

London Borough of Barnet,
2 Bristol Avenue,
Colindale,
London NW9 4EW

24 November 2021

Our ref: 7782484

Thank you for your request received on 27 October 2021, for the following information:

FOI 1

Under Freedom of information I would like to know the following information.

- 1. Is there any connection between childhood experiences and future parenting abilities. Can you supply evidence to back up your response.**
- 2. Do professionals like Cafcass, Guardian ad litem, Psychologists etc have access to child social services paperwork prior to doing their assessments? If so what type of information is shared and is this only in child social services vs parents or also in custody disputes?**
- 3. Do child social services share paperwork, even historical with other child social services areas for example from Coventry to South Yorkshire and if so under what circumstances?**
- 4. How often is misinformation passed between different child social services areas and what can the person that misinformation pertains to do about it?**

FOI 2

Under the freedom of information act I would like to know the following.

- 1. What is the council's position on Victim blaming and does the council believe that it is down to the victim to stop their abusive partner from abusing them?**
- 2. How often does child social services get involved with families where at least one parent was known to child social services during their childhood? Can you explain why this happens. Do the percentages change if the parent was once a looked after child?**
- 3. How often is previous family court paperwork used again at a future point against either the original parents in the case or the children in the case?**
- 4. How many times does a parent need to pass a parenting assessment before they are no longer required to take part in a parenting assessment? Is this subjective to new allegations?**

If you can not supply exact numbers for the 'how often' questions can you hazard a guess or a percentage or give the council's opinion regarding the questions please.

FOI 3

I would like to know the following information under the freedom of information act.

- 1. How often does child social services victim blame a domestic abuse victim / survivor?**
- 2. How long do you need to be separated or divorced from a domestic abuse perpetrator before child social services accept that you have nothing to do with your abuser? Accept you are a separate entity.**
- 3. How often do child social services help a domestic abuse victim, how long does it take for them to help and how long does that help continue for?**
- 4. Does the council or child social services believe there is a connection between domestic abuse/ violence and the victim suffering from Stockholm syndrome? Has the council or social services done any studies to prove or disprove this theory?**

FOI 4

Under the freedom of information act I would like to know the following information, if you hold it, for a couple of research projects I am working on.

- 1. What is the burden of proof in child abuse cases? are there any specific guidelines that need to be followed or is this worked on probability of the reporters beliefs?**
- 2. Do child social services follow the same guidelines or process when investigating child abuse when the child is in the care of the local authority as it does when a child is still living with their parent/s?**
- 3. How many complaints have been raised each year since 2010 in regards to Cafcass or other child experts such as psychologists, psychiatrists. This can be either calendar or financial year, whichever you use for statistics.**
- 4. Do child social services do background checks on the experts they use in cases such as criminal convictions, credentials etc.**

FOI 5

- 1. Does child social services report domestic abusers to the local police? If not, is there a reason for this?**
- 2. Does child social services warn new partners of abusers that they have a record of domestic abuse to help prevent further cases of abuse? If not, is this an area they are considering?**
- 3. Does child social services explain previous social services involvement to new partners? If not, is this an area they are considering?**

4. Does child social services share information about someone with their ex-partner if requested for a custody dispute case? for example will they share historic information about the mum/dad from when they were children with the other person? If so, under what circumstances?

5. What do child social services view as breaking confidentiality in regards to information they hold and give out? How often has this happened since 2010 per calendar or financial year if statistics are available.

6. How often do child social services put adults / children at risk of abuse by not informing / sharing information about the conduct of a new partner? For example a person is well known to child social services in any area of abuse and they do not inform or share information that could protect an innocent person who starts a relationship with the abuser? If there are any reports or statistics since 2010 on this per calendar or financial year this would be helpful. If there is no evidence of this it will also be helpful.

7. How often if at all are parental family court proceedings used against the child/ren of that case later on in life? Statistics / reports from 2010 per calendar / financial year appreciated.

8. How often do Cafcass, psychologists, psychiatrists or other professionals rubber stamp / validate child social services concerns even when there is evidence to the contrary? Again any reports or statistics from 2010 are appreciated.

9. How many sexual abuse claims end up being or not being investigated by child social services? reports or statistics from 2010 by calendar or financial year.

10. How often does child social services get involved with someone over allegations regardless of previous positive involvement? for example a parent has passed multiple assessments but new allegations are made by either the same person or family of the same person. Does there come a time when child social services look at this as harassment and stop investigating. Any reports, rules etc on this would be helpful.

