



**Archives & Records
Association**
UK & Ireland

The records of adopted and care-experienced people – developing guidance for record-keepers and care professionals

**A project by the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group (CALGG) of the
Archives and Records Association**

Research findings report

Version	Description
DRAFT 20 July 2023	First draft for presentation to the Advisory Group and Project Board.
DRAFT 5 October 2023	Second draft was created following feedback from the Advisory Group and Project Board. Sections 3, 5, and 6 updated.
DRAFT 17 October 2023	Third draft was created following feedback from the Project Board. Appendix A and C were added.
19 January 2024	Appendix A and C updated. Response rates to survey and dataset figures updated in Sections 3.1 and 3.3. Minor changes to sections 1.1, 5 and 6.
FINAL 29 January 2024	Minor changes following feedback from the Project Board: p.12 last paragraph "It will also" replaced with "The Government will also" p.47 Typos to Solihull and St Helens changed

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1. Project background and methodology

1.1 Project background

Many care-experienced or adopted people reconstruct their personal histories by turning to the records created about them by social workers and care providers. Thousands of requests to view records for this purpose are made each year in England and Wales. The records – a “paper self” - have significant impacts on a care-experienced person throughout their life. However, accessing social care records is often difficult, both practically and emotionally, and can be traumatic and dehumanizing. Managing the records is inconsistent across the public, private, and voluntary care sectors, affecting outcomes for care-experienced individuals. Across England and Wales the records of adopted and care-experienced people who are formally classified as ‘looked-after people’ should be kept for 100 and 75 years respectively, but there are no permanent preservation protections for records in law. Moreover, some care-experienced people are omitted from the requirement for records to be retained. In addition, there are now many records sitting in digital systems which do not have a proper data migration/preservation strategy.

The project had two key aims:

1. Identify where these records are held in England and Wales – in independent agencies and local authorities. Gather information about the quantities and formats of the records, and retention information and solicit the views of those who create, manage and preserve these (hard copy and digital) records. Not least it will seek views from care-experienced and adopted people.
2. Generate robust guidance on the preservation of these records based upon the empirical evidence base collected. The guidance will form the basis of a ‘best practice’ model for managing the records of adoption and looked-after children so bringing consistency to an area of record-keeping where currently none exists and providing clear guidance for care and record-keeping professionals and the organisations for which they work.

The project was led by members of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group (CALGG) who are part of the Archives and Records Association. They contracted the consultancy Kevin Bolton, Larysa Bolton and Sarah Wickham to work on the project. An Advisory Group consisting of adopted people, care-experienced people, social work practitioners, information/data protection practitioners helped inform the development of the project (see Appendix A).

Funding for the project was partly made up of grant aid from The UK National Archives’ Network for Change fund and the Welsh Government. Additional funding was provided by individual donations from services within the CALGG membership.

1.2 Purpose and methodology

The purpose of this phase of the research was to:

- Understand how care-experienced people and adopted people think their records should be created, managed, and accessed and what they think the guidance should cover.
- Understand the views of those who create, manage, preserve, and provide access to the records and what they think the guidance should cover.

And to

- Use the findings from above to develop a framework for the guidance.

In order to understand this between June and July 2023 we:

- Undertook a **new literature review** which built on the one we did for the exploratory research on this project (see *Exploratory research report and research plan*, 16 June 2023), but had a stronger focus on understanding the views of care-experienced people and adopted people on recordkeeping.
- Facilitated **consultation** through focus groups (6) and interviews (6) with care-experienced people, adopted people, social care practitioners, information governance/data protection practitioners, and archive and records management practitioners.

Summaries of the themes that emerged from each focus group were created and these are included in Section 2. For more information about the focus group methodology see Appendix B.

In addition between April and December 2023¹ a **survey** was undertaken of archive services, local authorities, independent adoption agencies, regional adoption agencies/services, and independent fostering agencies in England and Wales. The primary purpose of the survey was to understand what records they hold relating to care-experienced people and adopted people. The survey also included some questions regarding the management of the records and what the guidance should cover. The results of the survey can be found in Section 3 and a list of organisations that responded can be found in Appendix C.

The results of the research were then used to develop a framework for the guidance which can be found in Section 4.

Draft versions of this report was presented to the Project Advisory Group and Project Board. Following feedback and discussion, revised versions were created.

¹ We kept the survey open until January 2024, but stopped chasing respondents in September 2023.

2. Findings

2.1 Care experienced people's perspectives

Literature Review

[Memory—Identity—Rights in Records—Access \(MIRRA\)](#) was a participatory research project co-produced with care leavers which investigated recordkeeping practices in child social care from multiple perspectives. An outline of the project and its findings is provided in our *Exploratory research report and research plan* (16 June 2023). However, the following findings that emerged from the research, including interviews and focus groups with care-experienced people, are worth emphasising here²:

- “The voices of children and young people are often entirely missing from their records, and where they are present are paraphrased by a practitioner.”
- “Children and young people are rarely able to read and amend records prior to their entry onto a system. As a result, they are disenfranchised and may lack trust in recordkeeping, on the understanding that their feelings and beliefs won’t be truthfully represented.”
- “Recordkeeping issues often arise at the point of creation or ‘non-creation’. Inadequate cultures of recording, the use of unexplained shorthand or acronyms, prejudicial or euphemistic language and incomplete records make it difficult to retrieve authentic and trustworthy information.”
- “People attempting to access records of childhood care or safeguarding are often met with barriers and challenges, including overly bureaucratic processes, heavy redaction and a lack of practical and emotional support.”

MIRRA’s Research in Practice [podcasts](#): “Reflections on Accessing Care Records Supporting Good Recording” features John-george and Darren sharing their **personal stories of accessing their care files as adults**. They explore the emotional impact of receiving care files, the importance of child-centred recording, and provide suggestions for how practitioners can implement good recording. These suggestions include:

- Using online platforms to co-produce records and capture the child’s voice. “capturing certificates, capturing photos, capturing voice.”
- Capture more positive moments and memories – “the joyous moments.”
- Practitioners checking with the child how they would like to see meeting notes or opinions reflected in a file.
- Be honest and objective when creating records.

² This is based on *ICO Policy Briefing: Records and recordkeeping practice – MIRRA UCL, July 2019*

A [policy briefing in 2022](#) by the **Access to Care Records Campaign Group** outlines the problems of the current data protection framework for care-experienced adults and measures to resolve these. It also highlights the need to:

- “Extend the period of time for keeping care records. Currently, LAs in England must retain care records securely and confidentially for 75 years from the date of birth of the person who was ‘in care’ or if that person dies before reaching adulthood, 15 years from the date of their death. [Regulation 50, The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010]. Adoption records must be kept for at least 100 years after the date of the adoption order. Care experienced adults should have parity with adopted persons. Local authorities are under pressure not to retain files beyond the minimum period for various reasons, including costs of maintaining archival material. Hence, the importance of this measure. This ‘gain’ could be achieved through a simple amendment to existing Regulations.”
- “Records should hold not only reports but can, and should, hold memorabilia (photographs, for example). This can be of great personal significance for care-experienced adults and their relatives. Foster carers and residential care staff are key to these personal artefacts being retained and need to be supported to do so. Archival policies, procedures and contractual arrangements need to take this into account.”
- “Currently, descendants of care-experienced adults do not have a right to information from the records of their deceased relatives. This restriction does not apply to descendants of an adopted person. Impediments need to be removed (this may require legislative action) to direct descendants of care-experienced adults accessing the files of their parents and grandparents and close relatives. The care-experienced aspect of family history can be of enormous value to such individuals. We see no good reason why they should be denied access to such information.”

In 2022, Plymouth City Council undertook research with **young people from Plymouth's Listen and Care Councils** to understand their experience of accessing their records and learn from them to improve their practice around case recording. The young people said they want practitioners in their recordings to:

- “Highlight the positives of children and young people’s lives, and include our aspirations and hopes for the future.”
- “Ensure there is a focus on solutions.”
- “Remember the need for language to be simple and understandable. Use language that we can understand, is caring, age appropriate, and non-stigmatising.”
- “Explain why things haven’t happened or timescales have not been met.”
- “Be mindful of information that might trigger previous traumatic events for children and young people. Think about how we might feel when reading your recordings.”

A [Conference report](#) published in June 2023 by **Black Care Experience** recommended a wide range of “important things to know when raising a Black child or young person in children’s social care.” These included the following which relate to the creation and maintenance of records, and to subsequent access to records:

- Understanding health history.
- “Trace our backgrounds (our race and ethnic origin) as this will help us to know where we are from.”
- “Help us to know our journey.”
- “Keep better records about our Family Tree.”
- “Professionally and accurately record our care journey. We may read our files and see what you’ve said about us (and our families).”

The Conference also saw the launch of [The Black Care Experience Charter](#) which aims to “improve the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of the Black Child or Young Person and keep them connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage as they journey through the Care System.”

The [Inclusive Care: Experiences of LGBTQ+ children and young people in care report](#) published by **Social Finance, LGBTQ+ Youth in Care and nine LGBTQ+ care-experienced adults** in 2022 includes relevant issues for the creation and maintenance of records, and for access. It states that for the LGBTQ+ care-experienced adults who created the report, growing up in the care system at times felt intrusive, with enormous amounts of information about their lives being recorded and shared amongst professionals. Examples of specific information include gender markers, pronouns and deadnames. These may be recorded, and then shared without consent - which may have harmful consequences (regardless of intentions). The importance of maintaining the legal rights of children and young people not to be outed without their consent and of upholding their wishes around the sharing of this information is highlighted throughout.

