenge, all facilitated by staff of the Authority.

A very popular six-week course in yoga and mindfulness was held at lunchtime and a Zumba-style dance class after work.

Talks on nutrition and personal finance were also organised with external speakers for the 'munch and learn' programme. The Committee also hosted a very informative talk on Cyber Security from the Solutions Team.

Coffee mornings, including a festive event at Christmas with care packages for staff and Secret Santa, provided an opportunity for staff to gather in an informal setting.

The Committee also organised the staff Christmas party and an autumn social gathering for all staff.



**Corporate
Services and
Accreditation**

Structure

The Corporate Services and Accreditation Unit of the Adoption Authority of Ireland is overseen by the Head of Compliance at Assistant Principal Officer grade. The team comprises of a Higher Executive Officer, three Executive officers and one Clerical Officer.

Website and Communications

In 2022, the Authority's website continued to be an important source of information and news from the Adoption Authority. In the latter part of 2022, Corporate Services commenced a review of website content to improve the quality of information sharing with service users and the general public. As part of this review, consideration was given to the organisation's obligations under the EU Web Accessibility Directive, particularly the accessibility of the organisational websites to persons with disabilities.

As mentioned previously, in preparation for the enactment of the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022, the Authority, in collaboration with DCEDIY and Tusla, developed and published a dedicated website, www.birthinfo.ie. This website served as a platform solely for the provision of information relating to the new legislation, and a portal for CPR application forms, tracing services and birth and early life information. The use of Google Analytics to inform monthly reporting on web traffic provided an overview of website engagement. This information helped to identify key trends and the most visited sections of the site.

Press/Media

As outlined above, the Authority took the lead on developing the public information campaign, along with the DCEDIY and Tusla for the Birth Information & Tracing Act, 2022, overseeing the messaging, branding and reach of the campaign throughout Ireland and internationally ahead of the enactment of the law on 1 July 2022.

The publicity campaign included the delivery of an information leaflet to every household in Ireland and it used Ireland's Embassy network to reach those in other countries who are affected by the legislation.

To facilitate this huge endeavour, the Authority worked with a media relations consultant, and two government-appointed media companies: Javelin, a creative media agency, and MindShare, a media buying agency.

The CEO conducted more than 30 interviews with

national and international news agencies which were fielded and directed to them by 4TC.

As usual, the Authority closely monitored adoption-related news reports in the local, national and international media to keep up to date with developments on adoption-related matters in 2022, and the CEO and Chairperson responded to all press queries and requests to the Authority throughout the year.

Parliamentary Questions (PQs)

In total, 37 Parliamentary Questions were received and responded to in 2022.

Energy Management and Climate Action

In 2022, the Authority progressed with commitments to implement and meet public service energy usage and targets. The Authority initiated sustainable purchasing choices, eliminating the purchase of single-use items and opting for more long-term and/or environmentally friendly options. There was also continued participation in the Reduce your Use campaign, with regular and consistent messaging to staff around switching off, powering down and responsible energy usage.

The Authority identified staff members to support, develop and implement its obligations on both Energy Management and Climate Action, with the development of the Climate Action Roadmap, commencing at the end of 2022. Guided and supported by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), staff attended online seminars and in person conferences to educate and inform themselves on how to support and engage the organisation to adapt to energy saving practices.

Facilities Management

Following the implementation of the Birth and Information Tracing Act 2022 staffing numbers within the organisation increased rapidly, with substantial reconfiguration of the third-floor office space required to comfortably accommodate the Authority's expanding workforce.

Approximately 10 additional workstations were integrated to the existing office space to facilitate employee needs. The Authority will continue to update and improve the office configuration moving into 2023.

As part of an ongoing process of digitisation and innovation, Corporate Services facilitated the supply and installation of a videoconferencing system in the Boardroom. The main purpose of the system is to

ensure effective remote connectivity for the Board and staff of the Authority while hosting virtual meetings and adoption hearings and orders and so on.

The system comprises two tracking cameras, and using facial recognition technologies to seamlessly frame the active speaker, or pan the room without any requirement to physically interact with the system. The cameras are affixed to two 75" wall-mounted TV screens, with a microphone and speakers embedded in the ceiling. The system is not configured to any single platform, allowing ease of use across all virtual meeting platforms.

Since its installation in September the system has been successfully utilised to host approximately 85 virtual adoption orders and hearings.

