

**The
Adoption Authority
of
Ireland**

Business Plan 2004

Introduction

This Business Plan sets out measures to advance the objectives of the Corporate Plan in 2004. The Annual Report for 2004 will review progress on its implementation.

The following units are responsible for the 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.)
- Public Information and Communications Unit (P.I.C.U.)
- *Standards and Inspection Unit** (S.I.U.)
- *Research, Dissemination and Training Unit** (R.D.T.U.)

2004 represents a major year of transition as the Adoption Board is replaced by the Adoption Authority, with many new developments coming on stream. It is also 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.

This is an important transition year. Key priorities will be:

- To continue to develop the organisation in preparation for the new legislation to establish the Adoption Authority
- To develop measures, in particular training, to reinforce a new client orientation and focus within the new organisation
- To establish an Information and Tracing Service for adopted people and natural parents
- To develop our research in relation to Intercountry Adoption and prepare for ratification of the Hague Convention
- To promote public knowledge of adoption services
- To engage with Health Boards/Adoption Agencies in relation to establishing an integrated local adoption service, in the context of the Health Service reforms

* Standards and Inspection and Research Dissemination and Training Units will be established in 2004.

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
Publish Corporate Plan setting out key objectives for 2004 – 2007	Prepare and publish Corporate Plan	February 2004	C.E.O.	Corporate Plan published
Implement Business Planning cycle in the Adoption Authority	Prepare Adoption Authority Business Plan 2004	February 2004	C.E.O. & Heads of Units	Publication of Business Plan
Publish Annual Report in new format to report on progress in implementing Corporate Plan & Business Plan	Prepare and publish 2003 Annual Report	April 2004	Director of Services & Heads of Units	Publication of Report
Comments				

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 revised governance arrangements	Review governance arrangements Agree new process with Board Agree new format for Board meetings to support new governance arrangements	First Quarter of 2004	C.E.O. & Registrar	Implementation of revised procedures
Publish Corporate Governance Manual for Adoption Board	Prepare manual, obtain Board approval and publish manual	July 2004	C.E.O.	Manual published
Comments				

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
Formally establish the following new units: Adoption Information and Tracing; Standards & Inspection; Public Information & Communications; Research, Dissemination & Tracing.	Formally agree the remit of each unit Agree working arrangements for each unit Assign functions to staff in each unit Provide client focused training for staff	Rollout of the different units over the course of the year	Senior Management Team	New Units operational
Upgrade of Adoption Authority I. T. and communications infrastructure	Agree specifications for systems Initiate implementation of new systems	End of 2004	Director of Services, Heads of Units & P.I.C.U.	2004 priorities initiated New system operational
Comments				

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
Public Information & Communications Unit will publish a Communications Strategy.	Prepare and publish strategy Agree dates and locations for public information events Hold a series of public information events	End of 2004	Head of P.I.C.U.	Events successfully held
We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps	Review literature and amend as required	End of 2004	Heads of Units	Revised literature available to clients
Update the Adoption Authority website to provide accessible information	Work with contractors to agree on redesign. Launch website	May 2004	Head of P.I.C.U.	New website launched
Comments				

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
Establish a grant scheme to assist adoption support groups	Issue circular setting out terms of scheme Invite applications for 2005 grants Approve grants	End of 2004	Director of Services & Heads of Units	Groups notified of 2005 grants
Establish arrangements for formal meetings with stakeholder groups and for stakeholder involvement in services / policy development work.	Hold formal meetings with key stakeholder groups	Ongoing	CEO & Heads of Units	Meetings held
Comments				

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 for Adoption Service providers.	Agree membership Establish group Regular meetings of Providers with Senior Management Team	Ongoing	Director of Services & Director of Social Work	Meetings held
Agree mechanisms for client feedback on service quality	Identify and implement effective mechanisms for obtaining client feedback Obtain feedback on existing services	End of 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Proposal agreed and feedback initiated
Publish a Customer Service Action Plan	Consult with stakeholder groups Prepare and publish Customer Service Action Plan	November 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Publication of plan
Comments				

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	Review administrative filing systems	End 2004	Senior Management Team & All Units	Preparation completed
Comments				

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
Develop protocols for inspection process	Develop appropriate inspection standards in liaison with the relevant stakeholders	End of 2004	Director of Social Work & S.I.U.	Pilot inspection process
Develop protocols for inspection of services against standards	Prepare protocols and related inspection documentation			
	Initiate pilot inspections			
Comments				

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
Undertake research on Intercountry Adoption in Ireland	Consult with relevant practitioners / stakeholders	Autumn 2004	Director of Social Work & Head of R.D.T.U.	Research initiated
	Agree specifications of research project			
	Commission research project			
Support additional research projects in relation to Domestic Adoption / Adoption Information and Tracing	Identify research projects	End of 2004	Director of Social Work & Head of R.D.T.U.	Research commenced
	Commence research			
Comments				

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 seminars / information meetings for Adoption practitioners	Identify target groups and organise seminars	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	A number of seminars & meeting held
Comments				

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
Review Adoption Authority formal appeals procedures	Agree revised procedures and publicise to clients	July 2004	Registrar	New appeals procedures operational
Establish an internal complaints procedure	Agree complaints procedure as part of Customer Service Action Plan	November 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	New complaints procedure in place
Comments The formal appeals procedure relates to decisions of the Board of the Adoption Authority in relation to Domestic Adoption Orders, Intercountry Adoption Declarations and Adoption Information and Tracing requests.				

