caringlife

CONNECTING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Children in out-of-home care face a major problem in having access to their life memories - photos, videos, and important documents.

Carers often take a lot of photos and videos of significant moments of the child's life – it could be their 5th birthday party, a trip to the zoo, holidays, sporting achievements, family gatherings, or any of the usual family moments.

These moments are priceless, and form part of the child's identity and life story.

Until now, children in out-of-home care have not had a central place where they can access these photos, files and other documents in an easy way – they are often given these mementos in hard-copy form or on a USB stick, which are easily lost, particularly when the children move between carers.

What is CaringLife?

CaringLife is an online platform and app that has been designed to provide a private, safe and secure system way for foster agencies and local authorities, case workers, carers and children to upload and store photos, videos and important mementos during the child's time in out-of-home care.

Carers and children each have their own private account created on CaringLife, which are then connected when a child is staying with that carer.

Carers - Once connected to a child, carers can upload content to their account which is then also visible on the child's account. This content will only be visible to the carer, the child and the child's social worker.

Children – Children are able to add their own content to their account to ensure that they feel that they are contributing freely to their own life story and are creating their own memories. Content uploaded by the child will only be visible to the child and their social worker – the carer doesn't have access to this, to ensure the child feels that they have some privacy.

Social Worker - Social Workers are known as "Case Managers" on CaringLife.

As the child's social worker, you are able to monitor all the content that is uploaded by either the child under your responsibility or their carer, and you are also able to add content that you may feel is important to the child – for example if you receive photos or videos of the child from previous carers, you can upload them for the child.

CaringLife is *not* a social media platform – it's designed to be a very secure and private "Dropbox" style system that allows the children to be able to see all their life memories now and into the future.

Even when they leave care, or transition into adulthood, they will have on-going access to all their content.

Features

- Photos and files are date-stamped and are available to view either by chronological order or most recently added, so children can see their life in the order of sequence, or by most recently added;

- Ability to add Albums, i.e Sarah's 6th Birthday and add photos and videos to events, to provide context to the photos for the child;

- Captions can be added to videos and photos so that the child can remember the names of the people in the images, and information relevant to the photos and videos;

- Ability to scan and add school reports, certificates of achievement and awards, carer letters and notes, birthday cards, drawings, artwork, school work, and other important documents.

The Specifics

CaringLife incorporates 4 login interfaces – one for the Authority/Agency and accredited Account Managers; one for Social Workers; one for the Carers; and the other for the Child.

Authority/Agency and Account Managers

Features include:

• Administrative access to create child's account in system;

• Administrative access to create carer's account in system;

• Administrative access to connect child and carer accounts;

• Ability to transfer authorisation to another social worker and/or agency or local authority if the child is moved or transferred;

• Ability to decide when the child receives access to their account – for example it may be decided that the child should have access only once they reach 12 years of age.

The Specifics

Social Worker

Features include:

• Administrative access to create child's account in system;

• Administrative access to create carer's account in system;

• Administrative access to connect child and carer accounts;

• Ability to review photos and notes of children under their responsibility - if a photo or other document is deemed inappropriate for the child and is not approved for the child's viewing, the file will remain visible only to the social worker;

• Ability to delay approving photos and notes until an age-appropriate time, or for any other reason;

• Ability to delete inappropriate photos, or photos which may be culturally insensitive;

• Ability to transfer authorisation to another Social Worker if the child is moved or transferred;

• Ability to review all documents in an easily accessible way for audits or reviews;

• Social workers are able to see all children that are currently in their care on one screen, to ensure ease of use;

• Choose how often they are alerted to new content to moderate, to ensure work efficiencies. There is also the choice to allow automatic approval of content, or be able to moderate and review at the Authority's/Social Worker's discretion;

The Specifics

Carers

Features include:

• Can add photos, videos and documents that they feel are important for the child;

• Add captions, notes and other personalised information for the child to provide memories and context to the photos, videos and documents;

• Access to view photos, videos and documents that they have uploaded for all the children they have cared for;

• Can only see the memories they load – unless the child's Social Worker shares other memories/documents with them.

• Can download the documents for printing etc.

Child

Features include:

• Access to view all approved photos, videos and documents;

• Add photos, videos, documents, caption and comments - this allows for them to feel as though they have an interactive role in their "life story";

• Can see content from all carers and Social Workers;

• Can hide photos they don't like or want to see;

• Continued free access to the photos, videos and documents once they leave care or reach adulthood;

• Ability to download the documents for printing etc.

Security

Security and privacy is at the heart of CaringLife, and it is built utilising the latest security protocols to ensure complete data privacy and protection for the children.

All data is stored in the UK on cloud servers.

The protocols for storage of data are aligned with international security and quality best practices standards, including:

• SOC 1/SSAE 16/ISAE 3402 (formerly SAS 70)
• SOC 2
• SOC 3
• FISMA, DIACAP, and FedRAMP
• DOD CSM Levels 1-5
• PCI DSS Level 1
• ISO 9001 / ISO 27001
• ITAR
• FIPS 140-2
• MTCS Level 3.