The report also encourages the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data in appropriate and trauma-informed ways to avoid creating unintended harm. It notes that whilst LGBTQ+ care-experienced people may share some similar experiences, it is important that they are also seen as individuals with their own needs and preferences. This includes giving them as much choice as possible about how their data is collected and recorded.

The report includes suggestions for case management systems and the recording of information which are also of relevance to this project:

“There are ways to privatise parts of the [case management] system. When someone comes out as gay, lesbian, bi or transgender or whatever they’ve come out as or are curious about, that can be put into a secure area so that if a young person comes out [giving informed consent to have access to that information] they [professionals] have access... That way

you're protecting the children's privacy while still making a note on the [case management] system."

Enabling people to update their name and pronouns themselves, and the use of placemark systems to automatically backdate so previous [digital] records reflect their current identities is also suggested. This would also mean that LGBTQ+ CEP would be able to learn about their past through access to their case files without, for example, encountering deadnames which may be traumatising.

The **National Youth Advocacy Service** is currently running a [My Things Matter](#) campaign. 1 in 3 care-experienced children moves home each year (over 26,000 children in England and 2,200 children in Wales): 1 child in care moves home every 20 minutes. Often they are moved with less than 24 hours notice, making it difficult to say goodbye to their friends, teachers and classmates. What can make this move worse is bin bags being used to pack their belongings, which may be thrown away. Paperwork and records are among the items most frequently identified by children and young people as going missing or being damaged as a result.

"My grandfather's pictures got lost when I moved, as well as some really important files. It took me two and a half years to get the files back from the local authority. My pictures were lost forever."

"A boy's memory box was lost ... As his advocate, it was not something that I could just get the money back for, it was so special to him."

The campaign recognises the importance of unique and valuable records, and of their importance to the sense of self reflected throughout the other literature reviewed here. The NYAS campaign includes a local authority pledge to support young people to move with dignity, as well as practical partnerships with a luggage manufacturer, and campaigning resources to use at a local level.

Focus group and interviews

The participants in the focus groups and interviews were asked what **organisations should know about your experiences** of accessing your records. They highlighted:

- Finding out where their records are held was difficult for some – they might have to approach several organisations and it is not always clear what is held.
- Access to the records can cause secondary trauma and there needs to be more support provided. Organisations have a responsibility to do this. However, one person we spoke to who accessed their records from a voluntary agency had a good experience with facilitated access to the records and support provided in person.
- When access to records is provided they are often heavily redacted which is frustrating. Organisations often appear to be risk-averse and more concerned with protecting their reputation. One person suggested those with lived experience should be involved in decisions around redaction.
- There is also inconsistency in how redaction works. For example, asking for records a second time got more records/pages and different redaction.
- The child's voice is often absent in the records. There is a lack of quotes from the child or their writing. A lot of the content can be negative or derogatory. It is important to see the "rich texture of life," "happy events" and "joy" recorded. Using inclusive language in the records is also important.
- Ensuring personal items, photographs, and objects are preserved is important. With technology, it could be really easy to create a way for the child to upload personal items to their records. For example, photographs of artworks, recordings of them speaking, photographs, and videos.
- Access to records can often take a long time.

They thought the **guidance should cover** the above and also:

- The guidance needs to show the benefit of good recordkeeping to the record creators and organisations. This will encourage people to implement good practices. It also needs to point to examples of good practice and champions for good recordkeeping.
- There needs to be different and engaging ways to share the guidance e.g., videos, Instagram, small bite-size sections.

In terms of **management and retention of records** the following were highlighted:

- It is important when digitisation is undertaken that the digital copies of their records should represent the original format of the records accurately. For example, it is important to preserve the original handwriting and not simply transcribe it into text. Others felt strongly that the original records should not be destroyed following digitisation or expressed concerns over preserving digital data in the long-term.

There are some formats such as personal items and objects which cannot be digitised, and the original items should be kept.

- The retention period disparity between adoption and care records needs to be resolved. The retention period for care records needs to be at least 100 years – people are living older.
- Most people we spoke to felt records could be kept for longer than 100 years (some suggested 125-150 years) or permanently. They will be relevant and important for their descendants. However, they also recognised not everyone may want this and there were some discussions about whether there could be an option to 'opt out' of the records being kept permanently. One person did not want their records to be kept for longer than 100 years. They did not want people accessing their records, even descendants, and felt the common law of confidentiality applies to the records.
- Some people raised the need for new legislation relating to the records, particularly in terms of providing access.
- Some people asked whether all the records should be brought together into one place and some type of 'national' or 'regional' archive created.

2.2 Adopted people's perspectives

Literature review

Published in April 2023 by **Family Action PAC-UK**, the [Big Consult](#) represents the largest piece of research into the experiences of [adopted people](#) from the 1950s to the present, and of [birth parents](#).

Very large numbers of adopted people who responded had accessed their records (361/88%) but high levels of dissatisfaction were reported around support, timescales and content. Respondents wanted to see more of the original content of records, rather than summaries, and reported feeling that information may be incorrectly redacted. There was a high level of demand for follow-up support.

PAC-UK makes specific recommendations relevant to this project:

- Facilitate access to records with dedicated staff and registers of records and vetoes in record holding agencies.
- Reward agencies for this work to enable an increase in staff and resources.
- Enhance training on the preparation of files for these staff.
- Set minimum timescales [for access to records responses] and review progress.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights opened an inquiry in September 2021 to understand the experiences of **unmarried women whose children were adopted between 1949 and 1976 in England and Wales**. Described as “powerful and troubling” by CoramBAAF, the [third report](#) (July 2022) comments on access to paper records:

“94. While adopted people have had a right to access their adoption records since 1976, we heard of the huge disparities in the length of time this took... we heard how, having decided they wanted to investigate their adoption, adopted people felt frustrated at the unnecessary delays they met in their efforts to access their records...

...96. There are huge disparities in the timeliness of the responses of local authorities to requests for access to adoption records, to which adopted people have had a right since 1976, leading to unnecessary stress and frustration for those individuals who have decided to seek out family members. *The Government should monitor and publish compliance by local authorities with adherence to the guidance that sets down deadlines for responses to requests for adoption records.*” (original emphasis)

In its [response](#) published in March 2023, the **UK Government** refers to work by the Regional Adoption Agencies, including a partnership project with the University of East Anglia, ‘Improving Adoption Services for Adults: a time for change’ (see [below](#)). The Government will also write to Regional Adoption Agencies and local authorities to remind them that it is their legal duty to respond to requests for access to adoption records and that they should

do so in a timely manner, suggesting that they review their services to achieve this within six months [of the letter being received].

Membership charity **Adoption UK** published its [Adoption Barometer](#) in May 2023. This is the 5th annual survey of adopted people and adopters. It identifies good practice in relation to adult adoptees as including “Easy and well supported access to personal, historical records” but describes the experience of looking for historical personal records as poor, along with support for tracing and reunion. The detailed analysis of survey responses highlighted a lack of information about the location and processes for accessing records, lengthy delays in receiving records, and when received, high levels of redaction and missing information.

Adoption UK notes the current CALGG project as essential work in progress which will not only provide an evidence base to underpin future decisions around the preservation and storage of records but also bring consistency to the process. It also highlights “Subject to funding, this project would also result in a national database of records which would be available to care-experienced people to help them search for information about their own backgrounds.”

With relevance to this project, Adoption UK supports the recommendations of the Joint Committee report that compliance by local authorities with adherence to the guidance that sets deadlines for responses to requests for adoption records should be monitored and published, and of the establishment of a system enabling birth parents to pass on medical information that could be relevant to their child.

A project ‘**Improving Adoption Services for Adults: a time for change**’ (IASA Project) began in February 2023 at the University of East Anglia, in partnership with the National Adoption Strategic Team (RAA leaders programme funded by the Department of Education) and PAC-UK. This project aims to identify and propose solutions to barriers to tracing and support services which adopted adults and their birth relatives encounter. By July 2024 the project aims to

1. Expand and update the existing ‘Adoption: Access to Information and Intermediary Services Practice Guidance’ (published 2008) to produce a revised good practice guide as an online document.
2. Produce a briefing paper outlining the deficits in current legislation, regulations, and guidance and propose solutions to these.
3. Set up and facilitate a working group to scope the other issues that need addressing in the field of work with adults affected by adoption and propose potential solutions.
4. Work with stakeholders (professionals, adopted adults, birth relatives) to inform the development/revisions of the outputs and identify examples of best practice.
5. Disseminate the outputs and practice messages involving RAAs, VAAs, ASAs and LAs and the judiciary.

Focus group

The participants in the focus groups and interviews were asked what **organisations should know about your experiences** of accessing your records. They highlighted:

- Redaction of records was an issue for some. It was suggested that the reason for redaction should be clearly explained by the organisation on the copies provided.
- Some gave examples of being told no records exist and then asking a second time and then being provided with the records or more information.
- They want access to the whole file, not just the synopsis/summary. Every single piece of information is important for adopted adults. It was suggested there should be a way to independently assess what has been provided (or not provided) or redacted by organisations.
- Accessing the records can be traumatic. The level of support provided by the organisations was mixed and often poor. There needs to be more than just one meeting and ongoing support. They need to be warned or provided context about derogatory or judgemental language. "A kinder approach."
- Social worker practitioners need to be properly trained when providing access and it should not be undertaken by unqualified/junior staff.
- Access to court records is important, but it can be a postcode lottery around what has survived and how access is provided.
- There needs to be clear up to date guidance for adopted adults on how to access their records.

