

4 August 2020  
Our ref: 6412852

Thank you for your request received on 3 July 2020, for the following information:

**1. Please could you a) provide a statement of the overarching approach that you have taken to utilising the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 and b) confirm who signed this off within both the local authority and any providers that you commission to run children's social care services?**

**2. With reference to the need to record any use of the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 as well as the 'reasons for doing so' and 'local circumstances that have given arise to the need to use the flexibilities' ' as set out in the Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services as per 6 May 2020 ' please confirm how many of each specific flexibility has been utilised in total and in each month since the regulations came into force, and summarise the reasons and local circumstances which made the use of each type of flexibility necessary?**

**In your answer, please include both the specific regulation that has been utilised and a description of the flexibility (it may be helpful to make reference to the Children's Commissioner for England's summary of each of the regulations), and, as far as possible, present the information as per the following table:**

Regulation	Description of flexibility	Total number of uses	Number of uses in May	Number of uses in June	Summary of reasons and local circumstances
Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 23	An emergency placement with an approved foster carer can now last 24 weeks, rather than 6 days, even if that foster carer is eg not approved to look after that many children	XX XX XX			E.g. Shortage of foster carers and inability to recruit more

**3. What information relating to your use of the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 has been a) requested by or b) provided to Ofsted, and what, if any, further action are you aware of Ofsted taking in response?**

**I would appreciate it if you could provide the answers to questions 1 and 3 in the form of a document, and the answer to question 2 in the form of a spreadsheet.**

If it is not possible to provide the information requested due to the information exceeding the cost of compliance limits identified in Section 12, please provide advice and assistance, under the Section 16 obligations of the Act, as to how I can refine my request.

If you can identify any ways that my request could be refined I would be grateful for any further advice and assistance.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me via email and I will be very happy to clarify what I am asking for and discuss the request.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response

We have processed this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **Response**

The council holds the information requested and the answers to your questions are below

***1. Please could you a) provide a statement of the overarching approach that you have taken to utilising the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 and b) confirm who signed this off within both the local authority and any providers that you commission to run children's social care services?***

Please see attached our P1 Policy which covers the changes we have made to service delivery based on the revised regulations

***2. With reference to the need to record any use of the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 as well as the 'reasons for doing so' and 'local circumstances that have given arise to the need to use the flexibilities' ' as set out in the Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for children's social care services as per 6 May 2020 ' please confirm how many of each specific flexibility has been utilised in total and in each month since the regulations came into force, and summarise the reasons and local circumstances which made the use of each type of flexibility necessary?***

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Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulation 23	An emergency placement with an approved foster carer can now last 24 weeks, rather than 6 days, even if that foster carer is eg not approved to look after that many children	6	1	5	Emergency placement
Fostering Services	Flexibility of quorate membership, to include one other independent person	2	1	1	Fostering Panel continues to be held monthly and conducted virtually, consisting of the Chair and minute take / coordinator, and one independent person, one Health advisor, one social worker one independent panel advisor and one observer
Fostering Services	Flexibility around timescales and medical checks for prospective foster carers	2	1	1	Throughout COVID-19 we have continued to assess and approve foster carers across our May and June panels. We have requested applicants to complete a self-declaration which is commented on by the medical advisor in panel.
Fostering Services	Assessment of prospective foster parent	2	1	1	During May and June, we have increased our references per applicant to  2 family members and 2 friends to

					ensure holistic and thorough assessment.
Care Planning, Placement & Case Review	Frequency of visits and visits to be conducted by telephone, video-line or other electronic means	632	315	317	During May and June the majority of visits made to children were indirect and completed via Skype, whatsapp, facetime and zoom within statutory timescales.

***3. What information relating to your use of the legislative flexibilities provided by the The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 has been a) requested by or b) provided to Ofsted, and what, if any, further action are you aware of Ofsted taking in response?***

a) Ofsted have not requested anything and b) we have not provided any formal information to Ofsted.

### **Further information**

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

### **Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing**

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

**For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.**

### **Your rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information

Management Team at: [foi@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:foi@barnet.gov.uk). Or by post to Information Management Team (FOI) London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)). There is no charge for making an appeal.