



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

Access to Records Guidance

For those impacted by Northern Ireland Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses (from 1922 - 1995) and their related pathways and practices including the adoption and care systems.



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1. Introduction





1. Introduction

1.1 About the Independent Panel

The Executive Office ('TEO') set up the Truth Recovery Programme to investigate the workings of Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses in Northern Ireland, and the associated pathways and practices.

The Truth Recovery Programme is an integrated investigation involving two separate phases:

- a non-statutory Independent Panel; and
- a full statutory Public Inquiry.

The focus of the Truth Recovery Programme is on the following institutions:

Magdalene Laundries

- St Mary's – Belfast
- St Mary's – Derry/Londonderry
- St Mary's – Newry

Industrial Homes

- Thorndale Industrial Home (Salvation Army) – Belfast

Mother and Baby Institutions/Baby Homes

- Mater Dei Hostel, Belfast
- St Joseph's Baby/Foundling Institution, Belfast
- Marianville, Belfast, Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Belfast
- Marianvale, Newry, Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Newry
- Thorndale House, Belfast
- Malone Place, Belfast
- Hopedene Hostel, Belfast
- Kennedy House, Belfast
- Deanery Flats, Belfast
- Mount Oriel, Belfast

Workhouses

- Poor Law Union Workhouses across Northern Ireland



The Independent Panel is also investigating the pathways and practices related to Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses in Northern Ireland. This includes, but is not limited to:

- the care system, fostering and adoption practices,
- related institutions such as ‘baby homes’,
- private nursing homes, and;
- cross-border and international transfers of women and children.

In April 2023, TEO appointed ten people to the Independent Panel: three victims-survivors with personal experience of the institutions and the adoption system and experts in six important areas.





The members of the Independent Panel are:

- Professor Leanne McCormick and Professor Sean O’Connell, Social and Oral History/Co-Chairs
- Maria Cogley, Victim/Survivor
- Paul McClarey, Victim/Survivor
- Roisin McGlone, Victim/Survivor
- Dr Patricia Canning, Sociology of Discrimination and Gender-based Violence
- Beverly Clarke, Trauma Informed Practice
- Dr Mark Farrell, Archiving
- Colin Smith SC, International Human Rights Law and Domestic Law
- Steven Smyrl, Genealogy

The Independent Panel is collecting evidence in a number of ways, including from sources that already exist, archives/records research, engaging with the public and collecting testimonies from victims-survivors, their relatives and people who worked or volunteered for the institutions. When this work is complete, the Independent Panel will publish a report on its findings and recommendations, including on areas for the Public Inquiry to look into further.

One of the Independent Panel’s aims is to assist victims-survivors and their relatives to seek and obtain information from records and archives relating to the institutions and practices under investigation.

To achieve this aim, this guidance on access to records has been designed to assist people affected by the institutions and issues under investigation through the process of getting information and records about themselves and their family members. These records are held by organisations, Health and Social Care Trusts, agencies and other bodies in Northern Ireland.

1.2 Access to records

The importance of having access to written records of life events in the search for truth cannot be underestimated.

Many of those affected by the issues under investigation want information about their experiences, their past and identity, or family members.

The Independent Panel is aware that trying to access information and records can be a complicated and emotional process. Records can be held in many different places, and the process for getting access may be different depending on what the records are and who holds them. Records can contain different amounts of information.



The institutions relevant to this investigation were operated by a number of individuals and organisations. Each of these hold a variety of records which include different types of information. It is not always straightforward to identify where records are located or who holds them.

The structure of this guidance aims to assist navigation through the process in a logical and beneficial way. The guidance also outlines procedures to follow if individuals are unhappy with the outcome of any request made for information held about them. Our goal is to help people get access to as much information as possible.

1.3 Testimony

Records and archives are useful sources of information for the Independent Panel's investigation, but we also want to hear directly from people with knowledge of the institutions under investigation.

Your testimony can help the Independent Panel to understand what happened to you, or your loved one, while in a Mother and Baby Institution, Magdalene Laundry or Workhouse in Northern Ireland, or through their pathways and practices. If you worked or volunteered with one of these institutions, your testimony can help the Independent Panel to understand how they operated and what practices they used.

The Independent Panel records testimony through a safe, non-adversarial, disability-aware and trauma-sensitive process. Support is available before, during and after the testimony process for those who are victims-survivors.

When you are ready to share your testimony, our trained Testimony Facilitators will talk to you about the options for giving testimony and how we protect your confidentiality. They will go through our Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet with you so you know what you can expect from the Independent Panel.

You choose how, when and where you will give your testimony. This can be face-to-face, online or a written document. You choose how your testimony will be used, for example, whether you would like it to be included in the Independent Panel's final report.

You will always be listened to with empathy and acceptance, without challenge. Your testimony will be recorded truthfully.



You can contact our Testimony Team by:

**Scanning
the QR code:**



Visiting our website: www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk

Email: testimony@independentpanel.org.uk

Phone: 028 9052 0263
(Open Monday – Friday 11am - 12pm and 3pm - 4pm
or leave a voicemail on our secure answering service
any time outside of these hours.)

Post: Truth Recovery Independent Panel,
4th Floor, Equality House,
7-9 Shaftesbury Square, BT2 7DB

1.4 Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the guidance in this document is accurate, but it does not and is not intended to constitute legal advice. The Independent Panel will not accept liability for any loss or damage arising from any action or decision taken based on its content.



2. The Importance of Language, Terminology and Representation



2. The Importance of Language, Terminology and Representation



As a Panel, we acknowledge that the language and terminology we use is very important and that this guidance concerns sensitive issues.

While composing our guidance, we sourced other recent and relevant studies around terminology and language. In particular, we have had regard to the report entitled 'Language, Terminology and Representation - considering Ireland's Institutions historically known as 'Mother and Baby Homes', 'County Homes' and related Institutions', by Professor Caroline McGregor, Dr Carmel Devaney and Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the University of Galway. Their research focused on institutions in the Republic of Ireland, but we consider that its lessons are applicable in Northern Ireland also.

The report lists ten key messages directed to a range of stakeholders, including politicians and policy makers, professionals and others in authority, media, Church representatives, academics, researchers and members of the public:

- 1. Acknowledge and act when stigmatising language is used.**
- 2. Accept the truth of people's experiences.**
- 3. Ensure persons with lived experience have leadership in present and future actions.**
- 4. Avoid generalisations and prevent further stigmatisation.**
- 5. Focus on citizenship rights, entitlements and mutual respect.**
- 6. Respect diversity of people's experiences of language, terminology and representation.**
- 7. Face up to the history to inform present and future actions.**
- 8. Find positive ways forward in collaboration.**
- 9. Take responsibility and accountability for past actions of those in authority.**
- 10. Develop education and awareness raising actions.**



The report can be accessed in full by scanning the QR Code below.



With these principles in mind, we have endeavoured to use safe and appropriate language, terminology and representation relating to Northern Ireland Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses and their related pathways and practices, noting there is not always a consensus, and we continue to engage in discussion about the sensitivity and accuracy of the language we use. Our hope is that nothing in this document causes distress, but we will be grateful for any suggested improvements.

Throughout the guidance, we make specific language choices. For example, in records and other historic documents, some places are referred to and known as ‘homes’. In our guidance we have occasionally replaced ‘homes’ with the term ‘institutions’ because ‘homes’ may be considered inaccurate and insensitive by some people. However, we are also aware that some institutions may not be identifiable if referred to as an ‘institution’ and in these cases we have left the names unaltered.

For example, the three laundries operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters were individually known as ‘St Mary’s Home’ with no reference to the accompanying laundry in the name.

We may also refer to a historic document or information which contains terminology we do not agree with, or which we would not use, but we have tried to limit this where possible. For example, many adopted people prefer to be referred to as “children, now adults” or “adopted adults” rather than “babies” or “adoptees”.

We take this opportunity to remind users of this guidance that support services are available through the Victims and Survivors Service (‘VSS’) for victims-survivors, and information about how to access these services is available from VSS by telephone on 028 9027 9100, by email at enquiries@vssni.org or by scanning the QR Code below.



3. Where to Start



3. Where to Start

This guidance is intended to assist people in accessing their personal records. However, the Independent Panel is aware that trying to access information and records can be a complicated and emotional process. Records can be held in many different places, and the process of getting access may be different depending on what the records are and who holds them. Records can vary in the amounts of detail they contain and may be difficult to understand.

Where you start in your effort to access your records depends on your experience. Everyone's experience is different, but the information below may be of assistance in understanding what records exist, who controls them and how they can be accessed.

3.1 Support and assistance

This guidance is designed to be used by impacted people themselves, but help is available for people who would like support and assistance with using it. Such support is available from VSS and through their community partners, Adopt NI and WAVE. You can find out more about these organisations by scanning the QR codes below.



VSS



AdoptNI



WAVE

Free legal advice and assistance on access to records may also be available through your solicitor and the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland. Guidance on accessing legal advice and assistance can be found in Section 4.

3.2 Guidance for birth mothers

If you spent time in a Mother and Baby Institution or in a Workhouse before or after you gave birth, there may be records in relation to your time there. Guidance in relation to the records of Mother and Baby Institutions and Workhouses, including what records have survived and who controls them, can be found in Section 7. You may be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the General Data Protection Regulation 'GDPR'. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4.



You may also be able to access personal information about yourself in the adoption records relating to your child if he or she was adopted. Guidance on how to make an application for access to adoption records as a family member of an adopted person can be found in Section 5.

3.3 Guidance for women placed in a St Mary's Home/Laundry

If you spent time in a Laundry, there may be records in relation to your time there. Guidance in relation to the records of Laundries, including what records have survived and who controls them, can be found in Section 7. You may be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4.

3.4 Guidance for children, now adults, impacted by family separation

Adopted children, now adults, impacted by family separation

If you were born while your mother was in a Mother and Baby Institution or in a Workhouse and then adopted, there may be records in relation to your birth, time in the institution, and adoption.

The first step in accessing these records is often to apply for your original birth certificate. Guidance on how to apply for your original birth certificate can be found in Section 5.

Guidance in relation to the records of Mother and Baby Institutions and Workhouses, including what records have survived and who controls them, can be found in Section 7. You may be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4.

You may also be able to access your adoption file. Depending on how your adoption was organised, your adoption file may be held by a Health and Social Care Trust and/or a voluntary adoption agency. Guidance on how to make an application for access to adoption records held by Health and Social Care Trusts and voluntary adoption agencies can be found in Section 5.



Other children, now adults, impacted by family separation

If you were born while your mother was in a Mother and Baby Institution or in a Workhouse and then boarded out, fostered, placed or taken into care, and/or sent abroad (including to Australia), there may be records relating to your birth and placement.

Guidance in relation to the records of Mother and Baby Institutions and Workhouses, including what records have survived and who controls them, can be found in Section 7. You may be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4.

Boarding out, fostering and care records are held by Health and Social Care Trusts. Guidance in relation to the records of Health and Social Care Trusts can be found in Section 6. You may be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4.

4. Accessing Records and Your Rights



4. Accessing Records and Your Rights

For those who have suffered human rights violations, inability to access information and records about their experiences is an ongoing injustice which compounds harms already suffered. The right to information and access to records is an aspect of the right to respect for private life, protected in Northern Ireland by the Human Rights Act 1998 and the UK GDPR.

The right to information and access to records is not absolute, but it may only be interfered with to the extent necessary to protect the rights of others. The Independent Panel recommends that, for organisations and public bodies dealing with applications for access to records, a human rights-based approach to disclosure is imperative. Access to records is, in itself, a form of redress for people who have suffered.

One of the important functions of the Independent Panel is to provide guidance to people searching for records about themselves and their interaction with Mother and Baby Institutions, Laundries and Workhouses.

The best way to obtain access to records depends on what kind of records you are searching for and who holds them.

Records relating to you can be obtained under data protection law because they contain your personal data. This guidance is intended to help you to use data protection rules to access records relating to you.

Some records are covered by additional special access rules. Birth certificates and adoption records fall into this category. Guidance in relation to these records is available in Section 5.

Trying to access records can be difficult. If you are not happy with a decision someone has made in relation to records concerning you, you may need to challenge it.

The rules can be complex, and you may feel you would benefit from legal advice and assistance. This guidance also includes information about how to access free legal advice and assistance through the legal aid system.