Additionally, with the support of our printing service provider, the Authority updated the three printer systems. The key benefits of this new software include

- The introduction of staff card authentication, improving GDPR compliance as documents are not being printed until released at the machine using staff card authentication.
- Waste reduction; in line with our sustainable usage ambitions, there is a significant reduction in waste, as uncollected or mistakenly issues print jobs are not automatically printed with printing jobs do not print until released by the user.
- To further support reduction in our environmental impact administrators can input specific rules to further support sustainable practices, e.g. printing restricted to mono or double sided printing etc.

Health, Safety and Welfare at Work

As an employer, the Authority 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 Authority recognises the importance of having an effective occupational safety and health management system primarily to protect the health and safety of our people; for legal, economic, and moral and ethical reasons.

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. In 2022, a training needs analysis was completed to identify to the training required to support staff with carrying out duties in a safe and informed manner, and procurement exercises commenced to identify suitable providers to support delivery of training

into 2023. The continued operation of blended working regimes also influenced the engagement of a Health and Safety partner to confirm remote workstations were both safe and comfortable, and advise on appropriate actions where gaps were identified.

Accreditation

Register of Accredited Bodies

The maintenance of a 'Register of Accredited Bodies' by the Authority 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. By the close of 2022 there were three registered accredited bodies (changed from 2021).

Table 8: Register of Accredited Bodies 2022

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 6 September 2022
Helping Hands Adoption Facilitation Agency t/a Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency The Loft, Bessboro Centre Blackrock Road Cork	Reaccredited 12 June 2020

Accreditation Procedures

In line with statutory requirements, the Adoption Authority of Ireland actively engages with all accredited bodies throughout the year.

For each calendar year, two six-monthly activity reports are required to be submitted by each accredited body. These reports are summarised by the Executive and presented to the Board of the Authority. In 2022, all relevant bodies submitted two six-monthly reports each. A monthly report is also submitted by the Executive to the Board of the Authority detailing activity and engagement with the accredited bodies.

In line with legislation, audited accounts for the year ending 31 December 2021 were also submitted by the relevant accredited bodies.

As per Section 128 of the Act, the initial period of registration is for five years and renewals shall not exceed three years. No new applications were made in 2022, but two renewals were processed.

Cessation of Accredited Bodies in 2022

St Brigid's Information and Tracing Agency, Cúnamh and Arabella t/a Here2Help were formally deregistered and removed from the register of accredited bodies in 2022. Three agencies Cúnamh, Arabella t/a Here2Help and St Brigid's Information and Tracing Agency are closed and were formally deregistered from the register of accredited bodies in 2022.



**Domestic and
Intercountry
Adoption
Statistics**

Table 9: Domestic Adoption Statistics 1953-2022

Year	No. of Adoptions	Year	No. of Adoptions
1953	381	1989	615
1954	888	1990	648
1955	786	1991	590
1956	565	1992	523
1957	752	1993	500
1958	592	1994	424
1959	501	1995	490
1960	505	1996	405
1961	547	1997	422
1962	699	1998	400
1963	840	1999	317
1964	1003	2000	303
1965	1049	2001	293
1966	1178	2002	266
1967	1493	2003	263
1968	1343	2004	273
1969	1225	2005	253
1970	1414	2006	222
1971	1305	2007	187
1972	1291	2008	200
1973	1402	2009	190
1974	1415	2010	189
1975	1443	2011	39
1976	1104	2012	49
1977	1127	2013	116
1978	1223	2014	112
1979	988	2015	94
1980	1115	2016	95
1981	1191	2017	72
1982	1191	2018	72
1983	1184	2019	79
1984	1195	2020	81
1985	882	2021	101
1986	800	2022	102
1987	715	TOTAL	44,966
1988	649		

Table 10: Domestic Adoptions by type 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Step Parent	35	51	58	65	60
Long-Term Foster Care	25	21	16	24	30
Infant	7	6	5	2	10
Foreign to Domestic	3	0	0	5	0
Extended Family	2	1	2	5	2
Total	72	79	81	101	102

Table 11: Domestic Adoptions by Age of Child 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
17 Years Old	30	35	40	36	36
12-16 Years Old	23	24	23	45	33
7-11 Years Old	7	13	13	16	23
2-6 Years Old	9	4	3	7	8
0-1 Years Old	3	3	2	1	2
Total	72	79	81	101	102

