




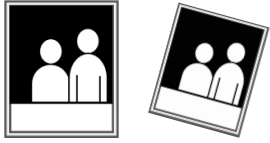





A booklet to help you put
together your life story








helping people realise their potential

A Guide to Life Story Work



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My Life, My Future was a one year project (September 2018-19) at Down's Syndrome Scotland which received funding from The RS Macdonald Charitable Trust 40th Anniversary Awards.



The project supported people with Down's syndrome to work on their life story with their family.



It ran group meetings for the families to come together and one to one sessions at home

My Life, My Future helped families:

To get started and guide everyone through the work.



To think about stories, memories, life events and all the important things that make you who you are.

To make sense of all the information collected and put it together in the way they chose.



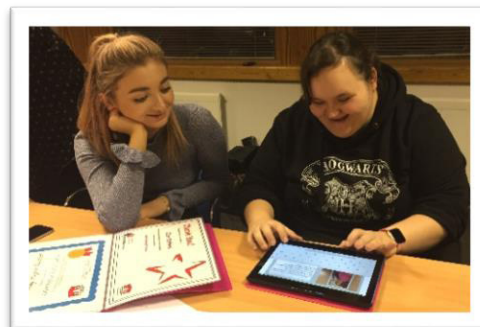
Learn how to use their life story every day.

What is life story work?

Your life story is all about you and something you keep adding to as you go through life. It can be a fun activity you can do with family members or someone who knows you very well.



They can help you gather the information needed for your story and you can share memories together.



The good things about having a life story:

It can tell others what is important to you.

It helps new people in your life to get to know you – this is good if you have support workers or carers.

It can help you share with others and find out about them too.

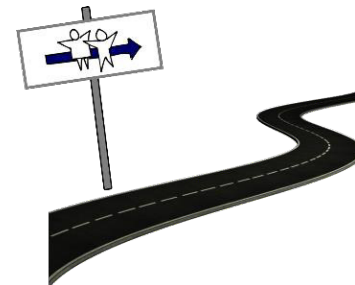
It can help you with changes in your life. If you feel worried or anxious, looking over your life story can help you to feel better.

It helps you have a say in your life and feel listened to.

It can help you plan for your future.

It can help you remember, as you grow older.

Your life story is an achievement.



Challenges – what can be hard?

Some memories may not make you feel good.

You may have lost someone dear to you. This is hard but doing a life story can help you keep special memories about the person.

It can be hard to remember things.

You may want to keep some parts of your life story secret.

Sometimes you cannot be bothered, that is okay. You do not need to do it every day, go at your own pace. If you are finding it difficult talk to the person who is helping you.



What can you use to do your life story?



Book

Scrapbook, folder or photo album



Memory Box

Keep special items all in one place



Tablet

Upload photos, videos and music



Talking photo album

Record yourself speaking about the photos



Talking tiles

Record speaking, sounds or music

You do not have to stick to one. Some people use a book and a box or a mix of different things.

You might want to do a photo collage or a poster as well. **It is up to you!**

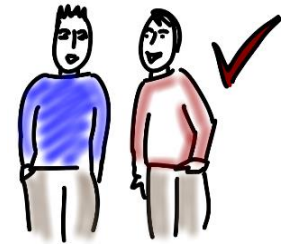
If you are using a tablet or iPad there are life story apps, you can use to help you. Have a look around and choose one that suits you.



How to use this booklet?

Fantastic, you have decided to work on your life story.

You have a family member or someone who knows you very well on board to do it with you.

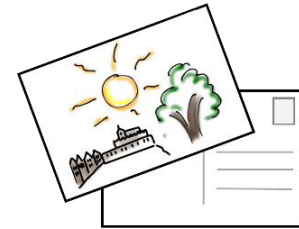


We have put together all of the handouts we used in our groups. These will help to guide you through life story work.

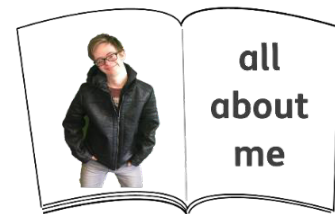


We suggest you start at the beginning and work your way through. If there are a few pages that do not matter to you, skip them.

Your life story is something you keep adding to so some pages might not matter now but will later on. For example, you might not have a favourite holiday now but as you go on more holidays, you may have one in the future.



At the end of the booklet, you will find some ideas of how to keep using your life story and adding to it.



Check them out!

