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TEACH SUN ALLIANCE, SRÁID THEACH LAIGHEAN
BAILE ÁTHA 2.

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Report of An Bord Uchtála (The Adoption Board) for 2006

To: Mr. Brendan Smith, T.D.
Minister For Children, Department of Health & Children.



CONTENTS

	Page	
Part 1	Annual report on activity in 2006	9
	Chairman's opening remarks	11
	CEO's review of 2006	12
Section 1	Key developments in 2006	15
Section 2	Overview of the work of the units of the Adoption Board	18
Part 2	Statistical tables	29
Appendix A	Business Plan 2006—End Year Review	55



Part one

annual report on activity in 2006



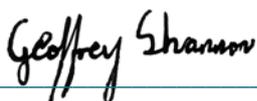
Chairman's Opening Remarks

On behalf of the members and staff of the Adoption Board, I would like to welcome the publication of the Adoption Board's 54th Annual Report.

During 2006, significant progress was made in achieving the objectives set out in the Board's Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007. Other significant events during 2006 included the licensing of a registered mediation agency, the continuing success of the National Adoption Contact Preference Register, and the successful completion of a pilot file indexing project.

I would like to express the Adoption Board's appreciation in respect of the contributions made by our clients, local adoption service providers, and adoption support groups. The continued support of the Minister for Children and his staff in the Department of Health and Children is also greatly appreciated as is the professionalism and dedication of the staff of the Adoption Board.

The Adoption Board awaits the publication of the new adoption legislation. The enactment of this legislation will address many of the key recommendations set out in the 2006 Annual Report. It will incorporate the 1993 Hague Convention into Irish law and thereby guarantee that intercountry adoption takes place in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights as recognised in international law.



Mr Geoffrey Shannon

Chairman

Adoption Board

C.E.O.'s Review of 2006

I am delighted to present the Adoption Board's 2006 Annual Report. As in previous years the work undertaken by the Board and staff throughout 2006 remained firmly focused on achieving the objectives set out in the Adoption Board's Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007.

At the end of 2006 further significant progress has been achieved in this regard both in terms of achieving our high level objectives and successfully completing the specific service development and delivery targets the Board set itself in 2004. A review of our progress in this regard is set out in our 2006 Business Plan Review at Appendix A.

A number of the key areas of service development and delivery achieved during 2006 are summarised below.

National Adoption Contact Preference Register

The National Adoption Contact Preference Register was launched in 2005 and was broadly welcomed by adoption stakeholder groups and the general public. By the end of 2006 over 6,000 applications to join the Register had been received by the Board. A total of 240 matches had been recorded. It is important to note that in many cases persons seeking to join the register do so with the intention of seeking non identifying information including medical information and that meeting the needs of these applicants is central to the operation of the Registrar. The Board intends to review the first two years of the operation of the Register in 2007 and will publicise the outcomes of that review.

Indexing and Scanning

A pilot indexing project, which involved indexing the Board's adoption files for the years 1980-1983, was completed during 2006. Following detailed consultation with Records Management Unit in the Department of Health & Children it was determined that the next step should be for the Department to issue separate public tenders for the indexing and scanning of the Board's adoption files. It is expected that the indexing of the Adoption Board files will now commence in 2007

Information & Tracing

Work on draft protocols for Information and Tracing service providers nationally was initiated in 2005 and extensive consultation with adoption stakeholder groups, service providers and the HSE on these draft Protocols continued throughout 2006. The protocols will be finalised and, subject to the approval of the Adoption Board, will be disseminated to all service providers during 2007.

Domestic Adoptions

A total of 222 domestic adoption orders were made in 2006. This total comprised of 153 family adoptions, 36 adoption placements made by either the Health Service Executive or the registered adoption societies, 17 long term foster placements made by the HSE, and 16 other adoptions, 15 of which were in respect of children placed for adoption overseas and adopted under Irish domestic adoption legislation.

A discernable trend over recent years has been the increasing complexity of the domestic adoption cases coming before the Board for its consideration and adjudication and this trend has continued throughout 2006.

Case tracking system

It is proposed to introduce a computerised, state of the art, case tracking system across all Units of the Adoption Board as soon as possible. With this in mind an initial outline proposal for a domestic adoption case tracking system was submitted to the Department of Health and Children's Information Technology Unit late in 2006 for its consideration and approval. This outline system will be further developed and refined in conjunction with the Department during 2007. Thereafter, it is proposed to pilot this computerised case tracking system in the Domestic Adoption Unit prior to its roll out across all Units.

Standardised Domestic Framework

The Adoption Board's social work team continued work on the preparation of the 'Guide for Practitioners on a standardised framework for Domestic Adoption Assessment Procedures' throughout the year, and it is expected that these guidelines will near completion in 2007.

A document to accompany the practice guidelines will outline contemporary adoption practice in Ireland, highlight the centrality of the child in adoption, review key aspects of adoption legislation pertinent to social work practice, and describe social work thinking relating to adoption. This document has also been circulated nationally for feedback from social work practitioners in adoption.

Trends in Intercountry Adoption

400 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to adopt abroad were granted in 2006. During 2006 the Board met its commitment to process Declarations within six weeks provided that the application is correct and complete upon receipt by the Board.

A total of 339 extensions were granted by the Board during 2006, reflecting the difficulty that many applicants have in adopting within the twelve month lifespan of the Declaration. The Board understands that consideration is being given in the proposed new adoption legislation to allow the Board to grant Declarations which will be valid for two years.

Vietnam

The bi-lateral adoption agreement between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in 2004 thereby allowing adoptions from Vietnam to commence after an 18 month closure. The Agreement, based on the principles of the Hague Convention, is operating very satisfactorily and 68 children adopted into Ireland from Vietnam were entered into the Irish Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2006.

Establishment of Mediation Agency

This bi-lateral agreement required the licensing by the Vietnamese Authorities of an Irish registered Mediation Agency to facilitate adoptions. In May 2005, pending the establishment of such a Mediation Agency, the Vietnamese Authorities proposed that a single facilitator be appointed to fulfil this role for a twelve month period.

Given the temporary nature of this appointment, the Board's priority in 2006 was to put a mediation agency in place as the permanent arrangement, in conformity with the agreement, as soon as possible. This was achieved and the Helping Hands mediation agency became fully operational following receipt of its Vietnamese licence in May, 2006.

As a result of the bi-lateral Agreement and the licensing of the Helping Hands mediation agency from May 2006 Irish persons adopting from Vietnam now have services and supports not available to persons adopting from other jurisdictions. Feedback from those availing of the mediation services provided by Helping Hands during the latter half of 2006 has been very positive.

Matters of concern

The Gardaí did confirm certain allegations regarding the temporary facilitator who had, in any event, voluntarily resigned her consultancy by that time. The Department of International Adoptions in Hanoi also confirmed that all adoptions under the bi-lateral agreement that had involved the temporary facilitator prior to the licensing of Helping Hands mediation agency were legal and were carried out in accordance with the new Vietnamese adoption law and the bi-lateral agreement. This was a vital and important assurance to parents from the sovereign government of Vietnam

Additional funding

Additional ongoing funding of €1 million for both intercountry adoption assessments and for information & tracing services was again disbursed to local service providers in 2006. This additional funding significantly expanded the resources available to bodies carrying out adoption assessment and adoption information and tracing work throughout the year.

Note of thanks

I would like to sign off by thanking our clients, stakeholders and service providers for their input and assistance throughout the year. I would also like to thank the staff of the Adoption Board for their hard work and the Minister for Children and the Department of Health and Children for their continued assistance in 2006.



John Collins
Chief Executive Officer
Adoption Board

Section 1

Key developments in 2006:

1.1 Domestic Adoption

General Developments

The total number of applications for Irish domestic adoption orders received in 2006 was 273. Of these, 218 were in respect of family adoption applications, a decrease of 7 on the previous year's figure of 225. (See Table 1).

The Board made 222 Irish domestic adoption orders in 2006 compared to 253 in 2005. 153 of these adoption orders were made in respect of family adoptions; 149 of which were made in favour of the child's mother and her husband. The remaining 4 orders were made in favour of other relatives. (See Table 2).

