

**Ombudsman
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PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES
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Lost records



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Introduction



This report is from the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**.



It is about the problems caused when health and social care organisations don't keep proper records, or lose records.



The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is an independent organisation that deals with complaints about **public services** provided by:

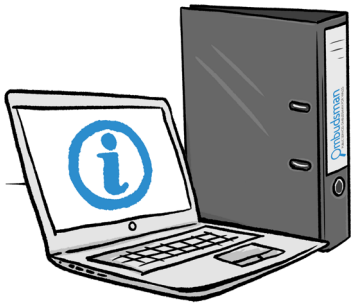


- Local councils
- The National Health Service (NHS)
- Housing associations
- The Welsh Government



A **public service** is a service provided by an organisation that is part of the government.

Keeping proper records

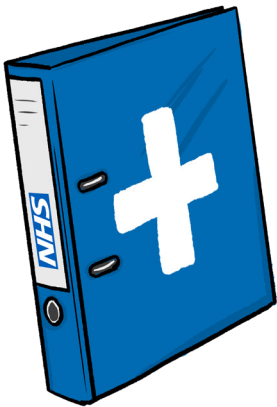


Records

Your health and social care record is a note of:



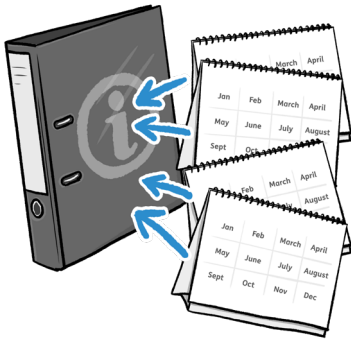
- Your personal information



- Information about your health



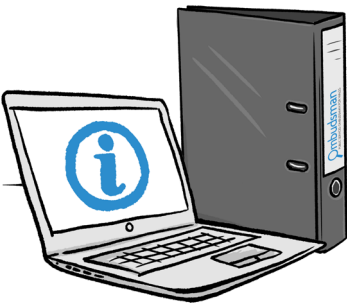
- The different services and treatments that you have had



Your record should include information about your health and social care over many years.



Your record may include photographs and video.



Records can be on paper or on a computer.

Making information available



It is important that doctors, health professionals and care workers can easily and quickly see your record.

They need this so they can give you the right help now.



A record of what has happened

Your health and social care record should include information about what has happened to you.



It should explain which doctors, health professionals and care workers have worked with you.

Your record should explain what health and social care professionals have done to help you.



When things go wrong

Your record is very important if something goes wrong with your health or social care.



Your record will help us see what has happened that has caused things to go wrong.

How records should be kept



The law says that people's records must be kept safe so that:

- They don't get lost



- They don't get damaged or destroyed



- People can't change any records without proper permission

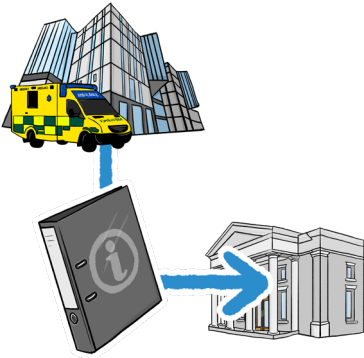


NHS Wales says that:

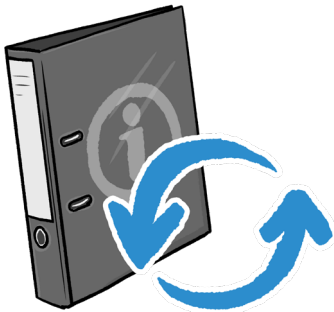
- Health records should be kept safely in NHS offices, hospitals or clinics



- The record should include a note of every time that someone has:
- Added something to the records



- Moved the records



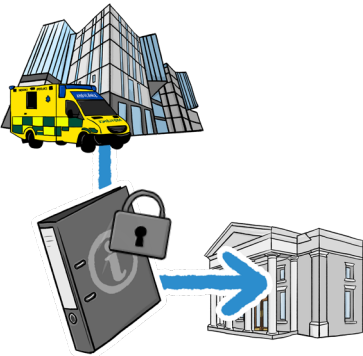
- Changed anything about the record



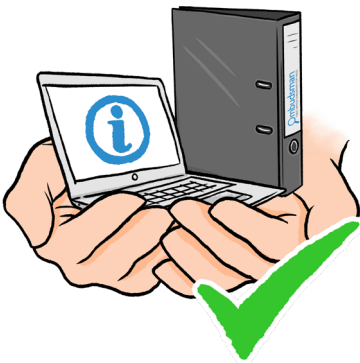
- Records should be put back in the proper place when the doctor has finished with them



- Information should be looked after properly when:
 - Part of a record is taken out of the main record



- Records are moved outside the organisation



We think that all health and social care organisations should have good and proper ways of looking after records.