First Steps



Decide on what you are using for your life story.
You can use a few things and add as you go along. You may start with a book and then decide later on you want a memory box as well.



Start looking through your photos

They can help you remember memories, events and things about you for your story.



It is a good idea to look out your photos and have them handy.

Spend some time talking to family and friends. Share memories and stories.

They can help you think about what is important to tell people about you.



Think about items that you have kept which have special memories.

We call these keepsakes. It could be a birthday card from someone dear to you, or tickets from your favourite concerts,



a pebble from your favourite beach or certificates of your achievements,

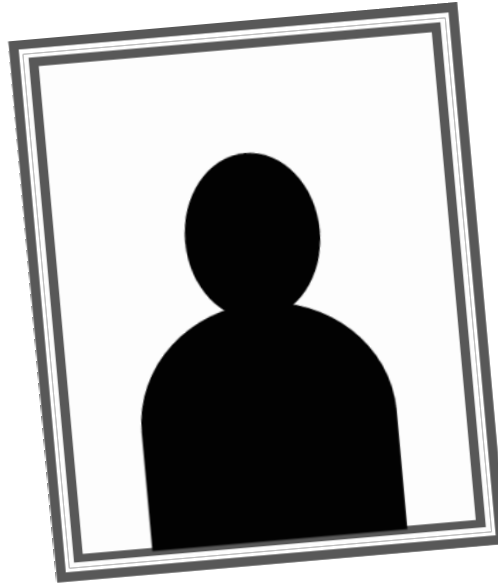
anything at all. Why not look them out. You might want them in your memory box.



My Life Story

Here is an idea on how to start. Use the pages we have provided or do your own thing in your scrapbook or tablet.

Photo of you



By



My name is



I was born on



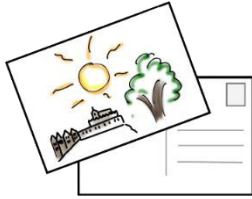
Baby photo

Copy of birth certificate if you want.

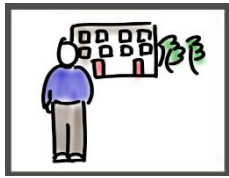


I live in

I've lived in



**A photo of the place you live in,
Postcards are great too.**



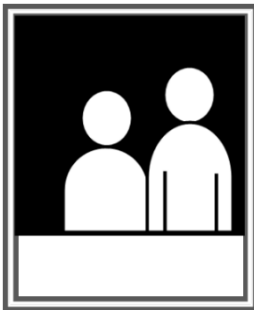
Add a photo of you and your house if you want.



This is me.

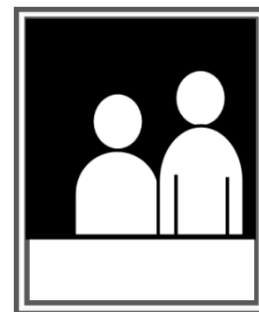
**Around 3 or 4 photos of you for starters.
You can add lots more all through your story.**

**Add more details about your photos.
Here are some ideas:**



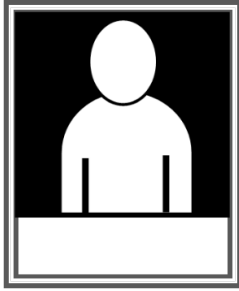
Mum and me. We were at

Here I am with



This is when I was

My Family and Friends



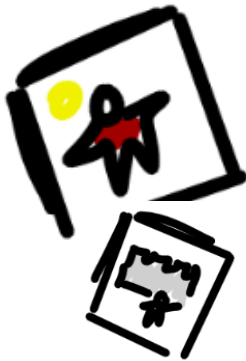
My Mum

Photo and name



My Dad

Photo and name



My brother and sister

My grandparents, any other family?

Photo and names as well



Best friends

Important people in my life



Photo and names

You can add more information if you want:

How long you have known them?

What things do you like doing together?

Growing Up



Part of your life story is about you growing from a baby, through your childhood and teenage years.



It is good to have photos or videos of this time along with family stories.

It really helps to do this together with a family member or someone who knows you very well.



Why not ask them what their favourite memory is of you growing up?

To help you, think about:



Good times with family
Friends
School or College
Family pets
Family holidays



When you were growing up were you in any clubs, teams, or sports, or did you have any favourite activities?

Are you proud of any certificates or medals you won when you were younger?



Take a photo and add them to your story.

Memories of a Special Person



Some memories are sad, especially of people who are no longer in your life.

It can help to think about the good times you had with this person.