Any statistics, reports, legislation, rules, protocols etc. to validate or reject these questions are welcome

FOI 6

Under the freedom of information act I would like to know the following information as it is not readily available online but there is a lot of misinformation and possible fake information and I am interested in facts for my research. Being able to follow the information to conclusion rather than accept conspiracy theories or fake facts.

The hope is to dispel misinformation from my research projects.

1. Are child social services biased against domestic abuse victims/ survivors when their name is mentioned at a future date? do child social services accept that people can change once away from the abuse?

2. Is there any evidence, reports or statistics in regards to how many victims of child/domestic abuse end up committing suicide due to victim-blaming / shaming, or re-victimisation by child social services, Cafcass or ex-partners allegations? information, statistics from per year from 2010 either calendar or

financial year is acceptable. If there is no evidence, reports etc is this an area child social services or any other governmental body are looking into?

3. Do child social services investigate serial complainers for harassment? For example the same person or family continually call child social services raising concerns over a particular child/ren or family?

4. Since 2010 how many times have child social services threatened someone with a gagging order and how many times have they actually gone to court to obtain a gagging order against an individual, family or company? these statistics would be per calendar or financial year.

5. Since 2010 how many anonymous complaints / allegations of abuse have child social services investigated per year by either calendar or financial year?

6. Since 2010 how many children have been removed from their homes where child social services have used parental mental health as a reason. These statistics if available can be per calendar or financial year.

7. How do child social services or Cafcass determine which parent a child loves the most for any family court cases. Is there any paperwork, evidence, reports to prove or disprove this question.

8. What is child social services standing on the effects of being a single child as apposed to living in a household with another child no matter if that child is related or not? Do they even have an opinion on this subject? Is there any reports or documentation to prove or disprove which is better for the child?

9. How often if at all do child social services ignore or use a previous family court judgment against the parent in future involvement? Does this only happen when the family court have ruled someone is guilty of an incident or does it also happen when someone is found innocent in family court?

10. Under what circumstance (if this happens) do child social services admit sharing or stating misinformation about a parent and what can the parent do to ensure this does not happen again in the future?

Any statistics held from 2010-now for any of these questions would be lovely. If statistics do not go back 10 years then going back as far as records allow below 10 years is acceptable.

Any accredited reports, etc that would help answer these questions would also be very helpful.

The internet has a lot of information but working out which information is accurate and which is based on biased belief systems is difficult.

Any questions that can not be answered for whatever reason can you let me know if they are an area of interest.

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

Response

I can confirm that the council holds the information you requested. However we are withholding the information because we consider that the following exemption exemptions and exceptions apply to it.

FOI 1

1. is there any connection between childhood experiences and future parenting abilities. Can you supply evidence to back up your response.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. This question is outside the FOI Act 2000 as it is asking for opinion. We do not have to answer a question if this means creating new information or giving an opinion or judgement that is not already recorded.

2. Do professionals like Cafcass, Guardian ad litem, Psychologists etc have access to child social services paperwork prior to doing their assessments? If so what type of information is shared and is this only in child social services vs parents or also in custody disputes?

Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you by other means.

The information relevant to your request is published online at the following links:

[Parents and carers - Cafcass - Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service](#)

[PART 25 - EXPERTS AND ASSESSORS \(justice.gov.uk\)](#)

3. Do child social services share paperwork, even historical with other child social services areas for example from Coventry to South Yorkshire and if so under what circumstances?

Yes. When requested or when a child transfers from one authority to another.

4. How often is misinformation passed between different child social services areas and what can the person that misinformation pertains to do about it?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

If an individual becomes aware of misinformation being passed between departments they can complain or contact the service directly responsible and ask for their record(s) to be amended or make a formal statutory Data Subject Rights available under the Data Protection Act 2018 to data.protection@barnet.gov.uk for their information to be corrected.

FOI 2

1. What is the council's position on Victim blaming and does the council believe that it is down to the victim to stop their abusive partner from abusing them?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. This question is outside the FOI Act 2000 as it is asking for opinion. We do not have to answer a question if this means creating new information or giving an opinion or judgement that is not already recorded.