4.1 Legal advice and assistance in accessing records

The Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland ('LSANI') operates a publicly funded legal advice and assistance service. The service can be accessed through almost any solicitor's office in Northern Ireland. The Law Society of Northern Ireland maintains a directory of solicitors you can use to find a solicitor if you don't already have one.

The LSANI's legal advice and assistance service covers almost any point of Northern Irish law, including the law relating to access to records. Solicitors can write letters on your behalf, including letters to people, organisations or bodies which hold records relating to you.



The legal advice and assistance service is means-tested, which means that it is only available to people who have income or assets below a particular level. You will need to provide your solicitor with information about your income to find out if you are eligible. Financial eligibility is decided based on your disposable income and assets during the week before your initial meeting. Based on your solicitor's assessment, LSANI will decide whether you are eligible or not.

If you are eligible for legal advice and assistance, you may still be required to make a financial contribution. You can find out more by scanning the QR Code below.



**Legal Services
Agency Northern
Ireland ('LSANI')**

The Independent Panel has recommended to the Executive that the means test be disappplied to applications for advice and assistance relating to access to records relating to its investigation. This remains under consideration.

4.2 Accessing records containing personal data

Records relating to you will usually contain your personal data. Your personal data is information about you that identifies you or from which you are identifiable.

Personal data can be held in many formats, including (but not limited to) paper documents, computerised records, photographs, audio recordings and videos.

In Northern Ireland, the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 give you a right of access to records containing your personal data held by an organisation or a publicly funded body.

To access these records, you can make a subject access request. Many organisations and public bodies which hold records containing personal data have a designated email address for receiving and processing such requests.

You will find contact details for the institutions included within the Independent Panel's terms of reference in Section 6.

You will find contact details for bodies holding church and other records in Section 9.



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

4.3 Making a data subject access request

The easiest way to make a data subject access request is to send an email to the data protection officer of the organisation or public body you believe holds documents containing your personal data, asking them to send you the records to which you are entitled.

There is no prescribed form for subject access requests under the UK GDPR, though sometimes organisations and public bodies will suggest that you use their form. If you do so, you should ensure that all the information below is contained in the form. The Independent Panel recommends that applications be made by email so that records of the application are automatically generated.

Usually, there is no fee for subject access requests. Administrative charges may be applied if a request is excessive and/or unreasonable.

In processing subject access requests, decision-makers are required to go through the records carefully and individually, taking account of the context and all the circumstances relating to the request. For this reason, it is very important in making such a request to set out the context and circumstances as fully as possible. To help you, you may consider using this checklist to write your email:

(1) The recipient

Send the email to the responsible person in the organisation or body to which the request relates using the contact details provided below.

(2) The subject

The subject of your email should be 'Subject Access Request under Article 15 of the UK GDPR'

(3) Information about you

Set out your name, address, date of birth, telephone number and how you would prefer to be contacted by return e.g. email address. You may then be asked to supply evidence of your identity (a copy of your driving licence/passport) and evidence of your address (a copy of a recent bank statement/utility or council tax bill/television licence). We suggest that you do not send this evidence with your initial request just in case it goes to the wrong person.

(4) The reason for application

Set out why you are applying for records containing your personal data, and why the records are important. This will be personal to you, but because the decision-maker is required to consider your request in the context of all the circumstances, the more information you can provide about those circumstances, the better. If you expect that the records you are requesting contain information you already have about other



people, you should say so, as this will be taken into account in making the decision about how much of the information needs to be redacted. If you think the record may contain information about a person who has already died, it is a good idea to include a copy of their death certificate (or, if they died more than 100 years ago, their birth certificate) as evidence of their death. This will prevent their data being redacted. You can find information about accessing birth and death registration records in Section 7 of this guidance.

(5) How you would like your records to be provided

Set out how you would like your records to be provided. Asking for your records by email has the advantage of creating an automatic record in case you need to ask for a review.

4.4 How requests are processed

The right of access to personal data is not absolute. It may be subject to some limitations and exceptions. As well as giving you a right of access to your personal data, the law protects the rights and freedoms of others. This means that access to records which contain the personal data of other people can be refused, or that records to which access is granted may have personal details of other people redacted; that is, blacked out.

In deciding whether to grant access to records, the person making the decision needs to balance your right of access with the personal data rights of others. In coming to their decision, they consider:

- Whether the person is alive or dead, because only living people are protected by data protection law.
- Whether the other person consented to the disclosure of their personal data. They may ask the other person for their consent to disclose their personal data to you. If you would prefer that they do not do so, you can ask them not to.
- Whether, even if the person does not consent, it is reasonable to disclose the records.

In deciding whether it is reasonable, the following circumstances must be taken into account:

- The type of information that would be disclosed;
- Any duty of confidentiality that the person holding the records owes to the other person;



- Any steps the applicant has taken to obtain the other person's consent;
- Whether the other person is capable of giving consent; and
- Whether the other person has refused to give consent.

The law presumes that it is reasonable to release information if the person in question is a health professional, a social worker or an education worker. Generally, the personal data of such people in any records covered by your request should not be redacted.

Another matter which should be considered is whether the information that would be disclosed about another person is information that you already have. If you think that the records you are looking for contain information that you already know about other people, you should mention this in your letter.

Finally, the person making the decision should consider how important the information is for you. For this reason, it is a good idea to include in your data subject access request some information about why you are looking for the records and why they are important for you. The more important they are for you, the less likely it is that another person's interest in non-disclosure will outweigh your interest in obtaining access.

When you make a subject access request, you should receive an acknowledgement and an indication of when your request will be replied to. You should receive the reply within one month. If the request is complex, the period can be extended for a further two months, but they must still notify you within the first month if they are applying such an extension.

4.5 Receiving your records

You will receive the records covered by your request in electronic form unless you have expressly requested them in other form; for example, on paper. You can request to receive both, but an administration charge can be applied if you ask for multiple copies of documents.

You will receive a list of the records covered by your request. You should be able to tell from the list which records are being disclosed, which are being redacted, and which are being withheld, and the legal basis for that disclosure, redaction or withholding.

Historic records can be difficult to understand. They may also contain distressing information. Information you were not expecting may be included, and information you were expecting may be missing or redacted.

Support services are available through VSS and their community partners WAVE and Adopt NI where specialist advocacy staff can help with understanding records.



You can find out more about the support services offered by these organisations by scanning the QR codes below.



VSS



AdoptNI



WAVE

4.6 Applying for an internal review

If you believe you have been wrongly refused access to records under the UK GDPR, or you believe that too much information has been redacted in the records you have received, you can make a complaint to the person, organisation or body concerned. It is a good idea to keep copies of any emails or letters you send in case you need to take the matter further.

Things to look out for in the reply to your data subject access requests include:

- Access to documents has been refused even though redaction would have been sufficient to protect the identifying information of other people.
- Names, addresses and dates of people who have been shown to be dead (or who should be presumed, based on the age they would be, to be dead) are blacked out.
- Information you already know is blacked out.
- Information that does not relate to other people at all is blacked out.
- Documents are completely blacked out.

You should explain in your complaint why you think the information which has been withheld should be disclosed.

If your complaint to the person, organisation or body concerned does not resolve the situation, you can decide to take the matter further by making a complaint to the independent national body responsible for protecting data and information rights: the Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO').

Another option is to apply for a Court Order that the person, organisation or body holding the records you seek comply with the UK GDPR in relation to your data subject access request. As this mechanism is more expensive and involves the risk that you would have to pay the other side's costs if your application should fail, it is a good idea to try to obtain access to your records by making a complaint to the ICO first.



4.7 Complaining to the Information Commissioner's Office

If your complaint to the person, organisation or body concerned does not resolve the situation, you can make a complaint to the independent national body responsible for protecting data and information rights: the Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO').

A complaint to the ICO should be made within three months of your last meaningful contact with the person, organisation or body from whom you sought the records.

You can make your complaint using the form on the ICO website, by calling their helpline, by writing to them at the following address or scanning the QR Code below.

The Information Commissioner's Office,
10th Floor, Causeway Tower,
9 James Street South,
Belfast, BT2 8DN.



ICO

The ICO online complaints tool is available on their website. Before you start the process, you will need to make sure you have downloaded all the documents — including emails — you will be submitting. The ICO's system accepts Word, Excel and other Microsoft Office files, Open Office, text, message, pdf, email and image files.

Depending on your income and assets, you may be eligible for legal advice and assistance in relation to a complaint to the ICO. People who have legal representation tend to have better outcomes than people who do not, so if you are eligible, it is a good idea to take advantage of this service.

When the ICO receives your complaint, it will usually conduct an investigation into the matter by contacting the person, organisation or body against whom the complaint was made to gather information and assess whether data protection laws have been complied with. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the ICO may provide guidance to them on how to rectify the issue by providing you with the records to which you are entitled.

If, when you receive the decision of the ICO you are still dissatisfied, you can apply for a case review. You need to do this within three months of the ICO decision you are unhappy with. The ICO has a team of reviewing officers who review decisions to make sure they have been reached correctly.



4.8 Going to Court

Even after a decision of the ICO has been reviewed internally, you may still feel that the law has not been properly applied and that records to which you are entitled have been wrongly withheld. If this is the case, you will have several options:

- You can apply to the High Court of Justice Northern Ireland ('High Court') to challenge the decision of the ICO, by way of a process called judicial review.
- You can apply to the High Court for a compliance order, requiring the controller of your records to comply with your data subject access request.

Judicial review

Judicial review is the process by which a judge examines the legality of how a body arrived at its decision. The judge, who sits in the Judicial Review Court, considers whether the decision reached is undermined by some illegality, irrationality, failure to balance rights correctly or procedural unfairness. Based on its consideration of the evidence, the Judicial Review Court can order the decision or action to be set aside (quashed) and require the body to follow a lawful process to come to a decision.

Applying to the High Court for a Compliance Order

If a person, organisation or body fails to comply with your data subject access request, you have the right under the Data Protection Act 2018 to apply to the High Court for a compliance order; that is, an order that the controller of the records comply with your request.

Legal aid

Applications for judicial review and for compliance orders involve going to the High Court, so it is advisable to have legal representation and to consider the potential cost implications. The LSANI operates a system of civil legal aid through solicitors across Northern Ireland which can provide legal representation once eligibility is established. Legal aid for such applications is subject to a means test, so you will need to provide information about your income and assets to your solicitor to see if you are eligible. Additionally, your solicitor will have to make a case to the LSANI that your case is strong enough to merit legal aid from public funds.



5. Adoption Records



5. Adoption Records



The guidance below has been compiled to help people affected by the issues being investigated by the Independent Panel in accessing adoption records relating to them.

Legal provision for adoption was introduced in Northern Ireland in 1931. From that time, the public welfare authorities, as well as voluntary agencies associated with different religious denominations, were involved in the arrangement of adoptions. Adoption orders, which were made by the courts, transferred responsibility for the adopted child from their birth parents to their adopted parents.

The public welfare authorities and voluntary agencies involved in organising adoptions were obliged to maintain records, and these records, which are now held by the Health and Social Care Trusts and the three surviving voluntary adoption agencies, contain valuable information for adopted people and birth relatives.

The Department of Health has issued detailed guidance to Trusts and voluntary agencies on how to deal with applications for adoption records, and the Panel hopes that this development will ensure a uniform approach in decision-making so that people affected have full access to the records to which they are entitled by law.

5.1 Obtaining your original birth certificate

For adopted people, the first step in accessing adoption records is often to obtain a copy of your original birth certificate. People adopted in Northern Ireland who are at least 18 years of age may obtain a copy of their original birth certificate by applying to the General Register Office for Northern Ireland ('GRONI'). You can visit GRONI's website by scanning the QR Code below.



GRONI

The process by which you can apply for your original birth certificate is different depending on when you were adopted and whether you already know your original birth details, including your birth name, name of your birth mother and birth father, if he is named on the registration. This is because, before 1987, birth parents and adoptive parents were sometimes led to believe that the children being adopted would never be able to find out their original names or the names of their birth parents.



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

People adopted before 18 December 1987

If you were adopted in Northern Ireland before 18 December 1987 and you do not know your birth details, you will be required, before applying for your original birth certificate, to have a meeting with a social worker — called a post-adoption counsellor — within the adoption team in a Health and Social Care Trust or a voluntary adoption agency.

