

The Confidentiality of Information about Adoptions

National Records of Scotland (NRS) aims to protect the privacy of children who have been adopted and their adoptive parents - but NRS cannot withhold information to which people are legally entitled.

The Adoptions register is not open to public scrutiny, so it is not possible to browse it in order to identify children who have been adopted. However, anyone who knows the name of a person who was born in Scotland is entitled to purchase a copy of that person's birth certificate from NRS. In the case of a child who has been adopted, if the enquirer gives the name by which the child is known following the adoption (rather than the name given when the birth was originally registered), NRS will provide an extract of the birth registration record which shows the child's name after the adoption together with the names of the adopting parents. The extract does not show the names of the child's birth parents. The child's date of birth appears in the extract, but not the actual time of birth, nor the place where the child was born.

NRS keeps confidential the information which provides a link between the original birth entry and the adoption entry. However, an adopted person can obtain an extract of their original birth entry, if they are at least 16 years old and provide proof of, and a declaration of, their identity. Further information about access to such records is available at: www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/adoption.

Finally, NRS produces only summary statistics about adoptions, such as the overall total number cross-classified by the child's age and the relationship (if any) of the adopter(s). Because such figures are produced only for Scotland as a whole, it is extremely unlikely that anyone could deduce from the published tables something that they did not already know about identifiable people.