Table 12: High Court Orders Granted Pursuant to Domestic Adoption Applications 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Section 18	1	0	3	2	1
Section 30	7	8	15	19	24
Section 54	13	5	11	14	18
Total	21	13	29	35	43

Table 13: 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, 2010-2022 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*	Country	No. of Entries*
Russia	1,631	Taiwan	22	Rwanda	2
Vietnam	933	Colombia	19	Scotland	2
Romania	808	England	18	Sri Lanka	2
China	432	Brazil	17	Uzbekistan	2
Ethiopia	308	Paraguay	7	Bolivia	1
Kazakhstan	151	Cambodia	4	Bosnia Herzegovina	1
Belarus	145	Philippines	4	Haiti	1
Thailand	138	South Africa	2	Hong Kong	1
United States of America	120	El Salvador	2	Malawi	1
Mexico	113	Jersey	2	Zimbabwe	1
Ukraine	100	Kenya	2	Moldova	1
Bulgaria	32	Lithuania	2	Total	5,057
India	25	Peru	2		
		Poland	3		

*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: Entries in the Register of Intercountry Adoptions, pursuant to Section 57(2)(b)(ii) of the Adoption Act 2010, for 2022 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 2022
Vietnam	13
Thailand	3
Philippines	0
USA	2
India	0
Haiti	0
China	0
Bulgaria	0
Poland	0
Total	18

Table 15: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised in 2022, 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 2022	Country where the adoption was effected	No. entered on Register in 2022	Country where the adoption was effected	No. entered on Register in 2022
Australia	1	Lithuania	0	Scotland	8
Bolivia	2	Malaysia	1	Taiwan	1
Bulgaria	0	Mexico	0	Tanzania	1
Cambodia	2	New Zealand	2	Thailand	4
Cameroon	4	Nigeria	4	USA	19
Canada	4	Northern Ireland	28	Vietnam	2
China	2	Norway	1	Wales	3
England	52	Peru	0	Zambia	1
Ethiopia	1	Philippines	1	Moldova	0
Haiti	0	Poland	0	Total	152
Hong Kong	3	Russia	2		
India	3				

Table 16: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 2014 and 2022, * 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
Bulgaria	4	8	4	8	1	1	0	0	0
Cambodia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
China	0	15	7	10	4	3	1	0	0
England	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ethiopia	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Haiti	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
India	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Lithuania	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	5	11	0	1	0	0	5	0	0
Peru	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Russia	4	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Thailand	6	1	4	2	8	0	4	2	3
USA	4	6	12	9	7	10	1	4	2
Vietnam	4	32	23	22	20	18	9	8	13
Moldova	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total	32	83	55	53	41	33	21	16	18

*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 17: Total number of intercountry adoptions recognised between 1991 and 2022 (All Sections)

Year	Number Recognised*	Year	Number Recognised*	Year	Number Recognised*
1991	58	2002	439	2013	141
1992	305	2003	460	2014	106
1993	59	2004	484	2015	160
1994	64	2005	443	2016	214
1995	93	2006	409	2017	324
1996	117	2007	439	2018	313
1997	149	2008	488	2019	386
1998	260	2009	395	2020	184
1999	284	2010	290	2021	136
2000	324	2011	342	2022	170
2001	284	2012	242	Total	8562



**Other
Information**

Website

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

Solicitors

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

Auditors

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



**Appendix
A**

Meeting Date 2022	Meeting Type	Board of the Authority Attendees
18 January	Full	All members
25 January	Orders	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
08 February	Full	All members
15 February	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, Judge P. McMahon, Dr H. Buckley
28 February	Emergency hearing/ Order	All members
01 March	Full	All members
08 March	Orders	O. Traynor, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
29 March	Full	All members
12 April	Full	All members
03 May	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim
10 May	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
24 May	Orders and Governance	All members
14 June	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley, Prof S. Greene
29 June	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison
05 July	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison, Dr H. Buckley, Prof S. Greene
12 July	Orders	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison
14 July	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison
23 August	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison
06 September	Full	O. Traynor, S.O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, Dr H. Buckley, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
20 September	Orders	O. Traynor, S.O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
11 October	Full	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, Judge P. McMahon, P. Harrison, Dr M. Anglim, Prof S. Greene
08 November	Full	All members
22 November	Orders and Governance	All members
13 December	Full	All members
15 December	Emergency hearing/ Order	O. Traynor, S. O'Brien, P. Harrison, Prof S. Greene



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN
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