

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. Health Boards are responsible for the medical records of patients and no patient records are held by Falkirk Council Archives. There are, however, a range of photographs and plans of buildings which may be of interest.

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 records for Bellsdyke Hospital are held by NHS Forth Valley (Primary Care)

Contact details: Health Records Dept,
Primary Care, NHS Forth Valley,
Falkirk & District Royal Infirmary,
FALKIRK

Tel: 01324 614308

These amount to little more than registers and will give very limited information. It can take some time for records to be made available as they are held off-site by a records management company.

Mental Health Records in the National Archives of Scotland

The National Archives 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 West Search Room, National Archives of Scotland, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. tel 0131 535 1413 or email wsr@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 anyone 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. These included cerebral palsy and other disabilities which restricted communication as well as learning disabilities such as Downs Syndrome. 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 operated by Western Regional Hospital Board, and was re-named Royal Scottish National Hospital in early 1970s.

Records for patients at RSNH are held by NHS Forth Valley Primary Care (contact details as above).

Acute Records

Records of patients of acute services are held by NHS Forth Valley (Acute Services). Records are not retained indefinitely.

Contact details: Health Records Dept,
 Acute Services, NHS Forth Valley,
 Falkirk & District Royal Infirmary,
 Major's Loan
 FALKIRK,

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 of 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.

Falkirk Council Archives
Callendar House
Callendar Park
Falkirk
Tel: 01324 503797

Opening hours: 10.00-12.30, 1.30-5.00; Monday to Friday



**FALKIRK COUNCIL
CULTURAL SERVICES**