



HM Passport
Office

Freedom of Information Team
Globe House
7th Floor
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

Email: foi@hmpo.gov.uk
Website: www.gov.uk/hm-passport-office

Ms S Lawson
request-752658-bb9630c3@whatdotheyknow.com

Reference: FOICR 63992/21

17 May 2021

Dear Ms Lawson

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your email of 4 May in which you ask for information on birth certificates.

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act).

I am able to disclose the following information from the General Register Office which is part of Her Majesty's Passport Office.

1) Why have signatures been obsolete from birth certificates from 2009 - date?

There has never been a legal requirement for an informant to sign a birth certificate, as this is not the primary legal record of the event. A birth certificate is a certified copy of the information registered at the time. Only the register page, which is printed following the direct questioning of a qualified informant, is required to be signed to confirm the particulars to be registered are correct.

Any printed certificates will only have a printed version of signatures. This complies with section 34(5) of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 (BDRA) which states that the information printed on a certificate can differ in form (the way it is shown) but not substance (the information provided).

2) Who authorised the GRO and local registers to type names of informants in signature box?

The Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953 requires the signature box on the register page to be signed following the direct questioning of a qualified informant to confirm the particulars to be registered are correct. Section 34(5) of the same Act states that the information printed on a certificate can differ in form (the way it is shown) but not substance (the information provided).

3) Why has the GRO and local registry offices stopped producing exact copies of birth certificates?

It is claimed that the informants sign the register page (that is same template as the birth certificate) and that's the GRO's copy but why isn't that copy the exact copy when issuing the birth certificate!

The Registration of Births and Deaths (Electronic Communications and Electronic Storage) Order 2006 amended the BDRA to allow for the electronic communication and storage of copies of Birth and Death Registers and for local registrars to transmit those copies to the Registrar General electronically and allow the Registrar General to use the electronic copies in the same way as paper copies.

Yours sincerely

D Hjiej-Andaloussi
Freedom of Information Team