Therapeutic Benefits

As well as providing carers and children with an easy place to load and store photos, videos and other memories and documents, CaringLife has been recognised by leading child welfare experts as having the following benefits:

• CaringLife enables children to form a continuous life narrative, autobiographical memory, and a sense of identity – all of which is often missing in children in out-of-home care - which have a direct relationship with mental health outcomes as they reach adolescence and adulthood. It can also provide a key tool for therapeutic life story work.

• CaringLife helps children to passively share feelings with their carers that they may not be able to verbalise.

• CaringLife provides a tool for therapists to work with children to learn how to identify and express emotions in a safe way.

Therapeutic Benefits

Access to positive memories has a very positive impact on mental health and depression in vulnerable children, as shown by a recent study by researchers at Cambridge University.[1]

The study showed recalling specific positive life experiences may be a resilience factor that helps in lowering depressive vulnerability in adolescents with a history of early life stress.

A significant number of studies have also shown that being able to recall individual memories, which is often difficult for children who have suffered from trauma, is critical for emotional regulation, mental health, and vulnerability to depression.[2,3]

[1] Askelund, A. D. et al. *Positive memory specificity is associated with reduced vulnerability to depression. Nature Human Behaviour*; (2019); DOI: 10.1038/s41562-018- 0504-3)

[2] Speer, M and Delgado, M. *Reminiscing about positive memories buffers acute stress responses. Nature Human Behaviour* 1, 0093 (2017).

[3] Williams, J. M. G., Barnhofer, T., Crane, C., Herman, D., Raes, F., Watkins, E., & Dalgleish, T. (2007). *Autobiographical memory specificity and emotional disorder. Psychological Bulletin, 133*(1), 122-148. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.133.1.122

What does it look like?

Child and Carer View (App)
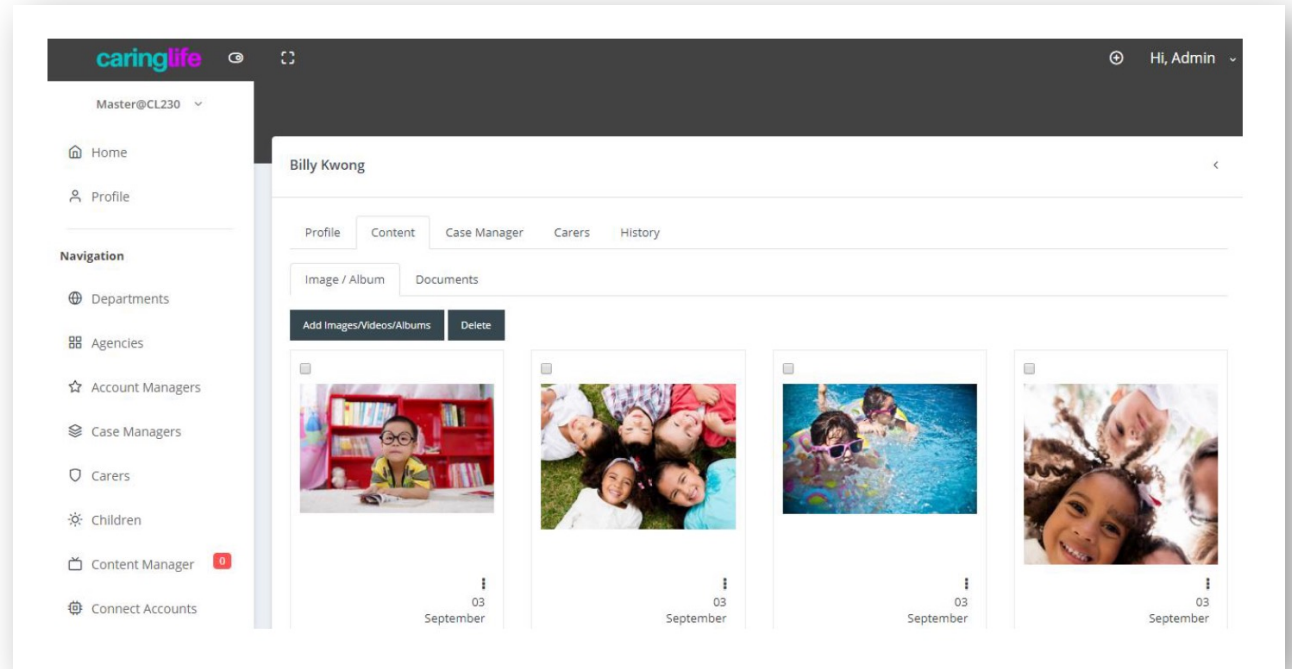
Case Manager/Social Worker View

FAQS

Uploading Content

Once carers upload the content, the content will be able to be accessed by the children both now and into the future. As children can not legally "own" content, we have provided the children with a perpetual, non-revocable license to the images on their account, to ensure they have legal access to their images.

If the child is moved to another family, it is really easy to connect the new carer to the child's account, and the new family can upload content immediately. The child will be able to see all content from all the families they've stayed with on their account.

It is important to note that the new carers are not able to see any content from previous carers and can only see the content they load unless you choose to share it with them.