They thought the **guidance should cover** the above and also:

- What type of information should be recorded.
- Retention periods for records (see below).
- Timescales to responding to access requests.

In terms of **management and retention of records** the following was highlighted:

- Everyone we spoke to felt that the records should be kept permanently. They will have value for their descendants. The participants in the focus group felt they would also have value for academics and external users- it is important the records are used to learn from previous mistakes and inform good practice.
- In terms of digitisation, some felt the original records should be kept, but others felt this could not be realistic. However, all felt that personal items such as letters/handwriting of their birth parents should be kept. There was also a discussion about preserving digital data.
- The focus group participants also discussed the possibility of bringing the records together into one place.

2.3 Social work practitioners' perspectives

Focus groups

Many **practical challenges** were identified, with the most prominent in relation to records being (in order of frequency of mention):

- Supporting people accessing records, including providing information about how to do this. The different statutory provisions for care-experienced and adopted people are a particularly big challenge.
“support required to prevent re traumatisation. This needs to be prolonged and at their pace [the person accessing records].”
- Locating records and obtaining detailed information about them.
Understanding when and why any gaps occur, and current practice in relation to retention and disposal (particularly outside local authorities) is also important.
- Handling historic records, particularly the language used, attitudes recorded and information now lacking.
- Deciding what information to redact and understanding/justifying why, to minimise the impact on the care-experienced or adopted person receiving their records whilst maintaining the rights of any third parties.
- Making decisions in relation to health records, e.g., psychological reports relating to the individual, but also health information about birth family members.
- Migrating formats to avoid loss of quality or of information, and how to handle previous poor-quality migrations where information has already been lost. Paper converted to microformats; digitisation of paper and microformats; and between-systems migration of born-digital or digitised data were all specifically mentioned.
- Providing copies or original records, with court records mentioned specifically in this context [understood to be certified/official copies provided by the court].
- Creating contemporary records to meet future needs.

Attendees felt that the guidance would help to address inconsistencies across England and Wales (“the postcode lottery”) and between types of agencies and welcomed the establishment of best practice that is freely available. In keeping with the challenges above, attendees strongly supported the inclusion of all the **proposed areas for the guidance**, with access to records and redaction rated as highest importance, and longevity of digital data and retention periods next highest.

Potential additional areas for the guidance were identified (in priority order):

- Legislation and statutory timescales for access
- Health records and medical history of birth family members

- Trauma-informed practice in supporting individuals, including descendants of care-experienced or adopted people
- Resources for identifying location and availability of records
- Making information accessible, both in contemporary practice relating to children and young people currently in care or being adopted, and in handling adults' requests to access their records, including writing summaries and sharing information between Local Authorities and agencies in the independent/voluntary sector
- Information about how records were created historically, to contextualise and explain when supporting people to access records
- Creating contemporary records about/with children and young people currently in care or being adopted

There was a very high level of consensus around **retention**. Attendees unanimously felt that records relating to care-experienced and adopted people should be kept permanently and securely, along with all photographs or other mementos.

If the state intervenes in lives in such drastic ways it needs to keep records of why how and info on connected people. It should never destroy the records

The rights of descendants of adopted people in particular were highlighted in relation to obtaining information about their medical history.

Permanent retention of digital and of large volumes of paper were both recognised as having significant cost implications.

Attendees identified many other **barriers and issues** which the guidance must take account of (but may be unable to offer practical solutions to address or resolve). Notably there is a lack of dedicated resources and capacity, meaning that "live" work with children and families has to take precedence over support to adults. Alongside the proposed guidance a need for training was identified, along with mechanisms for social workers to share their expertise in this area. During the webinar CoramBAAF offered further opportunities to promote the guidance once published and provide training, which attendees enthusiastically endorsed.

2.4 Information governance and data protection practitioners' perspectives

Focus group

Areas of good/best practice were noted as working with people when they make a request and before records are sent to ascertain what they already know, manage expectations and offer some levels of choice/control where possible. Good practice in redaction was described, including using white, leaving headings unredacted, and marking up where exemptions had been applied (and what exemptions were). Records in digital form make the process quicker. Some organisations had harmonised retention periods to 100 years for all records of adopted and care-experienced people for consistency.

The most notable **practical challenges** were identified as

- Inconsistencies between adoption & care legislation/requirements, and between different organisations within the same sector/different sectors. Different experiences for people in different parts of the country.
- Balancing the rights of different individuals and differing approaches within social work teams from general information governance teams. Striking a balance over sharing a person's own history and protecting others' privacy. It was noted that there are no Data Protection Act 2018 exemptions for embarrassment or risk to the organisation (even if organisations might wish there are).
- Levels of resources to cope with the demand and to meet expectations. E.g., If someone has been in care for all of their childhood their records may be 10-15,000 pages which need to be reviewed before release.
- Recordkeeping practices and formats – records may be split (e.g., paper & digital), recordkeeping more informal? Systems don't talk to one another. Retention has been inconsistent e.g., life story books.
- Historic social work/record creation practices – older records may be shorter but sometimes better quality. Practice that would now be unacceptable.
- Historic records management practices - so much hasn't survived, care of the records has been poor, lots missing. Previous format changes (e.g., microfiche) make providing access harder. This is difficult for current staff when there are past failings of the organisation in recordkeeping and which the staff know are the organisation's fault.

In keeping with the challenges above, attendees strongly supported the inclusion of all the **proposed areas for the guidance**, with access to records and redaction rated as highest importance, and retention periods, storage of paper records and digitisation next highest. Attendees were also keen to see guidance about how an organisation should interact with

the requester (a kind of customer charter/quality mark³); legislation and what adopted people are entitled to know. The guidance should signpost to other resources and agencies. It could also include supplementary information about the records and an overview of the history of adoption and social care to help to contextualise recordkeeping for staff and people accessing records.

The group was evenly split between permanent **retention** (with appropriate safeguards around access) and maintaining the status quo to ensure people's personal information is not retained in a way that they wouldn't expect and which doesn't apply to people who have not experienced care or been adopted: this isn't fair. Might other people involved in the system like foster carers, prospective adopters be deterred if they thought their personal information would be permanently available? There is enough information for research purposes without retaining personal data. Social care records contain very personal and intimate information, and they are different from other kinds of records. Conversely, there are also duties of transparency and accountability where the state has intervened in people's lives (e.g., public enquiries). Descendants also have rights. Either way, the bulk/volume of records and the impact on resources were acknowledged. The group felt that scarce resources should be prioritised for living people. Whilst it may be desirable to consult and seek consent for disposal and/or retention this was unlikely to be practically possible. A general harmonisation of minimum retention periods to at least 100 years was felt to be desirable.

Attendees also highlighted the importance of other records which may flesh out or provide information that can't be obtained elsewhere (an example was given of the confirmation register of a local church, which helped people prove that they had been in a particular institution when no other records survived).

Whilst recognising the need to be trauma-informed, and the importance of providing support where this was available, attendees also acknowledged that records may bring closure/relief and even joy for some people.

³ The Care Leavers Association launched [CLEARmark](#) in autumn 2008, although no evidence has been found of this being widely adopted.

2.5 Archive and records management practitioners' perspectives

Focus group

Areas of good/best practice were noted as including robust and consistent processes which also centred as much control as possible with the care-experienced or adopted person, including keeping them informed of the progress of their request. Some organisations had prioritised resources to the intellectual and physical control of the records and also to supportive practices both to care-experienced and adopted people accessing records and to staff facilitating access. For example, some organisations go beyond mandatory requirements and provide the option of accessing counselling services to all care-experienced and adopted people.

Attendees were asked about the **practical challenges** in relation to the records of care-experienced and adopted people. Many challenges were identified, with the most prominent in relation to records being (in order of frequency of mention):

- The resources required for establishing physical and intellectual control of records, for digitisation, for research and to providing access. This includes knowledge transfer and succession planning for staff changes.
- Locating records in other organisations and obtaining detailed information about them, and signposting to other organisations.
- Inconsistent approaches nationally particularly with regard to handling access requests.
- Deciding what information to redact and understanding/justifying why, to minimise the impact on the care-experienced or adopted person receiving their records whilst maintaining the rights of any third parties.
- A lack of trauma-informed support for individuals accessing records, and for staff facilitating this (particularly in relation to historic practices which do not meet current standards).

In keeping with the challenges above, attendees strongly supported the inclusion of all the **proposed areas for the guidance**, with access to records and redaction rated as highest importance, and retention periods, storage of paper records and digitisation next highest. Attendees also keenly endorsed including support services in the guidance, along with managing digital records in cloud-based/3rd party systems (both digital preservation and access).

A range of issues in relation to **retention** were highlighted, with all the organisations represented having made different decisions about the records (whilst complying with the minimum statutory retention periods). The IICSA moratorium on the destruction of records has suspended disposition but organisations are starting to consider this including transfer to archives. Digitisation is not straightforward, and the difficult formats of some case files

(physical volume and microformats in particular) is also an issue. Sampling for archival transfer may be undertaken.

Attendees highlighted the importance of other records in addition to the case files, and the shorter retention provisions for these (e.g., residential care home records) which have been suspended by the IICSA moratorium. Managing outdated formats (e.g., microfiche) and memory boxes/other items was also highlighted as problematic and could be included in the guidance.

