

Summary of Adoption Rights Alliance recommendations regarding adoption legislation

1. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately introduce legislation to grant adopted people automatic access to their birth certificates. (Section 6.2, Legislative Proposals)
2. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately introduce legislation to grant adopted people access to all files, records, documents and papers on their origins, family histories and early care and medical records held within the Irish State, the UK and also in the US. (Section 6.3, Legislative Proposals)
3. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately introduce statutory based information and tracing services for **all** adopted people without a two tier system. (Section 6.1, Legislative Proposals)
4. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately place the National Adoption Contact Preference Register on a statutory footing. (Section 4, Legislative Proposals)
5. We recommend that the Irish State introduce measures to grant adopted people free access to all archives which may be of assistance to them in establishing their identities. (Section 1.4.1, Legislative Proposals)
6. We further recommend that the Irish State introduce Search and Reunion Leave for adopted people, who unlike any other citizens have to take time out of their lives to establish their family origins. (Section 1.4.1, Legislative Proposals)
7. We recommend that the Irish State amend existing equality legislation to include “circumstances of birth” in the grounds on which discrimination is considered unlawful. (Section 1.4.3, Legislative Proposals)
8. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that a statutory inquiry into illegal adoption practices is established. (Section 1.5.1, Legislative Proposals)
9. We further recommend that the AAI should compile and maintain a register of illegal adoptions as a matter of urgency. (Section 1.5.1, Legislative Proposals)
10. It should also establish an “Illegal adoptions Advisory group” and all files should be located and seized and a comprehensive tracing database should be compiled. (Section 1.5.1, Legislative Proposals)
11. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish State immediately introduce statutory rights for those secretly adopted from Ireland to the US, to include information and tracing rights as well as repatriation options for those who wish to avail of such a facility. (Section 1.5.2, Legislative Proposals)
12. We also recommend that the Irish State, in conjunction with the equivalent authorities in the US, provide subsidised “homeland tours”. (Section 1.5.2, Legislative Proposals)
13. Adoption Rights Alliance further recommends that a register of adoptions from Ireland to America and other countries (e.g. the 2,000+ sent to the US for adoption) should be

established and maintained (i.e. where new, previously unknown cases emerge). (Section 1.5.2, Legislative Proposals)

14. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends a statutory inquiry into vaccine trials carried out at Mother and Baby Homes and other infant facilities that homed babies intended for adoption. (Section 1.5.4, Legislative Proposals)
15. We recommend that a statutory inquiry into practices at Mother and Baby Homes be established, to include analysis of the untaxed sums earned by these homes, through release fees, contributions paid by natural mothers, donations from adoptive parents and children's allowance collected by religious orders. (Section 1.5.5, Legislative Proposals)
16. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that a statutory provision is put in place to ensure the re-establishment of the identities of those whose births were not registered. (Section 1.5.6, Legislative Proposals)
17. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government expedite a referendum to amend the Constitution to strengthen the rights of the child, including the child's right to their identity. (Section 3.9, Legislative Proposals)
18. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately place Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) operations under the Freedom of Information & Ombudsman's Acts. (Section 6.5, Legislative Proposals)
19. We further recommend the removal of the gagging order on the Chief Executive of the AAI. (Section 6.5, Legislative Proposals)
20. We also recommend a complete root and branch reform of the AAI. (Section 6.5, Legislative Proposals)
21. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish State introduce legislation to strictly regulate accredited bodies in *all* areas of their operations, irrespective of whether or not they have been accredited under the new legislation. (Section 6.6, Legislative Proposals)
22. We further recommend that the Irish government immediately place accredited bodies/adoption agency operations under the Freedom of Information & Ombudsman's Acts. (Section 6.6, Legislative Proposals)
23. We also recommend that all remaining church run accredited bodies (or adoption agencies if accreditation was not sought or granted) should be immediately deregistered and their files seized and relocated to a secure archiving facility, employing competent, impartial administrators to disseminate the information. (Section 6.6, Legislative Proposals)
24. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that adoption files be placed under the Data Protection Acts 1988, 2003. (Section 6.7, Legislative Proposals)
25. We further recommend that all adoption files are seized and placed in a central archive and placed under the responsibility of a qualified archivist, so they can be made available to the adopted people concerned. (Section 6.7, Legislative Proposals)