On the basis of your application form, GRONI will then send the social worker information from your adoption court order. This will include your original name and typically the name of your birth mother and sometimes the name of your birth father, as well as the name of the court where the order was made. Based on this information, you can apply to GRONI for your original birth certificate. If you were born in another part of the UK or Republic of Ireland, a form will be provided by GRONI so that you can apply to the relevant General Register Office to obtain your original birth certificate.

The post-adoption counsellor will also receive a form enabling them to apply to the courts for information regarding the adoption, such as the Trust or agency which arranged the adoption.

If you were adopted in Northern Ireland before the 18 December 1987 and you already know your birth details, you will not be required to have a meeting with a social worker and you can apply directly to GRONI for a copy of your original birth certificate.

If you know your original birth details, but your post-adoption counsellor requires the form from GRONI to apply to the courts, you will still have to complete the initial application form.

People adopted on or after 18 December 1987

If you were adopted in Northern Ireland on or after 18 December 1987, you can apply to GRONI for your birth records using the application form on the NI Direct website.

Scanning the QR Code below will take you straight to the application form.



GRONI

You will have a choice whether to see a post-adoption counsellor or not. If you choose not to see a counsellor, GRONI will simply send you an application form by which you can apply for your birth certificate.



If you were born in another part of the UK or Republic of Ireland, a form will be provided by GRONI so that you can apply to the relevant General Register Office to obtain your original birth certificate. You will also receive a form enabling you to apply to the courts for information regarding the adoption, such as the Trust or agency which arranged the adoption.

If you choose for the information to be sent to a post-adoption counsellor, then they will receive the relevant information and forms.

If you know your original birth details, but your post-adoption counsellor requires the form from GRONI to apply to the courts, you will still have to complete the initial application form.

Contacting GRONI

GRONI is located within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and its contact details are as follows:

Address:

GRONI,
Colby House, Stranmillis Court
Belfast, BT9 5RR

Email: gro_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 200 7890

Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online

5.2 Locating other records relating to an adoption

Most Northern Ireland adoption records are now held by Health and Social Care Trusts, as statutory adoption agencies, or by voluntary adoption agencies. Who holds the records depends on the agency responsible for organising the adoption.

There are five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, and each covers a particular geographical area.

Two of Northern Ireland's voluntary adoption agencies also hold historic adoption records, having taken over the records of earlier agencies which no longer exist.

Information on which Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency holds records in relation to your adoption will be in the records of the court which made the adoption order.



Which Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency holds your records?

You may already be aware which Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency holds the records relating to your adoption.

If you do not have this information and you have a post-adoption counsellor, your counsellor will apply to the relevant court for information about which Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency holds the records in relation to your adoption.

If you do not have this information and do not have a post-adoption counsellor, you will need to apply to GRONI for access to your original birth details. Depending on when you were adopted, this information may have to be sent to a nominated post - adoption counsellor.

GRONI is located within the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and its contact details are as follows:

Address:

GRONI,
Colby House, Stranmillis Court
Belfast, BT9 5RR

Email: gro_nisra@finance-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 200 7890

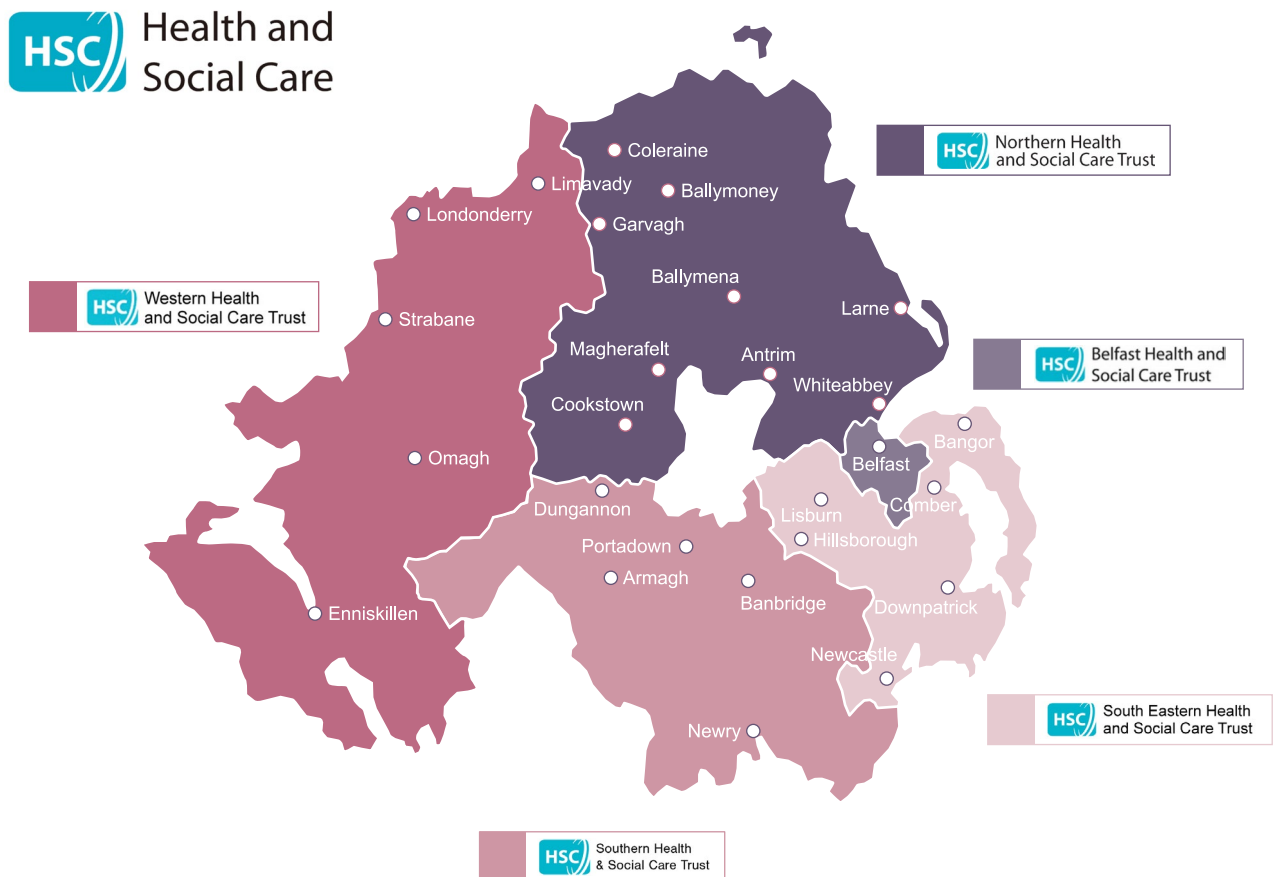
Website: www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/go-groni-online



5.3 Adoption records held by Health and Social Care Trusts

In Northern Ireland, health services and social services are the responsibility of the Department of Health, which delivers them through a system called Health and Social Care. Health and Social Care is organised across six Trusts, five of which have responsibility for service delivery in particular regions across Northern Ireland, and one of which, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust, operates an ambulance service.

Among the functions of the five regional Trusts are adoption and foster care. There is a regional fostering and adoption service in Belfast, and local adoption and fostering teams in each of the five Trusts. The map below shows the areas covered by each Trust.



The adoption and fostering teams, while responsible for current fostering placements and adoptions, also hold records for past individual care placements and adoptions in Northern Ireland that took place within their areas of responsibility.



5.4 Adoption records held by voluntary adoption agencies

In addition to the records held by Health and Social Care Trusts, records relating to adoptions in Northern Ireland may also be held by two of the voluntary adoption agencies. These agencies now hold the records of agencies, organisations and institutions historically involved in the organisation of adoptions, and particularly those associated with the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland.

Family Care Adoption Services

Family Care Adoption Services is a registered voluntary adoption agency based in Belfast. Today, its primary activity relates to the organisation of adoptions. In addition to the records of adoptions undertaken by the agency itself, Family Care Adoption Services holds or can access records relating to many Catholic agencies, organisations and institutions involved in adoptions which have since ceased operation.

Family Care Adoption Services hold records in relation to the following:

- St Joseph's Baby Home/Institution, Ravenhill Road, Belfast;
- Mater Dei Hostel, Antrim Road, Belfast;
- Mater Misericordia Adoption Society;
- Down & Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society;
- Derry Diocesan Child Welfare and Adoption Society;
- Boarding out (fostering) records from Diocese of Down & Connor Diocesan Orphan Society.

Family Care Adoption Services currently has a data processing agreement with the Good Shepherd Sisters ('GSS') and has access to the records of the institutions run by the sisters.

Family Care Adoption Services have access to GSS records in relation to the following:

- Marianville GSS Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Ormeau Road, Belfast;
- Marianvale GSS Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Newry;
- St Mary's Home/Laundry, GSS, Belfast;
- St Mary's Home/Laundry, GSS, Derry/Londonderry;
- St Mary's Home/Laundry, GSS, Newry.



Adoption Routes

Adoption Routes is a registered voluntary adoption agency based in Belfast. Today, its primary activity relates to the organisation of adoptions. In addition to the records it holds in relation to the adoptions it has organised, it also holds records relating to many Church of Ireland agencies, organisations and institutions involved in adoptions which have ceased operation, including, for example:

- The Church of Ireland Rescue League;
- The Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association;
- The Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Association;
- The Church of Ireland Board for Social Responsibility;
- Hopedene Hostel, Belfast; and
- Kennedy House, Belfast.

5.5 What do the adoption records of Trusts and voluntary agencies contain?

The Trusts and voluntary agencies hold adoption records for adoptions dating back to the 1940s and, in some cases, even earlier.

The amount of information contained in adoption records can vary. Files may contain a single sheet or many documents. Before statutory recording was enforced, record keeping was often sparse. It is important to be prepared for the possibility that, in some cases, records may have been lost or destroyed. Records sometimes contain information of a potentially upsetting nature, for example, unkind, harsh and unfair descriptions of family members.

Information contained in adoption records may include:

- Original birth name of adopted adult.
- Place of birth.
- Weight at birth.
- Medical notes.
- Mother's name and address at the time of birth.
- Social characteristics of biological mother such as ethnicity, height, appearance, education/employment, family background (potentially including details of other children or siblings).



- Possible inclusion of names, descriptions and addresses of other family members.
- Information about fathers, if included in the records, tends to be less specific and detailed than information about mothers.
- Agency case notes and social worker reports prior to adoption finalisation.
- Letters and legal documents, including court records and orders.
- Home circumstances of adoptive parents.
- Circumstances/reason for adoption recorded by agency or social workers.
- Foster or other carers prior to the adoption – for those who were in care prior to adoption, there may be information regarding this period, including medical information and possibly photographs.

5.6 Systems of access to adoption records

Once you know which Health and Social Care Trust and/or voluntary adoption agency holds the records relating to your adoption, you can apply to them for access to the records.

Access to adoption records is governed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. Under these Regulations, each adoption agency has discretion to provide access to its case records and disclose information, for the purposes of carrying out its functions as an adoption agency. In addition to adopted people, birth parents and adoptive parents, other people affected by an adoption, for example, close family members, are also eligible to apply for information held about them. It is important to note that the discretion available to adoption agencies is not absolute, and must be exercised in line with other rules, including UK data protection law and the Human Rights Act 1998.

You can also seek access to adoption records by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. You can only do this in relation to documents that contain your own personal data. It is unusual for there to be two ways of accessing records, and it is anticipated that the law will shortly be changed so that adoption records held by Health and Social Care Trust adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies will be provided for under the 1989 Regulations only.

Whether you apply for your records under the system specific to adoption records or make a subject access request under data protection law is your choice. However, if you decide to make a subject access request, it is important to be aware that adoption agencies also have discretion to provide access to adoption records under the 1989 Regulations and that this route may enable the disclosure of more information than a subject access request. When you submit a subject access request for information held about you in adoption records, the adoption agency should also provide you with information about making a request under the 1989 Regulations. The guidance below is



designed to assist you in using the special system for adoption records. Guidance is available in Section 4 of this guidance on making a subject access request under the UK GDPR.

The Department of Health has issued detailed guidance to Trust adoption agencies and voluntary adoption agencies on how to deal with applications for adoption records, and the Panel hopes that this development will ensure a uniform approach to decision-making so that people affected have full access to the records to which they are entitled by law.

You can read the guidance in full by scanning the QR Code below.