Choose a photo (or a few) that you really like of the person and put it into your story. If you want, write a bit about them. For example, do you have a special memory of them to share?



You might want to put something that reminds you of the person into your memory box. It could be a framed photo or a small keepsake.



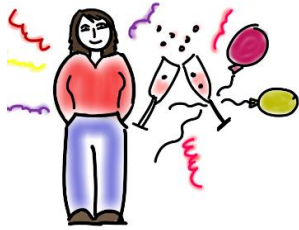
Sometimes, things happen in life that are not good memories. This might be difficult for you so it is okay to feel sad or angry.

Talk to a close family member, friend or support person about how you feel.

You do not have to put these memories into your life story. It is up to you.

My Special Birthdays

18[👑]



Or just a birthday you remember well and want in your story.

Add photos



Tell us about the photo and more about your birthday. Why was it so special? What did you do?



Write or use a talking photo album.

If you don't want to write use stickers instead, draw or cut out pictures from magazines.



Try putting together a birthday photo collage.

Have you kept any cards from your birthday? Why not put them into your memory box.

Special Events



Do you have any other special events you want to add to your life story?

It could be a wedding, family event or party.

It could be a concert or musical you went to. Perhaps you performed or acted in a show.



It could be any event that means a lot to you or has a special memory you want to keep.

Christmas



Photographs are a great way to think about good times you have had in the past.

Look back at photos of past Christmas get together.



Why not do this with family or friends. It also gives you the chance to share memories.

Choose a few photos for your life story.



Keepsake ornaments and decorations.

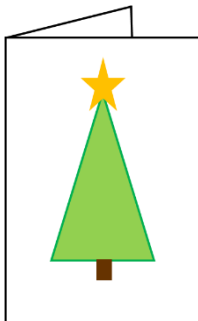
Families sometimes have Christmas ornament or decorations that have been passed down through the family.



Or you may have a few favourite decorations you use every year.

You may want one kept in your memory box or take a photo of it for your life story.

Christmas cards



Have you kept any Christmas cards from the past that can go in your box.

It can be a nice idea to keep a few especially if they are from special people in your life. If you don't do it already, think about it at your next Christmas.

Work and Volunteering



Do you have a job or have you worked in the past? Is it a job you really enjoy and want to talk about in your life story?



Are you a volunteer or have done volunteering work before?

Think about:



When and where?

The role and what tasks you do or did.

What you like or liked about it?

What do you get out of working, job or being a volunteer?



Add it to your story.

Do you have any photos of you working?

My Achievements



You've done your achievements when growing up, now think about your more recent achievements.

What have you done that makes you feel proud?



Some could be big and others small but they are still important to add to your life story.

Hobbies and Interests



Hobbies are things we like to do. These could be:



Sports



Music



Dance



Art

Drama

Theatre



Walking / Exercise class



Eating out



Pub



Shopping



Think about what you do in your spare time.

Here are some questions to help you.

What are your hobbies or interests?

How often do you do it?

Where?

What do you like about it?



What do you get out of your hobby?

This is all about what you like about it and how it makes you feel.



Do you have any photos of you doing your hobby?

Try putting a collage together. Use photos and pictures from a magazine.



Add your hobbies to your life story.



My Likes and Dislikes

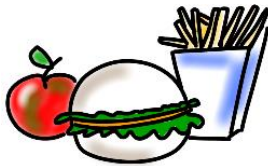
I like



I don't like



Food



Drinks

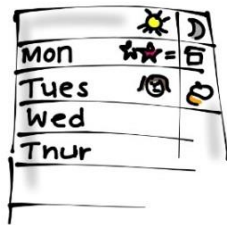


TV



Music





Anything Else to add to your list?

It can be things to do with your daily routine.

“I like to have my dinner at 6 p.m.”

“I like to visit my friend on Sundays for lunch.”



What about things that make you annoyed or affect how you feel?

You might not like crowds, loud noises or going out in the dark.



What is important to you for others to know?



I like



I don't like



Add your likes and dislikes to your life story.



A Few of my Favourite Things



Think about your favourite things. It could be a place you like to visit or something you do. It could be an object or part of your hobby.



It's good to talk more about why it is your favourite. It helps you to remember things but also helps people get to know you better.

To help you, here are some ideas to start with.



My favourite restaurant is _____

Because _____



My favourite time of year is _____

Because _____



Add more of your favourite things into your story. Use photos or pictures from a magazine. Do you have anything for your memory box?



Holidays

Think about your favourite holidays. Here are some questions to help you.