Of the remaining 69 Irish domestic adoption orders in 2006, 36 of these adoption orders were made in respect of children placed for adoption by the Health Service Executive and registered adoption societies, and 17 orders were in respect of children who were in long-term foster care and were being adopted by their foster parents (See Table 4). One case involved completion of an Adoption Order outside the ambit of the HSE.

The Board also made 15 Irish adoption orders in 2006 in respect of children who were placed for adoption overseas, 10 of whom were from Guatemala, 2 from the Philippines and 3 from India (See Table 22). Prospective adoptive parents are granted simple adoption orders in Guatemala and, as such adoptions are not recognised under Irish law, the prospective adoptive parents apply to the Board for Irish adoption orders in respect of these children, either with the consent of the natural parent(s) or through the High Court under the Adoption Act, 1988. Couples adopting from India and the Philippines are granted guardianship by the relevant courts and then adopt the children under Irish law.

The Board made 4 Irish adoption orders during 2006 which required the consent of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. A general overview of the functioning of the Adoption Act, 1988 is set out in Section 2.1.8.

In addition, the Board's Domestic Adoption Unit maintained existing levels of service in 2006

Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption

Domestic adoption assessment work is to be devolved to the Health Service Executive. With this in mind, the Board has overseen the development of a standardised framework for domestic adoption.

The Adoption Board, as a first step, commissioned UCD to carry out research towards a 'standardised framework for domestic adoption assessment procedures' to provide a basis for an agreed framework for the delivery of a uniform domestic adoption assessment service at local level after this work devolves to the HSE. This framework also provides for the development of greater opportunities for ongoing monitoring and review of the service.

Following completion of this research by UCD a service provider Implementation Group prepared detailed guidelines for practitioners working in the various strands of domestic adoption (including stepfamily, agency placement, long term foster, relative, and the adoption of children from countries whose laws do not comply with those of Ireland). The draft of these guides has now been completed and circulated for final consideration to adoption social workers nationally. Feedback from this exercise will be incorporated into a final draft of the framework in 2007.

The practice guidelines are to be complemented by a document outlining contemporary adoption practice in Ireland and highlighting the centrality of the child in adoption. This will include a review of the aspects of adoption legislation pertinent to social work practice; and it will describe the social work theories and concepts relevant to adoption. Social worker practitioners working in adoption will also have an opportunity to comment on and contribute to the preparation of this document.

1.2 Intercountry Adoption

The Board made 400 declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt outside the State in 2006 under the provisions of Section 5(1) (iii) (II) of the Adoption Act, 1991 and it granted 339 extensions to declarations made in previous years. (See Table 20) The Board made 298 entries in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2006 under Section 5 of the Adoption Act 1991. (See Table 17). 24 sole applicants who adopted a child from overseas made an entry in the register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of these children during 2006.

In relation to intercountry adoption, the Board seeks to process applications for Declarations of Suitability and Eligibility to adopt from abroad in 6 weeks. This timeframe does not apply where there is a negative recommendation or where there are exceptional circumstances involved.

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in July, 2004 thereby allowing adoptions to commence after an 18 month closure. The Agreement is based on the principles of the Hague Convention and in line with the provisions of that Convention a mediation agency, The Helping Hands Adoption Mediation was licensed to deal with adoptions from Vietnam with effect from May 2006. This licensed mediation agency has been operating very successfully and by end of 2006, 68 children were adopted into Ireland from Vietnam under this Agreement and entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions.

In 2004 the authorities in Belarus suspended intercountry adoptions to all countries. This was to facilitate a full review of the adoption laws, procedures and practices that apply in intercountry adoption cases in Belarus. This suspension continued throughout 2006. The Adoption Board received a draft protocol adoption agreement proposal from the Belarusian authorities in late 2006. However, having looked at the provisions of this draft protocol, the Department of Health & Children advised the Adoption Board that it did not provide a basis to conclude an adoption agreement with the Belarusian Authorities.

1.3 Information & Tracing

The Adoption Board's Information & Tracing Unit was established in 2004 in recognition of the increasing number of adopted people, natural parents and other relatives seeking to trace or to obtain medical or personal information from their files.

The National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) was launched by the Minister for Children, Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D., 2005. The launch was supported by a national and local newspaper and radio advertising campaign and an explanatory leaflet and application to join the Register was sent to every household in the state.

The Board in the calendar year 2006 received 1046 applications. Of the applications processed 750 applications were from adopted people and 296 applications from the relatives of adopted people. The majority of these applications related to adoptions under Irish law but the Board also received applications relating to pre-1953 fostering (boarding out) cases and adoptions effected in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Europe.

A total of 140 matches between adopted people and their relatives were made on the Register in the calendar year 2006. This is a higher match rate than achieved in many other jurisdictions who operate similar adoption contact registers. The applicants involved in these matches were referred to the local Health Service Executive or Adoption Agency that held the original adoption placement file. The Board has also contracted Barnardos to provide an intermediary service where an applicant expressed a preference not to deal with the HSE area or Adoption Society holding their placement file.

The enactment of new legislation in relation to adoption information and tracing remains a priority for the Board. Pending enactment the Board is committed to the establishment of a new National Adoption Information and Tracing Service (NAITS), initially functioning under the current legislative framework.

Draft protocols for information and tracing service providers nationally were prepared in late 2005. Extensive consultation with service providers and the HSE continued throughout 2006. The protocols will be finalised and disseminated to all service providers in 2007.

A pilot indexing project was completed during 2006. This involved indexing Adoption Board files for the period 1980-1983. Following on from detailed consultation with the Records Management unit of the Department of Health & Children it was determined that the best way forward was to tender separately for the indexing and scanning of the files. It is expected that the indexing of the Adoption Board files will commence in 2007.

The Board is aware of the lengthy waiting times to access information and tracing services in many Health Service Executive areas and Adoption Agencies throughout the country. An additional € 1 million in ongoing funding was provided to the HSE and local adoption agencies to expand the current service in 2006.

While initiating and managing the developments set out in this section the Information & Tracing Unit at the Adoption Board also continued to maintain existing service levels on its day to day operations throughout 2006.

In the next section we review the work of each unit of the Adoption Board during 2006 in more detail.

Section 2

Overview of the work of the units of the Adoption Board

2.1 Domestic Adoption Unit

2.1.1 Introduction

The Domestic Adoption Unit processes all applications for domestic adoption orders under Irish law. This includes applications for adoption orders on behalf of step-parent families, placements by the Health Service Executive (HSE), placements by registered adoption societies and applications from people who have adopted abroad but who have adopted from countries whose adoption law is not compatible with Irish law. Whilst there has been a decline in the number of adoption applications and orders over recent years the complexity of individual applications has increased in line with best practice requirements.

In addition to dealing directly with queries from members of the public, both in Ireland and from abroad, on a wide range of issues, the Domestic Adoption Unit also provides an advice and referral service for the public. This can involve directing enquirers to the appropriate agency / service that can deal with their enquiries. It also involves, in most cases, outlining the process from the making of an adoption application through to the making of an adoption order and explaining what an adoption order means in terms of the transfer of rights and responsibilities from the natural parents to the adoptive parents. The Unit also deals with issues of eligibility of children for adoption and processing adoption orders for consideration and decision by the Board; these files are prepared for the Board's consideration and interested parties are promptly informed of the outcome of the Board's deliberations.

2.1.2 Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption.

Following completion by UCD of the Adoption Board's commissioned research towards a 'standardised framework for domestic adoption procedures', an Implementation Group prepared detailed guides for practitioners working with each of the categories of domestic adoption i.e. stepfamily, agency placement, long term foster, relative, and adoption of children from countries whose laws do not comply with those of Ireland. The first draft of these guides was completed by end 2005 and circulated for consideration to all adoption social workers nationally. Feedback from this process is now being incorporated into the final draft to be submitted to the Adoption Board for approval next year.

A document completed with the practice guidelines outlines contemporary adoption practice in Ireland; highlights the centrality of the child in adoption, includes a review of the aspects of adoption legislation pertinent to social work practice, and describes social work thinking relating to adoption. This document has also been circulated nationally for feedback from social work practitioners in adoption.