5.7 Applying for access to adoption records

There is no prescribed form for applications for access to adoption records under the 1989 Regulations. The Independent Panel recommends that applications be made by email so that records of the application are automatically generated.

There is no fee for applications for access to adoption records.

In processing applications for adoption records, Trusts and voluntary agencies are required to go through the records carefully and individually, taking account of the context and all the circumstances relating to the request. For this reason, it is very important, in making such a request, to set out the context and circumstances as fully as possible.

To help you, you may consider using the checklist below to write your email:

(1) The recipient

Send the email to the relevant Trust or voluntary agency using the contact details below.

(2) The subject

The subject of your email should be 'Request for access to adoption records under Regulation 15 of the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989'.



(3) Information about you

Set out your name and attach evidence of your identity (a copy of your driving licence/passport) and evidence of your address (a copy of a recent bank statement/utility or council tax bill/television licence). If you are an adopted person, your birth name and the names of any birth family members you know will help the decision-maker locate the right records.

(4) The reason for application

Set out why you are applying for your adoption records, and why the records are important. This will be personal to you, but because the decision-maker is required to consider your request in the context of all the circumstances, the more information you can provide about those circumstances, the better. If you expect that the records you are requesting contain either information that you already have about other people, or information about people who are dead, you should say so, as this will be considered in making the decision about how much of the information needs to be redacted (blacked out).

(5) How you would like your records to be provided

Set out how you would like your records to be provided. Asking for your records by email has the advantage of creating an automatic record in case you need to ask for a review.

5.8 Processing applications for access to adoption records

In deciding whether to grant access to records, the person making the decision needs to balance your right of access with the right to confidentiality of others. In coming to their decision, they consider:

- Whether the other person is alive or dead (or likely to be dead), but bearing in mind that an obligation of confidentiality may continue beyond a person's death;
- Whether the other person consented to the disclosure of the information. The decision-maker may ask the other person for their consent to disclose their personal data to you. If you would prefer that they not do so, you can ask them not to; and
- Whether, even if the person does not consent, it is reasonable to grant access to the records.



In deciding whether it is reasonable, the following circumstances have to be taken into account:

- The type of information that would be disclosed.
- Any duty of confidentiality that the person holding the records owes to the other person.
- Any steps the applicant has taken to obtain the other person's consent.
- Whether the other person is capable of giving consent.
- Whether the other person has refused to give consent.

Another matter which should be considered is whether the information that would be disclosed about another person is information that you already have. If you think the records you are looking for contain information about other people that you already know, you should mention this in your letter.

It is important to make the decision-maker aware of how important the information is for you. It is a good idea to include in your request for access, some information about why you are looking for the records and why they are important for you. The more important they are for you, the less likely it is that another person's interest in non-disclosure will outweigh your interest in obtaining access.

The guidance issued by the Department of Health to Trusts and voluntary adoption agencies suggests that decision-makers should engage with people who make requests for access to adoption records to ensure that they have as much information as possible on which to base their decision. Such engagement is required to be sensitive and done in a trauma-informed way. This means that you should not worry if you get requests for more information from the adoption agency concerned. This is a normal part of the process.

If there is a reason you need your request to be prioritised — for example, if you have a serious medical condition, if you need access to services, or if you are taking legal action — you should indicate this in your letter.



5.9 Where to send your application

Health and Social Care Trusts

Each Health and Social Care Trust has an adoption and fostering team made up of social workers. These teams control the release of adoption records.

Contact details for the Health and Social Care Trusts are as follows:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Services,
Belfast HSC Trust,
Admin Building,
Forster Green Hospital,
110 Saintfield Road,
Belfast,
BT8 6GR.

Lead Social Worker: Karen Simpson

Email: karen.simpson@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9504 0350

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Team,
Western HSC Trust,
Community Services Department,
Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital,
Hospital Road,
Omagh,
BT79 0NS.

Lead Social Worker: Anita Birney/Roisin Lynch

Email: anita.birney@westerntrust.hscni.net/roisin.lynch@westerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 7131 4235/028 8283 5114



Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption Team,
Oriel House,
2-8 Castle Street,
Antrim,
BT41 4JE.

Lead Social Worker: Caroline Turley

Email: adoption.team@northerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9442 6196

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Team,
Southern HSC Trust,
John Mitchell Place,
Newry,
Co. Down,
BT34 2BU.

Lead Social Worker: Joan McGuinness

Email: joan.mcguinness@southerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 3756 6125

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Fostering and Adoption,
South Eastern HSC Trust,
61, Woodland Park,
Warren Children's Centre,
Lisburn,
BT28 1LQ.

Lead Social Worker: Karen Leonard/Pamela Robinson

Email: karen.leonard@setrust.hscni.net/pamela.robinson@setrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9127 0672



Voluntary adoption agencies

The voluntary adoption agencies have designated staff whose responsibility it is to consider and decide on requests for access to adoption records.

Contact details for the relevant agencies are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

CEO: Maggie McSorley

Email: email@familycareadoption.org

Address:

Adoptions Routes
Ground Floor,
Unit 2,
18 Heron Road,
Belfast,
BT3 9LE.

CEO: Lynda Wilson

Email: info@adoptionroutes.co.uk

5.10 Receiving your records

You should receive an acknowledgement of your application for adoption records within seven working days.

The guidance provided by the Department of Health indicates that Trusts and agencies should respond to requests for access to adoption records within 30 working days, or 90 working days in complex cases. Experience suggests that responding to requests for adoption records is complex in most cases.

You will have the option to choose how you would like to receive the information you have requested. You should be given the option to receive:

- A copy of the adoption file; or



- A letter of information which includes all the information in the file which can legally be given to you; or
- Both a copy of the file and a letter of information.

Some information in adoption files to which access has been granted may be redacted. Unfortunately, sometimes information is redacted which ought not to be. Although all requests for information held on adoption case records will be considered on a case-by-case basis, where an adopted adult requests access to their records, the following types of records and information should, in general, not be redacted:

- Names and addresses at the time of the adoption.
- Information concerning parents'/grandparents' names that is: a) not on a birth certificate or in any other record other than the applicant's file; or b) inconsistent with the adopted adult's knowledge.
- Letters written by the voluntary adoption agency/Trust adoption agency to the parents or grandparents, or vice versa.
- Personal information relating to parents or grandparents, e.g. education, domestic circumstances, activities that they were engaged in.
- Information concerning time spent with a parent or carer.
- All information concerning a deceased parent or grandparent.
- Names and dates of birth of biological siblings.
- Address and contact details of siblings.
- Personal particulars relating to siblings, e.g. education, domestic circumstances, activities that they are engaged in etc.
- References to siblings and the applicant in the same context e.g. John and Betty (siblings) went to camp.
- Information concerning visits to the child or the child visiting siblings.
- Information concerning a deceased sibling.
- Names of close relatives.
- Letters written concerning the applicant.
- Information relating to relatives e.g. education, domestic circumstances, activities that they are engaged in.
- Names of doctors, nurses, social workers, solicitors etc.
- Letters written to, or by, professionals (doctor/nurse/social worker etc.) that concern the adopted person.
- Names of carers.
- Address and contact details for foster carers.



5.11 What to do if you are unhappy with how your application has been dealt with

The Guidance for Trusts and voluntary adoption agencies issued by the Department of Health requires them to put in place review mechanisms to allow people who are unhappy with their decisions to have the decision on their application reviewed by an independent party.

If you are unhappy with a decision of a Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency in relation to your application, you should request an independent review. Your application will then be reviewed by an independent party.

If you are requesting a review, you may consider using the checklist below to write your email:

(1) The recipient

Send the email to the relevant Trust or voluntary agency using the contact details below.

(2) The subject

The subject of your email should be 'Request for review of decision on access to adoption records under Regulation 15 of the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989'.

(3) The decision you would like to be reviewed

Say that you are not satisfied with the records you have been provided with and that before you take the matter any further you are giving the decision-maker the chance to review their decision. Give the date of the decision on your request for access to adoption records, any reference number on the decision, and the name of the person who made it. If possible, attach a copy of the decision to make the reviewer's job as easy as possible.

(4) The grounds of review

Set out why you are applying for a review. Possible grounds of review include:

- Access to documents has been refused even though redaction would have been sufficient to protect the interests of other people.
- Names, addresses and dates of other people have been redacted even though those people are dead/should be presumed, on the basis of the age they would be, to be dead. If this is an issue in your case, you should attach copies of the relevant birth or death certificate. You can find guidance on accessing civil registration records in Section 7 of this guidance.



- Information you already know is blacked out.
- Information that does not relate to other people at all is blacked out.
- The correct balance has not been struck between the rights of other people and your right to information about yourself. Explain why the information in the records you are requesting is important to you. The decision-maker is required to consider your request in the context of all the circumstances, therefore the more information you can provide about those circumstances, the better. Explain why your rights should outweigh any other interest.

(5) Refer to the Department of Health Guidance

Ask for an independent review of the decision and refer to the guidance issued by the Department of Health.

If, following such a review, you are still unhappy, you may wish to make a complaint via the relevant agency's complaints procedure.

Details of the complaints procedure regarding Health and Social Care Services are available on the NI Direct website at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services#toc-1> or by scanning the QR code below.



You may also be able to challenge the decision of the Trust adoption agency or voluntary adoption agency in court.



5.12 Going to Court

Even after a decision of the Trust or voluntary adoption agency has been reviewed, you may still feel that the law has not been properly applied and that records to which you are entitled have been wrongly withheld.

To do this, you need to apply to the High Court to challenge the decision by way of a process called judicial review.

Judicial review is the process by which a judge examines the legality of how a body arrived at its decision. The judge, who sits in the Judicial Review Court, considers whether the decision reached is undermined by some illegality, irrationality, procedural unfairness or failure to strike the right balance between your rights and the rights and interests of others.

Based on its consideration of the evidence, the Judicial Review Court can order the decision or action to be set aside (quashed) and require the body to follow a lawful process to come to a decision.

Legal aid for judicial review may be available, depending on your means. You can apply for legal aid through your solicitor. If you do not have a solicitor already, the Law Society of Northern Ireland maintains a directory of solicitors from which you can choose.

