

Request

I write to request access to the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 1982.

1. Anonymised demographics of all staff currently employed in the following teams within children's services – special educational needs, inclusion, education improvement, virtual school and educational psychology (not exhaustive if LA has a different set up within its education teams) – please provide ages, gender and length of service of the employees
2. Retention rates for all staff with management / leadership responsibility in the above teams. How long have the post holders been in their posts and how many times has the post been recruited to in the last 5 years.
3. Any existing data or anonymised reports from exit reviews conducted with any staff leaving the teams mentioned above. If it not possible to provide anonymised copies, please provide a list of the reasons of all employees from exit interviews for the last 2 years.
4. Information relating to professional development programmes offered to employees within children's services.
5. Data / Results of any leadership questionnaires you have asked employees within children's services to complete within the last 2 years including workforce satisfaction surveys.
6. Details and / copies of any current staff retention policies / initiatives

Response

1. See attached spreadsheet
2. See attached spreadsheet
3. 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.

55 staff have left Education since 1st January 2021. We estimate from a sample test that each record (as they are held by different managers in different teams and there isn't a central report) would take approximately 20 minutes to find, redact and seek AD approval (all FOI submissions are approved by an Assistant Director). This would equate to approximately 18.5 hours just for this element of the FOI. However, as part of the sample the reasons given for exit were retirement, returning to a school environment, jobs closer to home and promotion opportunities in other organisations or local authorities.

4. See response to Question 6.

5. None completed

6. Children & Families

- Workforce Development strategies and plans – for example a Workforce Board and aligned programmes of work in Children's Services, with forming programmes of work that are supported by HR & OD to help approve retention.
- Children's services academy – to help grow and nurture new social workers for an additional year before offering an automatic permanent role within a mainstream social work team.
- Social Work Degree apprenticeship – growing our own talent across children services where existing staff secure a social work qualification and role and fill skills gaps.

- Exit interviews – enhanced 121 interviews in some key areas e.g., Children’s social workers, which to date have indicated that there is little we could have done to retain them (competing with the hours available in the private sector and high retirement numbers and for Social Workers high agency wages).
- Collaborative work with Greater Manchester colleagues – introduction of cap on agency rates.
- Social Work Forums – regular check ins with Social Work staff to build rapport and an informal support network as well as professional development from the Principal Social Worker.
- CPD opportunities – clear practice priorities and associated learning to complement corporate core learning offer. Learning available through a range of different ways including learning circles, e-learning, virtual and face to face events and regular staff briefings.