Carers can upload content while the child is in their care, or if you choose to leave them connected with the child's account after the child has moved or returned to their biological family, the carer can continue to load content after they have left care.

Can Content Be Deleted?

The children and carers can delete content within 24 hours of uploading it, to ensure that if a mistake is made, and the wrong content has been uploaded, it can be easily fixed. However, after 24 hours the content can not be deleted. This is to ensure the content is safe.

If a child doesn't want to see a certain image, they can "hide" the image, so they can see it later if they choose.

Social Workers have full capability to delay or delete content that is not suitable for the child.

FAQS

Moderating Content

Social Workers have the ability to choose whether they would like to moderate the content of a specific carer prior to the child seeing the content.

To ensure work efficiencies, the default setting is to allow the content to be immediately visible to the child, however if you have any concerns about this for any reason, you can choose to only allow the content to be published after you have reviewed it.

You can also choose to delay publication of content if they feel that it is not appropriate for the child for any reason – there may be issues of trauma, or other issues for the child, which may require this.

Connecting Accounts

It is really easy to connect a child to a new carer for Social Workers – they go to the Connect Accounts, choose the name of the child and then choose the name of the Carer and press the "Connect" button.

You can choose to have multiple carer families being able to upload content for a child – for example if a child has an extended or continuing respite carer with another family, or you may like to keep a previous carer connected to the child.

When to Connect Children and Carers

If a child is to be placed with Carers for longer than an emergency or very short term placement, it's great to connect them on CaringLife.

Transferring to a new Social Worker or Authority/Agency

Social Workers are able to transfer a child to another Social Worker within the Authority/Agency by using the "Transfer Child" function, however transfers to new agencies need to be done by Account Managers.

Usernames and Passwords

When a child or carer's account gets created, they are assigned a username and password.

If a child does not have an email address, there is not a password retrieval process for them.

If they lose their password, you are able to create a new temporary password for them via your Account.

FAQS

Talking with Children and Young People

We have created CaringLife with the needs of the children in mind – we have had focus groups with children in out-of-home care and they are really excited by CaringLife, and said they wished it had been around earlier!

How to Access CaringLife?

Once you have received your username and password, you are able to log on to CaringLife at http://admin.caringlife.com

You are able to create accounts for children and carers, and connect the accounts so that the carers can start uploading content for the children.

Children and Carers will be able to access CaringLife via the App, or by logging into www.caringlife.com

CARER FEEDBACK

"CaringLife - where to start? What a beautiful way to have all children and young people who are in OOHC for whatever reason to be able to back up their memories. Thank you for CaringLife - you are awesome! Our children and young people will have hopefully just the best experience and not so much "I wonder what I was doing at this age" etc, so it's a huge hit. Thank you so much!"

"I absolutely love it. It's great having somewhere to have all her photos in one place and for her to be able to access these when she's older."

"It is critical for our kids to be able to look back on their life and journey. CaringLife will really help that."

"Love it! Best thing for everyone. Easy to use. Amazing gift for child at the end of time in OOHC."

"Being able to access photos and important memories, even if a child does not remain in the care of the same Foster Parents, is a vital link to their past. Too often multiple moves to different Foster Parents meant that the child or young person left behind their memories, connections and images of themselves as young children or babies."

"Every single photo, video and document is special to upload! Can you imagine being able to see your life in pictures, videos and treasured memories as an adult from care? Game changer!"

"It is fantastic, easy to use and creates lifelong memories for children and young people in OOHC."

"I think CaringLife is such an important app for young people in OOHC, and such a good way to ensure that memories are not lost. I thought the App was very user-friendly and simple to follow."

SOCIAL WORKER FEEDBACK

"I strongly believe all children and young people in OOHC should be given the opportunity to have their memories and life story captured in an innovative and long-lasting, sustainable way such as CaringLife. This would be highly helpful across the OOHC sector, particularly in situations of multiple placement moves where memories and parts of children's and young people's life stories are not being captured or misplaced. It seeks to normalise the journey for children and young people throughout the most important milestones in their lives."

"This is a great platform for the young person to be able to capture big and small moments and be able to keep a record of life events that they can access at any time. This would be helpful for children and young people in emergency/ short-term placements as they can access this at any time."

"I think CaringLife is fantastic and it should be introduced to all young people so they don't ever have to miss a minute of their lives ever again."

"It has been a long-standing difficulty for Social Workers to gather and maintain photos etc that show the positive experiences that CYP have during their time in OOHC due to capacity and frequent moves. CaringLife makes this much more consistent and benefits both social workers, children, young people and families."

"I think CaringLife is a long-awaited innovation in this sector and fills a significant gap in children and young people's life story work. It is important for young people to make sense of and capture memories and milestones at times that are sometimes fast-moving and difficult for them to process in the moment. Allowing them to experience these memories at their own pace, when they are ready and fill in the gaps in in their journey has a significant impact on their well-being and sense of self."

"It has been solidly researched and evidenced that having material to share with children and young people that tell the story of their journey through care, and the people who have shared their lives, supports them to have a comprehensive story of their life and assists with self-worth and memory sequencing. This is essential for the best interests of children and young people lifelong."