

Freedom of Information – Response – 26612

For each year of the last five years, I would like to know:

- 1) The number of child safeguarding referrals that were made in relation to a child under the age of 18 taking or being prescribed (or suspected of taking or being prescribed) puberty blocking medication or cross-sex hormones*
- 2) The number of multi-agency assessments under Section 17 Children Act 1989 that were carried out in relation to a child under the age of 18 taking or being prescribed (or suspected of taking or being prescribed) puberty blocking medication or cross-sex hormones*
- 3) The number of assessments in (2) that ended in a) no further action b) a 'Child in Need' plan being drawn up c) a section 47 investigation being initiated*
- 4) The number of section 47 investigations in 3)(c) that ended with a 'child protection plan' being drawn up.*

We can confirm that Suffolk County Council (SCC) holds this information; however, it is exempt from disclosure under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). Whilst this information is held, it is held against each individual's file, so it is not recorded centrally or in a format that allows SCC to extract and provide the information quickly.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for local government is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending two and a half working days in determining whether the Council holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Therefore, this level of detail is not recorded within our reporting and would involve a manual trawl to retrieve and determine whether puberty blockers were a factor in the assessment and/or referral.

Since 1st January 2021- 25th November 2025, SCC has completed 31,533 Social Work Assessments and more than 27,143 MASH Referrals + Non-MASH Referrals.

We have carried out a sampling exercise to find out a reasonable estimate for how long it would take to locate and extract the information requested.

The process that would need to be carried out and the time each step would take is as follows:

1. Run a report from our social care case management system (LCS) to identify children for whom a Referral or Social Work Assessment was completed during the period requested – 5 minutes.
2. Search for each individual child's file in LCS – 30 seconds per record
3. Search Case Notes and Forms to identify if puberty blockers/gender affirming care are recorded as a reason for the S47 – 5 minutes per record
4. Total time to locate and extract the information for one individual – 5 minutes 30 seconds (5 minutes 30 seconds x 31,533/60 = 2,627 hours)

Therefore, based upon our sampling exercise SCC estimates that it will take us in excess of 2,627 hours to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request making the total cost estimate of 2,627 hours x £25 = £65,675

Advice and Assistance

Whilst we cannot provide you with what you have requested, if you can reword your request to only include the referrals made where sex is different to the recorded gender then we may be able to provide you with some information.

There were 126 referrals made during the time period requested where sex is different to the recorded gender. These potentially could be safeguarding referrals where puberty blocking medication or cross-sex hormones are mentioned.

Please let us know if you would like us to provide this information.

