

Making childhood memories

Imagine your only childhood memorabilia is an old photo and a drawing you did when you were six or seven. This scenario is sadly a reality for many children raised in foster care.

For children living in care, numerous placement changes can mean not only the loss of connections and a sense of security but often the loss of precious keepsakes. This can be incredibly traumatic and children can lose their sense of identity.

Barnardo's Australia has developed a digital 'memory box' to help store the keepsakes of children in care. The memory box, launched in August, uses new software called MyStory.

MyStory is currently being used with all children and carers across Barnardo's programs in NSW and ACT. A number of other accredited agencies will begin using MyStory in the coming months.

MyStory captures a child's life story, keeping a history of the child's health, education and identity. It is built over time, allowing children in care to look back over their lives and help provide a sense of stability for them.

Initially, it will be the responsibility of the child's caseworker to add information to the file and older children may be able to add to it themselves. MyStory is accessible anywhere, anytime on multiple devices. It is password protected and has a secure data link, and data is backed up daily.

All children need to know who they are and where they come from. It's never too late to start collating personal records for the children you care for. Photos, letters, drawings, school reports, as well as more practical documents such as medical records and legal documents can all be useful items to help build a child's identity as they grow.

Speak to your caseworker or contact your local Community Service Centre if you want help starting a personal record collection for the child in your care.

Find out more at www.my-story.org.au



Family and Community Services encourages carers to record details about a child or young person's history and personal development by using the Life Story Work method. It is a record of a child or young person's life in words, pictures and photos made by the child or young person with help from a trusted adult.

My Life Story Book assists children and young people in out-of-home care to develop a sense of self, in relation to their life experiences. It is a chronological account of the child or young person's history, and should be started when the child enters out-of-home care and maintained throughout their time in care.

The Aboriginal version of *My Life Story Book* supports Aboriginal children in understanding more about their cultural identity and in developing a sense of connectedness to family, kinship groups and the community. The book stays with the child or young person when they return to their own home or go to another placement.

For more information visit www.community.nsw.gov.au > parents, carers & families > fostering & adoption > foster care > are you an existing Community Services foster carer?

