

**The
Adoption Authority
of
Ireland**

Business Plan 2005

Introduction

This Business Plan sets out measures to further advance the objectives of the Corporate Plan during 2005. The Annual Report for 2005 will review progress on its implementation.

The following Units are responsible for administration and support services on a day to day basis and report on the implementation of the Business Plan to the Chief Executive Officer, who, in turn, is accountable to the Board for performance:

- Domestic Adoption Unit (D.A.U.)
- Intercountry Adoption Unit (I.C.A.U.)
- Adoption Information and Tracing Unit (A.I.T.U.)
- Standards and Inspection Unit* (S.I.U.)
- Research, Dissemination and Training Unit* (R.D.T.U.)

2005 will see the Adoption Board replaced by the Adoption Authority, with many new developments coming on stream. It is again important to acknowledge that maintaining the full range of adoption and related services that are currently provided will remain central to our operations throughout the course of the year. Key priorities in 2005 will be:

- To continue to develop the organisation in preparation for the new legislation to establish the Adoption Authority which is expected to be enacted this Autumn.
- To establish a National Information & Tracing Service for adopted people and natural parents.
- To review Intercountry adoption agreements, including countries where new agreements may be required, to oversee research in relation to Intercountry Adoption, and prepare for ratification of the Hague Convention.
- To continue to engage with the HSE/Adoption Agencies in relation to establishing integrated local adoption services in the context of the wider Health Service reforms.
- To provisionally register mediation agencies and assist them to become fully operational on a pilot basis.
- To continue to reinforce a new client orientation and focus within the new organisation
- To appoint the full approved staffing compliment to the Board.
- To develop proposals for shortening ICA assessment waiting times.
- To promote public knowledge of adoption services.
- The completion of the standardised framework for Domestic Adoption.

High Level Objectives as set out in the Adoption Authority Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007

1. We will introduce major organisational change to ensure that the Adoption Authority is and remains an efficient and effective organisation.
2. We will develop as an organisation committed to open and consultative processes. We will facilitate all our clients through the provision of information, advice and other appropriate supports.
3. We will develop as a centre of excellence and leadership, which promotes the delivery of quality, accountable, client-focused adoption services.
4. We will develop an integrated adoption service which addresses the needs of all parties involved in the adoption process, having regard to available resources.
5. We value our staff and with their co-operation we will continue to develop their capacity to deliver a quality service to our clients.
6. We will measure and evaluate our performance during the delivery of our corporate objectives and we will publish the results.

High Level Objective 1:

We will introduce major organisational change to ensure that the Adoption Authority is and remains an efficient and effective organisation.

Key Task 1.1:

We will publish a corporate plan every three years, and an annual business plan to report progress

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
2004 Business Plan Review and 2005 Business Plan.	Prepare and publish 2004 Business Plan Review and 2005 Business Plan.	January 2005	Director of Services & Heads of Units	Publication of 2004 Business Plan review, setting out progress to date against Corporate objectives, and 2005 Business Plan.
Publish Annual Report in new format to report on progress in implementing Corporate Plan & Business Plan Objectives.	Prepare and publish 2004 Annual Report	July 2005	Registrar & Heads of Units	Publication of 2004 Annual Report.

Key Task 1.2:

We will introduce appropriate governance arrangements for the new Adoption Authority.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Implement new Decision Making procedures for Adoption Approval Committees and the Adoption Board.	Take on board feedback from Adoption Committees on draft procedures already circulated; seek Board approval for final draft, publish and circulate new procedures.	First Quarter 2005.	Registrar & Senior Management team.	Implementation of revised procedures
Prepare Corporate Governance Manual for Adoption Board.	Prepare manual and obtain Board approval for new corporate governance procedures.	Mid 2005	C.E.O. & Registrar.	Manual completed and implemented.

Key Task 1.3:

We will put new organisational structures in place and continue to develop and deploy more efficient and effective organisation management processes.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Develop and implement a new file & correspondence tracking system at the Board.	Assess internal file and correspondence tracking needs, design required IT programme to meet needs, and implement. Training on system also to be provided.	Mid 2005.	HEO assigned in 2004 to undertake this task.	Design, develop and test system, ensure compatibility with wider DOHC requirements, implement.

High Level Objective 2:

We will develop as an organisation committed to open and consultative processes. We will facilitate all our clients through the provision of information, advice and other appropriate supports.

