

Request

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information.

Can you please provide the number of children taken into care by the council where a central reason for the decision was the family's homelessness, in each of the last five financial years (2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23).

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.

The requested information is not recorded in a reportable format. 1062 children became looked after between April 18 – March 23. To find and retrieve the information requested would require a manual examination of each of these cases. Using just five* minutes as a minimum it would take over 88 hours – far in excess of the 18 hour officer time stipulated in the FOI Act.

**The estimate of five minutes per case is the minimum as it could take longer depending on how the case has progressed to obtain what the requestor is asking.*