The Domestic Adoption Unit will review and update its general literature and address any information requirements arising out of the implementation of the Domestic Adoption Framework in due course.

A document completed with the practice guidelines outlines contemporary adoption practice in Ireland; highlights the centrality of the child in adoption; includes a review of the aspects of adoption legislation pertinent to social work practice; and describes social work thinking relating to adoption. This document has also been circulated nationally for feedback from social work practitioners in adoption.

The Domestic Adoption Unit will review and update literature and address any information requirements arising out of the implementation of the Domestic Adoption Framework in 2006

2.1.3 Trends in Domestic Adoption

The Board made 222 Irish adoption orders in 2006 compared to 253 adoption orders in 2005, a decrease of 31 on the previous year. (See Table 2) The number of applications received in 2006 was 273 (See Table 1). This represents a decrease of 27 on the previous year's total of 300.

The Board also made 15 Irish adoption orders in 2006 in respect of children who were placed for adoption overseas, 10 of whom were from Guatemala, 2 from the Philippines and 3 from India (See Table 22). Prospective adoptive parents are granted simple adoption orders in Guatemala and, as such adoptions are not recognised under Irish law, the prospective adoptive parents apply to the Board for Irish adoption orders in respect of these children, either with the consent of the natural parent(s) or through the High Court under the Adoption Act, 1988. Couples adopting from India and the Philippines are granted guardianship by the relevant courts and then adopt the children under Irish law.

The Board made 4 Irish adoption orders during 2006 which required the consent of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. A general overview of the functioning of the Adoption Act, 1988 is set out in Section 2.1.8.

2.1.4 Family Adoptions

The Board received 218 family adoption applications in 2006 compared to 225 such applications in 2005 (See Table 1). Most family adoption applications are made in step-parent situations where a natural mother has a child outside of marriage and she subsequently marries a man who is not the natural father of the child. The natural mother and her husband apply jointly to adopt the child into their marriage. Applications are made in such cases in order that the natural mother's husband can establish legal rights and responsibilities in respect of the child and to ensure the child's inheritance rights within the family unit. In such circumstances, the natural mother gives up her sole legal rights and responsibilities in respect of her child and both she and her husband take on joint legal rights and responsibilities in respect of the child.

As noted in previous Annual Reports, it remains the Board's view that the procedure outlined above is not always ideal in step-parent situations. The Board considers that some other legal means should be devised to establish the rights and responsibilities of a natural mother's husband without extinguishing the rights and responsibilities of the natural father.

2.1.5 Natural Fathers

Natural fathers have a statutory right to be consulted on an adoption application and are given the opportunity to make their views on the application known. The 1988 Adoption Act sets out the rights of the natural father and the Board's obligations in this regard. When notified of an adoption application (usually made by the natural mother and her husband), a natural father is given the opportunity to speak to one of the Board's social workers with regard to their views on the application. They are also issued with the Board's information booklet on step-parent adoption. Frequently their enquiries relate to procedural and legal matters and are not indicative of opposition to the making of an adoption order. The option of a full Board hearing is open to all natural fathers when they are notified of adoption applications.

In 2006 six natural fathers were heard by the Adoption Board in respect of applications for Domestic Adoption orders relating to their children (this compares to three in 2005, five in 2004, four in 2003, six in 2002 and five in 2001).

The Adoption Board notified 116 natural fathers of an application for an adoption order in respect of their child who either did not request or failed to attend a hearing with the Board. A further 10 natural fathers were consulted by an Adoption Agency / HSE Adoption Service (See Table 9).

2.1.6 Open Adoption

The Board continues to note the number of non-family domestic adoptions ('agency' adoptions) which are 'open' adoptions i.e. the natural parent or parents retain some degree of contact with the child (usually one or two visits a year) after the adoption order is made.

The Board calls for legal provisions to be put in place to ensure that, where a natural parent wishes to have continued contact with his or her child after the making of an adoption order, such contact can, in certain circumstances, be made a condition of the adoption order. This would, of course, also be relevant to the position of natural fathers in step-parent cases.

2.1.7 Children of Marriage

The Board continues to have enquiries from people wishing to adopt children from a previous marriage into a current marriage.

The Board has requested that consideration be given to the introduction of amending legislation to allow the Board to process adoption applications in cases where a widow or widower remarries and wishes his / her second spouse to have legal rights and responsibilities in relation to the children of his / her first marriage.

The Adoption Board has recommended that the welfare of the child be a primary consideration underpinning constitutional change in this area, and that all children, regardless of the marital status of their parents, should be eligible for adoption in certain circumstances. The key principle informing the Board's thinking in this regard is that adoption should always be carried out in the best interests of the child, and the Board considers that the rights of children to have their welfare and best interests assured should be put on an equal constitutional footing with the rights of the marital family. Furthermore, in areas of conflicting rights under the constitution,

because of a child's greater vulnerability, the Board considers that the rights of the child should be given particular protection, having due regard to the rights and duties of parents in respect of the welfare of their children.

2.1.8 Adoption Act, 1988

The Adoption Act, 1988, provides for the adoption of children of marriage, abandoned children, children whose eligibility for adoption cannot be established, and children in long-term foster care where there has been no placement of the child for adoption at the time of reception into care of the child. In such cases, the Board processes the application to a point where it cannot proceed any further and then adjourns the application pending a directive from the High Court. The application is then heard in the High Court and the High Court may direct the Board to make an adoption order in respect of the child in each case. Where the natural mother's consent is forthcoming and there is no question regarding the child's eligibility for adoption, such applications can be processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 without recourse to the High Court.

During 2006, the Board made four adoption orders pursuant to an order of the High Court under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988. At the end of 2006 the Board had before it 20 adoption applications which were being processed under the provisions of the Adoption Act, 1988.

In 2006 the Board made five declarations under the Adoption Act, 1988 and adjourned each of these applications pending the decision of the High Court in each case. Three applications were in respect of non-marital children and two applications were in respect of an extra-marital child. The Board made orders in two other cases with the consent of the natural mother where the process of holding hearings under the terms of the Adoption Act, 1988 was already underway.

The Board is obliged under the Adoption Act, 1988, to hear the applicants, the child where appropriate, its own welfare officer and representatives of the Health Service Executive in whose functional area the applicants reside. It offers a hearing to the natural parents in each case. In 2006, the Board did not hear any natural parents in relation to such cases.

2.1.9 Committee on Family Rights in the Constitution

The Adoption Board welcomed the opportunity to appear before the All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution in 2005 to assist the Committee in its examination of family rights in the Constitution. A number of key issues raised by the Board and set out in greater detail in the 2005 Annual Report are summarised below.

Key considerations

The key principle informing the Board is that adoption should always be carried out in the best interests of the child. The Board asked that the Committee on the Constitution place the rights of children to have their welfare and best interests assured on at least an equal constitutional footing with the rights of the marital family. In areas of conflicting rights under the constitution, because of a child's greater vulnerability, the Board asked that the Committee consider giving the rights of the child particular protection, having due regard to the rights and duties of parents in respect of the welfare of their children.

On the matter of how the family should be defined, the Board's submission took note of the Constitutional Review Group's preferred option to retain the protection of the family unit based on marriage but also to guarantee individuals a right to respect for their family life whether the family is or is not based on marriage.

As outlined at 2.1.7 above, the Adoption Board considers that Articles 41 and 42 of the Constitution place too much emphasis on the rights of the family as a unit against the rights of individuals within that unit. One of the consequences is that children of marriage are not eligible to be adopted other than in very exceptional circumstances.

The Adoption Board recommended that the welfare of the child be a primary consideration underpinning constitutional change in this area, and that all children, regardless of the marital status of their parents, should be eligible for adoption in certain circumstances. This recognises the right to alternative care for children who, for any reason, cannot remain with their natural family, and the need to provide such children with special protection and assistance.

