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Who Am I?

Making Records meaningful

Research to support archiving and record-keeping
in Victorian Out of Home Care

Who does 'the system' think I am? Current practices and issues in making and keeping the child's 'care'¹ record/s

Current Practice WORKSHOP 1: 24 April, 2009

Preliminary discussion paper

Introduction:

The research questions posed for the Current Practice strand are:

- A. What principles should underpin record-keeping and archival programs for children and young people currently in out of home care to support their on-going construction of identity?
- B. What are the factors which enable or create barriers to effective practice in record keeping and archival programs for front line workers, managers and organisations providing out of home care?

As *Who am I?* Advisory Group members will be aware, these questions derive from both past and present concerns.

¹ 'care': In view of the sensitive issues encountered in file searching, and in response to concerns raised by consumer groups, it has been suggested that this project will use the quotation marks around 'care'.

- Lessons from past care-leavers (e.g. *Forgotten Australians, Bringing them Home*), who have made it clear that the past lives on in the present, and may need to be revisited in different ways at different times. How might we ensure that future 'care'-leavers have their information needs better met?
- Current practice theory and guidelines, namely that all aspects of the child protection and 'care' system should be oriented to the child's best interests: How might we build on the strengths and fill the gaps in recording practices with respect to these best interests considerations, with particular attention to the child's sense of identity and stability within the family and other 'care' contexts (continuity/permanency perspective), the child's developmental needs and imperatives (needs and competency perspective), the quality and responsiveness of the child's environment (ecological perspective), and the child's cultural identity and participation (indigenous-informed rights and justice perspective)?

Lessons from the past

In their mid-1990s study of adults seeking access to Barnardo's records in the UK, Pugh and Schofield (1999: 11) found that:

A distinction could be drawn between those motivated by a desire to rectify ignorance of their origins and those who sought to make sense of their experiences and memories, who primarily wanted explanations rather than information. .. Others viewed their records as the key to starting to make sense of both their past and present.

The *Who am I?* Current Practice workshop (April 24, 2009) will briefly review some of the lessons from the experiences of former 'care'-leavers who have sought information and/or explanations about themselves and their lives from the records of statutory and community service organisations. The Senate Report, *Forgotten Australians* (2004), gives many examples of the lessons to be drawn from past 'care'-leavers. In a nutshell, those lessons include:

- The strong desire 'care'-leavers have for information about family, entry to 'care', daily life in placement, significant figures during placement, abuse in care, and a picture of the child as he/she was then.
- Inaccessibility of files.
- Gaps in and fragmentation of the records.
- Value-laden and negative personal information with little information about social and organisational contexts to make the case record meaningful in terms of explaining why things happened.

In the light of such a dearth of information to support inquirers' clarification of identity and history, Winter and Cohen (2005), practitioners from Northern Ireland, have argued that workers should be vigilant in both keeping records and recording forensically. On keeping records, they suggest:

Written records detailing attempts to make connections may represent the nearest an individual will get to understanding their history ... Aside from the detail these records may contain, they take on a symbolic importance representing the value that someone else has attributed to the identity of another. (Winter and Cohen, 2005: 51)

To 'record forensically', they suggest: 'Record anything that does or does not come to light. Keep anything that might be of relevance. ' (Winter and Cohen, 2005: 51)

This may seem a tall order. Avoiding inadequate recording and striving for comprehensive recording is a daily challenge in out-of-home care. There have been many changes in the 'care' and protection system over recent decades, some of which, such as Looking After Children (LAC), have been designed to lessen such disturbing experiences of insufficient and unbalanced information, both by providing more information, and by shaping a more positive and balanced account of the child's life while 'in care', in conjunction with the child him or herself. Even so, while LAC asks for 'a more holistic approach, that is proactive child development, child well-being approach' (Kufeldt, Simard & Vachon, 2003:18) this can be difficult if agencies are crisis-driven. Under such pressures, increasingly we also hear questions about whether there can be too much recording.

Questions for *Who am I?* participants: While in the past there may have been too little information kept, might there now be too much in some areas? How do agencies achieve a *necessary and sufficient* level of recording?