6. Boarding Out, Fostering and Care Records

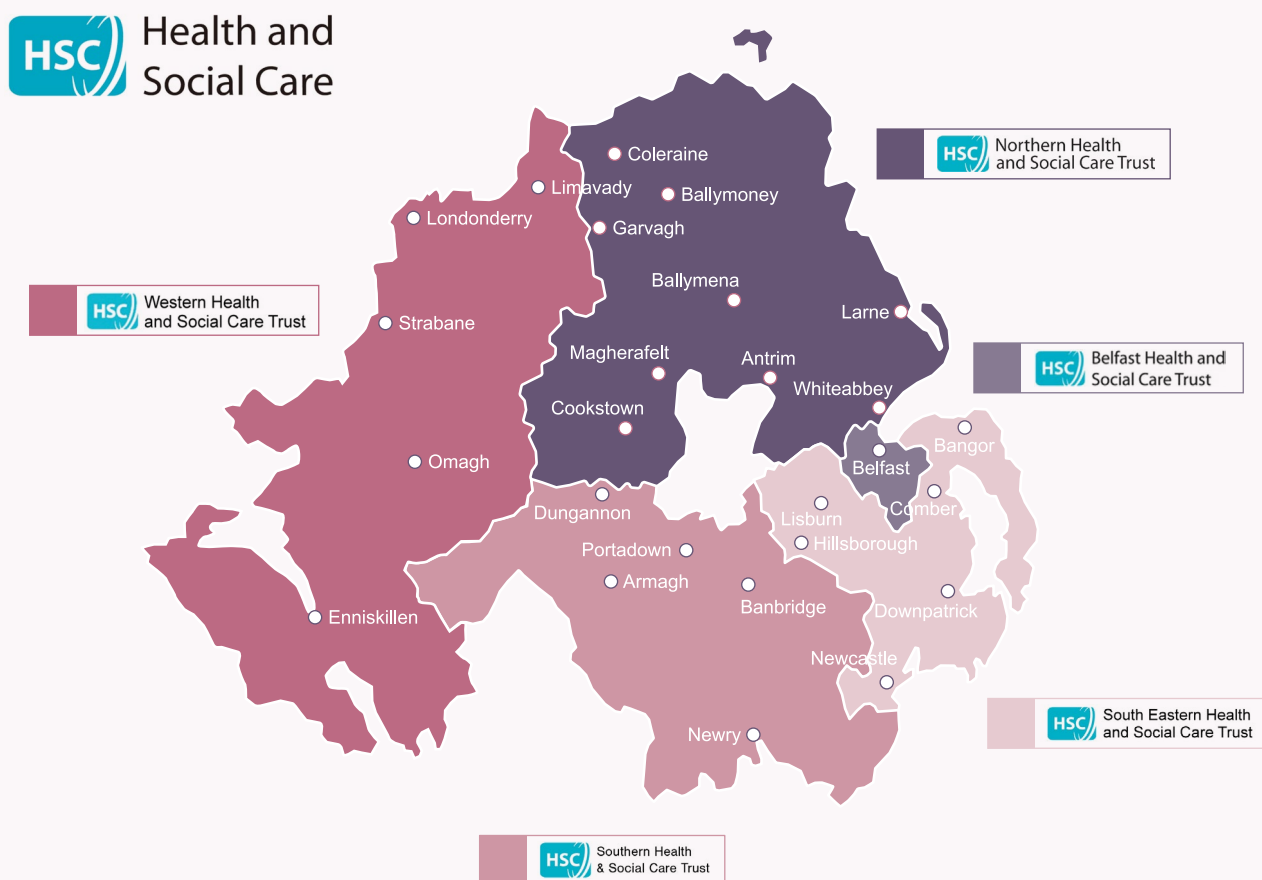


6. Boarding Out, Fostering and Care Records

6.1 Boarding out, fostering and care records held by Health and Social Care Trusts

In Northern Ireland, health services and social services are the responsibility of the Department of Health, which delivers them through a system called Health and Social Care. Health and Social Care is organised across six Trusts, five of which have responsibility for service delivery in particular regions across Northern Ireland, and one of which, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust, operates an ambulance service.

Among the functions of the five regional Trusts are adoption and foster care. There is a regional fostering and adoption service in Belfast, and local adoption and fostering teams in each of the five Trusts. The map below shows the areas covered by each Trust.



The adoption and fostering teams, while responsible for current fostering placements, also hold records for past individual care placements, including boarding out, in Northern Ireland that took place within their areas of responsibility.



Applications for records relating to boarding out, fostering and care placements usually contain personal data of the people to whom they relate. You will be able to access such records containing your personal data by making a subject access request under the UK GDPR. Guidance on how to make subject access requests can be found in Section 4 of this guidance.

6.2 Where to send your application

Health and Social Care Trusts

Each Health and Social Care Trust has an adoption and fostering team made up of social workers. These teams control the release of boarding out, fostering and care records.

Contact details for the Health and Social Care Trusts are as follows:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Services,
Belfast HSC Trust,
Admin Building,
Forster Green Hospital,
110 Saintfield Road,
Belfast,
BT8 6GR.

Lead Social Worker: Karen Simpson

Email: karen.simpson@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9504 0350

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Team,
Western HSC Trust,
Community Services Department,
Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital,
Hospital Road,
Omagh,
BT79 0NS.

Lead Social Worker: Anita Birney/Roisin Lynch

Email: anita.birney@westerntrust.hscni.net/roisin.lynch@westerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 7131 4235/028 8283 5114



Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption Team,
Oriel House,
2-8 Castle Street,
Antrim,
BT41 4JE.

Lead Social Worker: Caroline Turley

Email: adoption.team@northerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9442 6196

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Adoption and Permanence Team,
Southern HSC Trust,
John Mitchell Place,
Newry,
Co. Down,
BT34 2BU.

Lead Social Worker: Joan McGuinness

Email: joan.mcguinness@southerntrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 3756 6125

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Address:

Fostering and Adoption,
South Eastern HSC Trust,
61, Woodland Park,
Warren Children's Centre,
Lisburn,
BT28 1LQ.

Lead Social Worker: Karen Leonard/Pamela Robinson

Email: karen.leonard@setrust.hscni.net/pamela.robinson@setrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 9127 0672

7. Personal Records Relating to Institutions



7. Personal Records Relating to Institutions

In this Section, you will find information about personal records relating to the institutions within the Independent Panel's terms of reference, including what records exist and what they contain; what period they relate to; who controls them and how they can best be accessed.

The records for some of the institutions are extensive, while for other institutions records may be partial or missing altogether.

7.1 Mother and Baby Institutions

Belfast Midnight Mission Rescue and Maternity Home/Malone Place

The institution

Founded in 1860 in Bradbury Place as Belfast Midnight Mission, this institution moved to purpose-built premises in Malone Place in 1926 where it operated under the title of a rescue and maternity establishment. It also operated a separate maternity ward and many of the women and girls placed in Hopedene Hostel before 1949 gave birth there. In 1944, the institution's name was changed to Malone Place and in 1949 it was purchased by the Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority. It continued to operate as a maternity hospital until 1981.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The records of the institution have been transferred to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). They comprise a minute book for the Belfast Midnight Mission Maternity Home for the years 1934 - 1949 and admission registers for 1901 - 1944. The registers include personal information such as a mother's name, address, age, religious persuasion, date of admission and discharge date. Often details about the mother and father were recorded and sometimes details of a mother's future marriage. Details recorded for a newborn baby include name, baptism details (if applicable), destination on leaving and some other additional details.

To what period do the records relate?

Most of the personal records held in relation to this institution relate to the period 1901 - 1944.

Who is the controller of the records?

Requests for access to the records should be made to PRONI.



How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records held by PRONI relating to Malone Place can be accessed by submitting a subject access request ('SAR') under the UK GDPR for personal information held about the requesting party. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with PRONI should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for PRONI are as follows:

Address:

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland,
2 Titanic Boulevard,
Titanic Quarter,
Belfast,
BT3 9HQ

Email: proni@communities-ni.gov.uk



Deanery Flats

The institution

Deanery Flats was established by Barnardo's and consisted of six self-contained units for mothers with babies and a day nursery for up to 25 children located in Windsor Avenue, Belfast. The complex was designed to offer the idea of security and independence to unsupported women and girls, and their babies. The day nursery was thought to provide secure childcare therefore enabling some of the women and girls to take up employment. The flats opened in 1973 and closed in 1991.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Barnardo's hold limited records relating to Deanery Flats.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by Barnardo's.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records held by Barnardo's relating to residence in Deanery Flats can be accessed by submitting a subject access request under the UK GDPR for personal information held about the requesting party. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Barnardo's should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for Barnardo's are as follows:

Address:

Barnardo's Making Connections,
140 Balaam Street,
London,
E13 8RD

Email: makingconnections@barnados.org.uk



Hopedene Hostel

The institution

Hopedene Hostel opened in 1943 for mothers and their babies and was located at 55 Dundela Avenue in East Belfast. A nursery was operated on site so that mothers could return to work. The institution had a Protestant non-denominational ethos and was managed by an elected committee with representatives from the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army among its members. In 1950, Hopedene Hostel registered as a voluntary children's institution and was closely associated with the Church of Ireland Adoption Society. It closed in 1985. The figures available record 670 women and girls entering Hopedene Hostel between 1934 - 1985.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The Hopedene Hostel records do not contain as much information about the women and girls who were placed there as some of the records of other Mother and Baby Institutions. Entrance registers are only available between 1950 - 1968 and contain personal details and medical information for women and girls. They also record the date of hospital admission, the date of the baby's birth and where mother and child went to after leaving Hopedene. It is believed that records relating to the 1970's were destroyed in a fire. Unfortunately, there is no factual record of this having taken place. Other records of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association were used to identify women who were transferred to Hopedene Hostel for the periods 1943 - 1950 and 1968 - 1985.

To what period do the records relate?

Most of the records relate to 1950 - 1968 and 1983 - 1985.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by Adoption Routes.

How best can the records be accessed?

Records relating to adoption

Adoption-related records held by Adoption Routes relating to adoptions from Hopedene Hostel or through the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association or the Church of Ireland Adoption Society can be accessed by making an application under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 5 of this guidance.

If an individual is seeking a copy of the personal data held about them in adoption records, they can also make a subject access request under the UK GDPR.

Personal records



Other personal records held by Adoption Routes relating to Hopedene Hostel can be accessed by submitting a subject access request under the UK GDPR for personal information held about the requestor. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Adoption Routes should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for Adoption Routes are as follows:

Address:

Adoptions Routes,
Ground Floor,
Unit 2,
18 Heron Road,
Belfast,
BT3 9LE

Email: info@adoptionroutes.co.uk



Kennedy House/Church of Ireland Rescue League

The institution

From 1911, the Church of Ireland Rescue League ran an institution at 133 Crumlin Road in Belfast, which provided some accommodation for mothers. The institution was renamed Kennedy House in 1947 and operated in conjunction with the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association. In 1949, it moved to larger premises at 8 Cliftonville Avenue, Belfast and it closed in 1956. However, until the 1980s, the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association continued to locate foster mothers, arrange adoptions, locate places in other Mother and Baby Institutions or find employment for mothers.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Records for both the earlier institution on Crumlin Road and Kennedy House are extremely limited. The records available for Kennedy House are from 1950 - 1955. They consist of an admission register which recorded the name of each woman or girl entering the institution, her address, her religion, the date she was admitted/date discharged and where the mother and baby went upon leaving the institution.

To what period do the records relate?

The surviving records relate only to the period 1950 - 1955.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by Adoption Routes. The responsible person is Ms Lynda Wilson, CEO.

How best can the records be accessed?

Records relating to adoption

Adoption-related records held by Adoption Routes relating to adoptions of children from Kennedy House can be accessed by making an application under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 5 of this guidance.

If an individual is seeking a copy of the personal data held about them in adoption records, they can also make a subject access request under the UK GDPR.



Personal records

Other personal records held by Adoption Routes relating to Kennedy House can be accessed by submitting a SAR under the UK GDPR for personal information held about the requesting party. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Adoption Routes should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for Adoption Routes are as follows:

Address:

Ms Lynda Wilson, CEO,
Adoptions Routes,
Ground Floor,
Unit 2,
18 Heron Road,
Belfast, BT3 9LE

Email: info@adoptionroutes.co.uk



Marianvale Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Newry

The institution

Marianvale Mother and Baby Home/Institution opened in 1955 on the site of the Good Shepherd Convent at 132 Armagh Road, Newry, Co. Down. The institution was run by the Good Shepherd Sisters and shared a site with St Mary's Laundry. Entry numbers were at their highest in the 1960s, with 630 admissions for the decade. They fell to 492 in the 1970s and 154 between 1980 and the closure of Marianvale in 1984. Women and girls were generally, but not always, placed there in their third trimester of pregnancy, and gave birth locally at Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry, or transferred to a private nursing home.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Surviving records include entrance registers for the period 1955 - 1967. These registers include the name, address, date of admission and discharge of each woman and girl placed in the institution. In addition, the admission registers include the name, date of birth and date of discharge of their babies. Some entries include remarks about the baby which may include details of plans made or being prepared for the baby.

There are more recent admission files for the period 1967 - 1984. These include one page for a mother and one page for their baby, with additional correspondence possibly relating to medical information, personal information or social services correspondence.

Marianvale records held also include an adoption register for the period 1955 - 1961 containing the name and address of the mother, name and place of birth of their baby, who adopted the baby, and their address.

To what period do the records relate?

The records relate to the period 1955 - 1984.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Good Shepherd Sisters but under a data processing agreement, applications for access to records are processed by Family Care Adoption Services.

How best can the records be accessed?

Adoption related records

Records relating to adoptions originating from Marianvale can be accessed by making an application under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 5 of this guidance.



If an individual is seeking a copy of the personal data held about them in adoption related records, they can also make a subject access request under the UK GDPR.

Applications should be made to Family Care Adoption Services.

Personal records

Other personal records can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



Marianville Mother and Baby Home/Institution, Belfast

The institution

Marianville Mother and Baby Home/Institution opened in 1950. In 1963, it relocated to purpose-built accommodation with capacity for eighteen women and girls. It was located at 511 Ormeau Road, Belfast, the site of the Good Shepherd Sisters Convent, but had a separate entrance on Carolan Road. The same site also housed a church, St Mary's Laundry, Sacred Heart Children's Home (1922 - 1962), Roseville Hostel (1967 - 1975), and an adolescent centre (1970 - 1982). Marianville Mother and Baby Home/Institution closed in 1990.