3. Survey findings

3.1 Response rates

The primary purpose of the records surveys was to understand what records local authorities and independent organisations hold relating to care-experienced people and adopted people. The survey also included some questions regarding the management of the records and what the guidance should cover.

The surveys were issued to organisations in England and Wales in mid-April 2023. There were three versions of the survey:

- Archives services – for local authority and other archives services.
- Adoption records – for local authorities, independent adoption agencies, and regional adoption agencies/services.
- Care records – for local authorities and independent foster agencies.

The methods of issuing the survey included:

- Archives services - emailing the lead archivist directly or using their service email.
- Local authorities - using the lead archivist/records manager as a liaison or emailing the Director of Children’s Services/a generic email address directly.
- Regional Adoption Agencies/Services - in England, the survey was circulated by The National Adoption Strategic Lead and in Wales we emailed the adoption services directly.
- Independent adoption agencies –the survey was also circulated by the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies and we also emailed them directly.
- Independent fostering agencies – emailing them directly.

The initial deadline for responses was 3 July 2023 and in general at least two reminders were sent to each organisation. As of 10 July 2023, response rates from local authorities and independent agencies were low. As a result, we asked 98 (56%) local authorities to consider the survey as a Freedom of Information Request. Freedom of Information Requests were not submitted to local authorities who had asked for an extension or where the Archivist was acting as a liaison with Children’s Services. We stopped actively chasing respondents in September 2023, but a few responses were received between October to December 2023.

Table 1 below summarises the response rates as of 1 January 2024. Response rates from local authority archive service (84%) and regional adoption agencies/services (75%) were good. However, response rates for local authorities (49% for adoption records, 45% for care records) and independent fostering agencies (4%) were still low. A list of organisations who responded can be found in Appendix C.

Table 1 – Response rate to the records surveys (as of 1 January 2024)

	<u>Number of organisations issued to</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>% replied</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Local authority archive services	124	104	84%	100% response rate in Wales
Other archives services (charities, universities etc.)	32	23	72%	-
Local authority (adoption)	173	85	49%	-
Local authority (care)	173	77	45%	-
Regional Adoption Agencies (England) and Adoption Services (Wales)	36	27	75%	-
Voluntary adoption agencies (currently active)	35	16	46%	-
Independent fostering agencies	347	13	4%	-

3.2 Findings

Engagement with archivists and records manager

Several archivists and records managers fed back that completing the survey was a useful process as it has given them a greater understanding of what they hold. For a few it has helped them develop a better relationship with Children's Services. In general, archivists and records managers were highly engaged with the survey.

"Working with Childrens [Services] has been great for us to get to know better what the council holds collectively" (Archivist)

However, some archivists and records managers who agreed to act as a liaison with Children's Services appear to have struggled to engage with them.

Limited capacity or understanding of what they hold

For local authorities, the surveys appear to have been completed mainly by social work practitioners or their business support. In some cases, it was completed by records management or information governance practitioners.

Email and telephone conversations we had with respondents, especially local authorities, suggests the capacity to complete the survey was an issue, but this also suggests they do not necessarily have basic information to hand about what they hold. Information can also be held in different parts of the local authority which further complicated completing the survey. In retrospect, we perhaps could have made parts of the survey slightly simpler for local authorities to complete.

"I have discussed this with our information governance department and unfortunately we are not able to respond. The information requested is held in a range of places and would be extremely time consuming to collate as much of it would be stored in archives and would require significant officer capacity to identify. So I am afraid that we are not able support with [sic] your request at this time."

Some local authorities refused to deal with the Freedom of Information Request and used Section 12 (refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit). If this was the case, they were then sent a simpler version of the survey with four questions. Even then, two local authorities still refused to answer using Section 12.

Confusion about where records are held

There was often an assumption in England by local authority staff that adoption records are held by the Regional Adoption Agency, when in most cases they are still held by the local authority. In addition, in few cases where independent adoption agencies have closed and their records transferred (statutorily) to the local authority, staff were not always aware of this. For example, one local authority denied they held records for an independent agency until a Freedom of Information request was submitted. Where Children's Services functions has been outsourced to an external organisation there was also sometimes confusion about who holds the records.

Quality of responses

The quality of responses was mixed. Some respondents went to great lengths to provide useful contextual information and detail. However, there were some responses that provide very brief information. In some cases, respondents did not even include basic information such as date coverage. For example, just under one third of organisations who responded did not provide a start date of their adoption or care case files.

Size of the records

The survey asked about the extent/size of their paper and digital records. 67% of organisations did not provide an answer on the number of boxes they hold and 83% did provide an answer about the size of their digital records in GB. This suggests organisations do not know this or have this information easily to hand.

Where organisations did respond the size of the collections varied considerably. For example, for care records from 0 to 16,000 boxes and from 0 GB to 40,000 GB.

Case management software

The survey asked for an approximate date when the creation of digital case records started in the organisation. 65% of organisations were able to answer this question. The answers provided ranged from the 1980s to 2022 – with 80% of those who answered providing a date from the 2000s-2010s. Table 2 below summarises the results by decade.

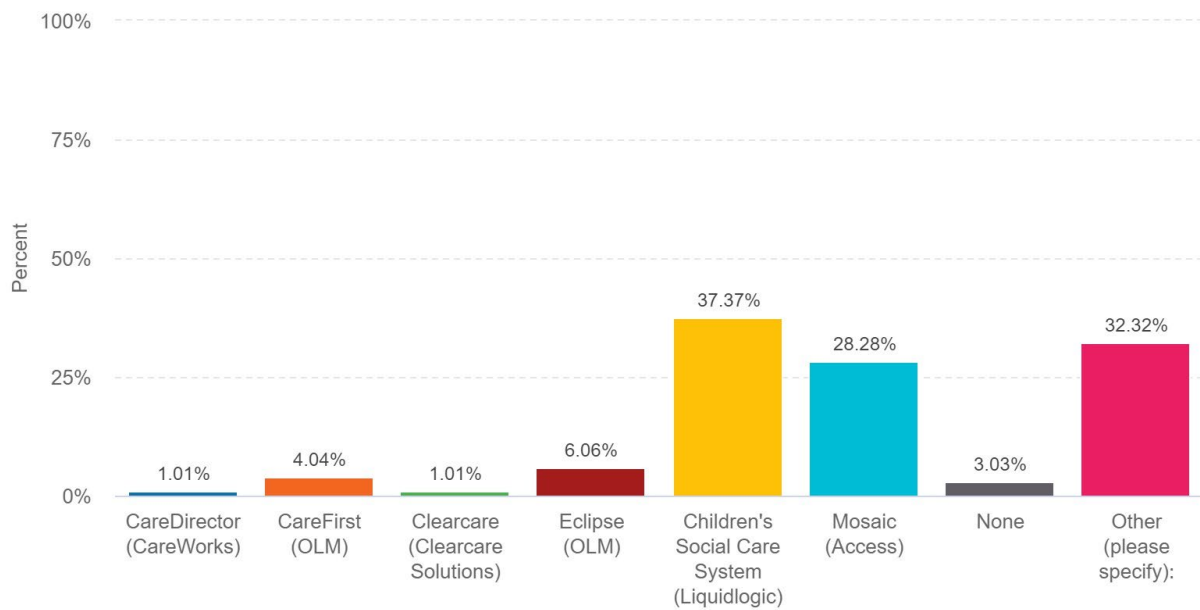
The most common case management software used by respondents was Liquidlogic (34% for care records and 37% for adoption records) and Mosaic Access (35% for care records and 28% for adoption records). See Figures 1 and 2 below for more information.

Table 2 - When did the creation of digital case records approximately start in your organisation? (by decade)

<u>Decade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1980s	6%
1990s	9%
2000s	40%
2010s	40%
2020s	5%

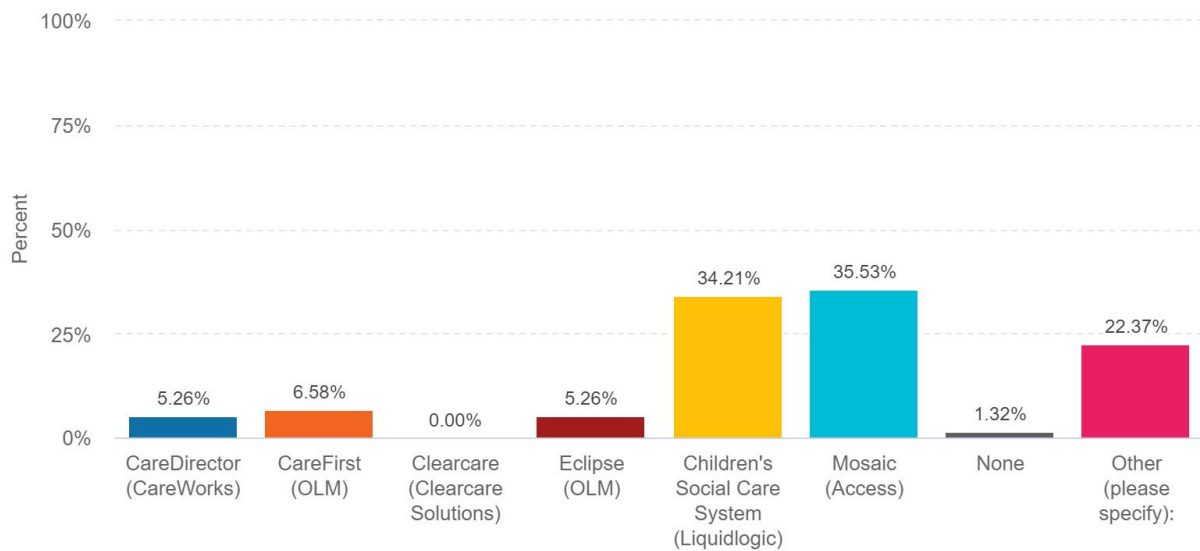
Note – 127 responses to this question as of 1 October 2023. The percentage excludes those who did not reply.