Key Task 2.1:

We will establish a public information and communications service to promote awareness of adoption and adoption services among adopted people, natural parents and families, adoptive parents and families and the wider general public.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Develop use of Adoption Board's new Website both internally and in our dealings with clients, adoption support groups, local service providers, other public bodies and international bodies working in the adoption area.	Ensure that information on Website is comprehensive and constantly updated; provide for all forms, leaflets and publications to be easily accessed and downloaded from the site; examine potential to develop links to other relevant sites both at home and abroad and utilise Website potential for client feedback purposes. Training to update site to be provided by developer.	Ongoing	Director of Services and Heads of Units	The Website should establish itself as an authoritative guide on adoption and related matters for all interested parties in 2005.

Key Task 2.2:

We will develop an appropriate level of involvement and other support arrangements with stakeholder groups both as a means of securing their input to the development of our services and supporting them in their activities.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Continue and build on arrangements for formal meetings with stakeholder groups and their involvement in services / policy development work.	Build on the high level of ongoing interaction on key adoption issues and developments achieved between the Board and the various stakeholder groups during the past year.	Ongoing	Senior Management team & Heads of Units	Meetings held with all key client / stakeholder groups throughout 2005.

Key Task 2.3:

We will develop appropriate feedback systems for our clients and stakeholder groups.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Establish a formal liaison forum at the Adoption Board involving the new Health Services Executive and the Adoption Agencies.	Agree membership, establish group, arrange quarterly meetings with Senior Management Team at the Board.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team.	Meetings held, key service development and delivery issues addressed.
Continue to develop mechanisms for client / stakeholder feedback on adoption services.	The participation of stakeholder groups (see 2.2 above) already provides comprehensive feedback to the Board on key developments. Feedback mechanisms will be further developed in 2005 to obtain client feedback on existing services and new developments.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Feedback mechanisms further developed particularly as regards individual client feedback; issues raised as a result of feedback addressed.
Establish formal customer complaints procedures at the Adoption Board.	Prepare and introduce formal customer complaints procedures, taking account, inter alia, of related provisions set out in the 2004 Health Act.	July, 2005	HEO assigned to undertake this task & Heads of Units	Preparation and introduction of customer complaints procedures, taking account of related developments already outlined under 2.1, 2.2, and above.

Key Task 2.4:

We will seek to have our administrative procedures and practices made subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Acts and other relevant public accountability legislation.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Prepare administrative files to comply with FOI requirements.	Complete review of administrative filing systems, assess any compliance, legal, IT or other requirements to be addressed, ensure compatibility with already established Departmental systems.	May, 2005	HEO assigned to undertake this task & Heads of Units	Preparation completed, legal, IT, and compliance issues identified and addressed.

High Level Objective 3:

We will develop as a centre of excellence and leadership, which promotes the delivery of quality, accountable, client-focused adoption services.

Key Task 3.1:

We will develop and embed quality standards and systems of inspection for adoption services.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
<p>Agree national adoption practice standards</p> <p>Complete protocols for inspection process and for inspection of services against agreed standards.</p>	<p>Complete development of appropriate inspection standards in liaison with interested parties and complete preparation of protocols and related inspection documentation.</p> <p>Undertake pilot inspections and develop prototypes for future standards that will apply. Finalise inspection, monitoring and review procedures and practices.</p>	<p>Autumn 2005.</p>	<p>Head of Social Work S.I.U. and R.D.T.U.</p>	<p>Pilot inspection process undertaken and completed. Prototypes for standards and inspection, monitoring and review completed, approved by Board and disseminated to all relevant service providers.</p>

Key Task 3.2:

We will develop evidence based research programmes and disseminate the findings of best national and international research.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Initiate new research projects in 2005.	Agree specifications for two new research projects including one in the area of Information & Tracing; consult with relevant practitioners / stakeholders; Undertake tendering procedures as required and commission research projects.	Autumn 2005	R.D.T.U. D.A.U. & A.I.T.U.	Agree Specifications, draw up and issue tender requests as required, complete tendering process, commission research work.
<p>Complete research work on Domestic Adoption Standardised Framework, including Birth / Natural Parenting aspects.</p> <p>Monitor progress on Intercountry Adoption Research Project, including, inter alia, Board approval for outcome of pilot phase of project.</p>	Complete Domestic Framework; disseminate final template approved by Adoption Board to local service providers; undertake necessary related work on Birth / Natural Parenting aspects; monitor pilot phase, pilot outcome and ongoing work on ICA research project.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team and Heads of Units.	Domestic Framework completed and disseminated to local service providers; work on Birth / Natural Parents undertaken; ongoing work on ICA research project monitored.

