

**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



13 April 2023

Sarah Cremin
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Houses of the Oireachtas Service
Leinster House
Kildare St
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

Dear Ms. Cremin,

I refer to your correspondence of 24 March regarding the 2021 accounts of the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

The Department's Adoption Policy Unit (APU) received the draft accounts from the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) in February 2022. These were reviewed by APU and no issues were arising. The AAI then submitted them to the Comptroller and Auditor General, who provided the audit certificate on 24 June 2022. However, the AAI did not, in turn, submit these audited accounts to this Department until 12 January 2023. The Department subsequently laid these before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 19 January 2023.

The period between June and December 2022 was a time of exceptional operational and organisational pressure for the AAI, as the long awaited Birth Information and Tracing Act was enacted on 30 June 2022. The Authority played a key role on the Implementation Group tasked with making preparations for the commencement of the Act. The Authority itself had statutory responsibility for the delivery of a major Public Information Campaign and the development and management of the statutory Contact Preference Register, both of which launched on 01 July 2022. This resulted in a significant increase in workload for the AAI and, in this context, an administrative error occurred by which the final accounts were not sent to this Department.

APU have engaged with the Authority on this matter. The unit also met with the Audit Manager in the Office of the C&AG to explain the origin of this error.

This Department acknowledges that it should have followed up with the AAI when the return was not made. In collaboration with the AAI, the relevant unit has drawn up a calendar for the receipt of key governance and financial documents to mitigate the risk of a future reoccurrence.

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I trust this clarification is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin McCarthy
Secretary General
Designated Public Official under Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015