On the matter of the constitutional protection for families other than those based on marriage, the Adoption Board supported a broadening of the definition of the family in line with the U.N. definition to more fully reflect the changing nature of Irish society. In the adoption area parenting capacities are the issue of paramount concern in meeting children's needs and these are not defined by marital status. The Board would also wish to see the word 'woman' replaced by 'parent' or 'primary caregiver' in Article 41.2.

The Adoption Board also recommended a new section in Article 41 giving everyone a right to respect for their family life in accordance with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This respect for family life would include respect for non-marital family life between a natural mother and her child and a natural father and his child. Any necessary limitations on such rights would also need to be clearly defined in law; for example, in the case of a natural father any such rights would have to be in the context of an established relationship with the child in question and not simply by reason of a biological link. The Adoption Board's submission also considered that natural parents who consent to place their children for adoption should be informed in the event of a breakdown in the adoption placement and should be consulted about future care arrangements for the child.

The Adoption Board considered that the Constitution should enshrine "the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration" in all decisions relating to the promotion of the welfare of children who do not receive adequate care and protection. In relation to adoption the Adoption Board also recommended that children should have equal rights in the State whether they are children of a marriage or not, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights

2.2 Intercountry Adoption Unit

2.2.1 Key Events in 2006

Vietnam

The Agreement on Mutual Cooperation concerning Adoption between Ireland and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam came into effect in July 2004 thereby allowing adoptions from Vietnam to commence after an 18 month closure. The Agreement, based on the principles of the Hague Convention, is operating well with 68 children being adopted into Ireland from Vietnam during 2006 and entered into the Register of Foreign Adoptions.

Matters arising in 2006

The State to State bi-lateral adoption Agreement between Ireland and Vietnam required the licensing by the Vietnamese Authorities of an Irish registered Mediation Agency to facilitate adoptions. In May 2005, pending the establishment of such a Mediation Agency, the Vietnamese Authorities proposed that a single facilitator fulfil this role for a twelve month period. The Vietnamese authorities stipulated that the individual could not be a Vietnamese citizen living in Vietnam.

This arrangement was to enable adoptions to begin in the face of the humanitarian crisis in Vietnamese orphanages following the closure of Vietnam for intercountry adoption in 2002. UNICEF estimate that there are 2.1 million orphans in Vietnam. The Vietnamese authorities emphasised the importance of Irish applicants working solely with the temporary facilitator approved by them.

Given the temporary nature of the appointment, the Board's priority was to end the arrangement and put a mediation agency in place as the permanent arrangement in conformity with the agreement. This was achieved and the agency became operational following receipt of its Vietnamese licence.

The Gardai had confirmed certain allegations regarding the temporary facilitator. The individual had, in any event, voluntarily resigned her consultancy at this time. The Department of International Adoptions in Hanoi confirmed that all adoptions under the bi-lateral agreement were legal and were carried out in accordance with the new Vietnamese adoption law and the bi-lateral agreement. This was a vital and important assurance to parents from the sovereign government of Vietnam.

As a result of the bi-lateral Agreement and the establishment of Helping Hands in May 2006, those adopting from Vietnam now have services and supports not available to those adopting from other jurisdictions. Feedback from persons availing of the services of Helping Hands have been very positive during the latter half of 2006.

Belarus

In October, 2004 the authorities in Belarus suspended intercountry adoptions to all countries. This was to facilitate a full review of the adoption laws, procedures and practices that apply in intercountry adoption cases in Belarus. This suspension continued throughout 2005 and 2006. A delegation from the Board visited Belarus in late 2005 in order to find a resolution to these cases. The Belarusian authorities indicated their decision to have a new agreement in place before addressing these outstanding applications. The Adoption Board received a draft protocol adoption agreement proposal from the Belarusian authorities. The Irish constitution affords special protection for the family and, following a review of the proposed protocol, it was deemed not possible to reach an adoption agreement with Belarus at this time which would comply with Irish constitutional and legal requirements.

2.2.2 Trends in Intercountry Adoption

400 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability to adopt abroad were granted in 2006. The Board strives to maintain the processing time for a Declaration to be granted to six weeks, provided that the application is correct and complete upon receipt by the Board.

A total of 339 extensions were granted by the Board during 2006, reflecting the difficulty that many applicants have in adopting within the twelve month lifespan of the Declaration. The Board understands that the proposed new adoption legislation, which is currently being drafted, will, inter alia, enable the Board to grant Declarations which are valid for two years.

2.2.3 Countries of Origin

(i) Russia

During 2006, 143 entries were made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of Russian adoptions. (See Table 17).

(ii) China

A total of 33 adoptions effected in China were entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2006. (See Table 17)

(iii) Thailand

There were six entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in respect of adoptions effected in Thailand.

(iv) Vietnam

A total of 68 adoptions effected in Vietnam were entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions during 2006 under Section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991. (see Table 17)

2.2.4 Hague Convention

The legislation which will ratify the Hague Convention will establish the Adoption Board as an independent statutory Adoption Authority. The Adoption Authority will be the Central Authority for the purposes of the Hague Convention. Once this legislation has been enacted it is anticipated that it will only be possible for Irish applicants to adopt from other countries which have ratified the Convention, or from countries with whom the Adoption Authority has agreements based on Hague principles. It has been apparent for some time that the 12 month time limit that applies in respect of Declarations of eligibility and suitability to adopt abroad is not sufficient to allow applicants complete their adoption. The Board understands that it is intended in the new legislation to provide for Declarations that will be valid for up to two years and welcomes this proposal.

2.3 Adoption Information & Tracing Unit

2.3.1 Information & Tracing Unit

The Adoption Information and Tracing Unit was established by the Adoption Board in 2003 in recognition of the fact that information and tracing is now a significant aspect of adoption services. The objectives of the Unit are:

- a) To provide an advice and referral service for enquirers i.e. advising on the procedures involved in adoption information and tracing, and where required referral to the correct agency for dealing with the enquiry.
- b) To manage the National Adoption Contact Preference Register.
- c) To provide an Adoption Information and Tracing Service to our clients and assist management of the Adoption Board with the preparation of National Information & Tracing Protocols.
- d) To deal directly with information and tracing enquiries from people who were placed privately for adoption or where no adoption agency was involved in the placement.
- e) To liaise with the Department of Health and Children, adoption support groups, private adoption agencies and HSE Adoption Services regarding the establishment of a National Adoption Information and Tracing Service.
- f) To establish a National Adoption File Index and the electronic scanning and indexing of all adoption records within the State, beginning with the Adoption Board's own records.
- g) To work toward the establishment of links to the databases of public bodies such as the General Register Office and the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs to assist the Adoption Board, Health Service Executive and adoption agencies in relation to search and reunion enquiries.

The staffing level of the Unit is 3.5 fulltime administrative staff (with one post vacant since May 2006) and two temporary agency workers were hired to undertake once off data entry work relating to the launch of the National Adoption Contact Preference Register.

During 2006 there were 518 written enquiries to the Unit, an estimated 5,000 phone calls and 230 emails received via the Board's website. The Unit also received over 6,000 applications by the end of 2006 to join the National Adoption Contact Preference Register (see below) and processed 1046 applications in 2006 and had over 200 requests from adoption agencies to access the General Register Office Birth, Death and Marriage records.

2.3.2 National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR).

The National Adoption Contact Preference Register was launched by the Minister for Children on 30th March 2005. The launch was welcomed by all concerned and received widespread and positive coverage in the media. The Board in the calendar year 2006 received 1046 applications. Of the applications processed 750 applications were from adopted people and 296 applications from the relatives of adopted people. The majority of these applications related to adoptions under Irish law but the Board also received applications relating to pre-1953 fostering (boarding out) cases and adoptions effected in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Europe.

A total of 140 matches between adopted people and their relatives were made on the Register in the calendar year 2006. This is a higher match rate than achieved in many other jurisdictions who operate similar adoption contact registers. The applicants involved in these matches were referred to the local Health Service Executive or Adoption Agency that held the original adoption placement file. The Board has also contracted Barnardos to provide an intermediary service where an applicant expressed a preference not to deal with the HSE area or Adoption Society holding their placement file. By the end of 2006, over 6000 applications in total had been received since the launch, resulting in an estimated 240 matches.