Figure 1 - What case management software do you currently use for adoption records?



Note – 99 responses to this question as of 1 October 2023. Other included Charm (15%) and WCCIS (4%).

Figure 2 - What case management software do you currently use for care records?



Note – 76 responses to this question as of 1 October 2023. Other included WCCIS (5%), Charm (4%), and Paris (4%).

Guidance

The survey asked what respondents thought the guidance should cover. All areas scored relatively high, although the highest scored areas were for 'access to records,' 'retention of records' and 'redaction.' Digitisation and storage of paper records scored slightly lower – especially in the care records survey. See Figures 3 and 4 below for more detail.

In terms of “other” areas the themes mentioned included.

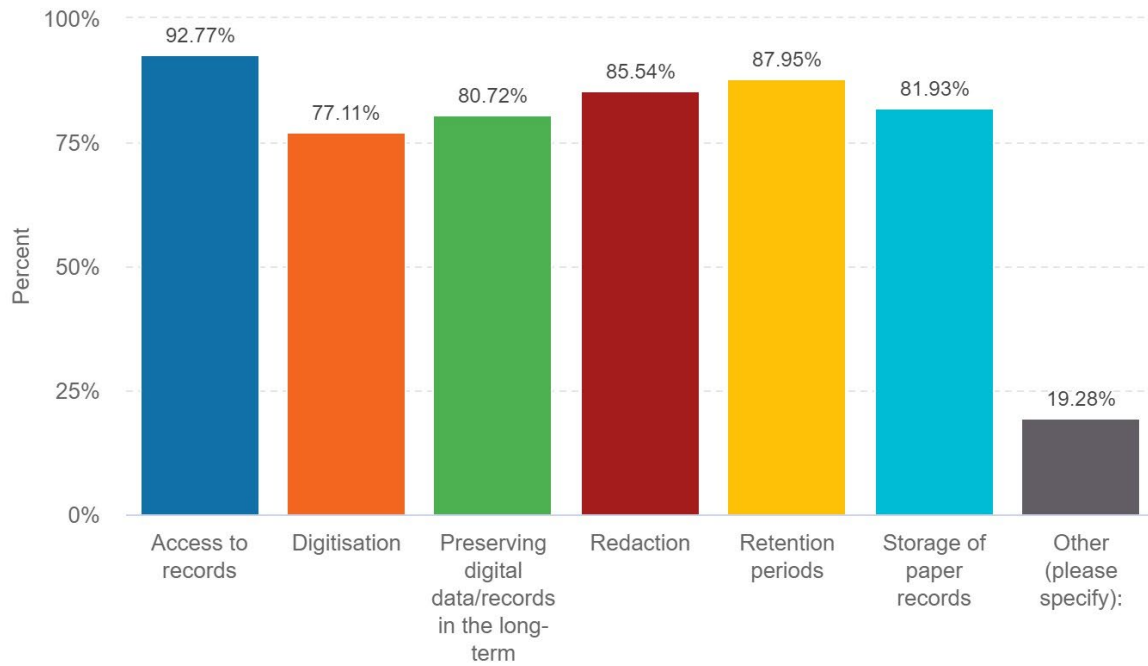
- Management and access to records of people who are deceased.
- Storage and retention of personal items e.g., birthday cards, gifts, hardcopies of handwriting of birth parents/family members.
- Demonstrating the value and importance of recordkeeping to individuals to organisations and practitioners.

Other comments included:

“You need to take into account Post Commencement access to adoption records legislation i.e. those children who were adopted post Dec 31st 2005 as the information that can be shared differs from pre commencement legislation.”

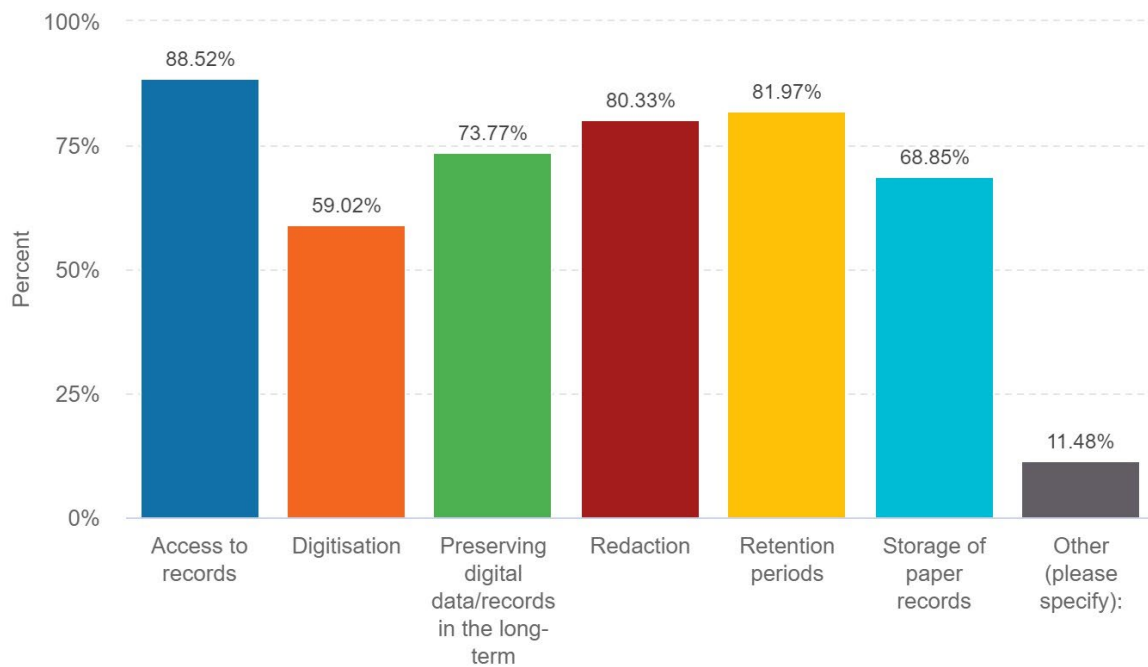
“Clarity about the future roles of Regional Adoption Agencies and Local Authorities in respect of access to records. It would make sense in the future if the 'Adoption Record' was held by the placing RAA and the case record in respect of how decisions were made etc. would remain with the LA's and would be accessed via Subject Access Request”

Figure 3 – What should the guidance cover? (adoption records survey)



Note – 83 responses to this question as of 1 October 2023

Figure 4 – What should the guidance cover? (care records survey)



Note – 61 responses to this question as of 1 October 2023

3.3 Datasets

The main outcome of the record survey is three datasets in .CSV format outlining what records organisations hold. These are:

1. Archives services

Arranged by name of the archives service (128 services). One row in the dataset represents one archive service. Includes:

- Background information about the archive service, including ARCHON code, service website and service email
- Records of children's homes (1599)
- Records of mother and baby Homes (151)
- Records of adoption agencies/societies (73)
- Other records (149)

2. Adoption records

Arranged by name of the organisation that holds the records (119 organisations). One row represents in the dataset represents one organisation. Includes:

- Background information about the organisation including name, website, and type of organisation
- Records of organisations e.g., adoption agencies/societies, local authority (155)
- Records of mother and Baby homes (15)
- Website and email addresses for enquiries about accessing the records

3. Care records

Arranged by name of the organisation that holds the records (92 organisations). One row in the dataset represents one organisation. Includes:

- Background information about the organisation including name, website, and type of organisation
- Records of organisations e.g., local authority, independent agency (113)
- Records of children's homes (150)
- Website and email addresses for enquiries about accessing the records.

Therefore in total the datasets contain details of the records of:

- 1,749 children's homes
- 166 mother and baby homes
- 228 local authorities and agencies/societies (adoption)
- 113 local authorities and independent organisations (care)

Note - information correct as of 1 January 2024.

4. Framework for the guidance

This section has been informed by the results of the research presented in Section 2.

4.1 Principles

The guidance will:

- Be aimed at practitioners responsible for creating, managing, and providing access to the records and free to access.
- Provide the perspectives of care-experienced and adopted people to give practitioners a greater understanding of their needs and the challenges they face.
- Use plain/simple and inclusive language.
- Be relatively 'short and punchy,' but at the same time have enough detail to be useful for practitioners.
- Be easy to dip in & out of/refer to when needed.
- Parts can be easily reused to create additional content such as social media posts or films.
- Signpost to existing guidance, sources of good practice and other resources where appropriate rather than create new guidance (e.g. [Access to information for adult care leavers - a guide for social workers and Access to Records Officers](#), [Recording in Children's Social Work guide](#)).
- Identify good practice to empower people to change what is in their power.
- Highlight best/exemplary practice as case studies and where campaigning/advocacy will be required to implement best practice with significant resource impacts (e.g., for project future phase(s) such as legislation change on retention).

4.2 Content

(i) Introduction

- Background
- Why is recordkeeping important?

