

How you can search for your birth parents

Once you have been provided with your pre-adoptive birth certificate, you will have the name(s) of your birth parent(s) that were registered at the time of your birth. Your pre-adoptive birth certificate will also include the age and place of birth for any birth parent recorded at the time that your birth was registered.

Birth parents can be located through public records and this guide outlines some initial steps you can take to search for them. Locating current contact details for your birth parent should be your first priority, rather than any wider family members. This means you can then decide whether and how to make an approach to your birth parent. While sometimes searches for extended family members may help to locate current details for your birth parent, it is always important to consider the privacy of the people involved.

1. Information known

The information on your pre-adoptive birth certificate is what was recorded on your first birth registration when you were born. Further searching is generally required to locate current contact details for a birth parent who is likely to have married and could be using different names, spellings, or versions of their names.

You may also have additional information from the Ministry's adoption record, such as usual home address, occupation, and other details about the family. This can sometimes be useful background information to help identify or confirm current contact details when searching.

2. Access to public records

Public records provide information that will help you establish whether your birth mother married and what her current married name might be. Public libraries throughout New Zealand hold various public records and staff there can often provide helpful advice on completing marriage searches. Libraries also have access to helpful websites such as [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [MyHeritage](https://www.myheritage.com).

How do I find out if my birthmother married?

Most larger public libraries hold New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriages indexes on microfiche. These indexes are lists of the people who were born, married, or died, arranged alphabetically by surname for each year. The index provides a name and a folio reference number. These registrations can help you establish or confirm the correct birth name, age, married name, and/or date of death for the person you are looking for. This information will enable the Registrar General's office to identify the entry if requested.



There are often library staff with specialised knowledge who can support you to undertake searches of the marriage index on microfiche. You would generally begin a microfiche check from the year that you were born. These indexes are available on microfiche up until 1990. Index searches from 1991 to current day will need to be carried out by Births, Deaths and Marriages at the Department of Internal Affairs.

Accessing a Birth, Death, or Marriage Registration

Births, deaths, and marriages are registered at a district register office and a copy is sent to the Registrar General's Office in Wellington on a quarterly basis. The details of a birth, death, or marriage registration can be requested through your local registry office or through the Registrar General's office.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Contact Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:30pm. They can be contacted at bdm.nz@dia.govt.nz, PO Box 10526, Wellington 6140, 0800 22 52 52 (New Zealand only), or +64 9 339 0852. Detailed information about fees can be found at www.dia.govt.nz. You can pay for most searches, print outs, and certificates by credit card.

A marriage registration will generally include the following details for the bride and groom:

- Name
- Age
- Occupation
- Relationship status (eg. never married or previously married)
- Place of birth
- Address
- Father's name and occupation
- Mother's name and maiden surname



Searching electoral rolls

A search of electoral rolls held at local libraries using a current name and/or partner's name may locate a current address for the person you are looking for. Rolls are published by electorate, including seven Māori electorates. Enrolled voters are listed alphabetically by surname. Their full name, physical address, and occupation are listed. Electoral rolls are updated around the time of each national election.

Libraries also hold historical electoral rolls and these can be useful to search as they can indicate the previous whereabouts of the person you are searching for. Rolls will also record the details for other family members registered at the same address, which can provide useful background information to support your search, especially where a surname is more common. New Zealand electoral rolls up to 1981 can also be searched on Ancestry.com.

If you are unable to locate current contact details from a marriage microfiche and electoral roll search, you can:

- Request a search of marriage entries at Birth, Deaths and Marriages
If you are not requesting a particular entry that you have identified, you will need to specify searches by year and make the associated payment.
The date and place for any divorce that has occurred is most easily established by getting a copy of the marriage registration. Where a divorce is stamped on the entry, a new marriage search from the date of the divorce can then be completed.

- Complete a death registration search

If the person you are looking for is not located in a marriage or electoral roll search, you are able to complete a search of the death registrations held on microfiche at public libraries. These are an indexed list of deaths registered by year, from 1921 to 1990. Copies or printouts of a death registration can be purchased from Births, Deaths and Marriages.

3. Additional sources of information

Depending on what you are able to establish, further searching steps include:

- Requesting your birth parent's birth entry for any name change recorded.
- Newspaper death notices will often include relevant information about current family members of a person who has died. There are various ways that death notices can be accessed. Local libraries may hold recent papers. You can search death notices in newspapers on microfilm at public libraries. The National Library of New Zealand (58 Molesworth Street, Wellington) holds copies of most New Zealand newspapers. Enquires can be made on their website www.natlib.govt.nz or by phone 04 474 3000.
- Habitation rolls are held at the National Library. These are indexed by street name and house number, and list the people registered in the electoral roll at a specific address. These are only available from the 1980s onwards.

4. Internet searching

The internet may provide a range of information about any name searched for. Results may not be definitive and should be cross referenced with what you already know about the person you are searching for.

If you find someone by the same name on social media, check to see if you have the correct person. For example, on Facebook, look at the 'About' section, as it may include details that can help to confirm that you have identified the correct person. Facebook matches to others can help confirm a maiden name, children's names, and other family members' names.

If using social media, it is important to maintain the privacy of your birth parent by not disclosing personal information about them, or yourself, to others. Respecting your birth parent's privacy allows them to decide how to share information about you with their family.

Some useful websites include:

- Archives New Zealand for historical New Zealand searching
- Ancestry.com and MyHeritage may hold genealogical family tree matches that could provide details to assist with your search
- Google search of birth parents' parents' names, as many obituaries can be found online
- Online cemetery searches
- New Zealand Companies Register, as directors and shareholders can be searched
- New Zealand White Pages
- LinkedIn

5. Useful tips and hints

- Keep an open mind and verify as many facts as possible, especially if you find information that is contradictory.
- There are many websites for overseas searching. However, many can involve charges. The Adoption Service can access searching in Australia and some other countries through our membership of International Social Service. Please talk with your social worker if you would like to discuss this option.
- Record the searching steps that you take so that you can refer back, plan next steps, or seek more advice.

6. Requesting Oranga Tamariki to complete searching to locate a current name and address for your birth parent

The Adult Adoption Information Act entitles you to request Oranga Tamariki to complete a search to locate current contact details for any birth parent named on your pre-adoptive birth certificate.

Your request needs to be in writing and include a copy of your pre-adoptive birth certificate.

If you would like the Ministry to complete this searching, you can:

- Talk to your social worker
- Contact your local Adoption Service office
- Make an enquiry using our [online form](#)
- Call 0508 326 459 to talk to one of our adoption social workers

Your Adoption Service social worker is also happy to provide advice and support for any questions about locating your birth parent yourself.

7. Approaching a birth parent

Once you have current contact details for a birth parent, your Adoption Service social worker will be happy to talk with you about:

- the sort of approach you would like to make
- preparing for and making an approach to your birth parent

Adoption Service
Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children
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