Over the period of operation, there were 2,278 admissions. The highest numbers were in the 1960s, with 726 admissions across the decade. Thereafter, numbers fell to 583 in the 1970s and then 391 in the 1980s. In the institution's final year of operation, 1990, there were 22 admissions.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The records include entrance registers for 1950 - 1963 and 1963 - 1970. These registers contain the name, address and date of admission of each woman and girl placed in the institution. In addition, the registers include references to medical care, brief social history of the mother, details of the baby's birth, where the baby was placed and with whom.

The entrance records for 1970 - 1990 consist of individual record cards for women and girls placed in Marianville. The cards include personal information such as name, address, date of birth, date of admission and date of discharge. Records may also contain next of kin details, name or names of individuals who recommended or arranged the placements, the social and familial history of mothers, and medical notes. The baby's name, date and place of birth, details of delivery, date and place of baptism were often added to the records along with notes or observations about the baby.

To what period do the records relate?

The records relate to the period 1950 - 1990.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Good Shepherd Sisters but under a data processing agreement, applications for access to records are processed by Family Care Adoption Services.



How best can the records be accessed?

Adoption related records

Records relating to adoptions originating from Marianville can be accessed by making an application under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 5 of this guidance.

If an individual is seeking a copy of the personal data held about them in adoption related records, they can also make a subject access request under the UK GDPR.

Applications should be made to Family Care Adoption Services.

Personal records

Other personal records relating to Marianville can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



Mater Dei Hostel (and Mater Misericordia Adoption Society)

The institution

Mater Dei Hostel was opened in 1942 and run by the Legion of Mary. The hostel moved to 298 Antrim Road in 1944 and closed its doors in 1984. Around 1,418 women entered the institution over that period. Women entered both prior to, and/or after, giving birth to their children. An adoption society was also set up which became Mater Misericordiae Adoption Society in 1950. On its closure in 1970, its records were transferred into the care of the Down & Connor Catholic Family Welfare Society, which was a registered voluntary adoption agency, and are now held by Family Care Adoption Services.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The Mater Dei records include file cards for women and girls who entered the institution, which carry details under the categories of name; home address; arrived here from; remarks; baby born [place]; date of birth; if baptised; mother gone to and date; baby gone to and date. There are varying levels of detail, sometimes more information is added on the back of the file card. However, in general, the notes are very brief.

There are also around 200 individual adoption files relating to the period between 1942 and 1969. Files may contain references for prospective adoptive parents, correspondence from Welfare Officers, or documentation in relation to women and girls and their individual circumstances. The files may contain receipts confirming that adoption of their baby has been explained to a mother, and other official documents. The amount of information differs in each file.

A significant element of the correspondence material from Mater Dei consists of letters from mothers inquiring after their children. There are also replies to advertisements which were placed in the personal columns of local newspapers aimed at attracting foster parents and adoptive parents. This correspondence often details the adoptions which followed, with solicitor's letters and the requests for Mater Misericordiae to complete the necessary paperwork.

To what period do the records relate?

The records relate to the period 1942 - 1969.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by Family Care Adoption Services.



How best can the records be accessed?

Adoption records

Adoption records held by Family Care Adoption Services relating to Mater Dei Hostel and Mater Misericordia Adoption Society can be accessed by making an application under the Adoption Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1989. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 5 of this guidance.

If an individual is seeking a copy of the personal data held about them in adoption records, they can also make a subject access request under the UK GDPR.

Personal records

Other personal records held by Family Care Adoption Services relating to Mater Dei Hostel and Mater Misericordia Adoption Society can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



Mount Oriel

The institution

Mount Oriel was opened in Belfast by the Down Welfare Authority in 1969. It was modest in size and operated for a much shorter period than the other Mother and Baby Institutions. Mount Oriel was equipped with accommodation for seven mothers and their babies.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Limited records relating to Mount Oriel have been discovered to date in individual records of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records held by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust relating to Mount Oriel can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust are as follows:

Address:

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust,
Fostering and Adoption Team,
Admin Building,
Forster Green Hospital,
110 Saintfield Road,
Belfast,
BT8 6GR

Lead Social Worker: Karen Simpson

Email: karen.simpson@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Telephone: 028 95040350



Thorndale House

The institution

The Salvation Army acquired Thorndale House on the Antrim Road, North Belfast in 1920. The institution offered accommodation for twenty mothers and babies. Women generally entered in their final trimester. The greatest number of admissions to Thorndale House took place in the 1960s, with 590 admissions, in comparison with the figure of 419 in the 1950s. Numbers dropped throughout the 1970s, with just nine admissions in 1976. Thorndale House closed in 1977.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The records relating to Thorndale are extensive and quite complex in terms of how the information was recorded. For the records relating to the Mother and Baby Institution, there are Day Books, which record separately details about mothers and babies in the institution. These books recorded names, feeding habits, hospital visits, and the next destination of the baby. However, they often offered incomplete information on the exit destination for babies leaving Thorndale. In many cases, they simply cited the name of the local welfare committee taking responsibility for the baby and did not precisely record the destination of the child.

The Day Books commence in 1929 and there are gaps in the records on babies between 1938 and 1941. However, information about mothers and babies was also recorded in the monthly statements of exits sent to Salvation Army Headquarters.

To what period do the records relate?

The records relate to the period 1920 - 1977.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Salvation Army.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records

Personal records held by the Salvation Army relating to Thorndale House Mother and Baby Institution can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with the Salvation Army should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.



The contact details for the Salvation Army are as follows:

Address:

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,
William Booth College,
Champion Park,
London,
SE5 8BQ

Email: heritage@salvationarmy.org.uk



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7.2 Magdalene Laundries (St Mary's Homes)

The Good Shepherd Sisters ran three Laundries in Northern Ireland. All three were called St Mary's Home. They were located in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry.

St Mary's Home/Laundry, Belfast

The institution

The Good Shepherd Sisters came to Belfast in 1867, taking over premises in Belfast city centre from the Sisters of Mercy. They moved to a large site at 511 Ormeau Road, Belfast, in 1869 where, in addition to the convent, a church and St Mary's Home and laundry facilities were built. Women and girls are recorded as being placed in the laundry for a variety of reasons. Some came from the adjacent Marianville Mother and Baby Home/Institution after giving birth. The overall number of women and girls admitted to St Mary's between 1933 and 1982 was 1,358.

What records exist, and what do they contain?

The records for St Mary's Home/Laundry in Belfast take the form of two ledgers which cover the period 1932 - 1982 and include the names of those sent there in alphabetical order. Some women and girls who entered prior to 1932 appear in the ledgers as readmissions. Although work in the laundry terminated with its closure in 1977, the files record entries to St Mary's Home/Laundry, Belfast until 1982.

To what period do the records relate?

The records for St Mary's Home/Laundry, Belfast cover the period 1932 - 1982.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Good Shepherd Sisters, but under a data processing agreement, applications for access to records are processed by Family Care Adoption Services.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records

Personal records relating to St Mary's Home/Laundry, Belfast, can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. A formal data processing agreement and process for access to records is currently in place between the Good Shepherd Sisters and Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.



It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



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St Mary's Home/Laundry, Derry/Londonderry

The institution

St Mary's Home/Laundry was built by the Good Shepherd Sisters in the grounds of Bellevue House on the Dungiven Road in the Waterside area of the city in 1920 and opened in early 1921. Between 1922 and the last recorded entry in 1979, it appears that 992 women and girls entered St Mary's Home/Laundry. The highest number of entrants was recorded in the 1930s, a total of 252, and the highest number of entrants in any one year was 32, in 1941. This was at a point when the Laundry was experiencing high demand for its services due to the military contracts that increased its profitability. Numbers of new entrants declined slowly in the 1950s and 1960s before dropping sharply in the 1970s. The Laundry closed in 1984.

What records exist, and what do they contain?

The records for the St Mary's Home/Laundry in Derry/Londonderry comprise a series of hand-written notebooks which serve as a register of entries and exits for the women and girls who worked in the laundry between 1922 and 1982.

There is a separate collection of notes and correspondence containing commentary on some of the women admitted to the laundry, and this material includes a small number of letters to and from the Good Shepherd Sisters and some of the women and girls.

The records also contain some correspondence with the statutory agencies responsible for placing women and girls in the laundry.

To what period do the records relate?

The records for St Mary's Home/Laundry, Derry/Londonderry cover the period 1922 - 1982.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Good Shepherd Sisters but under a data processing agreement, applications for access to records are processed by Family Care Adoption Services.



How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records

Personal records relating to St Mary's Home/Laundry, Derry/Londonderry, can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. A formal data processing agreement and process for access to records is currently in place between the Good Shepherd Sisters and Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



St Mary's Home/Laundry, Newry

The institution

The Good Shepherd Sisters opened St Mary's Home/Laundry in Newry in 1946, although records appear to show that it did not receive any women or girls until 1947. Located at 132 Armagh Road, Newry on the same site as the Marianvale Mother and Baby Home/Institution, it was the smallest of the three St Mary's Homes/Laundries. It could accommodate around 30 women and girls at any one time, with a maximum capacity of 36. The accommodation was registered as a voluntary children's institution in 1951 and operated alongside the Marianvale Mother and Baby Home/Institution. From 1973, there was also a hostel for female victims of domestic violence on the site. In 1984, the Good Shepherds sold the site, and it became a centre for victims of alcohol abuse operated by the Sisters of Mercy. The buildings that remained on the site were demolished in December 2021.

What records exist, and what do they contain?

The records of St Mary's Home/Laundry in Newry take the form of a series of books and cards which served as an admission register between 1946 - 1982.

To what period do the records relate?

The records for St Mary's Home/Laundry in Newry cover the period 1947 - 1982.

Who is the controller of the records?

The records are controlled by the Good Shepherd Sisters but under a data processing agreement, applications for access to records are processed by Family Care Adoption Services.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records

Personal records relating to St Mary's Home/Laundry, Newry, can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR to Family Care Adoption Services. A formal data processing agreement and process for access to records is currently in place between the Good Shepherd Sisters and Family Care Adoption Services. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.



It is recommended that all communication with Family Care Adoption Services should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept. The responsible person is Ms Maggie McSorley, CEO.

The contact details for Family Care Adoption Services are as follows:

Address:

Family Care Adoption Services,
Lynden Gate,
50 Knockbreda Road,
Belfast,
BT6 0JB.

Email: email@familycareadoption.org



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7.3 Other institutions

Workhouses

The institutions

The Poor Law (Ireland) Act 1838 led to the division of Ireland into 137 Poor Law Unions, each run by a Board of Guardians which administered poor relief through a system of workhouses. Following partition in 1922, the 27 Unions in Northern Ireland remained key in providing free health care and emergency accommodation to the poor, until the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948.

Under the Poor Law system, women and girls may have been sent to live in the workhouses, some expectant mothers were sent to give birth there, while others lived there, and their children were 'boarded out' with local families.

Some workhouse Boards of Guardians paid for women and girls who were pregnant to be placed in Mother and Baby Institutions and for their children to be boarded out. Other women and girls gave birth in Union Infirmaries, having spent time in Mother and Baby Institutions.

In Belfast, the Union Infirmary maternity hospital became the Jubilee Maternity Hospital, where women and girls in many of the Belfast Mother and Baby Institutions were sent to have their babies.

In Belfast and Coleraine, workhouses continued to be maintained as hostels by the welfare authorities after 1948. In Coleraine, the hostel operated as a children's institution prior to the building of the separate Dhu Varren children's institution in Portrush.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The records for the workhouses in Northern Ireland are extensive, including indoor and outdoor relief registers and minutes and records relating to the Board of Guardians as well as a variety of committees. There are differences in the records held for each Poor Law Union, but some registers may hold information about children who were boarded out.

To what period do the records relate?

Workhouses records relate to the period 1838 - 1948.



Who is the controller of the records?

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland ('PRONI').

