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2 September, 2004

Circular 22/2004: Confined competition for appointment to the position of Head of Social Work in the Adoption Board (pending its establishment as the Adoption Authority).

A Dhuine Uasail

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to announce a confined competition for the position of Head of Social Work in the Adoption Authority.

Background

2. The Government has decided to establish an Adoption Authority and legislation is being prepared under which the Adoption Board will become an independent, statutory, executive agency to be called the Adoption Authority. This development reflects the changing pattern of adoption practice since the Board was established in 1952 and the need for the adoption service, nationally, to respond more effectively to current adoption needs.

3. The Adoption Authority's recently published Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007 provides a road map for the transition from Adoption Board to Adoption Authority and sets out the vision and guiding principles that will govern the operation of the new Adoption Authority and the objectives that will be pursued over the next four years. The new Adoption Authority will have overall responsibility for all adoption and adoption related services and will provide a range of new services. Pending the enactment of the necessary legislative provisions, administrative measures are being taken to implement change on the ground.

4. Reflecting the growing importance of Intercountry adoption, the Hague Convention on Intercountry adoption is to be ratified by Ireland shortly. Ratification will bring with it new obligations. In particular, the Adoption Authority will be designated as the "Central Authority" under the Convention. This will have a significant impact on the work of the Adoption Authority which will be required to develop working relations with the central authorities of all countries who have ratified the Hague Convention and to put in place new procedures to enable the technical requirements of the Convention to be met.

5. In addition to carrying out functions assigned to the Adoption Board under the Adoption Acts, 1952-1998, the Adoption Authority will act as the central authority and as a centre of excellence and best practice in relation to adoption practice, policy and research. The Adoption Authority will also oversee the devolution and delivery of integrated adoption services at local level. This will involve the development and management of new functions relating to extensive external liaison, consultation, guidance, development and

monitoring of standards, promotion of best practice, research, maintenance of new Registers and Indexes and new data management procedures and processes.

6. The Head of Social Work will play a key role as a member of the Adoption Authority's senior management team in terms of positioning the new Authority to develop as a centre of excellence on adoption and related services, delivering appropriate, comprehensive and quality services to our clients and stakeholders, and leading change in the provision of local services. S/he will also be expected to have the capacity to establish the credibility of the Adoption Authority in its new role among colleagues both nationally and internationally.

Job Description

7. The Head of Social Work will be a key member of the senior management team of the Adoption Authority and will report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Adoption Authority. S/he will work as part of the senior management team to implement the Adoption Authority's programme of change under the direction of the CEO. S/he will be primarily responsible for the management of the social work services of the Authority.

8. A key requirement for the Head of Social Work will be the need to manage and balance multiple briefs and to maintain a clear focus on the implementation of the Adoption Authority's business objectives by contributing to the overall planning, direction, and high-level management of a wide range of activities. In so doing the Head of Social Work will need to oversee and undertake a broad range of major policy development, business planning, and service delivery functions.

9. In particular, the Head of Social Work will

- (i) manage and direct the Authority's social work service, including supervision, training, performance, and management of staff members of the social work team;
- (ii) lead and oversee the successful implementation of a major modernisation and change programme in the role of the social work services team of the Adoption Authority, in particular in relation to the setting, monitoring, evaluation and inspection of standards and processes;
- (iii) build up and promote an extensive external liaison network, including the provision of consultation and guidance on standards and inspection, promotion of best practice, quality assurance, training and public information and advice and support to local health boards, adoption agencies and other local adoption services;
- (iv) direct the commissioning and conduct of research into adoption practice and policy nationally and internationally, evaluate the outcomes of such research, and oversee the dissemination and application of the learning resulting from this and other research on the ground;
- (v) oversee the casework of the Adoption Authority's social work service and sensitive issues which may arise in relation to, inter alia, the Voluntary Contact Register, National Search Service, Accessing Information on Record and Intercountry applications;

- (vi) oversee the development of structures and relationships to support devolved adoption services delivery at local health board level;
- (vii) liaise with the other members of the Adoption Authority's management team to deliver integrated operations and services; and
- (viii) undertake any other duties as directed by the CEO.

