

INFORMATION ON MEDICAL RECORDS FOR FAMILY HISTORIANS

Hospitals in the Falkirk area include general and acute hospitals, cottage hospitals and hospitals for mental health and learning disabilities. No patient records are held by Falkirk Archives, although we do hold a range of photographs and plans of buildings which may be of interest. All surviving medical records mentioned in this leaflet are held by Stirling University Archives, NHS Forth Valley and the National Records of Scotland (see below for contact details).

Acute and General Records

Any surviving patient records for acute and general services are held by **NHS Forth Valley**. Records are not retained indefinitely and most non-current records are destroyed after a period set down by NHS retention schedules.

GP records are held by the GP practice. Records of deceased patients and patients who move abroad permanently are sent to a central holding facility where they are retained for 3 years and then destroyed. Records of patients who move practice are sent to the central holding facility where they are retained for 8 years and if they are not recalled they are then destroyed.

Mental Health Records

Bellsdyke Hospital, Larbert, was set up in September 1865 as Stirling District Lunacy Asylum and the first patients arrived in June 1869. In the 1930s it was known as Stirling District Mental Hospital and in 1960 the name Bellsdyke Hospital was adopted.

Surviving pre 1948 patient records from this hospital are held by **Stirling University Archives**. These records consist of registers and some case files. They are un-catalogued and are not available for public inspection, however, the archivist is able to conduct some limited research in response to telephone, email and written enquiries.

Surviving post 1948 Mental Health records are held by **NHS Forth Valley**.

Mental Health Records at the National Records of Scotland

The National Records of Scotland hold the Mental Welfare Commission records series (ref MC); including Admission books 1858-1962 (ref MC2) and General Register of Lunatics in Asylum, 1805-1978, (ref MC7). These records can be accessed via the Search Room, The National Records of Scotland, HM General Register House, 2 Princes Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3YY; tel +44 (0) 131 535 1314; email: enquiries@nas.gov.uk. As they are stored off site, researchers should request records at least one working day in advance. Please note that each reader can order a maximum of 12 items to be brought in from off-site storage at any one time.

The General Register of Lunatics in Asylum ref (MC7) is a chronological list of names of patients giving details of date of admission, the asylum, date of discharge or death, in whose care and observations. The Admission Books (ref MC2) are a series of monthly volumes dating from 1858 which contain bound copies of the Notices of Admissions by the Superintendent of the Mental Institutions addressed to the Secretary of the Board. The Notices of Admission contain a report by the admitting physician, details of the petition to the Sheriff, personal details of the patient, two medical certificates, and an emergency order granted by the Sheriff. The forms are bound in numerical order, the running serial number agreeing with the General Register of Lunatics in Asylums (MC7). The type of personal information contained in these volumes is enclosed in the statement of particulars which includes name, age, marital status, religion, place of residence, age of first attack, duration of first attack with

other medical information. The Notice of Admittance gives the name of the asylum each patient is sent to. Both MC7 and MC2 contain the name of the asylum each patient was admitted to; both public and private. The Data Protection Act 1998 restricts access records which are less than 75 years old. The online catalogue OPAC indicates what records are closed and which are open.

Disability

The Royal Scottish National Hospital was set up in 1864 as a residential school and hospital for young people with a range of disabilities which, at the time, were believed to be learning disabilities. It was established by the Society for the Education for Imbecile Youth in Scotland (founded in 1859) and called the Scottish National Institution for the Education of Imbecile Children. It was re-named Royal Scottish National Institute in 1916. In 1948 it was taken over by the National Health Service and re-named Royal Scottish National Hospital in early 1970s. All requests for records for patients at RSNH from before 1948 should be made to **Stirling University Archives**. All requests for records from after 1948 should be made to **NHS Forth Valley**.

Access to Medical Records

Medical records are confidential and are normally accessible only to the individual patient and to medical staff in the course of their duties. The Access to Medical Records Act 1992 applies to all records created after April 1992 and provides access to records for the patient and, in the case of a deceased person, for specified relatives, solicitors and officials. This act was not retrospective.

The Data Protection Act applies only to information for living individuals. Where the date of death of an individual is not known, then access is normally not permitted for 75 years (for adults) or 100 years (for children). A Health Board may refuse access to medical records of deceased persons provided they hold an order from the Secretary of State exempting these records under Section 30 of the Data Protection Act.

Under the Lunacy (Scotland) Act 1857, records of patients with mental health or psychiatric diagnoses must be retained in perpetuity. However, records have been lost or destroyed over time and coverage is patchy across Scotland. Records of patients of acute services are subject to retention schedules. Health Boards are entitled to charge for access to medical records or for copies made of the files.

Contact Details

NHS Forth Valley

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Opening hours: 1000-1230, 1330-1700 hours; Monday to Friday