

Norfolk Record Office Leaflet 51

Norfolk Children's Homes and Children in Care from 1834

This information leaflet relates to Homes and facilities run by the Norfolk Poor Law Unions (including King's Lynn) and by Norfolk County Council. **See Leaflet 38 for Norwich and Leaflet 52 for Great Yarmouth.**

Norfolk Poor Law Unions, 1834-1930

Between 1834 and 1930 the Poor Law Unions were responsible for the maintenance of children whose parents, for various reasons, could not provide them with a satisfactory family life. During the nineteenth century these children were usually accommodated in the Union Workhouse, where (unlike most of their contemporaries) they did at least receive some basic education. In the early twentieth century there was a growing movement to take children out of the Workhouse and either accommodate them in a Children's Home or board [foster] them out in the community.

In Norfolk there were twenty-two Poor Law Unions (including those for the City of Norwich and the Boroughs of King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth). Minutes of Boarding Out Committees and Children's Homes Committees have survived for only around half of the Poor Law Unions in Norfolk and it is possible that most of the Unions never maintained a Children's Home. It may therefore be necessary to search the relevant Board minutes and records of the Union Workhouse (admission and discharge registers, creed registers, birth registers) for references to a particular child.

Reference has been found to the following Poor Law Union Children's Homes:

Gresham Children's Home, The Old Rectory, Gresham had been established by Erpingham Union by 1922 (when it is listed in Kelly's Directory of Norfolk). For photograph and reminiscences see Keith Entwistle, *Gresham Voices and Faces* (Aylsham, 2000), pp 39-43, 70-71.

Long Stratton Children's Home (for 14 children) had been established by Depwade Union by 1916 (when it is listed in Kelly's Directory of Norfolk).

Lyde Cottage, Docking, Children's Home (for 12 children) was opened by Docking Union in 1915.

Red House, Little Snoring, Children's Home had been established by Walsingham Union by 1916 (when it is listed in Kelly's Directory of Norfolk).

Thetford Children's Home, Old Market Street, Thetford, had been established by Thetford Union by 1929 (when it is listed in Kelly's Directory of Norfolk).

North Walsham Children's Home, 60-62 Norwich Road, North Walsham, had been established by Smallburgh Union by 1916 (when it is listed in Kelly's Directory of Norfolk).

Records, 1834-1930:

Board minutes of all Norfolk Unions (including King's Lynn but excluding Norwich and Great Yarmouth) - see lists C/GC 1-20 for more detail.
 Blofield Poor Law Union Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1912-1918 (C/GP 2/52).
 Depwade Poor Law Union Boarding Out Committee correspondence files, 1906-1924 (C/GP 3/189-191).
 Docking Poor Law Union register of boarded out children, 1904-1917 (C/GP 4/72).
 Docking Poor Law Union Children's Home [Lyde Cottage, Docking] registers, 1915-1937 (C/GP 4/4/81-83).
 Downham Poor Law Union Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1915-1923 (C/GP 5/93-94).
 St Faith's Poor Law Union Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1911-1929 (C/GP 15/70).
 Smallburgh Poor Law Union Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1912-1930 (C/GP 18/113).
 Smallburgh Poor Law Union Children's Home [North Walsham] Committee, 1920-1923 (C/GP 18/82).

Norfolk County Council Guardians Committees, 1930-1948

In 1930, under the Local Government Act of 1929, the Poor Law Unions were abolished and, in Norfolk, their duties and properties were transferred to Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and Great Yarmouth County Borough Council.

Norfolk County Council set up a system of thirteen Guardians' Committees which reported to the Public Assistance Sub-Committee of the County Council. It appears that not all of the Guardians' Committees ran a Children's Home and those children who were not boarded out (fostered) were accommodated in the Public Assistance Institutions (the former Workhouses).