Personal attributes

10. Candidates must have:

- a recognised primary degree in the social sciences field
- a proven capacity to manage available resources and deliver results
- an ability to lead, manage and motivate individuals and teams
- a strong track record and credibility in the social work/probation field
- strong analysis and evaluation skills, sound judgement and decisiveness, and administrative and organisational management abilities at an appropriate level.
- excellent communication skills and the ability to communicate effectively, both within the organisation and with outside bodies
- good inter-personal skills, including an ability to establish and maintain key external relationships
- a good knowledge of adoption practice and legislation in Ireland.

It would be an advantage for candidates to have:

- a post primary degree in the social services field and/or relevant national and/or international social services related research experience.

Eligibility

11. To be eligible to compete, prospective candidates must on the latest date for receipt of completed applications be serving at least in an established capacity at Senior Probation and Welfare Officer level (or equivalent) and have a professional (NQSW or equivalent) Social Worker qualification.

Conditions of appointment

12. A successful candidate must be in a position to take up duty without undue delay. A twelve month probation period will apply to this posting. On satisfactory completion of this probation period, a successful candidate will be confirmed as the Head of Social Work in the Adoption Authority. In the event of the officer's service with the Adoption Authority not being satisfactory during the twelve month probation period, he/she will not be confirmed in the post and will return to their previous grade.

Salary Scale

13. The current salary scale for this post (with effect from 1st July, 2004) is:

Modified Scale: €70,578 - €73,571 - €76,544 - € 79,541 - € 82,066 - € 84,684 (after three years satisfactory service at maximum), and € 87,301 (after six years satisfactory service at maximum).

Personal Pension Contribution Scale: €74,294 - €77,445 - €80,574 - €83,726 - €86,385 - €89,139 (after three years satisfactory service at maximum), and €91,895 (after six years satisfactory service at maximum).

Starting pay will be calculated in accordance with the provisions of Department of Public Service Circular 34/77 (Starting Pay on Promotion or Establishment).

Officers on Probation, Special Leave, etc.

14. Officers on probation are not eligible to compete except where they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade and they have served continuously since satisfactorily completing a period of probation (periods of special leave without pay should not be considered to break continuity of service for this purpose).

15. Officers on special leave with pay may apply, if otherwise eligible. Officers on special leave without pay (e.g. to serve with the EU) may be eligible - Personnel Sections should check individual cases not covered by Department of Finance Circular 33/91 with this Department.

16. Officers on career break may apply if the terms of their career break conform with the provisions of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

17. A candidate who resigns, retires, or is dismissed from his/her post will cease to be eligible for appointment from this competition.

The Competition

18. Selection will be by competitive interview conducted by the Civil Service Commissioners. The Commissioners may, on the advice of the interview board (who will examine the applications of all candidates by reference to the nature of the duties and the personal requirements outlined at paragraphs 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 above), decide that not all of the candidates will be invited to attend before the board for interview.

19. In addition, the Commissioners may, at their discretion, on the advice of the interview board, require candidates to undergo a preliminary interview, which will determine whether candidates are fully qualified for appointment, and invite only those who reach the requisite standard to attend for competitive interview.

20. The interviews will be conducted by a board(s) set up by the Civil Service Commissioners.

21. In placing in order of merit the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, the Civil Service Commission will give credit for proficiency in both Irish and English, in accordance with Department of Public Service Circular 43/75 and Department of Finance Circular 30/90, to candidates qualified for the award of such credit

on or before the date of the interview, or such other date as may be agreed between the Official and Staff Sides.

Application Forms

22. Application forms are available online on the Civil Service Commissioners website at www.publicjobs.ie or can be forwarded on request from the Office of the Civil Service Commissioners. **Candidates should return their completed application forms via the online service or send them directly to the Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Civil Service & Local Appointments Commissions, Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1** as soon as possible but not later than **23 September 2004**. **This closing date must be strictly observed.**

23. The Civil Service Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to competitive interview. For each such candidate the Personnel Officer will be required:

(i) to certify that he/she

- has worked well and been satisfactory in his/her present grade,
- has been satisfactory in general conduct,
- fulfils the conditions of **eligibility** set out in paragraphs 7 -11 above,

and

(ii) to send to the Commission an assessment of the candidate's suitability for

- appointment to the post applied for, and
- promotion (if appropriate),

on a form to be supplied by the Civil Service Commissioners.