2.3.3 National Adoption Information and Tracing Service

The enactment of new legislation in relation to adoption information and tracing remains a priority for the Board. Pending enactment the Board is committed to the establishment of a new National Adoption Information and Tracing Service (NAITS), initially functioning under the current legislative framework.

Draft protocols for information and tracing service providers nationally were prepared in late 2005. Extensive consultation with service providers and the HSE continued throughout 2006. The protocols will be finalised and disseminated to all service providers in 2007.

2.3.4 Indexing and Scanning

A pilot indexing project was completed during 2006. This involved indexing Adoption Board files for the period 1980-1983. Following on from detailed consultation with the Records Management unit of the Department of Health & Children it was determined that the best way forward was to tender separately for the indexing and scanning of the files. It is expected that the indexing of the Adoption Board files will commence in 2007.

2.3.5 Additional Funding

The Board is aware of the lengthy waiting times to access information and tracing services in many Health Service Executive areas and Adoption Agencies throughout the country. An additional € 1 million in ongoing funding was provided to the HSE and local adoption agencies to expand the current service in 2006.

2.3.6 Information and Tracing - social work aspects

The social workers attached to the unit equate to 1.75 full time posts. They provide an information and tracing service with counselling where an agency has closed down and the records are held by the Adoption Board or where no placement agency was involved.

The telephone advice line and day duty provided by the social work team, commenced in 1986 and continues on a daily basis. During 2006 it received 1563 enquiries which included people calling to the office in person. This figure represents a cross section of adoption queries from the public and other professionals working in this field.

The establishment of The National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) in March 2005, marked an important milestone in the provision of Information and Tracing services in Ireland. Social work support and advice for callers to the free phone helpline was provided by the team. The overwhelming majority of callers welcomed the N.A.C.P.R. as a valuable and positive resource. Matches on the N.A.C.P.R. are referred to a social worker who makes the initial personal contact with the registered parties because of the sensitivities involved. Parties are encouraged to use a mediator to help prepare them for the various levels of contact chosen. Feedback on mediation has been overwhelmingly positive with over 90% wishing to avail of the intermediary service provided by the original adoption agency.



Part two

statistical tables and charts

Index of Tables & Charts

Table 1	Applications for Irish Adoption Orders 2006
Table 2	Irish Adoption Orders Made 2006
Table 3	Adoption Orders made in respect of each HSE area
Table 4	Adoption Orders made in respect of placements by each Adoption Society & HSE area
Table 5	Structure of Adoptive Families
Table 6	Age of Child at Date Adoption Order was made
Table 7	Length of time between Date of Placement and Date Adoption Order was made
Table 8	Age of Child at Placement for Adoption
Table 9	Information on Natural Fathers
Table 10	Age of Adopters at Date of Adoption Order
Table 11	Age of Natural Mother at Date of Birth of Child
Table 12	Analysis of Placements 1996 – 2006
Table 13	Birth and Adoption Trends in Ireland 1964-2006
Table 14	Total number of entries in the register of Foreign Adoptions, 1991-2006, entered pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act 1991 (Applicants Ordinarily Resident in Ireland)
Table 15	Number of persons whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in 2006 pursuant to section 2 of the Adoption Act, 1991

Table 16	Number of persons whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in 2006 pursuant to section 4 of the Adoption Act, 1991.
Table 17	Number of persons whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions from 2001- 2006 pursuant to section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991.
Table 18	Entries into the Register of Foreign Adoptions 1991 – 2006 pursuant to section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991. (Resident in the State and in possession of a declaration of eligibility and suitability to adopt abroad)
Table 19	Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991
Table 20	Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability and Extensions granted by the Adoption Board by County in 2006
Table 21	Sex of child, by country of origin, in respect of entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991 for the year 2006
Table 22	Sex of children whose adoptions have been processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 for the year 2006
Table 23	Sex of children whose adoptions have been processed under the Adoption Act, 1988 for the year 2006
Table 24	Number of Sole Applicants who adopted children from abroad whose adoptions were (a) recognised under the Adoption Act, 1991 and (b) processed under the Adoption Acts, 1952 and 1988 for the years 1991 to 2006.
Table 25	Written Adoption Information and Tracing Enquiries, 2006
Table 26	NACPR Registrations and Matches
Table 27	Written Information & Tracing Enquiries received by the Adoption Board in 2006 where the relevant HSE/ Adoption Tracing Agency is known

Table 1 Applications for Irish Adoption Orders 2006

NON-FAMILY APPLICATIONS	Total	%
Applications received in respect of children placed by:		
Registered Adoption Societies (adoption placements)	11	4%
Health Service Executives (adoption placements)	13	5%
Health Service Executives (foster placements)	21	8%
Persons (including the birth mother) or authorities outside the state	10	4%
TOTAL NON-FAMILY APPLICATIONS	55	20%
FAMILY APPLICATIONS		
Applications received from:		
Natural mother and her husband	199	73%
Natural father and his wife	5	2%
Grandparents	6	2%
Other relatives	5	2%
Surrogacy	3	1%
TOTAL FAMILY APPLICATIONS	218	80%
TOTAL APPLICATIONS	273	100%

Table 2 Irish Adoption Orders Made, 2006

	Total	%
Orders made in respect of boys	111	50%
Orders made in respect of girls	111	50%
Total	222	100%
ORDERS MADE IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN PLACED BY:		
Registered Adoption Societies (adoption placements)	17	8%
Health Service Executives (adoption placements)	19	9%
Health Service Executives (long-term foster placements)	17	8%
Other Placements	1	0%
Children placed by persons or authorities outside State	15	7%
Total non-family adoptions	69	31%
FAMILY ADOPTIONS		
Natural mother and her husband	149	67%
Natural mother alone	0	0%
Natural father and his wife	0	0%
Natural father alone	0	0%
Grandparents	3	1%
Other relatives	1	0%
Total family adoptions	153	69%
TOTAL	222	100%

Table 3 Orders Made in Respect of Health Service Executive Areas

	Family Adoptions	%	Non-Family Adoptions	%	Total	%	Census 2002 % of total population
Health Service Executives							
Eastern	56	37%	23	33%	79	36%	35%
Midland	15	10%	2	3%	17	8%	6%
Mid-Western	11	7%	3	4%	14	6%	9%
North-Eastern	14	9%	6	9%	20	9%	8%
North-Western	9	6%	4	6%	13	6%	6%
South-Eastern	19	12%	8	12%	27	12%	11%
Southern	22	14%	17	25%	39	18%	15%
Western	7	5%	6	9%	13	6%	10%
TOTAL	153	100%	69	100%	222	100%	100%

Table 4 Orders made in respect of placements by each Adoption Society & HSE area

Society	2005	2006	Health Service Executive	2005	2006
Cunamh	7	10	Eastern	8	5
PACT	2	2	Midland	0	2
St Louise AS	1	0	Mid-Western	4	3
CLANN	0	0	North-Eastern	3	4
St Catherine's Adoption Society	0	2	North-Western	4	1
St Mura's Adoption Society	0	3	South-Eastern	5	7
			Southern	8	12
			Western	3	2
Total	10	17	Total	35	36

Table 5 Structure of Adoptive Families

	Family Adoptions		Non-Family Adoptions		Total
No other children	33	22%	30	43%	63
Natural children only	109	71%	11	16%	120
Adopted Children only	0	0%	26	38%	26
Natural and adopted children	11	7%	2	3%	13
Total	153	100%	69	100%	222

Table 6 Age of Child at Adoption Order

	Family Adoptions		Non-Family Adoptions		Total
Under 1 Year	0	0%	6	9%	6
Between 1 and up to 2 years	2	1%	27	39%	29
Between 2 and up to 3 years	0	0%	13	19%	13
Between 3 and up to 4 years	0	0%	3	4%	3
Between 4 and up to 5 years	5	3%	3	4%	8
Between 5 and up to 10 years	62	41%	8	12%	70
Between 10 and up to 15 years	62	41%	6	9%	68
Between 15 and up to 18 years	22	14%	3	4%	25
TOTAL	153	100%	69	100%	222