Where do you like to go on holiday?



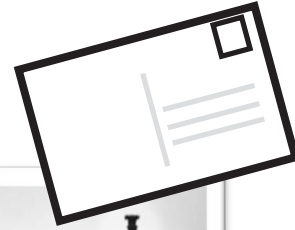
Beach and sun



Countryside



City break



Where do you like to stay?



How do you get there?



Who do you like to go with?



What kind of things do you like to do on holiday?

Holidays



Add favourite holidays to your life story.

Try doing a photo collage or use postcards.

Why not put something in your box that reminds you of your holidays.



My Favourite Holiday

Day trips

Do you like to go on day trips? This could be going somewhere new for the day or a favourite place you do not visit very often.



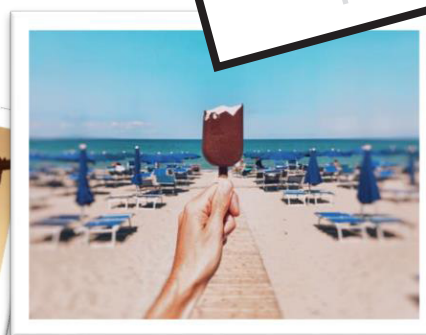
It could be an interest or hobby of yours that you have made into a day out.



Botanic gardens



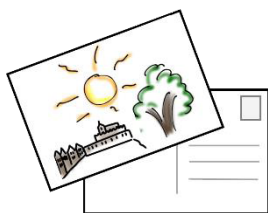
Theme park fun



A trip to the seaside



Think about your favourite day trips.



Where did you go and what did you like best about the day?



Add your favourite day trips into your life story. Make a list of **new** day trips you want to do.



The Holiday of My Dreams

Do you have a dream holiday? Somewhere you would like to go some day.

Is there a special reason why you want to go?
What do you want to do when there?
Add more details to your story.

My Dream Holiday



Try doing a large postcard of your dream holiday.
Look for photos on the internet.



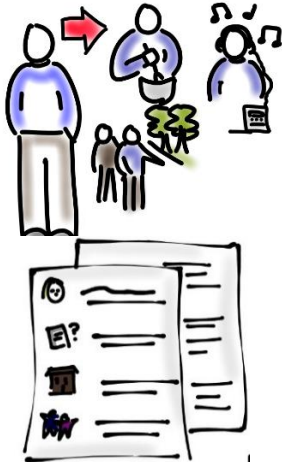
My Week



Think about what your normal week looks like. This could be work, regular activities or social outings you do every week.

It could be things that are part of your daily or weekly routine that are important to share.

This might be things like:



*Every Monday I do my food shopping with mum.
I go for a walk every day.*

You can do a list or fill in a timetable sheet. Remember, if your week changes a lot you will need to re-do your list or timetable.



What is important to me?




Think about what matters to you and the things you need and want in your life.



Try doing a collage of photos and pictures.

Old magazines are great for getting pictures.



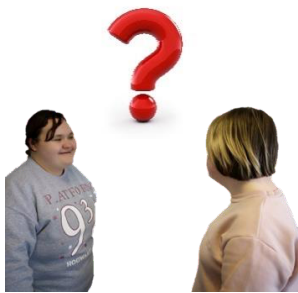
<p>My Week</p>	<p>Morning</p> 	<p>Afternoon</p> 	<p>Evening</p> 
<p>Monday</p>			
<p>Tuesday</p>			
<p>Wednesday</p>			
<p>Thursday</p>			
<p>Friday</p>			
<p>Saturday</p>			
<p>Sunday</p>			

My Perfect Day

	☀️	🌙
Mon	☀️	☀️
Tues	☀️	☀️
Wed	☀️	☀️
Thur		



Where would you be?



Who would be with you?

What would you be doing?



What would the weather be like?



What would you eat and drink?



What would you be wearing?

My Dreams for the Future



Do you have any hopes and dreams for your future? Our dreams are things we want to achieve or work towards in life.

They could be small or big dreams. They can also change as we grow older and we can have new ones to add at any time.



Add your dreams to your life story. You can do a list, drawings or cut out pictures from a magazine.



Bucket List

A bucket list is a number of experiences or achievements a person hopes to have or do in their life.



This can be anything at all. You may have already thought about some through your hobbies, holidays and dreams for your future.

Try putting together a bucket list for your story. Use the sheet over the page or make your own.



You can tick off when you do something or add more.

Having a bucket list helps you think about new things you want to do or try.