24. Candidates should note that (i) eligibility for the competition and (ii) health and the level of sick leave are not verified by the Civil Service Commissioners until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment. Admission to the competition, therefore, does not imply acceptance by the Commissioners. In particular, candidates should note that the Personnel Officer will not have verified health and the level of sick leave of those called to competitive interview - accordingly, admission to the competition, and/or an invitation to competitive interview does not imply that they meet the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a successful candidate's suitability from the point of view of health and sick leave the Commission will have regard to Public Service Circular 34/76 (as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91, 33/99 and 17/03). Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility, are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with the application.

Circulation

25. Personnel Sections should bring this Circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their Departments and associated Offices without delay, including eligible officers on maternity leave, career break or any other forms of leave.

26. If candidates have any queries about this Circular they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed directly to the Civil Service Commission.
27. Queries with regard to the post to be filled should be addressed directly to the Mr. John Keegan, Director of Services, Adoption Authority, Shelbourne House, Shelbourne Road, Dublin 2.
28. Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility are advised to clarify their position with their Personnel Section before proceeding with the application.
29. Interviews are expected to take place during the week commencing 18th October, 2004. The onus is on candidates to make themselves available for interview at short notice. Requests for postponements will not be considered. If candidates have not been contacted by the Civil Service Commission by **11th October, 2004** they should contact the Civil Service Commission immediately.
30. The Civil Service is an equal opportunity employer. Recruitment to posts within the Service is on the basis of qualifications and the ability to carry out the responsibilities of the grade or post.

Mise le meas

John O'Connell
Assistant Secretary

Appendix 1

Role Profile for Head of Social Work at the Adoption Authority.

A. JOB DESCRIPTION

The Head of Social Work in the Adoption Authority will:

- (i)** manage and direct the Authority's social work service, including supervision, training, performance, and management of staff members of the social work team;
- (ii)** lead and oversee the successful implementation of a major modernisation and change programme in the role of the social work services team of the Adoption Authority, in particular in relation to the setting, monitoring, evaluation and inspection of standards and processes;
- (iii)** build up and promote an extensive external liaison network, including the provision of consultation and guidance on standards and inspection, promotion of best practice, quality assurance, training and public information and advice and support to local health boards, adoption agencies and other local adoption services;
- (iv)** direct the commissioning and conduct of research into adoption practice and policy nationally and internationally, evaluate the outcomes of such research, and oversee the dissemination and application of the learning resulting from this and other research on the ground;
- (v)** oversee the casework of the Adoption Authority's social work service and sensitive issues which may arise in relation to, inter alia, the Voluntary Contact Register, National Search Service, Accessing Information on Record and Intercountry applications;
- (vi)** oversee the development of structures and relationships to support devolved adoption services delivery at local health board level;
- (vii)** liaise with the other members of the Adoption Authority's management team to deliver integrated operations and services; and
- (viii)** undertake any other duties as directed by the CEO.

B. KEY FUNCTIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES

Operational

The Head of Social Work will be a member of the Adoption Authority's senior management team reporting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and will have a key operational role to play in planning and overseeing the development of comprehensive, high quality, and integrated adoption services, and leading change in the provision of local services. The newly appointed Head of Social Work will work

as part of the senior management team to implement the Adoption Authority's programme of change under the direction of the CEO and will be primarily responsible for the management of the social work services of the Authority.

At an operational level the Head of Social Work will have a key role to play in establishing the credibility of the new Authority both nationally and internationally. This will necessitate the promotion and development of strong working relationships with a wide and diverse network of stakeholders and stakeholder groups across the adoption area, including the children on whose behalf we provide adoption services, adult adopted people, natural parents and their families, adoptive parents and their families, and the adoption support groups, the local service providers and the International Bodies with which we work.

The Head of Social Work will also lead the Social Worker team at the Adoption Authority in developing and setting down guidelines and standards for the provision of adoption services and in overseeing the ongoing inspection, review and evaluation of such services. Head of Social work will also oversee and promote research and the publication of information about adoption and related services in Ireland.

Human Resources

The Head of Social Work will lead and oversee the implementation of a major change programme in the role of the Adoption Authority's social work services team. This will require the newly appointed Head of Social Work to manage and motivate staff at both an individual and a team level and to demonstrate strong leadership and communication skills.

