

FCM's, their descendants or nominated representatives should have immediate access to all files containing information concerning their history and background. They should be advised to seek preparatory counseling before receiving sensitive items.

72. There has been since the 1980s a general acceptance across professional agencies that historic care records should be given in a supported way rather than merely handing over a file that may contain harsh, judgmental or distressing information. Today there are working protocols in place for the retrieval of former child migrant's documentation. Most agencies have re-organised their internal records and are more accepting of their continuing responsibility towards former residents in terms of providing access to records.
73. However, in recent years there have been continuing examples of poor practice and secondary abuse. For example:
- The custodian of records at Fairbridge, a former cottage mother, was reported to have aggressively told a former child migrant 'Why do you want your records? You should be grateful for all Fairbridge has done for you. There's nothing but misery in your past.'
 - CMT retrieved a file from a Western Australian agency which included a letter written by the former child migrant asking for help to trace his mother. The letter had written across the bottom in another hand: 'say -parents died while a baby'. This was not true.
 - Former child migrants have frequently reported being told over the years there are no surviving records, everything was burnt or destroyed in the London blitz. This is rarely true, particularly since most child migrants were sent away after the end of the war. One was told his birth certificate was 'washed overboard in a shipping container accident!'
74. When records are provided, there can be issues arising from modern practices that focus on and promote the agency itself, rather than the child migrant who usually simply wants his file and any existing information about his parents and his childhood. Sometimes the files arrive bound within elaborate presentational formatting that promotes the agency's current services and its modern operations and identity. Sometimes they redact critically needed information whilst including unasked for information about the institution, its founder and fundraising activities including a form for donations or bequests.
75. This is why there is a need for an independently managed single point of access to all records relating to former child migrants.

CONCLUSION – A POSITIVE WAY FORWARD

76. There is clear evidence of many missed opportunities to stop child migration and to safeguard those who had already been migrated. It is unacceptable that opportunities for justice, redress and timely support have been denied to former child migrants and their