(ii) Creating records

- Participatory recordkeeping and the voice of the children and young people
- Recording joy and positive moments
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- Memorabilia, personal items and objects

(iii) Preserving records

- Retention periods and permanent retention
- Digitisation of microformats and paper
- Storage and control of paper records
- Longevity of digital data

(iv) Providing access to records

- Access processes
- Redaction
- Legislation and statutory timescales
- Trauma-informed practice in support
- Identifying location and availability of records

5. Stakeholders for future work

We recommend that the Project Board seek to maintain and develop relationships with the following stakeholders as the current project nears an end. A project directory is provided separately.

5.1 Specific opportunities to disseminate the published guidance (short-term)

South East Post Adoption Network have offered a conference slot.

Regional Adoption Agency leaders have asked for a presentation about the guidance and data at one of their meetings.

CoramBAAF have offered further webinar opportunities through their monthly Exploring Expertise or other training series to promote the guidance.

Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Archivists of Scottish Local Authorities Working Group (ASLAWG) (ARA group) - Inquiries Working Group.

Universities and colleges that train social workers. Some care-experienced adults we spoke to emphasised the importance of sharing the guidance with organisations that train social workers.

5.2 Developing/contributing to future phase(s) of project

CoramBAAF – are considering the future of the Adoption Search Reunion website, and actively interested in exploring a possible project phase 2. As a wider organisation CoramBAAF are also actively campaigning including resources for access to records and to health information.

CoramBAAF is also a member of the **Access to Records Campaign Group**, which also includes the Association of Child Abuse Lawyers, Barnardo's, Care Leavers' Association (CLA) and Post Care Forum. The ARCG has highlighted retention in its [recent campaigning work](#).

Family Action (wider charity of which **PAC-UK** is a part) maintains the Family Connect website (MIRRA project outcome).

Improving Adoption Services for Adults (IASA)/UEA will complete next summer.

Improving case management systems – [government guidance](#). Open feedback opportunity; could include raising digital preservation issues.

The Government [accepted](#) (May 2023) the IICSA recommendation to direct the **ICO** to produce a code of practice on the retention of and access to records known to relate to child sexual abuse. The timeline for this is currently unclear: the ICO plans to publish a “guidance pipeline” but as at early October 2023 this is not yet available. There may be consultation opportunities around the creation of this code of practice.

Local Government Association. Their retention tool gives guidance on retaining records for legal and business reasons for each service. They may wish to update this tool in light of this research and the new guidance.

Information and Records Management Society. They have a retention wiki which provides a community-editable platform that will allow the profession to develop on-going consensus on rules for different record series. This could be updated in light of this research and the new guidance.

5.3 Other organisations working in this space

The following have been identified as being concerned with improving records and could be potentially approached to identify areas of mutual interest. See further details in the literature reviews above:

- The Black Care Experience
- LGBTQ+
- NYAS
- Adoption UK is likely to continue its annual “adoption barometer;” the 2022/5th barometer highlighted this project.

The NSPCC released “[retention and storage guidance on child protection records](#)” in September 2023. This was published after the literature review.

6. Future project phases

The following activities were out scope of the project for which we were contracted but have been identified over the course of this project as warranting further work and investigation.

Guidance

- Dissemination of the guidance.
- Detailed guidance on redaction in a social care setting.
- Creating audio-visual and social media content based on the guidance.
- Keeping the guidance updated (note Kevinjbolton Ltd has offered two-day pro bono to undertake this after 12 months).
- Further guidance on standards for what type of information records should contain.

Advocacy

- Dissemination of the guidance.
- Influencing organisations and advocating for statutory change including Ofsted and ICO.
- Influencing Local Government Association and Information and Records Management Society to update their retention tools (see Section 5.2 above) in light of this research and the new guidance.

Dataset

- Preparing the dataset for hosting.
- Hosting the survey dataset and making it accessible.
- Integration of the survey dataset with information from Adoption Search Reunion/future of Adoption Search Reunion web resource
- Keeping the dataset updated.
- Further chasing of those organisations who have not responded to the survey

Appendix A – Acknowledgments

This research was undertaken in 2023 with input from:

- Kevin Bolton, archives consultant
- Larysa Bolton, archives consultant
- Laura Cotton, Glamorgan Archivist, Glamorgan Archives and Chair of Archives and Records Council Wales
- Dr Julia Feast OBE, Independent Consultant, specialising in the life-long issues of Adoption, Care and Donor Conception
- Heather Forbes, County Archivist of Gloucestershire & Chair of Chief Archivists in Local Government Group of Archives and Records Association.
- Dr Jim Goddard, Chair of The Care Leavers' Association
- Isa Jaye, Subject Access Request Specialist, Post Care Forum (PCF) Chairwoman, Care Leavers Association (CLA) Trustee, Memory Identity Rights In Records Access (MIRRA) Co-researcher, and Access to Care Records Campaign Group (ACRCG) Committee Member
- Sam Johnston, Service Manager for Archives and Records, Dorset History Centre
- Dr Elizabeth Lomas, Associate Professor in Information Governance, Department of Information Studies, University College London (UCL)
- Irena Lyczkowska, Pathways Post Adoption and After Care Team Leader, Catholic Children's Society
- John-george Nicholson, care experienced
- Wendy Walker, County Archivist, West Sussex Record Office
- Rose Wallace, adopted adult and specialist adoption counsellor at PAC-UK
- Rosemary Walter, care experienced
- Sarah Wickham, archives consultant
- Other Advisory Group members

We are also grateful to:

- Those who participated in the research focus groups and interviews for this project.
- Those who have undertaken research previously including University College London's MIRRA project, Access to Care Records Campaign Group, The Care Leavers Association, CoramBAAF, The Black Care Experience, LGBTQ+ Youth in Care, and young people from Plymouth's Listen and Care Councils.

Appendix B – Focus groups

Who	How / when	Interview/focus group guide: high-level themes
Care experienced adults	<p>Focus group on 5 July 2023 (n=2) and 1:1 interviews in July (n=5).</p> <p>Note – there was an ambition to undertake a focus group with those aged 18-25 but this was not achieved.</p>	<p>What should organisations know about your experiences?</p> <p>What should organisations know about records, particularly objects/artefacts and things that might not be thought to be part of the formal “record” e.g., letters from family members or contact records?</p> <p>what kind of support would you like around accessing your records?</p> <p>how would you like to collect your records if you decide to access them?</p> <p>What’s working well?/examples of good practice</p> <p>Biggest challenges?</p> <p>What should the guidance cover? (e.g., Access to records / Digitisation / Preserving digital data/records in the long-term / Redaction / Retention periods / Storage of paper records / Other)</p> <p>Are current retention periods for records appropriate? Should records be kept permanently? What should happen to physical records if they are digitised?</p> <p>Who else is working in this sphere?</p>
Adopted adults	<p>Focus group on 18 July 2023 (n=4) and 1:1 interviews in July (n=1).</p> <p>Note – there was an ambition to undertake a focus group with those aged 18-25 but this was not achieved</p>	As above

Who	How / when	Interview/focus group guide: high-level themes
<p>Social care practitioners creating and/or managing records in any setting (local authority or independent/voluntary agency) in England and Wales</p>	<p>N = 91</p> <p>This took place chiefly through a webinar in CoramBAAF’s “Exploring Expertise” series on 13 June 2023. 54 people attended, with all attendees engaging in the breakout room discussions and in the interaction via an Ahaslides presentation. Wales, and all the English regions, were represented, with attendees from London and the South East making up just over half. Most attendees worked in adoption (61%) or both care and adoption (23%). A further 12 people engaged with the recording and gave feedback via the post-event Ahaslides presentation.</p> <p>A short discussion was held during the Post-Adoption Forum meeting on 25 July 2023 with 23 attendees.</p>	<p>What’s working well?/examples of good practice</p> <p>What are the current challenges with managing the records and recordkeeping?</p> <p>What types of guidance or best practice already exist/do they use? What makes them (not) useful? (content, structure etc).</p> <p>What types of guidance or best practice would be useful to help overcome these challenges? What else should the guidance or best practice cover? (e.g., Access to records / Digitisation / Preserving digital data/records in the long-term / Redaction / Retention periods / Storage of paper records / Other)</p> <p>Are current retention periods for records appropriate? Should records be kept permanently? What about non-statutory retention? How are physical records dealt with if they are digitised?</p> <p>Who else is working in this sphere?</p>
<p>Archive and records management practitioners</p>	<p>Focus group 18 June 2023 (n=11).</p> <p>Note -attendees were evenly split across London, South East, North West and Yorkshire & the Humber (20% each), with East of England and</p>	<p>What’s working well?/examples of good practice</p> <p>What types of guidance would be useful for them?</p> <p>What are the current challenges with managing the records and recordkeeping?</p>

Who	How / when	Interview/focus group guide: high-level themes
	<p>Elsewhere in the British Isles (10% each). Wales, and the English regions of the East Midlands, North East, South West and West Midlands, were not represented. Most attendees worked in the public sector (9 local authority, 1 other) but the private/third sector was also represented.</p>	<p>What types of guidance or best practice already exist/do they use? What makes them (not) useful? (content, structure etc). What gaps are there?</p> <p>Are current retention periods for records appropriate? Should records be kept permanently? How are physical records dealt with if they are digitised?</p>
<p>Information governance/data protection practitioners</p>	<p>A focus group was held on 29 June 2023 (n=5) and 1:1 interview in July 2023 (n=1).</p> <p>Attendees were evenly split across London, South East, North East, Yorkshire & the Humber, and outside the UK. Wales, and the English regions of the East Midlands, North West, South West and West Midlands, were not represented. Attendees' experience encompassed both the public and private/third sectors and was concentrated in providing access to records by Subject Access Requests, chiefly for adoption although some also covered care.</p>	<p>What's working well?/examples of good practice</p> <p>What types of guidance would be useful for them?</p> <p>What are the current challenges with managing the records and recordkeeping?</p> <p>What types of guidance or best practice already exist/do they use? What makes them (not) useful? (content, structure etc). What gaps are there?</p> <p>Are current retention periods for records appropriate? Should records be kept permanently? How are physical records dealt with if they are digitised?</p>

Appendix C – List of organisations who responded to the records survey

Correct as of 1 January 2024.

