

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 001678
Date 09 November 2017

Foster Carers

Request:

I am conducting some research in the area about foster carers and the current need.

Could you please supply me with the following information?

1. Total number of children placed in Foster Care by City of Wolverhampton Council?

We can confirm that the current information in regards to Foster Care is being withheld under Section 22 – Information intended for future publication under the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 22 of the Act states that:

22 – Information intended for future publication

(1) Information is exempt information if-

- (a) The information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority of any other person, at some future date,
- (b) The information was already held with a view to such publication at the time when the request for information was made, and
- (c) It is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to.

As section 22 is a qualified exemption, we have considered the public interest test for and against disclosure. In favour of disclosure we have recognised that there is a strong public interest in openness and transparency with regards to the Freedom of Information legislation particularly in relation to an individual's right to know. We recognise that disclosure would provide reassurance that the City of Wolverhampton Council is processing the requests that it receives in a timely manner particularly as it would indicate how we are meeting our obligations as outlined in the provisions of the Act.

We do not consider however that it is in the public interest to place information into the public domain, prematurely, before pre-publication procedures have taken place.

The data will be available publicly soon when the national returns are published in full in December on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

2. Total number of children currently placed in foster care outside City of Wolverhampton Council boundaries?
As above.
3. Total number of children currently requiring a foster care placement?
As above.
4. Total number of children in foster care who have a SEND need or disability?
94 children out of our foster care cohort in 2016/17 had SEND or a disability.
5. Total number of children currently placed in a residential setting by City of Wolverhampton Council who require a foster care placement?
Your question for information has now been considered and the City of Wolverhampton Council is not obliged to supply the information you requested for the reasons set out below.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires City of Wolverhampton Council, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies:

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We can confirm that the Council holds information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows a public authority to refuse a request if the cost of providing the information to the applicant would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information.

The Regulations provide that the appropriate limit to be applied to requests received by local authorities is £450 (equivalent to 18 hours of work). In estimating the cost of complying with a request for information, an authority can only take into account any reasonable costs incurred in:

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

- (a) Determining whether it holds the information,*
 - (b) Locating the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
 - (c) Retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information,*
- and*
- (d) Extracting the information from a document containing it.*

For the purposes of the estimate the costs of performing these activities should be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

The information appertaining to your question is not easily accessible and as such this information is not held as a distinct set able to be retrieved or reported on. To get the information would require a full scale look into all individual records. This would be a manual exercise and as such we believe that the aggregated time it would take to collate the information would be in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450).

Excess cost removes the City of Wolverhampton Council's obligation under the Freedom of Information, however under Section 16 – (the duty to provide advice and assistance, the Council may be able to provide answers to the request, should you wish to submit a refined request.