

ELECTION CANDIDATES! PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT FOR ADOPTED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Irish adopted people have no explicit statutory right to access their birth certificates or adoption records.

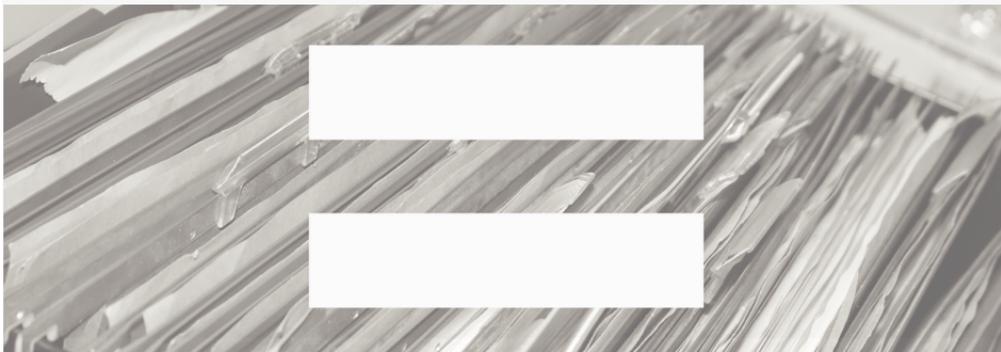
Birth certificates are public records and adopted people are the only Irish citizens discriminated against in this regard.

Adopted people are not demanding the right to a relationship. They are simply seeking the same rights to their personal data as every other Irish citizen.

**SIGN BELOW TO COMMIT YOUR SUPPORT FOR
EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ADOPTED PEOPLE**

Signed: _____

Date: _____



ADOPTION MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: For adopted people, information and contact go hand in hand.

FACT: Information about oneself and contact with natural family members are separate issues. Some adopted people do not want contact with their natural mothers at all, while others will wait for a period of time after obtaining their birth certificates before attempting to contact their natural mothers and/or family members.

MYTH: If adopted people are given access to their records they will knock on their natural mothers' doors.

FACT: Not all adopted people want contact. ARA provides resources to adopted people on how to legally obtain their birth certificates, and for those who are seeking contact, we recommend a discreet letter. Adopted people who wish to have contact with their natural mothers are highly unlikely to jeopardise the success of any relationship by arriving unannounced on their mothers' doorstep.

MYTH: Giving adopted people unfettered access to their personal data is a breach of natural mothers' privacy.

FACT: Since 1864, birth, death and marriage registrations have been a matter of public record in Ireland, and anybody can visit the Research Room of the General Registrar's Office and view these registers. Any member of the public may view the Register of Births and obtain copies of birth certificates from the information contained therein, which would, in an instant, reveal the identity of any woman who has given birth, including those women whose children were adopted.

MYTH: Natural mothers were given a guarantee of confidentiality.

FACT: No evidence has ever been produced to substantiate this claim. Birth registrations have been a matter of public record in Ireland since 1864, so regardless of any alleged (or implied) guarantees of confidentiality, it would have been impossible in practical terms, to give any such guarantee. The notion of there being an assurance of confidentiality presumes that such an assurance was sought by natural mothers in the first place. Testimony from natural mothers is clear that, on the contrary, these women and girls were forced to swear that they would never contact their children again. Natural mothers would certainly have sought confidentiality and privacy from Irish society, which judged unmarried mothers so harshly.

MYTH: Only adopted people are interested in tracing and natural mothers want to leave the past in the past.

FACT: In ARA's experience, a large number of natural mothers want to trace their daughters and sons, however many feel powerless to do so. This perpetuates the myth that natural mothers want to 'forget about the past'. In ARA's experience, when natural mothers approach the adoption agency asking about their adult children, the agency will, in all cases we have encountered, contact the adoptive parents of the (adult) adopted person instead of the adopted person themselves.
