

NEWS RELEASE
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Chance to be heard for Scots who spent time in care as children

Scots who spent time in institutional care as children can have their experiences heard and acknowledged by taking part in the National Confidential Forum.

The independent body is inviting participants from across Scotland to come forward and share their experiences, whatever they are, in a safe and non-judgemental setting.

The testimonies of participants will help the Forum understand what happened to children in the past and show what can be done to make things safer for children in care, today and in the future.

Project manager, Ben Lukins, said, "If you have been in institutional care as a child in Scotland, this is your chance to be heard.

"Sharing experiences can be therapeutic and importantly, the information given by participants will contribute to making positive changes to children in care today and in the future.

"By taking part in the Forum, participants will enable us to build a picture of the legacy of institutional care in Scotland, which will form part of a national record.

"For some people coming to us, it might be the first time they've shared their experience with another person, which can be a heavy burden to carry through life if it was negative. There are also people who have had very positive experiences of being in care. We want to hear from these people too.

"That is why we would encourage anyone who was in care to come forward and take this opportunity to share their experiences, so we can gain as full a picture as possible of what worked and what didn't.

"Being heard and acknowledged will help ensure that the same mistakes aren't repeated. We need to ensure that children in institutional care in Scotland are safe and have the opportunity to thrive.

Anyone who spent time in institutional care as a child can come to the Forum. They must be over 16 years old and no longer in care. Institutional care means residential care or the health service. The service could be run by a local authority, health board, a private provider or a charity and can include:

- A children's home
- A short or long term hospital stay in a children's ward
- A residential unit
- A boarding school at public or private school
- A school trip or summer school

The Forum builds on the successful 'Time to be Heard' pilot of 2010, where participants made it clear they want their experiences of being in care as a child acknowledged.

Set up in August 2014, the Forum is an independent body, funded by Scottish Ministers and hosted by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland. It started taking applications and holding hearings last month. The Forum is expected to run until August 2017.

For more information on the National Confidential Forum, please visit:

www.nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk

For media information, please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

- The National Confidential Forum has a three year remit. At the end of this time, it will produce a final report giving details of how children have been cared for in institutional care in Scotland – in the past and today. It will provide recommendations to ensure safer and better care for children in care today and in the future.
- All information received by the Forum is strictly confidential and anonymised for reporting purposes.
- The Forum does not include foster or kinship care.
- The Forum does not have a remit to pursue criminal charges, but it can report incidents to the police if children are still at risk.