

## **Freedom of Information – Response – 26807**

*Children’s Social Care, Family Court Practice and SEND Adjustments*

### **A. Workforce, Caseload and Capacity:**

1. *The total number of qualified children’s social workers employed by the authority as of the most recent reporting date (including permanent and agency staff) –*
2. *The average caseload per social worker in:*
  - (a) *Child in Need teams*
  - (b) *Child Protection teams*
  - (c) *Court / Legal / Public Law teams*
  - (d) *Any team responsible for assessments feeding into family court proceedings (including Section 7 reports, where applicable)*
3. *The highest and lowest caseload held by any individual social worker in the last 12 months.*
4. *The number of vacant social worker posts in the last 12 months, broken down by quarter*
5. *The proportion of cases handled by agency workers in the last 12 months*
6. *Whether the authority operates any formal or informal “maximum safe caseload” policy, and if so, a copy of that policy*

### **B. Performance Targets and Metrics:**

7. *Any internal performance targets, KPIs, or benchmarks applied to children’s social care teams relating to:*
  - *Timeliness of assessments*
  - *Case duration*
  - *Court-related work*
  - *Case closures*
  - *Reduction of backlog*
8. *Confirmation as to whether any financial, managerial, or performance consequences are linked to meeting or failing these targets.*
9. *Any internal documents, guidance, or policies describing how performance is measured for social workers involved in court proceedings*

### **C. Court-Related Work (Section 7 / Assessments / Evidence)**

10. *Confirmation as to whether your authority produces Section 7 reports in private law proceedings. If not, please state which body does.*
11. *Where your authority does prepare court reports or assessments:*
  - *Copies of any templates used (e.g. Social Work Evidence Template or equivalent).*
  - *Any internal guidance on report writing, evidence standards, or decision-making in family court cases.*

12. The number of Section 7 (or equivalent) reports produced by your authority in:

- 2022
- 2023
- 2024

13. How many of these reports were completed within court-ordered timescales.

14. How many were completed late, and the average delay.

#### **D. Training and Competence**

##### **Workforce Development**

15. Details of mandatory training completed by children's social workers in the last 12 months on: • Domestic abuse and coercive control • Practice Direction 12J (Domestic Abuse in Child Arrangements) • Parental alienating behaviours / family conflict dynamics • Disability and SEND reasonable adjustments for parents • Equality and non-discrimination in decision-making

16. The percentage of relevant staff who have completed each of the above trainings.

17. Whether refresher training is required and, if so, how often.

#### **E. Equality, SEND and Reasonable Adjustments**

18. Your authority's policy on making reasonable adjustments for parents with SEND involved in children's social care or family court processes.

19. How the authority records when reasonable adjustments have been requested and/or provided.

20. In the last 12 months, the number of complaints made by parents alleging a failure to make reasonable adjustments in children's social care involvement.

21. Of those complaints:

- How many were upheld?
- How many were partially upheld?
- How many were rejected?

#### **F. Complaints and Accountability**

22. The number of formal complaints received about children's social care practice in the last 12 months.

23. A breakdown of these complaints into:

- Stage 1
- Stage 2
- Stage 3

24. How many complaints were upheld at each stage.

25. Anonymised summaries of any complaints in the last 12 months relating to:

- Alleged bias against fathers / non-resident parents
- Failures in court reports
- Failure to make reasonable adjustments
- Delays impacting family contact

#### **G. Governance, Audits and External Scrutiny**

26. Your most recent Ofsted inspection outcome for children's social care.

27. Any internal audit reports from the last 24 months relating to:

- Quality of assessments

- *Court-related work*
- *Equality and SEND adjustments*
- *Case recording standards*

28. *Confirmation of whether your authority has implemented any improvement plans following Ofsted, audit, or Ombudsman findings, and copies where relevant.*

#### ***H. Systemic Risk and Defensive Practice***

29. *Any internal guidance on “risk management” or “defensive practice” in children’s social care decision-making.*

30. *Whether your authority has ever reviewed whether workload or performance pressures have affected decision-making quality in family court-related work.*

31. *If such a review exists, a copy of that document.*

We can confirm that Suffolk County Council holds this information; however, it is exempt from disclosure under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act).

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.

We estimate that it will take us in excess of 18 hours to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request making the total cost estimate of 18 hours x £25 = £450.

#### Advice and assistance

Whilst SCC cannot provide information all of the information requested if you are happy to narrow down your request to the following questions then we may be able to provide you with some information.:

Questions 1 -11 - 26 -31