2. How often does child social services get involved with families where at least one parent was known to child social services during their childhood? Can you explain why this happens. Do the percentages change if the parent was once a looked after child?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

3. *How often is previous family court paperwork used again at a future point against either the original parents in the case or the children in the case?*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

4. *How many times does a parent need to pass a parenting assessment before they are no longer required to take part in a parenting assessment? Is this subjective to new allegations? If you can not supply exact numbers for the 'how often' questions can you hazard a guess or a percentage or give the council's opinion regarding the questions please.*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

FOI 3

1. *How often does child social services victim blame a domestic abuse victim / survivor?*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. This question is outside the FOI Act 2000 as it is asking for opinion. We do not have to answer a question if this means creating new information or giving an opinion or judgement that is not already recorded.

2. *How long do you need to be separated or divorced from a domestic abuse perpetrator before child social services accept that you have nothing to do with your abuser? Accept you are a separate entity.*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

3. *How often do child social services help a domestic abuse victim, how long does it take for them to help and how long does that help continue for?*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

4. *Does the council or child social services believe there is a connection between domestic abuse/ violence and the victim suffering from Stockholm syndrome?*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

4b *Has the council or social services done any studies to prove or disprove this theory?*

No.

FOI 4

1. *What is the burden of proof in child abuse cases? are there any specific guidelines that need to be followed or is this worked on probability of the reporters beliefs?*

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

2. Do child social services follow the same guidelines or process when investigating child abuse when the child is in the care of the local authority as it does when a child is still living with their parent/s?

Yes.

3. How many complaints have been raised each year since 2010 in regards to Cafcass or other child experts such as psychologists, psychiatrists. This can be either calendar or financial year, whichever you use for statistics.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. CAFCASS and expert witnesses do not fall under the local authority complaints procedures.

4. Do child social services do background checks on the experts they use in cases such as criminal convictions, credentials etc.

Yes. We do not carry out checks on their background this is subject to their registration with professional bodies

5. Does the family court use the same judge throughout cases in family court or can the judge change during cases? Are there any statistics on this for each year since 2010 in either calendar or financial period?

6. Are there any statistics for non return of children by non-residential parent to residential parent for each year since 2010 by either calendar or financial year? if so, are these statistics separated by male / female parent not returning child from contact?

7. Does the gender of the parent making a custody application have any bearing on the outcome of the custody dispute? Is there any statistics or evidence to back this up? Again since 2010 by either calendar or financial year.

8. Does the distance or interim decision in custody disputes affect the outcome of the case? Again if there are any statistics on this please use statistics since 2010 per calendar or financial year.

For Q5-Q8, The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you by other means.

You may wish to make an information request direct to the Family Court [Freedom of Information | Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#)

9. How many allegations made to child social services are upheld without a full investigation or professional proof? How many are immediately investigated. Any statistics from 2010 by calendar or financial year are appreciated.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way. We do hold information on how many allegations made to child social services are upheld.

10. How often, if at all do child social services close a case without investigating? statistics if available since 2010 by calendar or financial year.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

11. At what age should an adult explain death to a child and under what circumstances would this be deemed appropriate? Any reports of evidence of this would be lovely.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

12. If a male has a pattern of behaviour of becoming involved with single mum's with children or moving in with a female with children within 3 months of first meeting her would child social services regard this as a risk factor? If so, how and are there any reports or documents to back this up?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. Full details would be required to make any informed decisions.

FOI 5

1. Does child social services report domestic abusers to the local police? If not, is there a reason for this?

Yes. We take a Multi agency approach in assessing domestic abuse.

2. Does child social services warn new partners of abusers that they have a record of domestic abuse to help prevent further cases of abuse? If not, is this an area they are considering?

Under section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to you by other means.

The information relevant to your request is published online at the following link:

[Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612212/Domestic_Violence_Disclosure_Scheme_factsheet.pdf)

3. Does child social services explain previous social services involvement to new partners? If not, is this an area they are considering?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as this depends on individual circumstances of a case.

4. Does child social services share information about someone with their ex-partner if requested for a custody dispute case? for example will they share historic information about the mum/dad from when they were children with the other person? If so, under what circumstances?

No. The General Data Protection Regulation requires consent for personal information to be shared, unless it is Court ordered or required by CAFCASS.

5. What do child social services view as breaking confidentiality in regards to information they hold and give out? How often has this happened since 2010 per calendar or financial year if statistics are available.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information. We do hold numbers of data breach complaints/ investigations under the Data Protection Act 2018.