The Head of Social Work will also need to identify appropriate formal and on the job training and development opportunities so as to provide staff with the competencies and work experience needed to achieve the staff development and the work objectives required. The new Head will also oversee the ongoing implementation of the PMDS function as a means of developing and managing the social worker services team and assigning work duties across the team.

Strategy/Planning

A key requirement for the Head of Social Work will be the need to manage and balance multiple briefs and to maintain a clear focus on the implementation of the Adoption Authority's business objectives by contributing to the overall planning, direction, and high-level management of a wide range of activities. In so doing the Head of Social Work will need to oversee and undertake a broad range of major policy development, business planning, and service delivery functions.

C. LONG TERM OBJECTIVES AND 2004 KEY DELIVERABLES

The recently published Adoption Authority of Ireland Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007 sets out six long-term corporate objectives for the new Authority. The new Head of Social Work and the social work services team reporting to the Head will be involved in the delivery of each of these Objectives over the 2004 – 2007 period. The following Objectives (and associated 2004 key deliverables set out in the Adoption Authority's 2004 Business Plan) are of particular relevance to the new Head of Social Work at the

Adoption Authority:

Objective one

The introduction of **major organisational change** to ensure, that the Adoption Authority is and remains, an efficient and effective organisation.

Key Tasks include:

New organisational structures and development, deployment of more efficient and effective organisation management processes.

Objective Two

Development as an organisation committed to **open and consultative processes**. Facilitate all our clients through the provision of information, advice and other appropriate supports.

Key Tasks include:

Development of an appropriate level of involvement and other support arrangements with stakeholder groups both as a means of getting their input to the development of our services and supporting them in their activities; Development of appropriate feedback systems for our clients and stakeholder groups.

Objective Three

Develop the Adoption Authority as **a centre of excellence and leadership**, which promotes the delivery of quality, accountable, client-focused adoption services.

Key Tasks include:

Developing and embedding quality standards and systems of inspection for adoption services; developing evidence based research programmes and disseminating the findings of best national and international research; provide and support training and specialist advisory services for those working in adoption to reinforce best practice.

Objective Four

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

Key Tasks include:

Putting in place an integrated set of Standardised Frameworks for the delivery of adoption services to ensure provision of a uniform and timely service at local level across the country, committing to the continuous review and development of services so that we can plan for changing needs into the future, and ensuring that services and information about services is more easily accessible.

The Corporate Plan 2004 – 2007 and the 2004 Business Plan are both available on the Adoption Authority's website at www.adoptionboard.ie.

D. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The following critical success factors will impact on the delivery of the objectives and key tasks set out above:

A clear legislative framework, which empowers the Adoption Authority to carry out its expanded remit; co-operation and active support from stakeholders and stakeholder groups; provision of the necessary human and financial resources at the central and local level; building the capabilities of staff, and supporting capacity building in the wider adoption services; benefiting from the opportunity that the wider health service reform provides to re-organise and develop adoption services; and continuing progress at all levels of the adoption service on implementation of the Public Service Modernisation Programme.

Key Performance Indicators *(specifically, what key results, qualitative and quantitative, am I expected to show and what are the benchmarks by which success will be judged?)*

The person appointed to the Head of Social Work posting will be assessed through the probationary and PMDS process on the extent to which s/he has developed;

- (i) an understanding and appreciation of the role the social worker team at the Adoption Authority must fulfil over the period 2004 – 2007, and
- (ii) a capacity and capability to deliver on the new social worker structures and services required to ensure that the new Authority does deliver a modern, efficient, client focused adoption service, overseeing all aspects of adoption practice and procedure, to our clients and customers.

E. IDENTIFICATION OF COMPETENCIES FOR THE JOB

Key Behaviours and Attributes

- A proven capacity to manage available resources and deliver results.
- An ability to lead, manage and motivate individuals and teams.
- Sound judgement and decision making abilities.
- Strong administrative and organisational management abilities at an appropriate level.
- An ability to work effectively under pressure and consistently meet deadlines.

Knowledge and Skills required

- Strong analysis and evaluation skills.

- excellent communication skills and the ability to communicate effectively, both within the organisation and with outside bodies.
- good inter-personal skills, including an ability to establish and maintain key internal and external relationships
- a good knowledge of adoption practice and legislation in Ireland.