| C/GC | Number of committee | Names of districts comprising area | Places at which Committee meets |
|-------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | 1 | Erpingham R.D.C. Cromer U.D.C. Sheringham U.D.C. | Beckham, Sheringham or Cromer |
| 2 | 2 | St Faith's and Aylsham R.D.C. | Aylsham or Norwich |
| 3 | 3 | Blofield and Flegg R.D.C. | Lingwood or Rollesby |
| 4 | 4 | Smallburgh R.D.C. North Walsham U.D.C. | North Walsham or Stalham |
| 5 | 5 | Forehoe and Henstead R.D.C. Wymondham U.D.C. | Norwich or Wymondham |

| | | | |
|----|----|--|--------------------------------|
| 6 | 6 | Docking R.D.C. Hunstanton U.D.C. | Docking |
| 7 | 7 | Walsingham R.D.C. Wells U.D.C. | Fakenham or Snoring |
| 8 | 8 | Freebridge Lynn R.D.C. King's Lynn Borough | Gayton or King's Lynn |
| 9 | 9 | Downham R.D.C. Marshland R.D.C. Downham Market U.D.C | Downham Market or Walsoken |
| 10 | 10 | Mitford and Launditch R.D.C. East Dereham U.D.C. | East Dereham or Gressenhall |
| 11 | 11 | Swaffham U.D.C. Swaffham R.D.C. Thetford Borough Wayland R.D.C. | Swaffham or Thetford |
| 12 | 12 | Depwade R.D.C. Diss U.D.C. | Pulham St Mary |
| 13 | 13 | Loddon and Clavering R.D.C. | Heckingham |

Records, 1930-1948:

Public Assistance Sub-Committee (to which Guardians' Committees reported), 1930-1948 (C/C 10/453-472).

Public Assistance Children's Care Committee, 1946-1947 (C/C 10/473).

Guardians' Committees 1 to 13 (see C/GC lists for detail).

Guardians' Committee No. 1 Children's Home (Old Rectory, Gresham) Committee minutes, 1938-1948 (C/GC 1/7).

Guardians' Committee No. 1 Medical Officer's register of examinations of children in West Beckham Institution, 1934-1938 (C/GP 6/198).

Guardians' Committee No. 2 Boarding Out Sub-Committee minutes, 1930-1947 (C/GC 2/10).

Guardians' Committee No. 3 Boarding Out Sub-Committee minutes, 1940-1947 (C/GC 3/7).

Guardians' Committee No. 4 Children's Home (North Walsham) Committee minutes, 1930-1948 (C/GC 4/8-11).

Guardians' Committee No. 5 Boarding Out Sub-Committee minutes, 1930-1947 (C/GC 5/9).

Guardians' Committee No. 5 correspondence, reports etc. re boarded out children, 1936-1937 (C/GC 5/13).

Guardians' Committee No. 6 register of boarded out children, 1933-1934 (C/GC 6/4).

Guardians' Committee No. 6 Children's Home (Lyde Cottage, Docking) registers, 1915-1937 (C/GP 4/81-83).

Guardians' Committee No. 7 Boarding Out Sub-Committee minutes, 1925-1945 (C/GC 7/10).

Guardians' Committee No. 7 Children's Home (Red House, Little Snoring) Sub-Committee minutes, 1931-1948 (C/GC 7/9).

Guardians' Committee No. 9 Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1933-1948 (C/GC 9/9).

Guardians' Committee No. 10 Children's Home (Garfield House, East Dereham) Sub-Committee minutes, 1937-1946, 1946-1948 (C/GP 14/129, C/GC 10/5).

Guardians' Committee No. 11 Boarding Out Committee minutes, 1930-1946 (C/GC 11/8).

Guardians' Committee No. 11 Children's Home (Thetford) Sub-Committee minutes, 1941-1942 (C/GC 11/9).

Guardians' Committee No. 12 Boarding Out Sub-Committee minutes, 1930-1945 (C/GC 12/8).

Guardians' Committee No. 12 Children's Homes (Long Stratton) Sub-Committee minutes, 1930-1948 (C/GC 12/7).

County Education Committee register of children adopted, 1927-1945 (C/ED Uncat). NB Closed for 100 years.

County Education Committee adoption files relating to children for whom the Council acted as Guardian ad Litem, 1927-1948 (C/ED Uncat). NB Closed for 100 years.

Registers of children under control of County Council, 1930-1971 (C/SS 7/64-66). NB Closed for 100 years.

Register of boarded out children, 1944-1947 (C/SS 2/4).

Denver Hall Nursery register, 1947-1951 (C/SS 7/69).

Garfield House (East Dereham) record book, 1947-1973 (ACC 2004/101). NB Closed for 50 years.

Norfolk County Council, 1948-1974

The Guardians' Committees only lasted eighteen years. In 1948 they were abolished and replaced by Norfolk County Council Children's Committee. The following extract from a report of the Children's Officer provides some useful information about the County Council Children's Homes.