A child's placement pathway/s

While on the whole much more information is collected about children and families than in the past, and the case-planning sequence has become more overt and documented, this does not mean the problems of archiving practices are solved. With policies such as giving priority to family reunification or kinship 'care' where possible, the 'in care' experiences of many children have become less continuous, and the case record has correspondingly become more dispersed. In this research project we speak of 'the record' while knowing this is an over-simplification, and the challenge is to focus on the whole case record without being overwhelmed by its many complexities. As *Who am I?* workshop participants will know, the child's 'care' record is complicated by the existence of many possible pathways to and through 'care'. These may involve multiple episodes of protective intervention, and possibly placement in different Community Service Organisations (CSOs) and different regions. The service system is built upon partnership between statutory and community service organisations, the latter sometimes working on behalf of the state Department of Human Services (DHS), and sometimes having an independent relationship with service users. Example of steps in 'care' pathways include:

<i>Steps in pathway</i>	<i>Issues in making and keeping an integrated archive of 'care'</i>
Brief Respite or emergency care prior to formal statutory intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this part of the project consideration? • How does the child experience and remember this? • How are records incorporated subsequently into a 'care' history if the child later enters long term care? • What are the responsibilities of the parent to maintain a history, what are the responsibilities of agencies?
Regular respite care – no order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues as for brief care
Initial temporary care pending court hearings and decisions ...eg Interim Accommodation Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushed placements with little information about the child or circumstances at CSO • Main records at child protection and court • May be brief but significant and/or traumatic experience for the child • Child protection file may have little information about carers and daily experience of child • Placement might be undisclosed to parent, who cannot help child integrate these memories
Longer term foster care or residential care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care agency holds significant information • Carer may be important recorder • Carers' children and other co-residents are significant to child but not part of the child's case record • In residential care, multiple staff complicates record • LAC should provide regularly updated and comprehensive material- how well is this working and accessible? • Birth family information and placement information may diverge- kept in different places and links between may not be clear to child at time or retrospectively
Shifts from foster care to residential (less often, from residential to foster care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much continuity is there in keeping the record of the child's daily life and development? • If moves are traumatic and triggered by placement disruptions, how is child's behaviour explained, how is the context of the move conveyed on file, are there clear and accessible records of carer behaviour ?
Shifts between kinship care and foster/ residential care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As for other care shifts, also • How well are contact details for kin maintained?
Transition between foster or kinship care and permanent care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this the major stage where Life Books are compiled? • Who holds the responsibility for maintaining past history in a complete form and accessible to the child over time? • How does the child gain access to information about the subsequent course of the birth family?
Repeated episodes interspersed with periods at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information is passed between regions, CSOs and carers over time? • How are policy or practice shifts influencing such changes over place and time made evident?

There are doubtless many other ways in which children's 'care' experiences are discontinuous, and in this action research project, we rely on practitioners and consumer representatives to help the research team achieve a realistic understanding of this. There can be, then, *no single case record* documenting a child's 'care' career, though many formal and informal efforts are made to connect the records that do exist.

Question for Who am I? participants: Since current 'care' experiences might be multiple and discontinuous, and might or might not involve the State as guardian or custodian, ought this project attempt to focus on the entire record of a child's career through 'care'?

Range of recording /report formats

Just as ‘the record’ is complicated by children following diverse paths in and through ‘care’, it is also complicated by a number of formal reporting requirements at different stages of the ‘care’ pathway.

The following list has been compiled with reference to DHS documentation of the LAC process and its links with other case planning stages. It is not a complete account of the many ways in which information is collected, collated and retained, but provides a beginning picture of where information might lie. Again, it is hoped that with the help of the research participants this project might help to document more accurately the many stages in making and keeping the child’s archive of ‘care’ with a view to better information retrieval by tomorrow’s ‘care’ leavers than experienced by past care leavers.

<i>Record</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Content</i>
DHS statutory case plan	Child protection case manager	Within 6 weeks of court order; prior by protective plan within 28 days of notification	context, direction, justification of placement
Placement referral record	DHS placement referrer	At referral for care	Current & historical personal, family and contacts info
Essential Information record (LAC)	Placement agency case worker	Within 2 weeks of placement (incorporating placement referral info)	Current and historical personal, family and contacts info plus Health, Emotional & Behavioural Development, Education, Family & Social Relationships, Identity, Social Presentation, Self-Care Skills
Care and placement plan (LAC)	Placement agency caseworker/CSO worker In consultation with child, parents, members of care team	Within 2 weeks of entry	Need as per LAC domains + How to respond, by whom, when, role of parents, planned outcomes
Review of arrangements	Placement agency worker	Within one month	
Cultural support plan	Child protection worker in consultation with ACSASS, placement worker, carer, child and family	timeline not specified	Role of family, extended family and community Contact Participation in cultural and community events
Individual Education Plan (school aged children)	School principal	Cross reference in care and placement plan	Needs, attendance, behaviour, strategies
Assessment and action records (age related)	Placement agency caseworker/CSO worker In consultation with child, parents, members of care team	Child has been in care 6 months, thereafter annually for children over 5, 6 monthly for children under 5 years	Assessment across LAC domains
Review of care and placement plan (LAC)	Placement agency caseworker/CSO worker In consultation with child, parents, members of care team	Individualised in accordance with court date etc or 6 monthly?	All domains of Care and Placement plan