26. We recommend the establishment of a “Monitoring Advisory Group” to oversee the relocation of files. (Section 6.7, Legislative Proposals)
27. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that a statutory provision be introduced immediately to provide the right for adopted people to know they are adopted. (Section 6.8, Legislative Proposals)
28. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish government immediately legislate for open adoptions. (Section 6.9, Legislative Proposals)
29. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish State introduce stricter regulations for intercountry adoptions, promoting domestic fostering as an alternative for families wishing to offer homes to children in need. (Section 6.10, Legislative Proposals)
30. We also recommend that all bilateral agreements are abolished and prohibited. (Section 6.10, Legislative Proposals)
31. We also recommend that Ireland ratify the Revised European Convention on the Adoption of Children. (Section 6.10, Legislative Proposals)
32. We also recommend that intercountry adoption arrangements are completely reassessed, with a view to working with organisations such as World Vision to promote child sponsorship programmes in developing countries in order to maximise the possibility of children being raised within their own family and/or community. (Section 6.10, Legislative Proposals)
33. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the statutory right to an adoption assessment is removed. (Section 6.11, Legislative Proposals)
34. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that a *guardian ad litem* is appointed to the AAI Board. (Section 6.12, Legislative Proposals)
35. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that statutory based follow up services and reporting procedures are implemented to ensure that the welfare of children adopted from abroad is of paramount importance. (Section 6.13, Legislative Proposals)
36. We recommend that the Irish State immediately legislate to outlaw anonymous egg and sperm donation and anonymous embryo adoption. (Section 6.14, Legislative Proposals)
37. We recommend a full ethical review of Assisted Human reproduction practices in Ireland, consulting those affected by closed secret adoption. (Section 6.14, Legislative Proposals)
38. We further recommend that full statutory based information rights be afforded to those conceived by egg, sperm and embryo donation. (Section 6.14, Legislative Proposals)
39. Given that there is a dire need for social workers in other areas, such as child protection, we recommend that (once adoption files and birth certificates are made available to adopted people) where appropriate, adoption social workers are redirected to child protection duties. (Section 7, Legislative Proposals)

Issues arising from the Programme for Government:

Pg 31: The Health Service Executive will cease to exist over time. Its functions will return to the Minister for Health and the Department of Health and Children; or be taken over by the Universal Health Insurance system. Staff will be deployed accordingly.

Please note: In both of the above scenarios, we strongly recommend that knowledge specific to individual social workers and agencies is preserved and stored at a central location, e.g. passwords, shorthand, codes and abbreviations. In the case of the abolition of the Health Service Executive, we recommend that the adoption files are transferred to a secure central location and placed under the responsibility of a qualified archivist.

40. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the National Counselling Service be made available to those affected by adoption. (Section 7.2, Legislative Proposals)

Please note: We strongly recommend the establishment (in conjunction with representative groups for adopted people and natural parents) of training courses for counsellors wishing to provide services to those affected by adoption. Adopted people often complain that most counsellors do not understand the issues they face. We also recommend that this training when established should be made compulsory for adoption social workers. (Section 7.2, Legislative Proposals)

41. Adoption Rights Alliance recommends that the Irish State establish an online service similar to the Find My Past service in the UK. (Section 7.3, Legislative Proposals)
42. We recommend that these services should be either free or discounted for adopted people and natural parents. (Section 7.3, Legislative Proposals)
43. We further recommend that the computerised system is implemented at the Research Room at the General Registrar's Office. (Section 7.3, Legislative Proposals)
44. We also recommend that Search and Reunion Leave is provided for adopted people. (Section 7.3, Legislative Proposals)

Please note: We urge the government to ensure that access to the hard copies of the birth, death and marriage registers is maintained as there is often crucial information contained in the books that does not appear on scans. (Section 7.3, Legislative Proposals)