



**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry – Foster Care  
Case Study  
Methodology**

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## 1. Background

The Section 21 Notice for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, Foster Care Case Study was received by West Lothian Council on the 27 August 2019.

This methodology outlines the process that was followed to ensure that relevant information was identified, gathered and reviewed.

The Inquiry was advised that 500 files were inadvertently destroyed in January 2010. Subsequently 322 files were found, 88 of them relevant to the Inquiry.

## 2. Scope of Records Management

The scope of records for the Inquiry includes all records relating to children in care dating "within living memory," roughly since 1930 and in any event not beyond 17 December 2014.

The scope of records included:

- **All formats of records and systems of record keeping** – Records in paper and electronic formats, in all systems, including but not limited to, those in filing cabinets, archives, IT applications, C:/drives, Storage Area Network or SAN, .pst files, and so on.
- **Current and past records** – Registers were developed to identify the records that the council currently has and previously had, the organisations involved, the systems of record keeping and the record keeping practices/processes plus the age, quality and formats of records (some of which may be in memory only);
- **Cross organisational records and arrangements** – records and cases may not originate in West Lothian or have been transferred to other councils/organisations;
- **Changes affecting the record keeping activities of the council** - Building a chronology of changes to the councils record keeping, such as, legislative, boundary and regional changes;
- **Processes and Procedures** - Reviewing the processes and procedures relating to the identification and management of records, including: destruction arrangements, redaction, archiving etc.;
- **Records held in Archives** or held by other organisations on behalf of the council

Records from 1975 – 1996 (Lothian Regional Council) may be available from City of Edinburgh Council.

During the research for the response to the inquiry it was evident that local government reorganisation, local restructurings, office moves/closures and the modernisation/digitisation agenda has resulted in various paper policies and procedures from the past being destroyed.

### **3. Approach**

The project was approached in five stages;

- Preparation
- Reading
- Reviewing & Collation
- Report writing
- Quality Assurance

#### **i. Preparation**

The council's project team:

- established a standard approach to aid with the demands of the Inquiry;
- identified current and past records and record keeping practices;
- identified and protected records that may be relevant to the Inquiry;
- ensured that standards are in place for locating, redacting, and transferring records;

All staff that was involved in the SCAI was provided a detailed briefing of their requirements and a confidentiality statement was signed and processed.

#### **ii. Reading**

- Readers were from varied professional backgrounds;
- A consistent team of readers was used;
- A tracking sheet was devised to ensure quality assurance. This was regularly reviewed to ensure sufficient evidence was captured;
- All completed evidence records were quality checked by Project Leads;
- All evidence was filed;
- A spreadsheet of all records was created and used to track the movement of records and evidence;
- A record of all children identified and their movements was kept.
- Specific information about abuse / alleged abuse was found this was recorded separately.

#### **iii. Reviewing & Collation**

A total of 9 reviewers with experience of social care services in West Lothian reviewed every piece of evidence found by the readers. The review team members met to analyse the data.

#### **iv. Report Writing**

Collated data was reviewed and the report written.

#### **v. Quality Assurance**

The final submission has been reviewed by the Head of Service/Chief Social Work Officer, Senior Manager and the Council's Chief Solicitor.