An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

AIRR Project

A*ccess to*
I*nstitutional and*
R*elated*
R*ecords*

An indexing project called the Access to Institutional and Related Records (AIRR) Project was undertaken in the Department of Health and Children from 2004 to 2006. This project involved the indexing of all papers held by the Department relating to child care services, some of which contain information referring to individual children who were in care. The personal information references were indexed onto a specialised 'names index' where they are listed by the name of the person concerned along with other relevant information. The purpose of the project was to create a comprehensive archive of historical child care records and to enable efficient release of records.

The historical role of the Department in childcare services was, for the most part, indirect. Some agencies returned lists of children visited and/or were authorised to receive monies under the Public Assistance Act. Insofar as the Department had any direct role, it supplemented the role carried out by local health authorities.

The past experience of children in care is a major public concern and, despite its limitations, the Department's archive is an important resource for information and research on this issue. Now that it is indexed, this material can be used to respond comprehensively to requests for access to personal information.

SEARCH PROCESS

On receipt of a request, a search is carried out on the Department's names index using relevant keywords.

Applications for details of personal information held should be addressed to:-

Records Management Unit
Department of Health
Block 1, Miesian Plaza
50-58 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2
D02 XW14

In order to process requests for records, the Department of Health needs as many relevant details as possible relating to the period in care together with full name and date of birth. Proof of identity – such as copy of birth certificate, driver's licence or passport – may be required. As soon as possible after receipt of a request, a search will be carried out to determine if there are any personal records under the name provided, and a formal reply will issue indicating if any relevant personal records are located.

Records located may be released directly to the requester or through an advocacy agency.

For further information on the AIRR Project please call +353 1 635 4000 or email Records Management Unit at RMUnit@health.gov.ie

HISTORICAL CHILD CARE FILES IN CONTEXT

There were a number of different aspects to care services for children in this State. Children could be:

- **Nursed out -** This refers to babies placed in care from soon after birth.
- **Boarded out -** This refers to children placed in care. These children could be placed from a home or institution or directly, without ever living in an institution. Boarding out can be seen as a type of fostering.
- **Hired out -** Once children reach a certain age they were deemed suitable to be placed in employment. This was arranged directly by the carer (foster parent or institution) or by the responsible local health authority.
- **Fostered -** This refers to children being placed with families for short or long term care. Boarded out and Fostered are often used interchangeably.
- **Adopted** – Adoption did not become legal in this State until the enactment of the Adoption Act, 1952. If a record created before 1952 refers to the 'adoption' of children in this State, this would not have been a legal adoption and usually refers to cases where a child was placed with a family for long term care. In certain cases, both before and after this State's Adoption Act of 1952, arrangements were made to have Irish children adopted outside of the State, usually to jurisdictions where adoption was legally recognised.
- **Placed in city and county homes -** These institutions were run by local health authorities and later by health boards.
- **Placed in schools/homes/centres for people with disabilities**
- **Placed in Industrial or Reformatory Schools -** The Department authorised some of these institutions to receive public assistance monies for some of the children placed there.

Responsibility for the different aspects was spread throughout the public services:

- Nursed out, boarded out/fostered, or hired out children were frequently the responsibility of local health authorities both for placement and for ensuring payment. However, children were often placed by private individuals or through private organisations, for example the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC, formerly NSPCC) and the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland, (now Cúnamh).
- In some cases, the private organisations contacted local health authorities to visit children placed in care by them and/or pay for their maintenance.
- Children could be placed in city and county homes, sometimes with their parents, on a voluntary basis. Examples of such cases would be children placed by family members, or entire families requesting residency due to being evicted. Local health authorities, later health boards, also placed children in these homes.
- Children could be placed in institutions catering for people with disabilities through local health authorities and later health boards, through institutions run by religious orders, or directly by parents or family members. In some cases the responsibility lay with the Department of Education, particularly in the case of schools for people with disabilities.
- Many children were placed in Industrial or Reformatory Schools through the court system. These children were considered to be under the care of the Department of Education. Some Industrial Schools (but <u>not</u> Reformatory Schools) also took children on a 'voluntary' basis. These children may have been placed by family members, through the local health authorities (later health boards), or through a private agency. In some cases, the Department authorised the school to receive public assistance monies for the maintenance of these children.