My Big Dream

Sometimes you have to break down your dream. The more you think about it, the more you realise there are other things about your dream that you can achieve.

To help, ask yourself:



Why you want to do it?
What do you like about it?
Why is it important to you?



Breaking down Derek's dream

My dream is to be a lifeguard.

I thought about it more and came up with this:

I want woman to chat me up. I want a girlfriend.

I want to be brave and popular.

I want to be a good swimmer and win medals.

I want to wear fancy swim gear and have muscles.

I want a paid job.

I want to work in a sports centre.



Live the dream – Derek’s plan

1. Join Dates ‘n’ Mates.
2. Swimming lessons.
3. Go to the gym.
4. Find out about jobs.
5. Speak to the local sports centre.
6. Try a new thing to do with swimming.



I found out I loved snorkelling!

My brother and I bought fancy swim shorts for holiday. We went snorkelling and had all of the gear.





Dreams for the Future



My Bucket List:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



Live the Dream



First Steps

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____









4. _____



Top Tips

To follow your dream.



	1. Dream it
	2. Why do you want to do it?
	3. Talk about it
	4. Who can help you?
	5. First step
	6. Work at it
	7. Enjoy it!
	8. Put it in your life story

My Life Story My Achievement



Well Done. You have reached the stage where you have a life story that you can use and keep working on. That's another achievement to add to your list.



It is now ready for new memories and experiences as you go through life.

Some of your life story may change over time. You may have new hobbies or ideas for your bucket list. Just add them in.



It's a good idea to keep spare polypockets in your folder or blank pages in your scrapbook.



If you are using a tablet or iPad, add new pages to 'The Book of You' ready to keep doing your story.



Top Tips

Here are more top tips to help you to keep adding to it.

Remember your life story is never finished!



Top Tips To keep going with your story

	<p>Keep a notebook handy or a large envelope/stud wallet.</p> <p>Jot a few notes down or put things into your envelope and sort out later into your story.</p>
	<p>Keep using your memory box. It's for new keepsakes and old.</p> <p>Every now and then, take time to look through it.</p>
	<p>Be organised;</p> <p>Keep a checklist of what's in your box. Group together cards, certificates etc.</p>
	<p>Label some items in your box with dates, names, places or why it's special to you.</p> <p>It helps you remember.</p>
	<p>Put extra photos in a small album and keep in your box.</p> <p>If you are using a tablet or iPad set up a life story album on it.</p>



Top Tips

To using your life story

	<p>Share your story with key people in your life such as support staff.</p> <p>This will help them get to know you better and find out what's important to you.</p>
	<p>Use your life story regularly with friends and family.</p>
	<p>Your life story can help you make plans. Every now and then, look through it and put together some action steps to work on.</p> <p>Check out your interests, dreams and bucket list for ideas to plan.</p>
	<p>A lot going on? Changes in your life?</p> <p>Your story can remind you of what you are good at, your gifts and all you can do.</p>

Using a Talking Tile

Here are some ideas for using a talking tile:

You can record a favourite memory or music.
You can ask a family member or friend

“What are my gifts?”
“What do you like about me?”

Record their answer.

Your gifts are what you give back to other people. These can be things like caring, brave, good listener, friendly. Your gifts are often what people like about you.

Or

You can talk about one of your achievements or something that makes you feel proud of yourself.




How to record on the talking tile:



Turn the tile upside down, and put on a flat surface.

- Push small black button to top. This is the on/off. You are moving it to On.
- Push the other black button to top. This is the rec/play. You are moving it to Rec.



Press down on the tile and the red light  will come. You will hear a 'beep' to show it is ready.

Move your mouth closer to tile.
Speak as clearly as you can.
The microphone is under the rec/play button.
Keep pressing the tile when you are talking.



To finish recording. Stop pressing down and you will hear another 'beep' to show it is finished.

To listen to the message

Push the small black button down. You are moving it to Play.

Turn tile over.

Push down on top of the tile once and let go.
To stop the playback push down and let go.



You can put a photo or picture on top of the tile under the clear Plastic cover.

Draw round the tile and cut it to get the same shape as the tile.

The University of Stirling

My life, My Future; Life Story Project was evaluated by the University of Stirling.

The university team used different ways of collecting information from people who took part in the project.

Everyone had a chance to say what they thought about life story work and the project. They could also talk about and show their own life story to university staff if they wanted to.

After collecting the information they needed, the university team wrote a report with suggestions for future work.