PRONI hold the records for the following Poor Law Unions:

- Antrim, Co. Antrim
- Armagh, Co. Armagh
- Ballycastle, Co. Antrim
- Ballymena, Co. Antrim
- Ballymoney, Co. Antrim
- Banbridge, Co. Down
- Belfast, Cos Antrim and Down
- Castlederg, Co. Tyrone
- Clogher, Co. Tyrone
- Coleraine, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Cookstown, Co. Tyrone
- Downpatrick, Co. Down
- Dungannon, Co. Tyrone
- Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh
- Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh
- Kilkeel, Co. Down
- Larne, Co. Antrim
- Limavady, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Lisburn, Co. Antrim
- Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh
- Londonderry, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Lurgan, Co. Armagh
- Magherafelt, Co. Derry/Londonderry
- Newry, Co. Down
- Newtownards, Co. Down
- Omagh, Co. Tyrone
- Strabane, Co. Tyrone



How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records

Personal records held by PRONI relating to workhouses can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR.

For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.

It is recommended that all communication with PRONI should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for PRONI are as follows:

Address:

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland,
2 Titanic Boulevard,
Titanic Quarter,
Belfast,
BT3 9HQ.

Email: proni@communities-ni.gov.uk



Thorndale Industrial Home

The institution

The Salvation Army opened a rescue establishment at 63 Great George Street in Belfast city centre in 1886, before moving to Wellington Park, Malone Road, Belfast in 1905.

In 1920, the Salvation Army acquired Thorndale House on the Antrim Road, North Belfast, and turned it into a Mother and Baby/Maternity Institution which operated until 1977. The industrial institution on the Malone Road moved to the new Antrim Road site in 1922 and operated alongside the Mother and Baby Institution.

Women and girls were placed in the Institution from a variety of referral sources which included social workers, probation officers and charity workers. Parental and family referrals took place, as did those by members of the clergy and by Salvation Army officers. Individuals were also sent directly from police courts on probation, as an alternative to a prison sentence. In many cases, the police or social services brought women and girls under Care and Protection Orders to the Thorndale site.

What records exist and what do they contain?

As with the records relating to Thorndale Mother and Baby Institution, the records for the industrial part of the site are rather complex. There are Girl's Statement Books and Day Books which include all women and girls placed in the Industrial Home between 1926 - 39, 1942 - 63 and 1974 - 79. There are also Country Statement Books, in which Thorndale administrators submitted monthly declarations of women and girls leaving the institution.

To what period do the records relate?

Thorndale Industrial Home records relate to the period 1922 - 1979.

Who is the controller of the records?

The Salvation Army control the records.

How best can the records be accessed?

Personal records held by the Salvation Army relating to Thorndale Industrial Home can be accessed by submitting a subject access request for information under the UK GDPR. For details of how to make such an application, please refer to Section 4 of this guidance.



It is recommended that all communication with the Salvation Army should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for the Salvation Army are as follows:

Address:

The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre,
William Booth College,
Champion Park,
London,
SE5 8BQ

Email: heritage@salvationarmy.org.uk

8. Civil and Related Records



8. Civil and Related Records

8.1 Civil registration records

Registration of births, deaths and marriages

The General Register Office for Northern Ireland ('GRONI') was established in 1922, with responsibility for registration within the six counties which form Northern Ireland. GRONI hold all official birth, death and marriage records from 1864 for the six counties that form Northern Ireland (and hold records of non-Roman Catholic marriages from 1845).

The General Register Office in the Republic of Ireland was established in 1845 and holds records for all of Ireland up to December 1921. After that date, it maintains records for the Republic of Ireland.

Because the Catholic Church had initially opted out at the commencement of civil registration in Ireland, only non-Catholic marriages were registered from 1 April 1845. It was not until 1 January 1864 that full registration was achieved, after which it was compulsory to register all births, deaths, and marriages.

GRONI therefore holds a full set of civil registration records for Northern Ireland dating back to 1864 and non-Roman Catholic marriages from 1845.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Until relatively recent times, the information recorded in all three forms of registration had remained unchanged in both jurisdictions since the nineteenth century. The data recorded is only as complete as that which was provided by the person who registered the event.

Birth registrations

In Northern Ireland before October 1973, the following information was recorded in birth registrations:

- The child's name;
- The date and place of birth;
- The child's gender;
- The father's name and address (if recorded);
- The mother's name and birth surname;
- The father's occupation (if recorded);
- The name and address of the person who provided the information;
- The date of registration.



In cases where only the mother is recorded, the mother's address is usually captured.

Since October 1973, the following additional information has been recorded, where known:

- A specific surname for the child;
- The address for the mother if different from the father's;
- The mother's surname at marriage if different from the maiden surname.

From December 1996, the mother's occupation has been recorded. In some instances, prior to this date, the mother's occupation was recorded beside their name.

Death registrations

In Northern Ireland before October 1979, death registrations contained the following information:

- The date and place of death;
- The name of the deceased;
- The home address of the deceased (if different from place of death);
- The gender of the deceased;
- The civil status of the deceased;
- The age of the deceased;
- The occupation of the deceased;
- The cause of death;
- The name and address of the person who provided the information; and
- The date of registration.

From October 1973, each deceased person's date and place of birth is recorded, and for a married woman her birth surname.

From December 2012, where known, each deceased person's parents' names and occupations have been recorded; and, additionally, the name and occupation of their spouse or civil partner.



Marriage registrations

In Northern Ireland before January 2004, marriage registrations contained the following information:

- Both parties' names;
- Their civil status;
- Their ages, date of birth or both;
- Their occupations;
- Their home address or addresses;
- Both parties' fathers' names and occupations;
- The date and place of marriage; and
- The names of two witnesses.

Since January 2004, the following additional information has been recorded: both parties' dates of birth and country of birth; both parties' parents' names and occupations; and the home address of the two witnesses.

Adoption birth registrations

Birth registration for adopted persons began in Northern Ireland in January 1931. From that date until July 1950, the following information is recorded:

- The child's name;
- The child's date of birth and country of birth, if not Northern Ireland;
- The child's gender;
- The adoptive parents' names and address and occupations;
- The date of the adoption order;
- The name of the court making the order; and
- The date of registration at GRONI.

From December 1969, the child's country of birth, if not Northern Ireland, is captured, or district of birth and country of birth, if born in Northern Ireland.



In the Republic of Ireland, registrations in the Adopted Children's Register commenced in July 1953. The information recorded is:

- The child's name
- The child's date and country of birth;
- The child's gender;
- The adoptive parents' names, address and occupations (though not the adoptive mother's birth surname, if parents are married);
- The date of the adoption order;
- The name of the person who provided the information; and
- The date of registration at GRO.

Where record keeping has been accurate, for each child legally adopted in any constituent part of the UK or in the Republic of Ireland, and who was also born in any of these jurisdictions, there should be an original birth registration noting the child's birth parent or parents. However, while this is a public record, it can only be accessed where at least a surname, and an approximate date of birth, is known for the child.

To obtain a copy of the original birth record from GRONI, the applicant must provide the child's forename/s and surname at birth, date and place of birth, mother's forename and surname and father's forename and surname, if recorded.

To what period do the records relate?

The earliest records are for non-Catholic marriage which date back to April 1845. Compulsory registration of all births, deaths and marriages only began on 1st January 1864.

Where are the records held?

The original records are held by GRONI. However, copies of all records pertaining to Northern Ireland up to December 1921 are held by the General Register Office in Dublin.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Civil registration records are the building blocks for any form of genealogical research. One record will lead to another and when used in conjunction with other records and data sets, reliable conclusions can be drawn. Additionally, it may then be possible to make links with others who might be able to contribute oral family information.



Who is the controller of the records?

All civil registration records across the island of Ireland fall under the separate authority of the island's two General Register Offices. The registers are public records, and anyone can search for and obtain a copy of any registration record.

How best can the records be accessed?

Civil registration records are a matter of public record; anyone can obtain a birth, marriage, or death certificate so long as they possess enough information to identify the relevant entry in the registers.

An adopted person aged 18 or over has the right of access to their original birth registration. More information about this can be found at Section 4 of this guidance.

Earlier civil registration records can be accessed online, and more modern ones must be applied for. In certain instances, fees for searching and for obtaining certificates may apply.

For both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, all birth records registered more than 100 years ago, all marriage records registered more than 75 years ago, and all death records registered more than 50 years ago can be obtained online. The website for the Republic of Ireland, [Irish Genealogy.ie](https://www.irishgenealogy.ie) is free for both searching and printing out non-official copies of register entries. However, the website for Northern Ireland allows for free searching, but applies fees for viewing register entries. GRONI does not provide non-official copies of register entries. You can visit these websites by scanning the QR codes below.



[Irish Genealogy.ie](https://www.irishgenealogy.ie)



**[nidirect – Search
GRONI online records](#)**

Records which are not subject to the embargoes noted above must be obtained through contact with either the General Register Office in Belfast; or through a local Register Office. Details of costs, which change from time to time, can be found in the QR Codes provided below. Local Registration Offices in Northern Ireland do not hold information on adoptions.



**[nidirect – Order
certificates](#)**



**[nidirect – District
Registrars in NI](#)**



Generally, birth records from under 100 years ago, marriage records from less than 75 years ago and death records from under 50 years ago cannot be obtained online. In Northern Ireland, the general public can visit the Public Search Room, by appointment, in the GRONI building located at Colby House, Stranmillis Court, Belfast, to search for and to view records using credits that can be purchased from the GRONI website. Details can be found by scanning the QR Code below.



**nidirect – GRONI
Public Search Room**

For birth records from under 100 years ago, marriage records from less than 75 years ago and death records from under 50 years ago from the Republic of Ireland ('ROI'), in-person visits can be made to one of their General Register Offices ('GRO') and additionally an email service is available for those unable to travel to ROI. There is a small fee for searches and to receive a copy of records.

Details for that service can be found by scanning the QR Code below.



**Search Room at the ROI General
Register Office ('GRO') (www.gov.ie)**

8.2 Electoral rolls

Electoral rolls, also known as electoral registers or voters lists, record those eligible to vote in all forms of elections held in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Great Britain.

What records exist and what do they contain?

While the information noted is far less than in census returns, unlike the census, electoral rolls are a matter of public record from the point of their publication, and a new register is published each year. They tend to be arranged by council, town, and/or county areas (depending on the jurisdiction) and they record all voters' names at each postal address. In UK electoral rolls since the 1970s, for those who will only turn eligible to vote during the qualifying year, for one year only their date of birth is recorded. Some older rolls will note those with additional votes based upon property ownership. The rolls do not record relationships between voters at specified addresses.



To what period do the records relate?

Comprehensive electoral rolls, noting all eligible voters by address, date from the extension of the voting franchise in 1918. They run right up to the present, and anyone can access the printed register. However, they are not indexed, so searches can only be made by reference to specific addresses. That said, for Great Britain, some older pre-1965 registers can be found online on genealogy websites, and these can be searched by name. Unfortunately, in Northern Ireland not every area has retained a full set of rolls since 1918, with many collections containing significant gaps.

Where are the records held?

For various dates, a selection of original archival rolls from across Northern Ireland can be found at PRONI. Small collections can also be found in some libraries and local archives. More recent years may still be held at local council offices across Northern Ireland. Some electoral register data for Northern Ireland, dating within the last two decades, can be found online on genealogy websites.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

While electoral rolls do not note the relationships of those recorded at each address, nevertheless knowing the names of those resident in a particular house can help in piecing relationships together with access to other records, for instance civil registration records of birth, death, and marriage.

Who is the controller of the records?

Electoral rolls in their published form are public records, though that said, access to them and the data they hold is regulated by statute as regards their commercial exploitation.

How best can the records be accessed?

They can be accessed easily in person or online. In person, this can be done by initially searching two online catalogues and then by visiting the relevant archive or library. There is a catalogue maintained by PRONI, and another by Libraries NI. These catalogues can be found by scanning the QR codes below. Search under key words such as “voters” and “electoral” etc. Original archival material generally dates from the 20th century.



**PRONI's
eCatalogue**



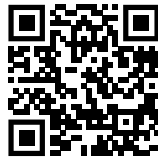
Libraries NI



Online voters' data, mostly for the past two decades, though not necessarily comprehensive, can be found on subscription sites such as Ancestry.com, Findmypast and 192.com. These websites can be found by scanning the QR codes below. Because this data is digitised, it can be searched by name and/or address.



Ancestry.com



Find my past



192

8.3 Census returns

The first census was taken in Ireland in 1821, and then each decade afterwards until 1911. Unfortunately, most returns for the period between 1821 to 1851 were destroyed in the fire which consumed the Public Record Office of Ireland in Dublin in June 1922. The returns for 1861 to 1891 were not retained after the compilation of anonymised statistics. Thus, for the period prior to partition, in Ireland the only two surviving and complete sets of census returns are those for 1901 and 1911.

