Adoption and Care Records at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

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Who We Are

- Part of the City of London Corporation
- Principal local government archive repository for the Greater London area
- Over 100km of books, maps, photographs, films and documents
- Oldest records date from 1067
- Located near King’s Cross
Care and Adoption Records at LMA

• Among our child care records we have records for:
  • Christ’s Hospital
  • Board of Guardians - until 1930
  • London Country Council (LCC) - 1930-1965
  • Middlesex County Council (MCC) - 1930-1965
London County Council (LCC) and Middlesex County Council (MCC)

- LCC and MCC were in existence from 1930 until 1965
- Between the two authorities they covered Greater London
- They provided:
  - Adoption (legally brought up with another family)
  - Care in a children’s home
  - Boarded Out (fostering)
- These are closed records
Enquiries

• Adoptee or care leaver
• Relative
• Social work agency
• Solicitor
• Police

• Many people have been searching for their records for decades
Checks

• Online database
• Paper check
• Coded index card check
• If no records:
  • Explain that there was no statutory retention period to keep records
  • Suggest where else they could search
Data Protection

- Comply with the GDPR legislation
- Individuals need:
  - Provide personal and address ID
  - Paper trail of change of names
  - If the person is deceased then a death certificate and proof of relationship (next of kin)
- Records not shared until above is provided
- Balance between gate keeping and supporting/enabling
Preparing the Records

• Digital Services Team scan all files
• Social work agencies sign an agreement form and are sent an unredacted copy of the records
• For individual request I prepare the records and remove third party information
Care and Adoption Files

• LMA’s care and adoption records are held in perpetuity
• Size of files vary
• Files are mainly administrative
• Problematic as judgemental with offensive language
Support for Accessing Records

- I undertake in person, online or telephone counselling support
- UK law people adopted before 1975 must be counselled before accessing their records
- Records are then posted out
- Follow up calls are available
- Signpost to long term support, counselling and assistance with tracing family
Distressing Issues

• Filling in gaps about their childhood memories
• Looking for answers to unanswered questions
• Non-recent child abuse
• Intergenerational Trauma – adoption/ care experience impacting on decedents
Summary

• Be supportive and empathetic as many individuals find accessing their records upsetting.

• If your agency does not have their records try to signpost on.

• Review your retention period for adoption and care files and consider keeping for perpetuity.