



Voices
FOR A BETTER FUTURE



In Care Record Search

Guidance and Information



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Introduction

This information and guidance has been produced by the members of Voices for a Better Future to help anyone who is trying to access their records from when they were in care as a child.

We hope that the information and advice is helpful and hopefully makes accessing your records a little easier.

As well as the information and advice, we have included some people's personal experience of accessing their records. We felt it was important that people were aware of some of the difficulties that people have faced when accessing their records. However, the content of these accounts may be upsetting to some. You may wish to miss this section of the guidance which is on pages 5 and 6.

Voices for a Better Future

Voices for a Better Future is a survivors voice group. It brings together people who experienced abuse or neglect while they were children in the Scottish care system. Members of the group want to make a difference. They want to help improve services and support for other survivors.

Voices for a Better Future provides a safe space where members can offer guidance and advice to the Alliance Leadership Team. The group can also influence and take the lead on aspects of the design and delivery of Future Pathways. Members of the group will represent survivors as part of the Alliance Leadership Team. They will make sure that the views of survivors are heard and considered in all decisions on the design and delivery of Future Pathways.

The group has 14 survivors, 2 representatives from the Scottish Government and one person from Future Pathways (who gives administrative support).

You can find out more about the group at www.future-pathways.co.uk/who-we-are/voices-for-a-better-future

Accessing In Care Records

There are several reasons why someone may wish to access their records. This may be to get the evidence required to apply for Redress or for a court case, or it may be that someone just want the information for themselves.

When someone requests their records there should be a way to make clear to the organisation carrying out the search, what information the survivor wish to receive. Survivors may want the following information:

- Proof Only – A person may want to only know if there is evidence that they were a resident in a certain care setting, like a specific children's home.
- Full Records – A person may wish to have access to every record that is held about their time in care.
- Part Record – A person may wish to request only specific information relating to a certain time period while they were in care

When requesting records, people should be aware that they may read things that they did not know before and this may relate to other members of the their family. This can be upsetting and the survivor should ensure that they have sufficient support in place.

The survivor should be aware that there may be times when some of the information contained in their records has been redacted. This is when information is removed that may identify a third party. This can sometimes be disappointing as it may mean the survivor feels they are not getting all of the information they requested.

Many Local Authorities have said that they no longer have any records on the children that were in their care many years ago. If that is the case, the survivor may be able to access information from healthcare or school records.

Where there are difficulties locating your records, there should be consideration for any records regarding your siblings who were also in care. Sometimes all records that relate to one family may be kept together.

Who can carry out a search for In Care Records?

Record searches are currently carried out by Wellbeing Scotland and Birthlink.



Record Searches may also be carried out by nominated others, for example solicitors in context of a legal process or by individuals themselves who raise 'subject access requests' or 'information requests' to record holders that might include institutions, services and local authorities.

What support is available to people who want to access their In Care Records?

It is a significant decision for someone to choose to seek information about their time in care. It is therefore essential that they receive support. The process for people is significantly better when there is good communication, access to support and full explanation from the record holders. The support and guidance available to people about how to seek information and other types of support varies across Scotland.

Future Pathways

If someone experienced childhood abuse in care, Future Pathways is available to provide support to find records and associated help such as emotional support.

www.future-pathways.co.uk



Redress Support Service

If support is needed to apply for Scotland's redress scheme, Scottish Government case workers can refer individuals to the Redress Support Service.

www.redress-support.scot



People's experiences of In Care Record Searches

The following section contains the experiences of people who have accessed their records. Some of the content may be upsetting to those who can identify with the situation.

Carol's Story

My journey to get access to my records with Glasgow City Council wasn't the best you would want.

I was taken into a small room which was cold and dreary. It didn't feel assuring that a woman who was standoffish sat across from me. She had a file with a couple of A4 papers which I wanted to see. She then informed me that they had a file on the family but there wasn't much about me, only to say I wasn't a very nice child - in her words.

I truly couldn't believe what I was hearing. I don't remember how we ended it but I don't think I was in that room for more than 15 minutes.

After that encounter, I went to my local MSP at my local library where they held their surgery every month and I told her my story. After my MSP got involved, I had a call from Barnardo's saying they had my records. I do have a lot to be thankful for in regards to my MSP.

When I went to Barnardo's head office I don't really remember a lot. The worker was very nice but I think at the time I just wanted to be alone with my files. She did speak to me about the effects on your mental health when reading your file and how back in the 70s things were so different to this day. I think this is the hardest part for me to write because reading that file was excruciating and painful, but I have no regrets in asking for my file.

Sam's Story

My record search has been really challenging. Despite submitting a SAR, I have been told there are no medical records or hospital records for me from birth to 1985 when I had my second son. No evidence of my first child born 1981 or any GP involvement or hospital appointments.

Care home records no longer exist but I have entry and exit dates provided by archivist at Nazareth House.

Some Social Work records have been provided to me but very limited information was included.

Mary's Story

It took me 6 years to trace my documents. Birthlink got some heavily redacted papers. Then, fairly recently, Wellbeing Scotland obtained more on my behalf.

However, it has been a very negative experience for me.

For 50 years my father led me to believe that social services took us from him and placed us in the 'care' system. He also led me to believe he had to fight to get us back. His last words to my mother were a promise to keep us all together at home with him.

It transpired through reading these documents that my father plagued social services to take us away, at one point dragging my two older brothers (9 and 11 years old) with him. The documents clearly show that social services did not want to remove us from his care.

It also transpired that he insisted that he get us back to his and our 'mum's' care? Our mother was dead. This woman was his wife that we were forced to call 'mum'. We were then subjected to 7 years of abuse at her hands and from his pathetic attempts in parenting. We endured physical and psychological abuse, the trauma of which affects all of us (barring my eldest brother who died several years ago) to this day. Of all of us, I believe my eldest brother was the worst affected and he will now never be compensated in any way.

I was forced to obtain these documents for Redress and now I have to face these upsetting facts and given that my father and stepmother are dead I can never get closure from this. The government requirements for seeking and (hopefully) obtaining these documents is unnecessarily adding to survivors' pain and distress and is absolutely unfair. We have all endured to this day and due to government requirements the pain goes on.

Further help

If you are finding things hard, you can contact one of the following services:

The Samaritans

The Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like. You can talk in your own way about whatever is going on. They have a helpline, email service, letter service and a self-help app.

Helpline open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Phone for free on 116123

www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a free and confidential phone service for anyone in Scotland over the age of 16 who is feeling low, depressed or anxious.

Open 6pm to 2am Monday to Thursday, and 6pm to 6am Friday to Sunday.

Phone for free on 0800 83 85 87

www.breathingspace.scot

Shout

Shout is a free, confidential, text messaging support service for anyone who is finding it difficult to cope.

Text SHOUT to 85258

giveusashout.org



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