Table 7 Length Of Time Between Date of Placement for Adoption and Date Adoption order was Made

	Less than 2 mths.	2-6 mths.	6-10 mths.	10-14 mths.	14-18 mths.	18-24 mths.	Over 2 yrs.	Over 5 yrs.	Total
Cunamh	0	0	6	3	0	0	1	0	10
PACT	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
St.Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
CLANN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St.Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St.Maura's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Health Service Executives	0	0	6	9	2	2	2	15	36
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	0	2	8	3	1	1	0	15
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	0	0	16	20	6	5	5	17	69
	<i>0%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>23%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>9%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 8 Age of Child at placement for adoption

	Up to 6 mths.	6-9 mths.	9-12 mths.	12-18 mths.	18-24 mths.	2-5 yrs.	over 5 yrs.	Total
Cunamh	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	10
PACT	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
St.Catherine's Adoption Society	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
CLANN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St.Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St.Maura's Adoption Society	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Health Service Executives	16	9	8	0	1	2	0	36
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	4	3	1	3	1	3	0	15
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	30	18	9	5	2	5	0	69
	43%	26%	13%	7%	3%	7%	0%	100%

Table 9 Information on Natural Fathers

	No identifying information	Identity known but not notified of application*	Notified by the Adoption Board but did not request or did not attend hearing	Consulted by Agency / HSE	Heard by Board	Took proceedings **	Deceased	Total
Cunamh	4	1	3	1	1	0	0	10
PACT	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
CLANN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Mura's Adoption Society	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
Health Service Executives	20	5	4	5	1	0	1	36
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	15
Private Adoption Placements (Irish)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Family Adoptions	21	6	109	2	3	1	11	153
TOTAL	63	13	116	10	6	2	12	222
	28%	6%	52%	5%	3%	1%	5%	100%

* This figure includes cases where the fathers' identities were known but were untraceable for notification purposes.

** This figure refers to fathers who took proceedings in respect of the child subsequent to being notified of the adoption application or being heard by the board.

Table 10 Age of Adopters at Date of Adoption Order

	18-30 Years	30-35 Years	35-40 Years	40-45 Years	Over 45	Total
Cunamh	0	5	13	2	0	20
PACT	0	1	1	2	0	4
St.Catherine's Adoption Society	0	1	1	0	2	4
CLANN	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Mura's Adoption Society	0	4	1	1	0	6
Health Service Executive	2	6	16	19	28	71
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	0	0	10	12	8	30
Private Adoption Placements (Ireland)	0	0	0	0	1	1
Family Adoptions	59	118	83	24	18	302
TOTAL	61	135	125	60	57	438
	<i>14%</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>29%</i>	<i>14%</i>	<i>13%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 11 Age of Natural Mother at Date of Birth of Child

	Under 16	16-18	18-21	21-25	25-30	Over 30	Not known	Total
Cunamh	1	0	1	4	3	1	0	10
PACT	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
St. Catherine's Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
CLANN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Louise Adoption Society	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Mura's Adoption Society	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Health Service Executive	0	3	4	8	4	16	1	36
Private Adoption Placements (Irish)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Private Adoption Placements (outside State)	1	0	0	3	3	3	5	15
TOTAL	2	3	6	17	12	22	7	69
	3%	4%	9%	25%	17%	32%	10%	100%

Table 12 Analysis of Placements 1996 - 2006

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of Applications Received	407	431	368	367	400	332	329	298	286	300	273
Number of Orders Made	405	422	400	317	303	293	266	263	273	253	222
Orders made in respect of children placed by:											
Adoption Societies	115	95	68	53	46	32	45	23	26	10	17
Health Boards / Health Service Executive	26	41	31	37	31	49	31	45	42	34	36
Natural Mothers & Others	21	36	37	30	19	16	23	24	20	18	16
Orders made in respect of family adoptions	243	250	264	197	207	196	167	171	185	191*	153

*This was recorded in error as 225 in the 2005 Annual Report

Table 13 Birth and Adoption Trends in Ireland 1964 - 2006

Year	Total Births	Non-Marital Births	% of Total Births	No. of Adoptions	Adoptions as a % of Non-Marital Births
1964	64072	1292	2.02	1003	77.63
1965	63525	1403	2.21	1049	74.77
1966	62215	1436	2.31	1178	82.03
1967	61307	1540	2.51	1493	96.95
1968	61004	1558	2.55	1343	86.20
1969	62912	1642	2.61	1225	74.60
1970	64382	1709	2.65	1414	82.74
1971	67551	1842	2.73	1305	70.85
1972	68527	2005	2.93	1291	64.39
1973	68713	2167	3.15	1402	64.70
1974	68907	2309	3.35	1415	61.28
1975	67178	2515	3.74	1443	57.38
1976	67718	2545	3.76	1104	43.38
1977	68892	2877	4.18	1127	39.17
1978	70299	3003	4.27	1223	40.73
1979	72539	3337	4.60	988	29.61
1980	74064	3723	5.03	1115	29.95
1981	72158	3914	5.42	1191	30.43
1982	70843	4358	6.15	1191	27.33
1983	67117	4552	6.78	1184	26.01
1984	64062	5116	7.99	1195	23.36
1985	62388	5282	8.47	882	16.70
1986	61620	5946	9.65	800	13.45
1987	58433	6347	10.86	715	11.27
1988	54600	6483	11.87	649	10.01
1989	52018	6671	12.82	615	9.22
1990	53044	7767	14.64	648	8.34
1991	52718	8912	16.91	590	6.62
1992	51089	9211	18.03	523	5.68
1993	49304	9826	19.93	500	5.09
1994	47928	9904	20.66	424	4.28
1995	48530	10788	22.23	490	4.54
1996	50390	12484	24.77	405	3.24
1997	52311	13892	26.56	422	3.04
1998	53551	15133	28.26	400	2.64
1999	53354	16461	30.85	317	1.93
2000	54239	17235	31.78	303	1.76
2001	57882	18049	31.18	293	1.62
2002	60521	18815	31.09	266	1.41
2003	61517	19313	31.39	263	1.36
2004	61684	19935	32.32	273	1.37
2005	61042	19528	32.00	253	1.30
2006	64237	21295	33.15	222	1.04

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

Table 14 Total number of entries in the register of Foreign Adoptions, 1991-2006, entered pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act 1991 (Applicants Ordinarily Resident in Ireland)

Country	No of Children	% of Total
Russia	952	29.84
Romania	785	24.60
China	309	9.69
Vietnam	324	10.19
Guatemala	176	5.51
Belarus	144	4.51
Kazakhstan	127	3.98
Ukraine	78	2.45
Thailand	71	2.23
Ethiopia	60	1.88
India	28	0.88
Mexico	31	0.97
Brazil	17	0.53
Colombia	16	0.50
Paraguay	16	0.50
Philippines	10	0.31
Taiwan	10	0.31
Texas, USA	6	0.18
Peru	5	0.16
Bulgaria	5	0.16
Uganda	2	0.06
Chile	1	0.03
El Salvador	1	0.03
Israel	1	0.03
Japan	1	0.03
Lebanon	1	0.03
Massachusetts, USA	1	0.03
Bolivia	1	0.03
Sri Lanka	1	0.03
Venezuela	1	0.03
Zambia	1	0.03
Kenya	1	0.03
Zimbabwe	1	0.03
Morocco	1	0.03
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	0.03
Malawi	1	0.03
Libya	1	0.03
Florida	2	0.06
Total	3190	100

*Please note that there is no legal requirement for adoptive parents to apply to have an entry made in the register of foreign adoptions.