List of Norfolk County Council Children's Homes and Nurseries from report of Children's Officer to Children's Committee on 5 May 1954 (C/C 10/81)

Residential Accommodation

Under Section 15 of the Children Act the Local Authority must provide residential accommodation for children who for the time being are deprived of their own home life. The Children's Committee took over from the Public Assistance Authority six Children's Homes for children of school age and one Nursery for children from 2-5 years of age as follows:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| The Old Rectory, Gresham. | 24 children of school age. Now 20 children. |
| The Red House, Little Snoring. | 20 children of school age. Now 12 children. |
| Garfield House, East Dereham. | 30 children of school age. Now 20 children. |
| Shiels Court, Brundall. | 20 boys 8-15 years. |
| Briardale, Long Stratton. | 12 children of school age. Now 9 children. |
| Denver Hall, Downham Market. | 20 children 2-5 years. |

These Homes were all reasonably small and the Children's Committee were fortunate in that they did not inherit any of the very large institutional type of Children's Homes. They have been improved in many ways and in several cases the number of children accommodated has been reduced so that they are now all small Homes. With the opening of the new Home in King's Lynn there will be some provision of residential accommodation for children and young persons of all ages.

The following Homes have been opened since the Children's Committee was established in 1948:-

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| The Durdans, Mundesley. | Nursery 0-5 years. |
| The Grange, Overstrand. | 22 children of school age. |
| Girls' Hostel, 191 College Road, Norwich. | 14 adolescent girls. |
| Reception Home, Grove House, East Dereham. | 30 children. |
| Boys' Hostel, 60 Norwich Road, North Walsham. | 8 adolescent boys. |
| To be opened shortly: | |
| Children's Home, King's Lynn. | for a family of 8. |

The Children's Officer states in this same report of 5 May 1954: 'Since the opening of Grove House as a Reception Home the use of the nursery accommodation in County Homes [the former Workhouses or Public Assistance Institutions] is no longer required for children in the care of the Children's Committee.'

County Homes used to accommodate children:

The report also reveals that diminishing numbers of children were also accommodated in five County Homes (the former Public Assistance Institutions or Workhouses):

Downham Market (Howdale Home) 41 children in 1951, 57 in 1952, 8 in 1953

Gressenhall (Beech House) 4 children in 1951, 0 in 1952, 1 in 1953

Lingwood (Homelea) 18 children in 1951, 18 in 1952, 11 in 1953

Pulham Market (Hill House) 23 children in 1951, 25 in 1952, 10 in 1953

West Beckham (Beckham House) 1 child in 1951, 0 in 1952, 3 children in 1953

Records, 1948-1974:

Norfolk County Council Children's Committee, 1948-1970 (C/C 10/79-87).

Norfolk County Council Social Services Committee, 1970-1974

Registers of children under control of County Council, 1930-1971 (C/SS 7/64-66). NB Closed for 100 years.

Register of children admitted into care, 1950-1971 (C/SS 7/67). NB Closed for 50 years.

Register of children discharged from care, 1950-1971 (C/SS 7/68). NB Closed for 50 years.
Denver Hall Nursery register, 1947-1951 (C/SS 7/69).
The Durdans Children's Home, Mundesley, registers, 1949-1988 (ACC 1998/158). NB Closed for 50 years.
Garfield House (East Dereham) record book, 1947-1973 (ACC 2004/101). NB Closed for 50 years.

Norfolk County Council, 1974 onwards

The Local Government Act of 1972, which came into effect on 1 April 1974, made Norfolk County Council responsible for Social Services throughout Norfolk (including Norwich and Great Yarmouth which hitherto had acted independently). In 2005 the Social Services Department and the Education Department were reorganised to form Adult Social Services and Children's Services.

Records, 1974 onwards:

Register of children in Norwich discharged from the care of Norwich City Council and (from April 1974) Norfolk County Council, Dec 1950 – Sept 1983 (ACC 2004/101). NB Closed for 50 years.

Assumption of parental rights files, 1974-1987 (ACC 2006/231). Files for names beginning with letters T, U, V and Wa are missing. NB Closed for 100 years.

Record cards relating to children in care, 1970s-1980s (ACC 2006/231). Information from the cards has been entered on a computer database by Children's Services. NB Closed for 100 years.

Children's Services Contact (particularly for children in care after 1974):

The Norfolk Record Office has very few records relating to Children's Homes and children in care after 1974 and enquiries should be addressed to:

Mr Bramwell Chapman
Access to Records Officer
Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
Vantage House
Fisher's Lane
Norwich NR2 1ET



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