Additional written records

In addition to these formal reporting schedules, there are many other record-making incidents that contribute to the child's archive of 'care'. In Workshop 1 we aim to begin to develop this more comprehensive map with help from participants. *Please see the attached preliminary worksheet* to help you prepare your agency's input for Workshop 1.

Examples of other kinds of record entries written by key workers include:

- Case notes in child protection
- Case notes in placement agency
- Record of placement changes
- Family Contact records
- Child protection case plan reviews with supervisor, Case Planner, or at Court
- Supervision and consultation notes in child protection
- Supervision and consultation notes in placement agency
- Caregiver supervision notes
- Caregiver's own case notes, records, mementos
- Health records
- School reports
- Correspondence, including emails and telephone notes- especially with parents, other family members, ancillary carers (eg. Respite providers), schools, specialists
- Critical incident reports

Many of the above may or may not be reflected in CRIS and CRISP entries, may or may not be in separate hard copy.

Additional materials in the child's personal 'archive of care'

- Health documents
- School documents/certificates, projects
- Photographs, videos
- Correspondence- emails, video, letters, cards
- Gifts
- Special belongings, favourite clothes, memorabilia

Questions for Who am I? participants: How ought this strand of the research deal with these multiple sources and formats of information in the records of 'care'? Ought priority be given at this stage to particular parts of this dispersed record? (It is anticipated that after initial mapping of issues, priorities for attention will emerge from the research process.)

The record as cue to the contexts of care – a key aspect of 'making records meaningful'

The quality of agency practice will determine the way in which the child's history is recorded or constructed...The days of official secrecy may be over but we need to make sure that looked after children grow into adulthood with access to as full and accurate an account of their history as we can manage. (Pugh and Schofield 1999:17-18)

It might be argued that most people have nothing like so full a written record of their lives as children as do children currently 'in care' in Australia and comparable care systems. Yet what these children often lack over time, especially if they have had frequent placement changes, are good photographic records, unambiguous memories, and continuous parents, siblings, relatives and friends to turn to with questions and reflections. Under these circumstances, we can expect that the care record will be an important archive for them. How might we judge whether that account is 'full and accurate'? One strategy is to set standards for what case-specific information must be recorded, and to conduct quality audits to ensure compliance. Often criteria for inclusion of information relate to the overall goals of out-of-home care: Is it child-centred – are the child's needs and development monitored and recorded? Is it safe and stable – are incidents of harm detected, noted and responded to, and are changes in placement adequately justified and documented? Does it ensure the child experiences continuity of key relationships and activities – are contact visits with families and friends recorded and are school and other activities tracked?

That is, the record needs to show evidence of the child's daily life in 'care'. Yet we have learnt from past 'care'-leavers that the searcher also needs sufficient information about the contexts that help the child (later adult) interpret the meaning of that daily experience. The environment of 'care' thus needs to be documented in some way.

Horrocks & Goddard (2006: 264) discuss the links between identity, the case record for adults who have formerly been children 'in care' and the wider societal context:

...identity is seen as a 'dynamic project' that is ongoing, developing - being revised throughout the life course. These revisions are not only influenced by personal events/biographies, but they are also situated and influenced by wider societal understandings; the self is an ever-developing story that can be added to, amended and transformed. Accessing child care files, with their mixture of new and forgotten personal information, can be a hugely significant event in the self-identity storytelling project of these adults.

From the perspective of current practice, workers cannot anticipate future changes to the societal context that might make for a reinterpretation of the case record. They can, however, attempt to ensure that in some measure the current context is made visible in the text about people and events, to aid the process of later interpretation. Clearly it is not possible for each file entry to constitute a social essay, but the following discussion raises some of the contextual issues that may have a bearing on how records of the present might be interpreted in the future. The challenge is to assess to what extent these contextual variables can be made evident in the record, and at what times during the construction of the record they might be most easily signposted.