Local authority archive services

<u>Country</u>	<u>Archive service</u>	<u>Replied to survey?</u>
England	Barking and Dagenham Archive and Local Studies Centre	Yes
England	Barnet Local Studies and Archives	Yes
England	Barnsley Archives and Local Studies	Yes
England	Bath Record Office	Yes
England	Bedfordshire Archives	Yes
England	Berkshire Record Office	Yes
England	Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre	Yes
England	Birmingham Archives and Collections	Yes
England	Blackburn Central Library	Yes
England	Blackpool History Centre	Yes
England	Bolton Archives and Local Studies Service	Yes
England	Brent Archives	No
England	Bristol Archives	Yes
England	Bromley Historic Collections	No
England	Buckinghamshire Archives	Yes
England	Bury Museum and Archives	Yes
England	Cambridgeshire Archives	Yes
England	Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre	Yes
England	Cheshire Archives and Local Studies	No
England	Coventry Archives	No
England	Croydon Archives and Local History Collections	Yes
England	Cumbria Archives Service	Yes
England	Derbyshire Record Office	Yes
England	Doncaster Archives and Local Studies	Yes
England	Dorset History Centre	Yes
England	Dudley Archives and Local History	Yes
England	Durham Record Office	No
England	Ealing Local History Centre	Yes
England	East Riding Archives	Yes
England	East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office	Yes
England	Enfield Local Studies Library and Archive	Yes
England	Essex Record Office	Yes
England	Gloucestershire Archives	Yes
England	Hackney Archives	Yes
England	Hammersmith & Fulham Archives Local Studies	Yes
England	Hampshire Archives and Local Studies	Yes

England	Haringey Archive and Local History	Yes
England	Harrow Local History Collection	Yes
England	Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre	Yes
England	Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies	Yes
England	Hillingdon Museum and Archives Services	No
England	Hounslow Local Studies and Archives	No
England	Hull History Centre	Yes
England	Isle of Wight Record Office	Yes
England	Islington Local History Centre	Yes
England	Kensington and Chelsea Local studies and Archives	Yes
England	Kent Archives	No
England	Kingston Heritage Service	Yes
England	Knowsley Archives	Yes
England	Kresen Kernow	Yes
England	Lambeth Archives	No
England	Lancashire Archives	Yes
England	Lewisham Local History and Archives Centre	No
England	Lincolnshire Archives	Yes
England	Liverpool Record Office	Yes
England	London Borough of Havering Local Studies	Yes
England	London Metropolitan Archives	Yes
England	Manchester Archives, Central Library	Yes
England	Medway Archives Centre	No
England	Merton Heritage and Local Studies	Yes
England	Newham Archive and Local Studies Library	Yes
England	Norfolk Record Office	Yes
England	North East Lincolnshire Archives	Yes
England	North Lincolnshire Local Studies Library	No
England	North Yorkshire County Archive Service	Yes
England	Northamptonshire Archives	No
England	Northumberland Archives	Yes
England	Nottinghamshire Archives	No
England	Oldham Local Studies and Archives	Yes
England	Oxfordshire History Centre	Yes
England	Peterborough Archives	Yes
England	Plymouth Archives, The Box	No
England	Portsmouth History Centre	No
England	Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland	No
England	Redbridge Local studies and Archives	Yes
England	Richmond upon Thames Local Studies Library and Archive	Yes
England	Rochdale Local Studies and Archives	Yes
England	Rotherham Archives and Local Studies	No
England	Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust	Yes
England	Salford City Archives	Yes

England	Sandwell Community History and Archives Service	Yes
England	Sefton Library Information Service and Archive Unit	Yes
England	Sheffield Archives	No
England	Shropshire Archives	Yes
England	Solihull Heritage & Local Studies	Yes
England	South West Heritage Trust	Yes
England	Southampton Archives	Yes
England	Southwark Archives	Yes
England	St Helens Archive Service	Yes
England	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service	Yes
England	Stockport Archives Service	Yes
England	Suffolk Archives	Yes
England	Surrey History Centre	Yes
England	Sutton Archives and Local Studies	Yes
England	Tameside Local Studies and Archives	Yes
England	Teesside Archives	Yes
England	Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives	Yes
England	Trafford Local Studies Centre	Yes
England	Tyne and Wear Archives	Yes
England	Walsall Archives	Yes
England	Waltham Forest Archives and Local Studies Library	Yes
England	Wandsworth Heritage Service	Yes
England	Warwickshire County Record Office	Yes
England	West Sussex Record Office	Yes
England	West Yorkshire Archive Service	No
England	Westminster Archives	Yes
England	Wigan Archives and Local Studies	Yes
England	Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre	Yes
England	Wirral Archives	Yes
England	Wolverhampton City Archives	Yes
England	Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service	Yes
England	York City Archives	Yes
Wales	Anglesey Archives	Yes
Wales	Carmarthenshire Archives	Yes
Wales	Ceredigion Archives	Yes
Wales	Conwy Archives	Yes
Wales	Glamorgan Archives	Yes
Wales	Gwent Archives	Yes
Wales	Gwynedd Archives	Yes
Wales	North East Wales Archives	Yes
Wales	Pembrokeshire Archives	Yes
Wales	Powys Archives	Yes
Wales	West Glamorgan Archive Service	Yes
Wales	Wrexham Archives	Yes

Other archive services who replied

<u>Country</u>	<u>Archive service</u>	<u>Replied to survey?</u>
England	Action for Children	Yes
England	Barnardo's	Yes
England	Board for Social Responsibility	Yes - emailed to say records were transferred to Norfolk Record Office in 2008 and 2009 so Nothing held
England	Borthwick Institute for Archives	Yes
England	Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham	Yes
England	Canterbury Cathedral Archives	Yes
England	Caritas Salford	No
England	Catholic Childrens Society	Yes
England	Children's Society	Yes
England	Christian Family Concern	Yes
England	Diocesan Archives, Catholic Diocese of Southwark/Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark	Yes
England	Diocese of Brentwood	Yes
England	Father Hudson's	No
England	Hexham and Newcastle Roman Catholic Diocesan Archives	Yes
England	Lambeth Palace Library	Yes
England	Middlesbrough Roman Catholic Diocesan Archives	Yes
England	Mulberry Bush (formerly Planned Environment Therapy Trust Archive)	Yes
England	Nazareth House Archives	No
England	Nugent Care/Caritas Care Leeds	No
England	Regent's Park College archives Oxford/The Angus Library and Archive	Yes
England	Salford Diocesan Archives	Yes - emailed to say Nothing held
England	Salvation Army International Heritage Centre	No
England	Shrewsbury Roman Catholic Diocesan Archives	Yes
England	St Bartholomew's Hospital	Yes
England	St Cuthbert's Care	No
England	The Women's Library	Yes
England	Together Trust	Yes
England	University of Southampton Archives and Special Collections	Yes

England	Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society (deposited at the University of Leeds)	No
Wales	Cardiff Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Archives	No
Wales	Menevia Roman Catholic Diocesan Archives	No
Wales	Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University	Yes

Local authorities

<u>Country</u>	<u>Local authority</u>	<u>Replied to survey? (Adoption)</u>	<u>Replied to survey? (Care)</u>
England	Barking and Dagenham, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Barnet, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Barnsley Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bath and North East Somerset Council	Yes	No
England	Bedford Borough Council	Yes	No
England	Bexley, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Birmingham City Council	Yes - see Birmingham Children's Trust return	Yes - see Birmingham Children's Trust return
England	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Blackpool Council	No	No
England	Bolton Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	Yes - see Aspire return	Yes
England	Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bradford City Council	No	No
England	Brent, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Brighton and Hove City Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bristol City Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bromley, London Borough of	No	No
England	Buckinghamshire Council	Yes	Yes
England	Bury Borough Council	No	No
England	Calderdale Borough Council	No	No
England	Cambridgeshire County Council	Yes	Yes
England	Camden, London Borough of	No	No
England	Central Bedfordshire Council	No	No
England	Cheshire East Council	Yes	Yes
England	Cheshire West and Chester Council	No	No
England	City of London Corporation	No	No
England	Cornwall County Council	No	Yes
England	Coventry City Council	Yes	Yes
England	Croydon, London Borough of	No	No
England	Cumbria County Council	No	No
England	Darlington Borough Council	No	No
England	Derby City Council	No	No