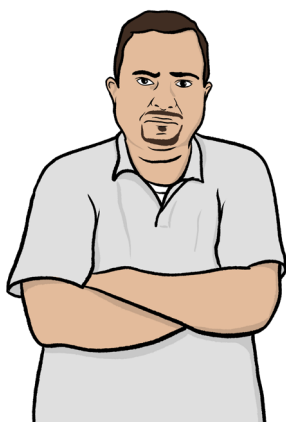


There should also be rules that staff have to follow about looking after records.

When a record is lost



We at the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, have had to deal with complaints where health and social records have been lost.



If someone makes a complaint and the record has been lost it means that:



- The health or social care organisation can't look into the complaint properly



- The person who is making the complaint will carry on being unhappy



- The person who is making the complaint may think that doctors are trying to hide something

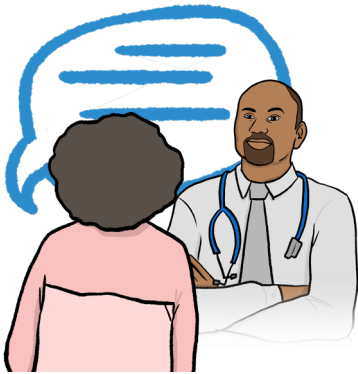


- We at the Ombudsman can't look into the complaint properly either



Sometimes the person making the complaint is given wrong information, because the correct information is lost.

Some examples



Complaint by Mrs N

Mrs N went to a meeting with a doctor to talk about her father's treatment before his death.



But the doctor had the wrong records at the meeting and talked about a different patient.

Mrs N's father's records had been lost.



Complaint by Mr W

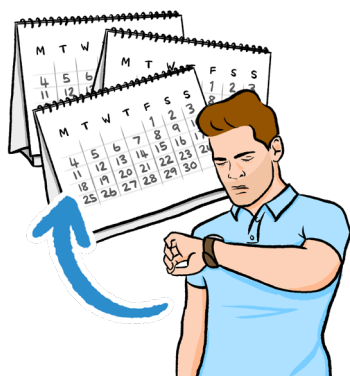
Mr W asked to see a copy of his own health records.

But they sent him someone else's health records.



Complaint by Mr H and Mrs X

Mr H and Mrs X wanted to talk about their parent's treatment before they died.

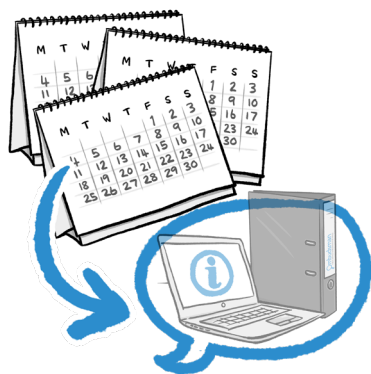


They had to wait for 3 months to get a reply, because the records had been lost.



Complaint by Mrs L

Mrs L asked several times to see the records of her mother after she had died.



After 3 months, the hospital told her that the records had been lost.



Complaint by Mrs AB

Mrs AB complained about a care home.

The care home answered some of the points, but didn't answer others.



After a long time, they admitted that that they couldn't answer all the points because the records had been lost.



Complaint by Mrs S

The health board couldn't look at the records because they were lost.



Instead they answered the complaint from what doctors could remember.



Complaint by Mrs F

The health board said that they didn't agree with Mrs F's complaint.



But they hadn't looked into it properly because they had lost the records.

What should happen



We think that health and social care organisations should:

- Have a way of tracking where a record is at all times



- Make sure all staff have had training in how to look after records properly



- Have a proper way of reporting and looking for files that have been put in the wrong place



- **Look at how they tell people and the Information Commissioner when a record is lost**



- **Make sure they learn from cases where the records have been lost. They should think about how to make sure records are not lost in the future**



Information Commissioner is the part of the government that checks that records are kept safe and secure.

For more information



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