Table 15 Number of persons whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in 2006 pursuant to Section 2 of the Adoption Act, 1991. (Adoptions effected in a country where the adopter(s) were domiciled at the time of the Adoption)

Country	2006
China	1
Colombia	1
England	15
Kenya	1
Mexico	1
Northern Ireland	1
Scotland	1
Texas, USA	1
Total	22

Table 16 Number of persons whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions in 2006 pursuant to section 4 of the Adoption Act, 1991. (Adoptions effected abroad where adopter(s) were ordinarily resident)

Country	2006
Alberta, Canada	1
Argentina	1
California, USA	2
Connecticut	1
England	17
Florida, USA	1
France	2
Georgia, USA	1
Ghana	3
Hong Kong	1
Illinois	2
Japan	1
Manitoba, Canada	2
Massachusetts, USA	7
Mexico	1
Missouri, USA	2
Nevada, USA	1
New York	7
Northern Ireland	2
Northern Territory, Australia	1
NSW, Australia	1
Ohio, USA	3
Ontario, Canada	1
Quebec, Canada	1
Saskatchewan	1
Scotland	3
Singapore	2
South Africa	6
Spain	1
Switzerland	2
Ukraine	1
USA	1
Victoria, Australia	1
Vietnam	2
Wisconsin, USA	2
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	1
Total	86

Table 17 Number of persons adopted into Ireland whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions from 2001 to 2006 pursuant to section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991.

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Belarus	11	27	39	56	2	0
Bosnia & Herzegovina	0	0	0	1	0	0
Brazil	0	0	0	1	0	0
Bulgaria	1	1	0	0	0	0
China	16	51	56	60	52	33
Colombia	3	1	1	0	0	0
Ethiopia	0	2	7	16	13	14
Florida, USA	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kazakhstan	19	23	17	9	16	15
Kenya	1	0	0	0	0	0
Malawi	0	0	0	1	0	0
Mexico	1	1	3	3	9	4
Romania	48	13	8	2	0	1
Russia	45	107	139	189	131	143
Taiwan	3	1	1	1	1	1
Texas	0	0	1	0	2	0
Thailand	5	15	16	8	2	6
Ukraine	0	12	14	12	27	11
Vietnam	10	81	39	16	92	68
Total	163	335	341	375	347	298

Table 18 Entries into the Register of Foreign Adoptions 1991 – 2006

Year	Number of Adoptions effected Overseas and entered into the Register of Foreign Adoptions
1991	58
1992	305
1993	59
1994	67
1995	90
1996	117
1997	148
1998	260
1999	284
2000	323
2001	285
2002	440
2003	487
2004	486
2005	439
2006	406
Total	4254

Table 19 Number of Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability granted and refused by the Adoption Board under the Adoption Act, 1991

Year	Number of Declarations Granted	Number of Declarations Refused
1991	4	1
1992	40	1
1993	54	6
1994	63	3
1995	109	4
1996	117	5
1997	176	1
1998	206	3
1999	242	1
2000	282	1
2001	391	1
2002	399	1
2003	468	0
2004	461	0
2005	403	3
2006	400	3
Total	3,815	34

Table 20 Declarations of Eligibility and Suitability and Extensions granted by the Adoption Board by County in 2006

County	Approval to adopt one child	Approval to adopt one child / two siblings	Total declarations granted	Extensions granted	Total declarations granted and extensions granted
Carlow	7	-	7	5	12
Cavan	5	1	6	3	9
Clare	11	-	11	9	20
Cork	77	-	77	49	126
Donegal	14	-	14	13	27
Dublin	91	-	91	73	164
Galway	14	1	15	17	32
Kerry	2	-	2	9	11
Kildare	14	-	14	17	31
Kilkenny	5	4	9	5	14
Laois	1	-	1	8	9
Leitrim	2	2	4	3	7
Limerick	20	4	24	14	38
Longford	2	-	2	1	3
Louth	11	1	12	10	22
Mayo	6	-	6	10	16
Meath	13	-	13	19	32
Monaghan	4	-	4	4	8
Offaly	5	-	5	7	12
Roscommon	4	-	4	3	7
Sligo	6	2	8	5	13
Tipperary	18	-	18	17	35
Waterford	13	2	15	13	28
Westmeath	10	1	11	7	18
Wexford	12	2	14	10	24
Wicklow	11	2	13	8	21
Totals	378	22	400	339	739

Table 21 Sex of child, by country of origin, in respect of entries made in the Register of Foreign Adoptions pursuant to Section 5 of the Adoption Act, 1991 for the year 2006

Country	Boys	Girls	Total
China	2	31	33
Ethiopia	7	7	14
Florida, USA	1	1	2
Kazakhstan	6	9	15
Mexico	3	1	4
Romania	0	1	1
Russia	81	62	143
Taiwan	0	1	1
Thailand	3	3	6
Ukraine	8	3	11
Vietnam	24	44	68
Total	135	163	298

Table 22 Sex of child whose adoptions have been processed under the Adoption Act, 1952 for the year 2006

Country	Boys	Girls	Total
Guatemala	4	6	10
India	0	3	3
Philippines	2	0	2
Total	6	9	15

Table 23 Sex of child whose adoptions have been processed under the Adoption Act, 1988 for the year 2006

Country	Boys	Girls	Total
Total	0	0	0

Table 24 Number of Sole Applicants who adopted children from abroad whose adoptions were (a) recognised under the Adoption Act, 1991 and (b) processed under the Adoption Acts, 1952 and 1988 for the years 1991 to 2006.

Year	Number of Sole Applicants who had adoptions entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions under the Adoption Act, 1991	Number of Sole Applicants whose applications were processed under the Adoption Act, 1952	Number of Sole Applicants whose applications were processed under the Adoption Act, 1988
1991	0	0	0
1992	7	0	0
1993	2	0	2
1994	1	0	0
1995	0	0	0
1996	0	0	0
1997	0	0	0
1998	2	0	0
1999	2	0	0
2000	7	0	0
2001	1	0	0
2002	7	0	0
2003	15	0	1
2004	22	1	0
2005	18	0	0
2006	24	0	0
Total	108	1	3

Table 25 Written Adoption Information and Tracing Enquiries, 2006

Information & Tracing Statistics	2006	%
Applications for Release of Birth Certificate		
Approved	43	65%
Refused	1	2%
Awaiting report from Placement Agency	22	33%
Withdrawn or Discontinued	0	0%
Total	66	9%
Enquiries by Adoptees for Contact with Natural Parent		
Referred to Placement Agency for an active trace	67	49%
Tracing organised by the Board	14	10%
Request for non-identifying information	34	25%
Request for medical information	18	13%
Request for information before placement	2	1%
Request appointment for counselling	2	1%
Total	137	18%
Enquiries by Natural Family for Contact with Adoptee		
Natural Mother tracing Adopted Person	25	52%
Natural Father tracing Adopted Person	7	15%
Sibling/ Half Sibling tracing Adopted Person	9	19%
Relative of Natural Mother/ Father tracing Adopted Person	7	15%
Total	48	6%
Enquiries where applicant was not adopted under Irish Law		
Enquiries received	115	100%
Total	115	15%
Enquiries by Agencies		
Practice Issues	4	3%
Information From File	100	67%
Referred to Other Agency	18	12%
Other	27	18%
Total	149	20%
Tracing enquiries sent to adoptioninfo e-mail		
Tracing enquiries sent by e-mail	230	100%
Total	230	31%
Complaints received by the Board		
Complaints received	3	100%
Total	3	0%
Total General Enquiries received by I & T in 2006	748	100%

Percentage figures are rounded

Table 26 NACPR Registrations and Matches

National Adoption Contact Preference Register	2005	2006	Total	%
No. of Adoptees registering	3601	750	4351	71%
No. of Relatives registering	1459	296	1755	29%
Total NACPR applications	5060	1046	6106	100%

NACPR Matches	2005	2006	Total
No. of matches generated	100	140	240

NACPR launched on 30th March 2005
 Percentage figures are rounded

Table 27 Written Information & Tracing Enquiries received by the Adoption Board in 2006 where the relevant HSE/ Adoption Tracing Agency is known

	2006	%
The Adoption Board		
St. Therese's Adoption Society (files with the Adoption Board)	5	36%
Private Placement	8	57%
Family Adoptions	1	7%
Total	14	4%
Health Service Executive		
Health Service Executive Dublin North East	60	30%
Health Service Executive West	41	20%
Health Service Executive Dublin Mid Leinster	6	3%
Health Service Executive South	94	47%
Total	201	50%
Other Agencies		
Barnardos	8	4%
Cúnamh	58	32%
National Maternity Hospital	2	1%
PACT	11	6%
RGAS	11	6%
Sacred Heart Adoption Society	32	17%
St. Attracta's Adoption Society	5	3%
St. Brigid's Adoption Society	7	4%
St. Patrick's Guild	48	26%
St. Mura's Adoption Society	2	1%
Total	184	46%
Total Enquiries by Tracing Agency	399	100%