The child's family

Whether the placement is short or long term, accurate records of who comprise the child's family are important. Genograms have become commonplace, but to be truly informative genograms must be dated and regularly updated, as 'the family' is not a constant entity and may traverse several households (often transient) over time. Full-, half- and step-siblings need to be accounted for, and new partners of parents might need to be included. It will be important to understand whom the child sees as 'family' and to account for them: grandparents, favoured aunts, uncles, cousins and 'fictive kin' (family-

like friends). If relatives have contact with the child, who exactly are they? Beyond these private family matters, that are distinctive to each family, there are also social policies affecting the choices that families make and the conditions under which they rear their children.

Important aspects of the context of the family:

Family specific:

- Complexity of family form and extended family norms
- Special needs of adults and siblings
- Cultural beliefs, expectations and practices specific to the family

Broader context:

- Socioeconomic issues, especially unemployment and housing stability and sufficiency, the availability of financial support for sole parents, relevant child protection and family law legislation, policy and practice norms at the time affecting removal, contact and family reunification

The care home

The nature of the placement has its own particular context. Many children have been and still are cared for in private homes, with comparatively few at present spending their childhood in residential 'care'. Not only registered carers but other adults and children in the home or part of the carer's extended social network may be significant to the child 'in care'. It has long been recognised that the children of carers are an important resource to the child 'in care' and should not be ignored (Tierney and Were, 1991), and that carers are part of a 'wider caring network' that influences the nature and quality of the 'care' experience for a given child. (Campbell, 1999) In addition, it is not uncommon for carers to provide a home for children and young people of various ages under different programs and legal orders, and the child may be unclear about his or her relationship to these various others. (O'Neill, Campbell, Mitchell & Russell, 2006) While there may be privacy issues with respect to these persons, and especially other 'looked after' children, it can be important for subsequent care leavers to understand the make up of the care home.

The degree of formalisation of the care environment may also be relevant to the content and quality of the record. What information does the carer hold and how is this recorded? How well prepared is the carer to place this information in context? How carers are selected, trained and matched to a child provides important context for understanding the 'care' experience. Are the carer and members of the carer's network recognised as parts of a formalised 'care team'? Are carers paid and on what basis? Are they rostered or full-time?

Kinship care raises particular constraints and opportunities with respect to information flow and the child's access to past and present information. For example, in many foster care situations contact with birth families is fraught with difficulty, and is no less so in kinship care. Care records often refer to a child's distress after contact, or to a carer's dissatisfaction. By implication, the birth family member appears problematic. A fuller account of the context helps put this in perspective. For example, Ziminski (2007) has argued from a qualitative study of kinship carers that 'the success or otherwise of contact is an issue about carers' and birth parents' positioning toward each other, rather than being inherent in birth parents' attitudes' (p248). 'Carers described a dynamic

construction of 'family': the effect of the experience of kinship care on that construction was to drive a change of meaning, but it could be in the direction of either greater inclusion or restriction.' (p243)

Important aspects of the context of the care home:

- Status of carer- kin/unrelated, paid/unpaid, trained, rostered etc
- Nature/status of placement- e.g. voluntary/statutory, temporary/permanent, therapeutic, foster/residential

In relation to home-based care options (fostercare, kinship care, permanent care):

- Complexity of family form and extended family norms
- Special needs of adults and siblings
- Socioeconomic issues, especially unemployment and housing stability and sufficiency, lifestyle
- Cultural beliefs, expectations and practices

School

Gilligan (1998) made a cogent argument for the importance of schools in child welfare, with particular reference to children in care. He described the school as potentially an ally, guarantor, capacity builder, secure base, integrator and gateway to opportunity in adulthood for children, including those in care, as well as being a resource for parents and communities. He cautioned, however, that this most important contribution to the lives of children is also context dependent, 'heavily constrained by questions of ideology, governance and resource allocation... Services may be withdrawn, students excluded, schools run down.'(p19) While school reports and other evidence of child's attendance and scholastic achievement might be recorded, there may be other variables unrelated to the child relevant to his or her performance.

Important aspects of the school/ day program context:

- Frequency of school disruptions, including changes of setting ...school, teacher, class placement
- Composition of peer group
- Well or poorly resourced school – eg school support and mental health advisors, school counsellor
- Ability of school to satisfy child's special needs and interest
- Geographic proximity to/accessibility from placement

Activities

Fong, Schwab & Armour (2006) reported a study of 103 Texas foster parents , who were asked 'questions about the child's school, leisure, family, church, social and therapeutic activities prior to and currently with the foster care family' (p1359), and found that many carers did not know about the child's activities prior to care. They assert: 'Continuity of activities may be an under recognised but efficient and effective alternative for normalization of foster children and youth, who otherwise lack continuity in relationships. Moreover, continuity of activities may help buffer children from the negative effects of relationship disruption and insecure attachment.' (p1360) They note that the study prompts further questions about *how information is conveyed to carers about children's prior lives*, what activities children themselves find meaningful and wish

to continue, and how continuity of activities affects child wellbeing and placement stability.