6. How often do child social services put adults / children at risk of abuse by not informing / sharing information about the conduct of a new partner? For example a person is well known to child social services in any area of abuse and they do not inform or share information that could protect an innocent person who starts a relationship with the abuser? If there are any reports or statistics since 2010 on this per calendar or financial year this would be helpful. If there is no evidence of this it will also be helpful.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

7. How often if at all are parental family court proceedings used against the child/ren of that case later on in life? Statistics / reports from 2010 per calendar / financial year appreciated.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

8. How often do Cafcass, psychologists, psychiatrists or other professionals rubber stamp / validate child social services concerns even when there is evidence to the contrary? Again any reports or statistics from 2010 are appreciated.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

9. How many sexual abuse claims end up being or not being investigated by child social services? reports or statistics from 2010 by calendar or financial year.

All allegations made to Children's services are investigated. See Refusal Notice exceeds costs limit.

10. How often does child social services get involved with someone over allegations regardless of previous positive involvement? for example a parent has passed multiple assessments but new allegations are made by either the same person or family of the same person. Does there come a time when child social services look at this as harassment and stop investigating. Any reports, rules etc on this would be helpful.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

FOI 6

1. Are child social services biased against domestic abuse victims/ survivors when their name is mentioned at a future date? do child social services accept that people can change once away from the abuse?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

2. Is there any evidence, reports or statistics in regards to how many victims of child/domestic abuse end up committing suicide due to victim-blaming / shaming, or re-victimisation by child social services, Cafcass or ex-partners allegations? information, statistics from per year from 2010 either calendar or financial year is acceptable. If there is no evidence, reports etc is this an area child social services or any other governmental body are looking into?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

3. Do child social services investigate serial complainers for harassment? For example the same person or family continually call child social services raising concerns over a particular child/ren or family?

No, harassment is a matter for the police to investigate. Vexatious policy may be implemented..

4. Since 2010 how many times have child social services threatened someone with a gagging order and how many times have they actually gone to court to obtain a gagging order against an individual, family or company? these statistics would be per calendar or financial year

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

5. Since 2010 how many anonymous complaints / allegations of abuse have child social services investigated per year by either calendar or financial year?

4 corporate complaints recorded since 2011.

From our preliminary assessment, we estimate that compliance with this request would exceed the appropriate costs limit under section 12 of the Freedom of information Act 2000

This is currently £450 or 18 hours of officer time.

6. Since 2010 how many children have been removed from their homes where child social services have used parental mental health as a reason. These statistics if available can be per calendar or financial year.

If a parent was unable to care for a child due to hospitalisation the child may need to come into care.

From our preliminary assessment, we estimate that compliance with this request would exceed the appropriate costs limit under section 12 of the Freedom of information Act 2000

This is currently £450 or 18 hours of officer time. See Refusal Notice.

7. How do child social services or Cafcass determine which parent a child loves the most for any family court cases. Is there any paperwork, evidence, reports to prove or disprove this question.

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

8. What is child social services standing on the effects of being a single child as apposed to living in a household with another child no matter if that child is related or not? Do they even have an opinion on this subject? Is there any reports or documentation to prove or disprove which is better for the child?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

9. How often if at all do child social services ignore or use a previous family court judgment against the parent in future involvement? Does this only happen when the family court have ruled someone is guilty of an incident or does it also happen when someone is found innocent in family court?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information.

10. Under what circumstance (if this happens) do child social services admit sharing or stating misinformation about a parent and what can the parent do to ensure this does not happen again in the future?

The London Borough of Barnet does not hold this information as we do not collect information in this way.

S12 - Cost limit (Exceeds Appropriate Limit)

We are refusing your request under section 12 because we estimate that compliance with your request will exceed the "appropriate limit" under section 12. The appropriate limit is £450 which is equivalent to 18 hours at £25 per hour. The per hour figure is set by Regulation rather than actual salary paid to any officers handling requests. The appropriate limit includes the time it will take the council to discover if it holds the information requested, to locate it, extract it and collate it as well as putting it into any particular format requested by the requester.

We have calculated that for FOI6 it will take approx 375 hours to comply with your request. Our calculation is as follows:

FOI Q5 around 750 S47 enquiries per year would need to be checked, 10 minutes per enquiry = 125 hours

FOI Q6 around 3,000 Referrals per year would need to be checked, 5 minutes per referral = 250 hours

Advice and Assistance

Unfortunately we are unable to suggest a way of narrowing the request to bring it under 18 hours/cost limit

Further information

By means of advice and assistance, freedom of information requests are for access to information that Barnet Council holds. Some of these questions are asking for opinions rather than facts, which is why we do not hold the 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

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. Or by post to Records & Information Management Service, Assurance Group, 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). There is no charge for making an appeal.