Inspection of these children were carried out by different agencies

- Officials from local health authorities carried out inspections of children nursed out, boarded out/fostered, or hired out, who had been placed through their organisation or of whom their organisation had been informed. The officials selected to carry out these inspections varied depending on the local health authority and included Infant Life Protection Visitors, Assistance Officers, Public Health Nurses, and Children's Officers. This work was later carried out by social workers in the health boards.
- The Department employed Inspectors of Boarded Out Children who visited local health authority areas, carried out some inspections and reported on the general work of local health authority officials in respect of these children.
- After 1952, many children who were nursed out or boarded out/fostered were subsequently legally adopted. Children who were nursed out or boarded out/fostered before 1952 could also be adopted after the enactment of the Adoption Act. Inspections would take place prior to adoption and for a brief period afterwards. The inspection details are recorded as for nursed out and boarded out/fostered children.
- City and county homes were inspected by Department officials and by local health authority officials.
- The extent of inspections of disability institutions is not clear. The Department has examined files relating to such institutions that it currently holds. These for the most part refer to contracts for building or maintenance and children are rarely mentioned. When they are it is largely in the context of payment for maintenance.
- Inspections of Industrial Schools and Reformatory Schools were carried out by inspectors appointed by the Department of Education. Medical inspections were also a matter for the Department of Education.

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

- From the late 1940's and early 1950's the Department had a statutory role in relation to inspections of children known to be nursed out, boarded out/fostered, or hired out.
- Within this context, the Department also carried out inspections of some children who were placed in care through a public body and subsequently adopted. This responsibility ended shortly after the adoption was complete.
- Records relating to city and county homes show that inspections of premises and residents were carried out.
- Records indicate that the role in relation to provision of services for people with disabilities centred on premises and some maintenance payments.
- The Department had no direct role with regard to children in Industrial or Reformatory Schools. Many of these children were placed through the courts and the responsibility lay with the Department of Education. The Department of Health authorised a number of schools to receive children whose maintenance was paid for by the state under the 1939 Public Assistance Act. This covered children who were placed in Industrial Schools outside the courts system or through the local health authorities. This did not apply to all such schools.

FILES HELD BY THE DEPARTMENT

- The Department holds some files on child care institutions:

- The Department has some files on Industrial Schools. The records contained in these files, for the most part, relate to the authorisation of the schools under the Public Assistance Act 1939. Typically, the school or a local authority would apply to the Department seeking approval under the P.A. Act. Internal memoranda were created in relation to this and the Department corresponded with the school. There is also some correspondence relating to specific children, mainly seeking permission to maintain these children beyond the authorised age.
- The Department also has files that include lists of children maintained in various institutions under the Public Assistance Act 1939. These are lists that were returned by the school or by the local health authority providing maintenance for them.
- The Department has some papers relating to inspections of city and county homes. In some cases, these included details about the children in the home, their welfare at the time of the inspection, and proposed future arrangements for them.
- The Department has some files which include lists of names or letters about individuals with disabilities, placed in or awaiting placement in specific institutions.
- There are a number of files relating to children who were nursed out, boarded out/fostered, or hired out. Many of these files refer to children visited by local authority inspectors or the Department's Inspectors of Boarded Out Children over a specific period of time. Many files also include correspondence relating to arrangements and issues concerning particular children and their placements.
- The Department also has a set of papers known as the *Clandillon Papers*. These papers include reports of inspections of nursed out, boarded out/fostered, or hired out children, correspondence concerning these children, and other records relating to child care and social work. These papers record the activities of the Department's Inspectors of Boarded Out Children, including Miss Fedelma Clandillon who was the Department's last Inspector and who maintained these records.
- The Department holds records referring to people in various types of care - including residency in institutions that received children under the Industrial School and Reformatory School schemes. These records are, for the most part, listed with reference to the person's name rather than the institution in question and are contained in folders divided by geographical location relevant to the authority financing their care. The records may also include references to the fact that the person was sent to an institution under the Industrial School and Reformatory School schemes.
- Records relating to the residency of persons who were sent to Industrial or Reformatory Schools through the courts are not generally held. However, if these persons were in some other type of care as well as becoming resident in an Industrial School or Reformatory School, there may be a record referring to that person. It is therefore vital that as many details as possible accompany each request for information to the Department.
- Some records related to adoptions may also be included in the lists described above. Post 1952 records relating to legal adoptions are held by the Adoption Board and are part of the Adoption Register as established under the Adoption Act, 1952.

- An individual maintained under the Public Assistance Act 1939 was usually maintained by the local health authority dealing with the geographic area of their birth or of their parent's home, rather than the location of the institution or foster parent.
- In the case of people seeking access to their records who have applied to the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB) and Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan-Laffoy Commission) and who were placed in the relevant institutions <u>through the courts</u>, the Department may not have records relating to them.