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
Hold discussions with Health Boards / Agencies on organisation of local service and address current delivery issues	Hold discussions with Health Boards / Agencies Consult with stakeholder groups Agree proposals to address delivery issues Identify resource requirements	Fourth quarter 2004	Senior Management Team	Priority 2004 actions initiated Identify other service requirements in context of 2005 estimates process
Develop a Domestic Adoption assessment framework to support devolution of domestic adoption assessment to Health Boards	Consult with stakeholders Finalise framework Provide Training Agree date for handover of services	End of 2004	Director of Social Work & Head of D.A.U.	Finalisation of framework Initiation of Training
Agree uniform procedures for existing local Adoption Information and Tracing services	Meet with service providers Issue guidelines	September 2004	Head of A.I.T.U. & Director of Social Work	A more uniform service provided
Comments				

Key Task 4.2:				
<p>We will introduce, in co-operation with the Department of Health and Children, a number of new services as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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
Continue to improve waiting times for Adoption Information and Tracing service	Address outstanding applications	Ongoing	A.I.T.U.	Shorter waiting time for service
Agree framework for National Information and Tracing service	Working group to complete its work and report to the Adoption Authority	December 2004	Working Group on Adoption Information and Tracing	Framework agreed
Establish a National Contact Preference Register	Proposal for National Contact Register agreed I.T. requirements of National Contact Register addressed Publicise Register	Autumn 2004	Director of Services, Director of Social Work & Head of A.I.T.U.	Register launched
Commence work on establishment of National File Index for Adoption Information and Tracing Service	Establish a computerised index of Adoption Authority files Establish links with the General Registers Office for search purposes Complete audit of adoption files	End of 2004	Director of Services, Director of Social Work & Head of A.I.T.U.	2004 priorities identified and work initiated
Maintain current level of services in Domestic Adoption and Intercountry Adoption Services	Current work to continue while new developments are progressed	Ongoing	Heads of D.A.U & I.C.A.U.	Existing services maintained
Finalise and pilot mediation guidelines to support Intercountry Adoption / Hague Convention	Publish guidelines Agree pilot scheme	November 2004	Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.	Pilot scheme agreed
Review Intercountry adoption agreements including countries where new agreements may be required in the context of the Hague Convention	Review existing agreements under provision of Hague legislation Prioritise countries where it would be appropriate to establish new agreements	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.	Negotiations initiated

Objective 4: Key Task 4.2 (ctnd)				
Identify current post adoption services	Meetings to be held with Adoption service providers to identify current services and shortfalls	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Gaps identified
Identify possible areas for development				
Comments				
There is a considerable amount of new development work being carried out in 2004 under the Corporate Plan. The Authority is conscious of the need to maintain the current level of service in this context.				
The Working Group on Adoption Information and Tracing includes representative stakeholder groups				

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
Implementation of Vietnam agreement	Initiate arrangements with the Vietnam authorities Process declarations including applications for extension / renewal of declarations	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Arrangements with the Vietnamese authorities agreed
Publish an Adult Medical Report form and explanatory circular in relation to the Adoption Authority's new medical service	Issue Adult Medical Report Form and revised circular	July 2004	Registrar Medical Advisor to the Adoption Authority	Documentation Circulated
Comments				

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
Update the Adoption Authority website to provide accessible information	Work with contractors to agree on redesign Launch website	May 2004	Head of P.I.C.U.	New website launched
We will review and update all Adoption literature and address information gaps	Review literature and amend as required	End of 2004	Heads of units	Revised literature available to clients
Comments				

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
Revise P.M.D.S. role profiles to reflect Corporate Plan / Business Plan	Staff to update P.M.D.S. forms All stages of P.M.D.S. review to be carried out.	End of 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	P.M.D.S. cycle completed
Comments				

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
Establish a Partnership Committee	Monthly partnership committee meetings to address staff issues	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Meetings held / actions taken
Comments				

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	Head of R.D.T.U. & C.E.O.	Training provided
Identify staff training needs (both formal and on the job)	Staff training needs to identified through P.M.D.S.	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Training Undertaken
Refurbishment of Adoption Authority accommodation to provide better client services	Agreement with O.P.W. on scale of task and costs Works initiated	2004 – 2005	Senior Management team	Work initiated
Comments: Refurbishment of Adoption Authority accommodation is subject to agreement with O.P.W. and availability of resources.				
Records management and I.T. requirements covered under High Level Objective 1.				

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
We will review assignments of existing and new staff Review current staffing levels in view of existing services and to provide for developmental work	Review current assignments Agree policy on staff rotation	Ongoing	Senior Management Team	Agreed staff deployments carried out
Comments				

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 review progress on implementation of Corporate Plan with our stakeholders	Identify issues arising from client feedback Executive meeting with Board to review progress	December 2004	Senior Management Team	Completion of review process
Comments				

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 have been identified in the 2004 Business Plan	Target dates and outputs agreed Ongoing measurement and evaluation	End of 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Review of targets completed
Comments:				

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
Revise the structure of the Annual Report to reflect progress on implementation of the Corporate Plan	Agree new format for the Annual Report Publish the 2003 Annual Report	April 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	2003 Annual Report published
Comments				

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 mechanisms for client feedback on service quality	Identify and implement effective mechanisms for obtaining client feedback Obtain feedback on existing services	End of 2004	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Proposal agreed and feedback initiated
Comments				