These written enquiries are also incorporated in Table 25



Appendix A

The Adoption Authority of Ireland

Business Plan 2006

End Year Review

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.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Prepare and publish 2005 Business Plan Review and 2006 Business Plan.	February 2006	Director of Services & Heads of Units	Publication of 2005 Business Plan review and 2006 Business Plan.	2005 Business Plan review completed. 2006 Business Plan published.
Prepare and publish 2005 Annual Report	September 2006	Registrar & Heads of Units	Publication of 2005 Annual Report.	2005 Annual Report published.
Review case tracking and monitoring procedures in each section. Assess internal procedures and practices. Design required IT programmes to meet needs, and implement.	2006	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Complete systems design work. Commence implementation.	Information & Tracing case tracking system introduced. Proposal for Domestic Adoption case tracking system submitted to DoHC systems unit for approval.

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.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Establish forum at the Adoption Board involving the new Health Services Executive and the Adoption Agencies.	End 2006	Senior Management Team.	Meetings held, key service development and delivery issues addressed.	Regular meetings with HSE / Adoption Agency representatives on adoption and related issues throughout 2006
Continue to develop mechanisms for client / stakeholder feedback on adoption services. Feedback mechanisms will be further developed in 2006 to obtain client feedback on services.	2006	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Feedback mechanisms in place	Information & Tracing Protocols (including feedback mechanisms) drafted. Work ongoing at HSE level on domestic adoption guidelines.
Introduce a Customer Service Action Plan	Mid 2006	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Launch of Customer Service Action Plan	Customer Service Action Plan completed and submitted for Adoption Board approval.
Prepare and introduce formal customer complaints procedures at the Adoption Board.	November 2006	Section Heads	Introduction of customer complaints procedures in conjunction with Customer Service Action Plan.	I & T and Domestic Adoption complaints and appeals procedures included in final drafts of these respective guidelines to be published in 2007.

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.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Review progress in developing services and standards in Adoption Agencies.	2006	Head of Social Work S.I.U. and R.D.T.U.	Initial review complete.	<p>Draft of Social Work Section of I&T Protocols completed and submitted to Board for approval.</p> <p>Adoption Agency feedback in respect of Domestic Adoption Guidelines received and incorporated into draft guidelines.</p>
Agree specifications for research project in Information & Tracing and Domestic Adoption areas.	End 2006	Heads of D.A.U. & A.I.T.U.	<p>Report to be completed on initial working of NACPR.</p> <p>Research on natural parents to supplement Domestic Adoption Framework.</p> <p>Initiate research on experience of open adoption in Ireland.</p>	<p>Draft report on NACPR prepared.</p> <p>Funding for this research to be sought in 2007 after completion of major ICA Study.</p> <p>See above.</p>

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Complete Domestic Adoption Standardised Framework. Collate feedback from agencies and practitioners and incorporate into the Implementation group's final report.	End 2006	Head of Social Work	Guidelines complete and with HSE practitioners for final comment.	Feedback from national consultation received in 2006. Final comments from practitioners awaited.
Monitor progress on Intercountry Adoption Research Project.	Ongoing	Head of Social Work	Successful monitoring of progress of project via Implementation Group chaired by Head of Social Work at the Board.	ICA research project ongoing. And expected to be completed by March, 2007 with public launch and conference on outcomes thereafter.
Provide training and support for agency staff to implement Information and Tracing Protocols	Ongoing	A.I.T.U. & Head of Social Work.	Training provided.	Training for practitioners will commence after approval of I&T Protocols in 2007. Conference on Contact preference Register held in last quarter 2006.

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.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Issue Protocols and Standards for the National Information & Tracing Service. Provide training to HSE & adoption agency practitioners on new Protocols and Standards.	Phased roll out in 2006.	A.I.T.U. and S.I.U.	Successful phased implementation of Service during 2006.	Final draft of Protocols document (incl. Social Work Practitioner Guidelines) prepared and to be submitted for Adoption Board approval in early 2007.
Review operation of NACPR. Prepare and publish report on 1 st year of operations.	March 2006.	A.I.T.U	Processing complete. Report published	Internal NACPR review complete. Consultation with service providers completed in October. Consultation with user groups to proceed in early 2007.
Complete Indexing and scanning of Adoption Board records.	End 2006.	A.I.T.U	Significant progress on indexing and scanning of Adoption files.	File indexing pilot scheme successfully undertaken by Adoption Board. Agreement reached with DOHC Records Management Unit to go to tender on files Indexing project, and, thereafter, to tender to scan the files.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Continue to deliver existing levels of services in Domestic Adoption,	Ongoing	Domestic Adoption Unit	Maintain current number of <u>Domestic</u> adoption Orders and completion of assessments to adopt.	222 adoption orders made to end of year 2006. 273 applications received in 2006. Birth fathers consulted on 22 pre-placement adoption reports completed by DAU. Guidelines for pre-placement counselling of clients by social workers to be prepared in 2007.
Continue to deliver existing levels of services in Inter-country Adoption	Ongoing	I.C.A.U.	Maintenance of average five week turnaround in routine declaration applications.	Average five week turnaround time for routine Declaration applications maintained. Extension requests are heard by the Board at the next available Board meeting.
Continue to deliver existing levels of services in Inter-country Adoption (continued)	Ongoing	I.C.A.U.	Hearing of extension requests at next available Board meeting. Speedy processing of applications for Foreign Adoption Registrar. Devolution of Garda Clearance work to local HSE Offices.	Standard Applications for entry onto Foreign Adoption Register are processed within two week. Garda Clearance work devolved to local HSE Offices. New form for post-placement reports for Romania completed.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Continue to deliver existing levels of service on the Information & Tracing front.	Ongoing	A.I.T.U.	<p>Initial enquiries are responded to within five days,</p> <p>Waiting period for initial interview with social worker reduced to three months.</p> <p>Waiting list for initiating full trace reduced to 6 months.</p> <p>Priority service given to Matches on NACPR.</p> <p>Ongoing revision of information booklets.</p>	<p>Five day response time generally adhered to for standard enquiries made to Unit.</p> <p>Priority continues to be given to NACPR matches.</p> <p>General waiting time commitments achieved.</p> <p>Preparing to Meet Guidelines updated at end 2006</p>
Ensure the smooth transition to revised adoption arrangements with Vietnam involving introduction of Mediation Agency.	2006	Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.	Arrangement comes into operation without any interruption to adoptions.	Targets fully met. Helping Hands Adoption Mediation Agency commenced operations from April, 2006.
Negotiations with the Belarusian authorities on a possible new adoption agreement.	2006	Senior Management Team & Head of I.C.A.U.	Seek resolution to difficulties arising with regard to possible adoption agreement with Belarus.	Negotiations between Irish and Belarusian authorities ongoing.

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.

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Continue to implement P.M.D.S. cycle and ensure role profiles reflect Corporate Plan and revised Business Plan objectives.	Ongoing.	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	P.M.D.S. cycle to be completed	P.M.D.S. cycle completed.
Continue to identify and meet staff training needs (both formal and on the job)	Ongoing	Senior Management Team & Heads of Units	Training Undertaken	Staff training is facilitated through Department of Health & Children Change Management Unit. Training also facilitated by Council of Irish Adoption Agencies with particular reference to social work practice.
Manage implementation of Refurbishment of Adoption Board accommodation to provide better client services.	Mid 2006	Senior Management Team	Refurbishment project complete.	Refurbishment completed.

High Level Objective 6:

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

Actions	Date	Person(s) responsible	KPIs / Outputs	End-Year Review
Review progress on implementation of Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007.	End 2006	Senior Management Team	Completion of review process	Review of progress Corporate Plan ongoing.