Key Task 3.3:

We will provide and support training and specialist advisory services for those working in adoption, in order to reinforce best practice

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Hold a series of meetings with Medical Advisors; Principal Social Workers; Chairpersons and representatives of Adoption Approvals Committees; and Authorised Persons who oversee required consent procedures for adoption purposes. SW practitioners' conference. Development of adoption library.	Contact key personnel involved, organise and hold meetings as required, write up and inform all interested parties of outcomes of these consultations. SW training needs identified. Collection of Irish research	Ongoing	Senior Management Team and Heads of Units.	Meetings held and outcomes made known to all interested parties. Development of adoption training module. Establishment of library commenced.

Key Tasks 3.4:

We will put in place transparent and accessible appeals procedures in relation to our legal functions, and transparent and accessible complaints procedures in relation to our administrative processes and practices

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Establish formal customer complaints procedures at the Adoption Board.	See Key Task 2.3 above.	See 2.3 above	See 2.3 above.	See 2.3 above.

High Level Objective 4:

We will develop an integrated adoption service which addresses the needs of all parties involved in the adoption process, having regard to available resources.

Key Task 4.1:

We will put in place an integrated set of standardised frameworks for the delivery of adoption services, in order to ensure provision of a uniform and timely service at local level across the country.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
<p>Design and Develop Framework for National Information & Tracing Service, including Protocols and Standards under which this National Service will operate. Provide for roll out of service on a National basis during 2005.</p>	<p>Hold discussions with Health Boards / Agencies / Stakeholder Groups on the design, development and delivery of this new National Service.</p> <p>Identify resource (including staffing and funding) requirements across HSE areas and Adoption Agencies; Approve grants for additional staff to be specifically appointed to deliver this service; Address Standards issues to ensure the delivery of high quality, efficient and effective service to commence in 2005.</p> <p>Advisory Group to make recommendations and seek Adoption Board approval for Frameworks/Protocols to apply and the proposed timetabling of the roll out of this new Service and its Staffing and Funding.</p>	<p>Phased roll out of National Information & Tracing Service in 2005.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team, A.I.T.U. and S.I.U.</p>	<p>Successful Consultations with Service Providers on how best to Deliver Service required;</p> <p>Advisory Group agreement on Framework for New Service;</p> <p>Adoption Board approval for Structures, Protocols, & Resourcing of Service;</p> <p>Successful phased implementation of Service during 2005.</p>
<p>Complete the Domestic Adoption assessment framework to support devolution of domestic adoption assessment to HSE areas (See also Key Task 3.2 above).</p>	<p>Finalise framework; Hold workshop with all interested parties prior to seeking final approval of Board and Publication of Framework; Provide ongoing Training Required.</p>	<p>Autumn 2005.</p>	<p>Heads of Social Work and Domestic Adoption Units, S.I.U. & D.A.U.</p>	<p>Finalisation and Approval of framework; Initiation of Training.</p>

Finalise and agree uniform procedures for existing local Adoption Information & Tracing services	Meet with Service providers; Finalise, issue, and implement Circular setting out Standardised Guidelines to be adhered to by all I&T Service Providers.	June, 2005	Social Work Senior Management and A.I.T.U.	A high quality uniform service to be provided across all regions.
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Key Task 4.2:

We will introduce, in co-operation with the Department of Health and Children, a number of new services as follows:

- an information and tracing service
- services necessary for the implementation of the Hague Convention
- a range of post-adoption services.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Maintain and further reduce waiting times for Adoption Information and Tracing service	Initial enquiries responded to within 5 working days. Waiting period for an initial interview with social worker reduced to three months. Waiting list for initiating full trace reduced from 3 years to 12 months. Maintain and improve these levels of service delivery.	Ongoing	Social Work Team and A.I.T.U.	Shorter waiting time for service. A.I.T.U. to continue to provide assistance to local service providers in clearing their waiting lists. Social Work Dept. to continue to provide info and tracing service to costumers and consultation with local service providers.
Agree framework for National Information and Tracing service	See Key Task 4.1 above.	See 4.1 above	See 4.1 above	See 4.1 above
Finalise proposed National Voluntary Contact Preference Register and Launch Register.	Agreed Framework for National Voluntary Contact Register to be finalised; I.T. requirements to be addressed; Nationwide publicity campaign, advising the general public of the launch of the Register to be undertaken; Nationwide leaflet drop to be organised and Register launched.	Rollout of National Voluntary Contact Preference Register to be completed by June, 2005.	Senior Management Team and A.I.T.U.	Publicity campaign for Register undertaken; Nationwide Leaflet drop completed; Register launched.

