

Request

This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. My request relates to age disputes for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) under the care of your local authority. Please note my request has five parts

- 1) For five years from 2018-2023, from 1 January 2018 or the nearest applicable date, till 1 April 2023, how many unaccompanied asylum seeking children have been in the care of your local authority
- 2) Of the UASCs under your care since 2018, how many have been subject to age disputes? By age disputes, I mean that the age of the claimant and therefore their status as a child is in doubt, and reference must be made to the detailed Assessing age guidance, as per [page 32](#) of this Government guidance
- 3) Between 1 January 2018 and 1 April 2023, what were the outcomes of the age dispute cases? By outcomes please can you provide the number of UASCs who were found to be under 18, and the number found to be over 18. For those over 18, please can you share what happened to them. For example, did the local authority track them and whether they ended up homeless, returned to their country of origin, or other outcomes?
- 4) Between 1 January 2018 and 1 April 2023, how many of the age dispute cases were subject to appeal and what was the outcome of each appeal?
- 5) Does the local authority keep track of UASCs who following an age dispute case were found to be over-18? Please provide a yes/no response. By keep track I mean does the LA continue to engage with the young person.

Response

(1) 63

(2 TO 4)

We do not hold the information that you have requested in an easily retrievable format. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) relieves a public authority from the obligation to comply with a request for information where the estimated time required to locate, review and extract the information exceeds a certain threshold set out in Regulations.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3244) set out the rules in relation to the cost limit (otherwise called the "appropriate limit"). These Regulations are published by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and are viewable on their web site from this link:

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/uksi_20043244_en.pdf

The Regulations set out the cost limit for Government departments and for other public authorities. For local government, Regulation 3 states that the cost limit is £450 and Regulation 4(4) states that the prescribed hourly rate is £25. Regulation 4(4) further provides that where the local authority estimates the time taken to gather the information would exceed this limit (which based on the prescribed hourly rate, equates to 18 officer hours), it may refuse the request under section 12 of FoIA.

I am satisfied the cost limit applies to your request and will explain why this is the case.

We cannot answer these questions without examining each of the individual cases over the five year period. We have estimated that this would take at least 20 minutes per case taking the task far above the 18 hour officer time stipulated in the Act.

(5) If over 18, then No.