



REQUEST 18841

Please provide the following information:

1. The total amount spent by the council on legal representation, expert witnesses, tribunal fees, settlements, and any other related costs associated with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) tribunal cases involving Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for each of the past five financial years (2020/21 to 2024/25).
2. Where available, please provide a breakdown by category:
 - Legal costs
 - Expert or specialist assessment costs
 - Internal staffing costs (if recorded separately)
 - Compensation or settlement payments

I would prefer the information to be provided in CSV or Excel format, or another open and machine-readable format.

RESPONSE

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 estimate that locating, retrieving and extracting the information you have requested would significantly exceed this limit. It would involve locating, retrieving and examining all SEND tribunal cases for each of the years requested and this would require extensive manual searches. Each file would require at least 15 minutes of work and there are in excess of two hundred files.