Dr Kate Mattheys (Research Fellow) carried out the evaluation overseen by Dr Karen Watchman, Senior Lecturer in Ageing, Frailty and Dementia, University of Stirling. The report is available from Down's Syndrome Scotland.



My Life, My Future, Life Story Project

Information for Family Members and Carers

What is life story work?

Life story work can help people who support your family member with Down's syndrome now and in the future, to know them better and give positive support taking into account their interests, hobbies, skills, dreams for the future and what is important to them. It is intended to be a fun activity to do together, giving you the opportunity to share memories and stories. It can give your son/daughter/sibling a sense of identity helping them to realise their gifts, talents, achievements, plans for the future and much more.

Life story work can be done in different formats. Participants on the project tried a range of different types of life story with all combining 2-3 types, which included using a life story box for items that could not be readily stored elsewhere. Other types used were scrapbook or folder, photo album (or talking photo album) and digital (Tablet or iPad). The project used Book of You but there are also life story apps you can use.

What are the possible benefits of life story work?

Life story work can help you all plan for the future. The compilation of a life story can be an empowering process, helping the person to feel valued and listened to and most importantly give them 'a voice' throughout their lives. Many parents/carers worry about what the future holds for their family member with Down's syndrome. Having a life story can not only ease challenging transitions and help the person come to terms with changes, but can also help provide a routine and have a calming effect as well as being crucial for any future support staff to 'know the person'.

Are there any risks?

Sometimes talking about things that have happened in the past can be upsetting, for example if a family member or friend has died. Life story work can help the healing process and give you the opportunity to talk about the feelings associated with a loss. It is important to encourage the person doing their life story to talk about the person who has died. Choosing favourite photos of the person and sharing a memory to go into the life story can help you remember the person and the time you spent with them.

At the beginning of the project, many families were concerned about re-visiting upsetting memories in their life stories of people who had died, yet by the end spoke of how helpful it had been to include these memories and to talk about both sad and happy memories of that person. If you need further information on supporting a person with Ds who is grieving, please contact DS Scotland.

First Step

Talk to your family member or long-term friend about doing their life story. Use the beginning of the booklet to help explain what life story work is. If your family member wants to go ahead, discuss together and decide the most appropriate format of life story work to use. Help the person think about their interests and what will be more manageable. For example, choosing to do a digital life story may be difficult for someone who struggles with digital skills.

Your role

You are supporting the person to create their life story but you are also contributing to memories, life events and experiences especially areas of the life story your son, daughter or sibling (or friend) cannot remember well but are still important to include in the story, as they are part of who they are. Remember, whilst doing the life story work with the person they should be the one to choose what to put in and how to present the information.

To start, it can feel like you are leading the process by initiating memories or telling your family member (or friend) of events that happened when they were much younger or cannot remember well. This should change when the person is more confident and knowledgeable.

Using the booklet

This booklet provides a guide through life story work. It contains all of the handouts used in the DSS life story groups. You can photocopy and fill them in for folders, cut bits out to stick into a scrapbook or just use as a guide for a digital story. If there are pages that are not relevant, just skip them. You can leave spaces or blank pages in the life story and add more later on.

The project also used a life story template, which helped some of our group members in doing their story. People with Down's syndrome will get a paper copy of the template along with the booklet. For further copies and for professionals/organisations, the template is available to download from our website. This is a good option if you want to print on coloured card and use in a folder.

Tips

Looking through old photos together may be rewarding, although it can be hard to decide which to put in. Photos you do not use put into a memory box or use extra photo albums.

It is worth keeping a pen and paper handy when looking through photos as it often triggers memories or ideas of people to ask about events.

If using a talking photo album or a tablet and recording voice it does not have to be the person whose life story it is doing the talking. They may want you or another person in their life to do it.

To start, set a regular time to work on the life story, doing it little and often, working at the participant's own pace, rather than trying to do too much at once.

A life story does not have to be perfect. The content is as much or little as the person wants. Some pages may be a photograph and short description whilst others may be much more.

The aim is to get the life story to a stage where the person can continue to add things to it as they happen in life. A life story is never complete or finished.

Guide to Life Story Work © Down's Syndrome Scotland

Pictures, symbols and Photos:

<https://icons-for-free.com>

<https://pexels.com>

<https://pixelbuddha.net>

Down's Syndrome Scotland

Drawings by Brenda Hepburn.



**For more information about this booklet or life story work
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If you are interested in supporting us please visit www.dsscotland.org.uk or give us a call today.



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