You can read more about the fate of Irish census material in the 19th and 20th centuries on the website of the Council of Irish Genealogical Organisations, CIGO.ie.

What records exist and what do they contain?

At this time, only the returns for the 1901 and 1911 census can be accessed by the public. They record the occupants of each household across Ireland on 'census night', noting their name, age, occupation, religion, marital status, place of birth, education, ability to read/write in English and/or Irish, and relationship to the head of the household.

To what period do the records relate?

In both the UK and Ireland, census returns are embargoed for 100 years. The returns for 1901 and 1911 are now online and can be searched freely. The next census to be released will be in 2026 and will be the returns for the Republic of Ireland. The returns for Northern Ireland's own census in 1926 have not been preserved.

Where are the records held?

The original census returns for 1901 and 1911 are held by the National Archives of Ireland in Dublin. PRONI holds microfilm copies for the six counties which form Northern Ireland.



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Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Census returns provide a family snapshot on a given date which can assist in piecing a family together, particularly when used in conjunction with other records such as civil registration records etc.

Who is the controller of the records?

A century after their compilation, census returns become public records and therefore there are no legal obstructions in accessing census data.

How best can the records be accessed?

All of Ireland's surviving original census returns can easily be accessed online for free on the website of the National Archives of Ireland. This website can be found by scanning the QR code below. They are searchable by name and/or place.



**The National
Archives of Ireland**

8.4 The 1939 National Register

At the beginning of the Second World War, on 29 September 1939, a census was held to gather basic facts about everyone then residing in each constituent part of the UK. Each household was required to fill out a form, rather like a census return. This data was used to compile the National Register which was used for rationing, ID cards and, in Great Britain, for conscription. After the war, in Northern Ireland the card index (arranged by name) to the National Register formed the basis of the NHS Central Index for Northern Ireland. The National Register volumes themselves were put into storage for many years before being transferred to PRONI.

What records exist and what do they contain?

The entire National Register for Northern Ireland has been preserved. It notes for each resident in Northern Ireland, arranged by home address, on the night of 29 September 1939, their name, sex, date of birth, marital status, and occupation. Unfortunately, no details were recorded about each person's relationship to others in the same household.



To what period do the records relate?

The National Register recorded the whole population of Northern Ireland as it stood on the night of 29 September 1939. It includes many quite elderly people, some born as early as the 1840s.

Where are the records held?

The National Register is now held by PRONI.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Unlike census returns which only record ages, the National Register notes each person's exact date of birth which can help in identifying specific individuals in other record sets.

Who is the controller of the records?

PRONI is the controller.

How best can the records be accessed?

The National Register is not a public record, but searches can be requested through PRONI. There is no surviving names index, thus one needs to either know the National Registration Number for the individual being sought, or their address on or about 29 September 1939.

It is recommended that all communication with PRONI should be in writing and copies of correspondence should be kept.

The contact details for PRONI are as follows:

Address:

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland,
2 Titanic Boulevard,
Titanic Quarter,
Belfast,
BT3 9HQ.

Email: proni@communities-ni.gov.uk



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8.5 Wills and administration records

A Will records how a person wishes to have their assets distributed after their death. Where a person dies without a Will, which is known as dying intestate, their estate might be dealt with via administration, issued by the probate office and which allows the assets to be divided amongst their nearest living next-of-kin according to a legal formula set by statute.

What records exist and what do they contain?

A typical Will generally records the names of relatives (and perhaps personal and family friends) of the person making it. Where the deceased has died intestate, there will be no Will and therefore the documentation generated by the probate office will note only the name and address of the relative who applied for the grant of administration.

To what period do the records relate?

All original Wills proved, and administrations granted, in Northern Ireland since 1922 are extant. Copies of earlier Wills and administrations, dating back to 1858, are available for most estates, though not all.

Where are the records held?

These records are held by the Probate Office for up to ten years, after which they are then transferred to PRONI. Currently, the testamentary records transferred to PRONI run up to 2015.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Testamentary records (i.e. Wills and administrations intestate) generally comprise of family relationships, involving names and addresses which were current at the time the Will was written or the administration intestate granted.

Who is the controller of the records?

There are no restrictions in access to Wills and administration records while retained by the Probate Office. Upon transfer to PRONI, they become public records.

How best can the records be accessed?

PRONI maintains an online index of grants of probate and administration from 1858 to 1965 inclusive, which indicates which records survived and can therefore be either viewed online, inspected in its reading room, or a copy ordered to be posted out. At PRONI, access to details about grants of probate and administration after 1965 is via a series of hardcopy printed Will Calendars, alphabetically arranged by surname, which run up to 2014.

For the period after 1 January 1986, the Northern Ireland Probate Service maintains an online index to grants of probate and administration, but utilising this requires the creation of an account, and searches in the online database require the payment of a fee.

9. Church and Other Records



9. Church and Other Records

9.1 Church and parish records

These generally comprise registers of baptism, marriage, burial and membership, maintained at local parish or congregational level by religious denominations.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Thoroughness of record keeping by all denominations can vary. Most religious denominations maintain their own registers and, depending upon when they were founded, some can date back into the 18th century. From the later 19th century, Catholic parish registers tend to be uniform in the information they record. Generally, in all denominations, more modern records will contain enough information to allow identification of an individual's baptism, marriage, burial or record of membership.

To what period do the records relate?

Other than where parishes and churches were founded more than 200 years ago, where record keeping has been thorough and consistent, parish and church records should exist from earliest to current times. That said, the records of 1,006 Church of Ireland parishes were destroyed in the Public Record Office fire in Dublin in 1922.

Where are the records held?

Parish records compiled less than a century ago can usually only be accessed through the local parish or church. Older records can be accessed on microfilm at PRONI and through some local Northern Ireland libraries.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Parish and church records generally record family details and relationships which can assist in family history research. For instance, in Catholic parish registers from the early 20th century, marriage records almost invariably record the full names of the parents of the bride and groom. This can be helpful given that until quite recent years, civil marriage records only noted each party's father's name.

Who is the controller of the records?

The controller is the local parish or congregation; or an archive to which the records have been transferred, depending upon what access provisions have been put in place.

How best can the records be accessed?

Older records can generally be quite easily accessed, through copies held by libraries and archives and digitised material placed online. For instance, scanned images of virtually all pre-1880 Catholic parish registers can be found, for free, on the website of the National Library of Ireland. However, they are not indexed, requiring a search through



them entry by entry. Indexed data extracted from both Catholic and Protestant parish and congregational records, much of which dates up to the 1920s, can be found on the subscription website Roots Ireland. This website can be found using the QR code below.



**Roots
Ireland**

Because more modern parish and church records are not considered public records, the best way to access such material may vary according to the denomination controlling them.

Addresses to write to, requesting information, can be found for Catholic parishes by visiting the website CatholicIreland, where you should then check the link for the relevant diocese. This website can be found using the QR code below.



CatholicIreland.net

For the Church of Ireland, the Irish Genealogical Research Society maintains an online resource which includes all parish registers, noting the dates for which they survive, and whether they are held locally or in an archive. This resource can be found using the QR code below.



Parish Registers

Contact details for congregations attached to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland can be found on the 'Find a Church' page on its website.



**Presbyterian
Find a Church**



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For congregations attached to the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Methodist Historical Society in Ireland has an ever-growing collection of local church records from across Ireland which can be identified via its online catalogue. This catalogue can be found using the QR code below.



**Methodist Historical
Society Online Catalogue**

Contact details for specific churches can be found using the 'Find a Church' page of the Methodist Church in Ireland's website. This website can be found using the QR code below.



**Methodist Find
a Church**

PRONI also maintains a Guide to Church Registers, arranged by civil parish, noting the survival dates for all denominations in the nine counties which comprise the province of Ulster. This guide can be found using the QR code below.



**PRONI Guide to
Church Records**

9.2 Cemetery and crematoria records

Records of burials and cremations generally fall into two categories, those maintained by local councils and those maintained by private bodies, such as churches or cemetery trusts.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Many burial registers are simply chronological lists of those buried. Town cemeteries tend to be more detailed and record all burials linked to a particular plot. The data recorded can vary, but generally notes the deceased's name, address, and age, but other



information recorded might be their occupation and religious denomination. Keep in mind that where a deceased person was cremated, there may be two records to find: that maintained by the crematorium, and a burial record if the ashes then went on to be interred in a graveyard or cemetery.

To what period do the records relate?

Depending upon when they were first opened, virtually all cemeteries and burial grounds hold records of interments from the early 20th century. Others can be much earlier if the burial ground has been in use over many generations. Records of cremations in Northern Ireland date from the opening of the first crematorium on the island of Ireland, which was in Belfast in 1961.

Where are the records held?

These records, still mainly held only in hardcopy format, are maintained by the relevant cemetery body, church, or local authority.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Burial records can provide vital biographical information about deceased people which can help fill in gaps or provide vital clues when trying to understand family relationships. Specifically, as grave plots tend to contain several burials for a family, the records noting this can provide data pertaining to two or three generations of a family.

Who is the controller of the records?

These records are not public records, though gaining access to them can be easier than with other sources, given that they record information about deceased people. They are maintained by the relevant cemetery body, church, or local authority.

How best can the records be accessed?

Some burial records can be accessed online, such as those maintained by Belfast City Council. Burial records for Belfast City Council can be accessed using the QR code below.



**Belfast City Council –
Search for a Burial Record**



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For the records of most of Northern Ireland's burial grounds, enquiries should initially be made with the cemeteries section of each city or borough council. Contact can be made with the relevant city or borough council using the QR codes below.



**Antrim &
Newtownabbey**



**Ards &
North Down**



**Armagh City,
Banbridge &
Craigavon**



**Belfast
City**



**Causeway
Coast &
Glens**



**Derry City
& Strabane**



**Fermanagh
& Omagh**



**Lisburn &
Castlereagh**



**Mid &
East Antrim**



**Mid
Ulster**



**Newry,
Mourne
& Down**

9.3 Memorial inscriptions

A memorial inscription, also known as gravestone inscription, is the wording engraved on a gravestone.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Gravestone inscriptions exist where a gravestone has been erected on a grave by the deceased's family.

To what period do the records relate?

Most graves from the mid-20th century have a gravestone erected upon them.



Where are the records held?

While visiting the relevant graveyard or cemetery can be a way of identifying memorial inscriptions, in more recent times many have been transcribed and published in either hardcopy format or digitally online.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Gravestone inscriptions generally record helpful genealogical information such as the deceased's name, age, date of death and abode. Generally, relationships with others interred in the same grave are recorded.

Who is the controller of the records?

As public memorials, there is no impediment to accessing inscriptions on gravestones.

How best can the records be accessed?

Memorial inscriptions can be easily accessed by visiting the relevant graveyard or cemetery, or by searching online for one of the many websites in Ireland which hold databases of photographs and transcriptions of gravestones. These websites can be found using the QR codes below:



**Discover
Ever After**



**Find a
Grave**



**Historic
Graves**



**North of Ireland
Family History
Society**



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9.4 Newspapers

Local newspapers can be a particularly rich source for family information.

What records exist and what do they contain?

Back copies of virtually all Irish and UK newspapers are held by various national and local libraries.

To what period do the records relate?

Complete runs of most newspapers survive from the later nineteenth century.

Where are the records held?

For Northern Ireland newspapers, the four main repositories are the Belfast Central Library, the Linen Hall Library in Belfast, the National Library of Ireland in Dublin, and the British Library in London. Many titles have been digitised and are now available online.

Why might the contents of the records be useful?

Newspapers carry family notices for births, deaths, engagements and marriages, news items about divorce, court appearances, wedding anniversaries, house sales, sporting achievements, competition results, funerals attendance, church meetings and social events etc.

Who is the controller of the records?

For reasons of conservation, original newspapers might not always be made available in libraries once they have been digitised. They will generally be available in digital form from private subscription websites. Some local libraries subscribe to these websites.

How best can the records be accessed?

Most back copies of newspapers are now accessed online through subscription websites, such as Ancestry.com, British Newspaper Archive and Irish News Archive. These websites can be found using the QR codes below:



Ancestry.com



**British Newspaper
Archive**



**Irish News
Archive**

