



VOLUNTARY ACTION HISTORY SEMINARS

VAHS seminar series at the Institute of Historical Research

SEMINAR ABSTRACT

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Unexplored Riches in Medical History at The Children's Society

This talk introduces a new research resource at The Children's Society Archive. Made possible by a grant from the Wellcome Trust, the Unexplored Riches in Medical History project has made great strides in opening up The Children's Society's archive collection for access and research.

Integral to child care is the need to look after children's health, which is reflected in The Children's Society's records. The aim of the Unexplored Riches in Medical History project has been to catalogue, conserve and make available for research those records that are most useful for the study of medical history. This includes records generated by The Society's children's homes, from 1881 to the 1980s, and the case files of 30,000 individual children.

This talk will explain the project process and the difference it has made to the accessibility of the archive collection. The main archive sources within the collection will be introduced and there will be a discussion of the historical trends that have been discovered as the project has progressed, including case studies showing the experiences of specific children. In particular, the talk will highlight areas of the collection that would benefit from more in-depth research.

Overall, the records made available through the Unexplored Riches in Medical History project are a rich information resource, shedding light on diseases and the different treatments used to cure them, the funding of healthcare for children, and the day-to-day running of The Children's Society's residential children's homes. With these records, we can follow the growth of medical understanding from 1881 to the late-20th Century, as well as following the changing relationship between charitable organisations and healthcare during that time.