The National Confidential Forum is here to listen to, understand and acknowledge the experiences of anyone who spent time in institutional care as a child in Scotland.

People from across Scotland and beyond have been sharing their childhood experiences of being in care with the Forum. Those who have already spoken to the Forum include people who stayed in children’s homes, boarding schools and hospitals and they range in age from 20 to 80. Most people have come to the Forum offices for a hearing where they talked about positive, negative and mixed experiences, while some have chosen to share their experiences in writing.

Those who visited the Forum met with two Forum members, who in their previous work have listened to people talking about very personal experiences. People have had help in paying for and sorting out their travel arrangements and have been accompanied by up to two supporters.

It can be difficult to decide to come forward and there is help available in making that decision from a dedicated advice and guidance phone line. This is staffed by an experienced listener who discusses with individuals what sharing their experiences may mean for them personally. This can be especially helpful if it is not something that someone has spoken about before. People have been offered information about support services if they may be of help to them.

Ben Lukins, Project Manager at the Forum said:

“Being heard and acknowledged has been a powerful experience for individuals. We are very grateful to all those who have shared with us, including those who had a difficult and distressing time in their childhood. The Forum is only a small part of a bigger journey for some people in dealing with and reconciling issues that have affected them into their adult life. People have been clear about their desire to ensure that what happened to them does not happen to children in care now.

“We have also heard about positive experiences, with people telling us about the good care they received and why this worked well, which is also really valuable to our work.

“What people tell us helps us understand what it was like to be a child in care in Scotland. This is helping us to build a picture of the legacy of care in Scotland, which will form part of the national record and help policy makers provide better and safer care in Scotland for children now and in the future.”

Individuals who want to take part in the Forum must be over 16 years old and no longer in care. Institutional care includes residential care or health service or
boarding school and could have been run by a local authority, health board, a private provider or a charity.

Anyone interested in finding out more can call the Forum’s support staff on free phone: 0800 121 4773, email: information@nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk or visit the Forum’s website www.nationalconfidentialforum.org.uk.