<p>Continue work on establishment of National File Index for Adoption Information & Tracing Service</p>	<p>Complete work on the audit of adoption files; on setting up computerised index of Adoption Board files; and on Scanning the Board's files.</p> <p>Approval in principal for link to GRO Computerised Registration System for search purposes obtained from Registrar General. Upgrade Boards' internet access to get the full benefit from this service in 2005.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Senior Management Team and Head of A.I.T.U.</p>	<p>Audit of Adoption files completed, substantial progress made on Indexing and Scanning Adoption Board files.</p>
<p>Commence Scanning and Indexing of adoption files held by HSE across the regions and by Adoption Agencies.</p>	<p>Agree arrangements with HSE Areas / Adoption Agencies for roll out of project, including tendering and funding aspects, and commence project.</p>	<p>Initiate project during 2005.</p>	<p>Senior Management Team and A.I.T.U</p>	<p>Agreement with local service providers on scope and funding of project; completion of tendering aspects as required; commencement of project.</p>
<p>Continue to deliver existing levels of services across Domestic Adoption, Intercountry Adoption, and Information & Tracing areas.</p>	<p>Ongoing development and delivery of current services to continue in conjunction with new service developments.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Social work dept. and Heads of D.A.U & I.C.A.U. & A.I.T.U.</p>	<p>Key tasks include number of <u>Domestic</u> adoption Orders and completion of assessments to adopt; on the <u>ICA</u> side maintenance of six week turn around in routine cases, hearing of extension requests at next available Board meeting, speedy processing of applications for entry onto Foreign Adoption Register and of Garda Clearances; On the <u>I&T</u> side Initial enquiries responded to within 5 days, Waiting period for initial interview with social worker reduced to three months. Waiting list for initiating full trace reduced from 3 years to 12 months. Continuance and further development of day duty service. Ongoing revision of information booklets.</p>

<p>Finalise initial registration of mediation agencies and assist them to become fully operational on a pilot basis as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Board to approve provisional registration of Mediation agencies based on Guidelines drawn up by Board to support Intercountry Adoption / Hague Convention; Board to assist these Agencies to become fully operational on a pilot basis as soon as possible in 2005.</p>	<p>July, 2005</p>	<p>Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.</p>	<p>Provisional Registration approved; pilot scheme agreed to allow Registered Agencies to commence operations; Evaluation of outcomes of pilot scheme undertaken and submitted for Board consideration and approval.</p>
<p>Review Intercountry adoption agreements including countries where new agreements may be required in the context of the Hague Convention.</p>	<p>Review existing agreements under provision of Hague legislation. Prioritise countries where it would be appropriate to establish new agreements.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.</p>	<p>Keep all current Agreements including Belarusian and Vietnamese Agreements under constant review; Initiate negotiations as appropriate with other countries.</p>
<p>Identify current post adoption services through the mapping process carried out by Social Work Dept. Identify possible areas for development.</p>	<p>Meetings to be held with Adoption service providers to identify current services and shortfalls</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Senior Management Team & Heads of Units</p>	<p>Gaps and resource implications identified and agreed steps taken to develop and improve services.</p>

Key Task 4.3:

We will commit to the continuous review and development of services so that we can plan for changing needs.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Continue to implement and develop Agreement with Vietnam	<p>Provide for introduction on a pilot basis of a Mediation Agency to oversee the processing of Vietnamese adoptions in conjunction with the appointed Facilitator for Vietnam.</p> <p>Continue to process declarations including applications for extension / renewal of declarations as required.</p>	Ongoing	Senior Management Team and Head of I.C.A.U.	Successful piloting of Mediation Agency at operational level; Evaluation of outcomes at end year; provision for full Registration from 2006 onwards.
Review workings of new Adult Medical Review Form and Explanatory Circular.	Assess and evaluate working of Revised Medical Review Form and Circular published in late 2004 with interested parties.	September, 2005	Registrar & Medical Advisor to the Adoption Authority	Evaluation completed, Outcomes considered and any follow up action required taken.

