

Request

We would like information on the percentage of children who were victims of child sexual exploitation offences who had a 'Child in Need' assessment undertaken, from January 2016 – December 2022.

For the purposes of this Freedom of Information request, child sexual exploitation offences are defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as amended by Section 68 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. This includes:

- Section 47 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Paying for sexual services of a child;
- Section 48 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Causing or inciting [sexual exploitation of a child];
- Section 49 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Controlling a child [in relation to sexual exploitation];
- Section 50 Sexual Offences Act 2003: Arranging or facilitating [sexual exploitation of a child].

'Children in Need' plans are defined by Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989.

We are looking to find out:

What was the percentage of children who were victims of child sexual exploitation offences who had a 'Child in Need' assessment undertaken, from January 2016 – December 2022.

Response

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.

For the timescale indicated in your request there were 37,109 completed Children and Families' assessments. Accounting for just a minimum of five minutes per case to gather the information would take far in excess of the 18 hours officer time stipulated in the act.