England	Derbyshire County Council	No	No
England	Devon County Council	No	No
England	Doncaster Borough Council	Yes - see One Adoption South Yorkshire return	Yes
England	Dorset Council	Yes	Yes
England	Dudley Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Durham County Council	No	No
England	Ealing, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	East Riding of Yorkshire Council	No	No
England	East Sussex County Council	Yes	Yes
England	Enfield, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Essex County Council	No	No
England	Gateshead Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Gloucestershire County Council	Yes	Yes - included on adoption survey return
England	Greenwich, Royal London Borough of	No	No
England	Hackney, London Borough of	Yes	No
England	Halton Borough Council	No	No
England	Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Hampshire County Council	Yes	Yes
England	Haringey, London Borough of	Yes	No
England	Harrow, London Borough of	No	No
England	Hartlepool Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Havering, London Borough of	No	No
England	Herefordshire Council	Yes	Yes
England	Hertfordshire County Council	Yes	Yes
England	Hillingdon, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Hounslow, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Hull City Council	No	No
England	Isle of Wight Council	No	Yes - although this appears to covers adoption
England	Islington, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Kensington and Chelsea, Royal London Borough of	No	No
England	Kent County Council	No	No
England	Kingston upon Thames, Royal London Borough of	Yes - see Achieving for Children return	Yes - see Achieving for Children return
England	Kirklees Borough Council	No	No
England	Knowsley Borough Council	No	No
England	Lambeth, London Borough of	Yes	No
England	Lancashire County Council	No	No

England	Leeds City Council Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Leicester City Council	No	No
England	Leicestershire County Council	No	No
England	Lewisham, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Lincolnshire County Council	Yes	No
England	Liverpool City Council	No	No
England	Luton Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Manchester City Council	No	No
England	Medway Council	No	No
England	Merton, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Middlesbrough Borough Council	No	No
England	Milton Keynes City Council	Yes	Yes
England	Newcastle City Council	No	No
England	Newham, London Borough of	No	No
England	Norfolk County Council	No	No
England	North East Lincolnshire Council	Yes	Yes
England	North Lincolnshire Council	Yes	Yes
England	North Northamptonshire Council	No	No
England	North Somerset Council	No	No
England	North Tyneside Borough Council	No	No
England	North Yorkshire County Council	Yes	No
England	Northumberland County Council	Yes	No
England	Nottingham City Council	No	No
England	Nottinghamshire County Council	No	No
England	Oldham Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Oxfordshire County Council	No	No
England	Peterborough City Council	Yes - see Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption return	No
England	Plymouth City Council	No	No
England	Portsmouth City Council	Yes	Yes
England	Reading Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Redbridge, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	No	No
England	Richmond upon Thames, London Borough of	Yes - see Achieving for Children return	Yes - see Achieving for Children return
England	Rochdale Borough Council	No	No
England	Rotherham	Yes	Yes
England	Rutland County Council	Yes	Yes
England	Salford City Council	No	No

England	Sandwell Borough Council	No	No
England	Sefton Borough Council	No	No
England	Sheffield City Council	No	No
England	Shropshire Council	No	No
England	Slough Borough Council	Yes	No
England	Solihull Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Somerset County Council	Yes	Yes
England	South Gloucestershire Council	Yes	Yes
England	South Tyneside Borough Council	No	No
England	Southampton City Council	No	No
England	Southend-on-Sea City Borough Council	No	No
England	Southwark, London Borough of	No	No
England	St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Staffordshire County Council	No	No
England	Stockport Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	No	No
England	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	No	No
England	Suffolk County Council	No	No
England	Sunderland City Council	Yes - see Together for Children return	Yes - see Together for Children return
England	Surrey County Council	No	No
England	Sutton, London Borough of	No	No
England	Swindon Borough Council	No	No
England	Tameside Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Telford and Wrekin Borough Council	No	No
England	Thurrock Council	Yes	Yes
England	Torbay Council	No	No
England	Tower Hamlets, London Borough of	Yes	Yes
England	Trafford Borough Council	No	No
England	Wakefield City Council	No	No
England	Walsall Borough Council	No	No
England	Waltham Forest, London Borough of	Yes - note - two responses	Yes
England	Wandsworth, London Borough of	No	No
England	Warrington Borough Council	Yes - see Together for Adoption return	Yes
England	Warwickshire County Council	Yes	Yes
England	West Berkshire Council	No	No
England	West Northamptonshire Council	No	No
England	West Sussex County Council	Yes	Yes

England	Westminster City Council	Yes - see Coram Ambitious for Adoption return	No
England	Wigan Borough Council	Yes	Yes
England	Wiltshire Council	No	No
England	Windsor and Maidenhead, Royal Borough Council	Yes - see Achieving for Children return	Yes - see Achieving for Children return
England	Wirral Borough Council	No	No
England	Wokingham Borough Council	Yes	Deadline extended for two weeks
England	Wolverhampton City Council	Yes - see Adoption@Heart return	Yes
England	Worcestershire County Council	Yes	Yes
England	York, City of Council	No	No
Wales	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Blaenau Gwent)	No	No
Wales	Bridgend County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Caerphilly County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Cardiff Council (Cyngor Caerdydd)	No	No
Wales	Carmarthenshire County Council (Cyngor Sir Gaerfyrddin)	Yes	No
Wales	Ceredigion County Council (Cyngor Sir Ceredigion)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Conwy County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Denbighshire County Council (Cyngor Sir Ddinbych)	No	No
Wales	Flintshire County Council (Cyngor Sir y Fflint)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Gwynedd Council (Cyngor Sir Gwynedd)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Isle of Anglesey County Council (Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn)	Yes - emailed to say records held by North Wales Adoption Service	No
Wales	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Merthyr Tudful)	No	Yes

Wales	Monmouthshire County Council (Cyngor Sir Fynwy)	No	Yes
Wales	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell nedd Port Talbot)	No	Yes
Wales	Newport City Council (Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd)	Yes	Yes
Wales	Pembrokeshire County Council (Cyngor Sir Penfro)	No	Yes
Wales	Powys County Council (Cyngor Sir Powys)	No	No
Wales	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Taf)	No	No
Wales	Swansea, City and County of (Cyngor Sir a Dinas Abertawe)	No	Yes
Wales	Torfaen County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen)	No	No
Wales	Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Bro Morgannwg)	No	No
Wales	Wrexham County Borough Council (Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Wrecsam)	No	No

Regional adoption agencies and services

<u>Country</u>	<u>Regional adoption agency/regional service</u>	<u>Replied to survey?</u>
England	Adopt Coast to Coast	No
England	Adopt East Alliance	Yes
England	Adopt London East	Yes
England	Adopt London North	Yes
England	Adopt London South	No
England	Adopt London West	Yes
England	Adopt North East	Yes
England	Adopt South	No
England	Adopt South West	Yes
England	Adopt Thames Valley	Yes - see Berkshire return
England	Adoption Central England	Yes
England	Adoption Connects	Yes
England	Adoption Counts	No
England	Adoption East Midlands	Yes
England	Adoption in Merseyside (AiM)	Yes
England	Adoption Lancashire & Blackpool	Yes
England	Adoption Now	Yes - also submitted a return for care records
England	Adoption Partnership South East	Yes
England	Adoption South East	Yes
England	Adoption Tees Valley	Yes
England	Adoption West	Yes
England	Adoption@Heart	Yes
England	Birmingham Children's Trust	Yes
England	Aspire Adoption	Yes - also submitted a return for care records
England	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption	Yes
England	Family Adoption Links	No
England	One Adoption North and Humber	Yes - also submitted a return for care records
England	One Adoption South Yorkshire	Yes
England	One Adoption West Yorkshire	Yes - also submitted a return for care records
England	Together for Adoption	Yes
England	Together4Children	No
Wales	Adoption Mid and West Wales	No
Wales	South East Wales Adoption Service	Yes
Wales	The North Wales Adoption Service	No
Wales	Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption	Yes
Wales	Western Bay Adoption Service	No

Independent adoption agencies (current)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Name of agency</u>	<u>Replied to survey?</u>
England	Action for Children - Adoption and Permanency Service London	No
England	Action for Children - Adoption and Permanency Service Midlands	No
England	Action for Children - Adoption and Permanency Service South West	No
England	Adopters for Adoption (umbrella organisation is Polaris Community)	Yes
England	Adoption Focus	No
England	Adoption Matters	Yes
England	Adoption West	Yes
England	Adoptionplus Limited	No
England	ARC Adoption North East Limited	Yes
England	Barnardo's - London, East & South-East	No
England	Barnardo's - Making Connections	Yes - see archives service return
England	Barnardo's - Midlands and South West	No
England	Barnardo's - North East	No
England	Barnardo's – Yorkshire	No
England	Birmingham Children's Trust Adoption Agency	Yes - see local authority return
England	Brighter Futures For Children	No
England	Caritas Care (Head Office)	Yes
England	Clifton Children's Society	Yes - CCS Adoption
England	Diagrama Adoption	Yes
England	Doncaster Children's Trust Adoption Service	Closed - but confirm that the Doncaster Council response should include Doncaster Children's Services Trust Adoption Service.
England	Families for Children Adoption Agency	Closed
England	Family Futures CIC	Yes
England	Intercountry Adoption Centre	No
England	Jigsaw Adoption	No
England	Northamptonshire Children's Trust Adoption Agency	No
England	Nugent Care	No

England	Parents and Children Together - Reading Office	Yes
England	Sandwell Children's Trust Adoption	No
England	Slough Adoption Service	No
England	SSAFA Forces Help Adoption Service	No
England	St Francis Children's Society	Closed - see Milton Keynes City Council
England	TACT [not active]	Yes
England	Thomas Coram Foundation for Children	Yes- Coram Ambitious for Adoption
England	Together For Children Adoption - Sunderland	Yes
England	Worcestershire Children First Voluntary Adoption Service	No
England	Yorkshire Adoption Agency Ltd	Yes
Wales	Barnardo's Cymru Adoption Service	No
Wales	St David's Children Society	Yes

Independent fostering agencies

We also received returns from the following

- Achieving for Children
- Anglia Fostering Agency
- Child Action North West
- Fostering London Ltd
- ISP Enfield
- TACT Fostering