Important aspects of the activities context:

- Geographic proximity to/accessibility from placement
- Funding available for fee-based activities
- Cultural appropriateness to family/carer of accessible activities

The neighbourhood/s

Adults who have been in 'care' often struggle to reconstruct a picture of their lives as children- where they studied, worked, played, and with whom. To augment their own memories, often fragmented, they seek clues to these experiences from details of the location of the care setting, from organisational records, from photographs, and so on.

When there have been disturbing experiences, these might be just as much about events and persons within the care environment, as they about the in-home experience. There may or may not be a great difference between the environment of the birth family and that of the 'care' home. Freisthler & Crampton (2009), in an introduction to a series of articles on environment and child wellbeing, note the debate about the use of out of home care in a child's own neighbourhood (perhaps with kin), when that neighbourhood is disadvantaged. They note, in particular, the challenge of indentifying the relative contribution of the different environments in which a child spends his/her day to the child's experience and outcomes, and suggest as a unit of analysis the individual's 'activity spaces': 'Activity space refers to how people move about and interact with their environment...Knowing where and when a person is in a specific environment and understanding how negotiating that environment may affect behaviour, while giving a more complete view of environmental effects, introduces more complexity into methods and analysis.'(p298)

Important aspects of the neighbourhood context:

- Social and cultural mix , and tolerance of 'difference'
- Community acceptance of care home (e.g. See Cameron & Crewe, 2006)
- Community infrastructure- playgrounds, neighbourhood centres, transport, safe leisure places
- Safety of streets and public places
- Special issues of remote and rural placements

Organisational cultures, policies and constraints

From a child's point of view, out-of-home placement is an experience of daily living, but it is no less a complex social arrangement subject to many organisational influences from the various statutory and community organisations involved in the 'care' system. They can have a profound impact on the child's experience. Additionally, organisational factors are particularly important in determining the quality and nature of the case record to which the child might gain access either while in 'care' or later, as an adult.

Important aspects of the organisational environment:

- Grounds for child placement

- Policies for use of kinds of placement
- Kinds of staff employed/training
- Levels of staff pay or carer reimbursement
- Caseloads and other constraints upon staff time and attention to clients, including issues of case allocation and staff turnover
- Practices with respect to family contact
- Practices with respect to approval of the activities undertaken by children in care (eg camps, extracurricular lessons) including additional funds available
- Policies and practices with respect to case management, including staff contact with children in care
- Policies and practices with respect to receiving and responding to complaints about care or allegations of abuse in care
- Record-keeping policies, incentives and disincentives for recording different kinds of information, and the ease and reliability of recording methods and technologies

Socio-political-cultural environment: macro factors

Children's family and out-of-home 'care' stories are inextricably connected to larger issues of race, culture, socioeconomic status, social services infrastructure and similar factors which create or constrain their developmental, educational and social opportunities. The prevalence, incidence and distribution of poverty, homelessness, mental illness, substance dependence, family violence and disability in the community, and the societal responses to these issues, all have a bearing on why children are removed from home, for how long, whether they return, and how their needs are perceived in out-of-home 'care'.

Tilbury and Thoburn (2008) note the recent increasing rates of children in care and length of stay in Australia, and draw attention to a number of policy trends that influence such figures, and hence the types and sustainability of 'care' available, and ultimately the nature of children's experiences. These include the commitment to family preservation and reunification, the balance of investment between preventive, remedial and substitute care services, and the special issues for vulnerable populations, with particular attention to the disparity of social opportunity for indigenous and non-indigenous children and families.

In addition, the 'care' story will be profoundly affected by dominant professional ideologies and prescriptions about the best way to care for children who cannot stay at home, including debates about the relative merits of institutional and home-based care, whether 'care' is defined as temporary or permanent, and the reliance on volunteerism and the altruism of local citizens to care for children. Delfabbro and Barber (2002) drew attention to the importance of this motivational issue in their discussion of supply and demand in foster care, noting that there are questions to be answered about how much we can continue to rely on foster care models to continue to recruit caregivers for children with significant behavioural problems. It is often in these policy positions and the resulting service systems that we find the explanations for what former 'care-leavers' have experienced.