Key Task 4.4:

We will ensure that services and information about services is more easily accessible.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
<p>We will continue to review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps on an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Review literature and amend as required; maintain fully up to date comprehensive information on all services and service developments on the Adoption Board's Website, including documentation relating to the forthcoming launch of a National Voluntary Contact Preference Register and establishment of a National Information & Tracing service. Organise conference for dissemination of information on Domestic Adoption Framework.</p>	<p>End of 2005</p>	<p>Social Work Dept. and Heads of units</p>	<p>Comprehensive and fully up to date literature and information available to clients, stakeholder groups and local service providers at all times.</p>

High Level Objective 5:

We value our staff and with their co-operation we will continue to develop their capacity to deliver a quality service to our clients.

Key Task 5.1:

We will put in place human resources policies to meet the developmental needs of the staff and the organisation and we will use the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) to support the processes arising from this policy.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Continue to implement P.M.D.S. cycle and ensure role profiles reflect Corporate Plan and revised Business Plan objectives.	All stages of P.M.D.S. review to be carried out by all staff. Complete end year reviews and revise role profiles for 2005 by end February	Ongoing.	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	P.M.D.S. cycle completed

Key Task 5.2:

We will establish a partnership committee to address staff needs and concerns in relation to the transition to the Adoption Authority.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Continue active Partnership Committee process throughout 2005.	Monthly partnership committee meetings to address staff issues	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Meetings held / actions taken

Key Task 5.3:

We will provide adequate support services and training for staff, including accommodation, records management, and information technology.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Provide training for staff working in Adoption Information and Tracing Unit.	Agree Training Content Identify trainers including person who has used service	Ongoing	Heads of R.D.T.U. & A.I.T.U.	Training provided
Continue to identify and meet staff training needs (both formal and on the job) Continuation of current I.T. training and advanced website training.	Staff training needs to identified through P.M.D.S.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Training Undertaken
Manage implementation of Refurbishment of Adoption Authority accommodation to provide better client services.	Works initiated and significantly progressed during 2005	2006	Senior Management team	Complete renovation of 3rd Floor in 2005 allowing staff to relocate and refurbishment of 4 th floor to begin.

Key Task 5.4:

We will commit to providing staff with challenging and rewarding work experience aimed at enhancing their career potential while addressing the needs of the organisation.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
<p>We will keep current staffing levels and structures under review and provide staff with challenging and rewarding work.</p> <p>We will continue to review assignments of existing and new staff</p> <p>We will place a considerable emphasis on teamwork both within and across all Units.</p>	<p>Review current assignments and undertake staff rotations as required to meet both individual and organisational goals.</p> <p>Teamworking aspect will be optimised to develop the capacity of the Adoption Board to develop and deliver quality services to the public.</p>	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Ongoing review of staffing needs, filling of remaining sanctioned posts, required staff deployments carried out, increased teamwork within and across Units.

High Level Objective 6:

We will measure and evaluate our performance during the delivery of our corporate objectives and we will publish the results.

Key Task 6.1:

We will develop internal audit procedures and be subject to external audit in terms of measuring and evaluating our performance against stated objectives.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
We will continue to review progress on implementation of Corporate Plan with our stakeholders	Identify issues arising from client feedback. Executive meetings with Board to review progress.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Completion of review process
We will publish an Annual Report for 2004 setting out performance against Corporate and Business Plan objectives.	Publish Annual Report in new format (See also Key Task 1.1 above).	July, 2005.	Registrar & Heads of Units	Ongoing review process.

Key Task 6.2:

In our annual business plan we will establish performance targets designed to achieve the objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2004–2007.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
The completion dates and outputs are identified in this 2005 Business Plan	Target dates and outputs agreed Ongoing measurement and evaluation	End of 2005	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Review of targets completed

Key Task 6.3:

We will publish an annual report reviewing progress under the Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
See key task 6.1 above. We will revise the structures and statistical input of the Annual Report to reflect progress on implementation of the Corporate Plan and related Business Plan objectives.	Agree new format for the Annual Report Publish the 2004 Annual Report	July, 2004	Registrar & Heads of Units	2004 Annual Report published

Key Task 6.4:

We will put in place arrangements to measure client satisfaction with the implementation of this corporate plan.

Steps to achieve objective	Specific Actions	Completion date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs
Agree and develop mechanisms for client feedback on service quality	Identify and implement effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback particularly from clients who have completed an adoption process or an information or tracing enquiry.	Ongoing See also Key Task 2.3 above.	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Proposal agreed and customer feedback sheets / questionnaires designed and initiated.