How childhood itself is understood will also be significant (Sorin & Galloway, 2006), since the positions taken on the nature and rights of the child affect how they are invited to participate in decision-making, the level of information they receive as a matter of

course, and the freedom they are given to shape the 'care' experience by enacting their preferences around residence, family contact, activities, education, cultural practices, sexuality and many other aspects of life.

Important aspects of the socio-political and cultural environment:

- Child protection and care legislation
- Social, cultural and racial stigma and disadvantage and efforts to counter these
- Prevention, protection and care policies and service provision
- Children's status and rights as citizens and as service users

Questions for Who am I? participants: Which aspects of the case record can most readily accommodate contextual information? How might the sector continue to build on the historical archive to ensure that key socio-political and cultural changes around the provision of care are documented?

Conclusion

This preliminary discussion paper has attempted to draw together a number of factors influencing the processes of *making, keeping and accessing* the case record in out-of-home care, with an emphasis on the first stage, making the record. It has argued that while there were many problems and deficiencies in past 'care' records, and it is vital to learn from the messages from the past, there can be no simple translation to recommendations for current and future practices. 'The record' is made particularly complex by the many players in the 'protection and care' process; the diverse pathways children and young people may take to and through 'care'; the range of information required at many formal recording points; and the coexistence of digital, written and tangible materials for archiving. The paper has also briefly addressed the issue that children, young people and adults who experience 'care' require more than simple descriptive information about people, places and events; they need contextual information that allows explanations of why events occurred as they did. Contextual factors of various kinds have been suggested as important, leaving questions about how these can be made evident in the record or in other ways at the point of file access.

In the light of the complexity discussed above, Workshop 1 will seek to map issues in the current 'care' records through combining the experiences of the participants and their organisations.

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Current Practice WORKSHOP 1

Who does 'the system' think I am?

Current practices and issues in making and keeping the child's 'care' record/s

Friday 24 April, 2009

9.30am -3.30 pm

(Advisory Group meeting, 3.30-4.30)

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

Level 5, 50 Market Street, Melbourne

WORKSHOP 1- PREPARATION SHEET

Note for participants:

The attached Preparation sheet has been designed to facilitate your review and reflection prior to the workshop. It has been constructed with CSO workers in mind, but consumer representatives might also wish to note issues from the perspectives of their membership.

You might find it helpful to consult with others in the organisation about the information, and the tool might prompt you to *identify other key informants* in your organisation whose input might be helpful to the research team.

The sheet might also prompt you to identify *recording practice tools and innovations* in your organisation that would be helpful to the group's deliberations. **If you have any materials you would be willing to display at the workshop, please contact Dr Lynda Campbell – email lyndac@unimelb.edu.au**

Participants are encouraged to fill out these sheets and bring them to the Workshop to aid discussion. If you agree, completed preparation sheets may also be handed to the researchers to augment the material compiled on the day.

MAPPING ‘THE RECORD/S’ FOR CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME ‘CARE’ IN YOUR PROGRAM / ORGANISATION

Describing processes and issues along the record continuum:

Making the record with sensitivity

Who (eg. CSO caseworker, carer, teacher, supervisor) is recording	what kind of information (eg,. Health, education, family relationships)	in what format (eg. LAC A&AR, formal electronic reports, incident reports, handwritten casenotes- may be written, visual, auditory, tangible)?

Note: Those CSOs which have been engaged in or are preparing for audit for registration purposes may have already collated information of this type.

Keeping/storing the record/s

In relation to the information collected and recorded as noted above, **how** is information stored, and what are the issues for the organisation with respect to safe storage?

What issues arise with respect to information held by carers?

What information is held by the child or young person, and leaves with the child or young person when they leave the [placement]?

Accessing the record

During and after making and storing the record, who facilitates the former resident's access to the 'care' record, how is it done, what are the major practice and organisational issues?

Reviewing strengths and gaps

Bearing in mind that children in 'care' might later in life want information about their lives from these records:

- Who is recording what particularly well?

- What kind of information or historical case material is not normally recorded and gets lost?

- From these current records, how clear is the *context* for the information recorded? ie. Why events have happened, why decisions have been made, why information is framed in the way it is?

- What improvements to record making and keeping practice seem to be most needed?

Can you provide examples of good practice innovations in record keeping in your agency? (eg. Pamphlets, recording sheets, repositories for documents or tangible items)
Please contact Dr Lynda Campbell – email lyndac@unimelb.edu.au – if you have any materials you would be willing to display at the workshop.