

## **Freedom of Information – Response – 27205**

*I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to your authority's children's placements, placement sufficiency, use of unregistered provision, and workforce supply into any in-house residential children's homes operated by the authority.*

*This request concerns policy, resourcing, performance, decision-making and procurement within children's social care and does not seek personal data.*

*This information is sought in the public interest to ensure transparency and accountability in the delivery of statutory duties to looked-after children, children in need of care and support, and care leavers — and to inform market engagement by commissioning, placement and workforce providers seeking to address identified sufficiency and staffing gaps.*

*Where data is held against a financial year, please provide figures for the most recent three complete financial years (2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25) and the current year to date. Where monthly snapshots are held, please provide the most recent 12-month period.*

### *\*1. Placement Numbers by Category\**

*1.1 For each of the following placement types, please provide the number of children/young people placed as at the most recent available snapshot date, and confirm the snapshot date used:*

- *Ofsted-registered children's homes (under 18s)*
- *Ofsted-registered supported accommodation (16–17 year olds, post-April 2023 regulation)*
- *Unregistered provision — children under 18 placed in settings that are not Ofsted-registered (including any placement not registered with Ofsted as a children's home or as regulated supported accommodation at the time of placement, and including emergency/short-notice placements)*
- *Unregulated supported accommodation — care leavers aged 18+ not subject to Ofsted registration*
- *Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements*
- *In-house foster placements*
- *Residential schools / 52-week placements*
- *Secure children's homes / secure welfare*
- *Out-of-area placements (placed 20+ miles from home address, or outside the LA boundary — please state which definition applies)*

1.2 Please provide the equivalent figures for each of the following years, where held:

- 2022/23
- 2023/24
- 2024/25
- 2025/26 (year to date)

*\*2. Unregistered Placements – Detail\**

*For children under 18 placed in unregistered provision at any point during the last 12 months, please provide:*

- 2.1 The total number of such placements made.*
- 2.2 The average duration of those placements (in days).*
- 2.3 The longest single placement duration (in days).*
- 2.4 The number of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) or High Court inherent jurisdiction authorisations associated with such placements.*
- 2.5 The average weekly cost paid to unregistered providers, and the highest single weekly cost.*
- 2.6 The number of Ofsted and/or DfE notifications made by the authority regarding use of unregistered provision.*

*\*3. Sufficiency and Placement Searches\**

*Over the most recent 12-month period for which data is held:*

- 3.1 The total number of placement referrals or searches issued to external providers.*
- 3.2 The number of searches that resulted in no suitable Ofsted-registered offer being identified — including where no regulated provider accepted the placement on the authority's required terms (for example, due to complexity, cost or location).*
- 3.3 The number of placement offers declined by providers after an initial expression of interest, where recorded.*
- 3.4 The average time (in days) taken to secure a placement following initial referral or search, where data is held.*
- 3.5 The number of placements that ended prematurely due to provider notice (provider-initiated termination).*
- 3.6 The number of emergency (same-day or next-day) placement requests, and the proportion that were matched to a regulated setting.*
- 3.7 Whether the authority is currently meeting the placement targets set out in its most recent Sufficiency Strategy. If not, please state the scale of the shortfall by placement type.*
- 3.8 Any internal or external reports or summaries the authority has produced in the last 12 months regarding placement sufficiency challenges. Titles or links will suffice where full disclosure is not possible.*

*Where exact figures for any of the above are not held, please provide any available estimates, ranges or narrative explanation of current practice.*

*\*4. Commissioning Arrangements\**

*4.1 Which frameworks, Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) or consortium arrangements does the authority use for children's residential placements, supported accommodation (16+), and IFA placements? Please name each.*

*4.2 Does the authority spot-purchase outside of these frameworks? If yes, in approximately what proportion of placements?*

*4.3 What is the process for a new Ofsted-registered provider to be added to the authority's approved or preferred provider list, or to its referral distribution list?*

*4.4 What is the typical timeframe for onboarding a new provider onto the authority's approved or preferred list, from initial enquiry to inclusion?*

*4.5 Please provide contact details (named officer where possible, otherwise relevant team inbox) for the function(s) responsible for:*

- (a) children's residential placements commissioning*
- (b) supported accommodation commissioning*
- (c) IFA commissioning*

*4.6 Please provide the generic team inbox(es) used to receive placement referral responses and expressions of interest from providers.*

*\*5. Fee Benchmarking\**

*For the most recent financial year, please provide:*

*5.1 Highest, lowest and mean weekly fee paid for an Ofsted-registered residential children's home placement.*

*5.2 Highest, lowest and mean weekly fee paid for Ofsted-registered 16+ supported accommodation.*

*5.3 Highest, lowest and mean weekly fee paid for solo or bespoke placements, where used.*

*\*6. In-House Residential Provision & Workforce Supply\**

*6.1 Does the authority operate any in-house Ofsted-registered children's homes? If yes, please state the number of homes and total registered bed capacity as at the most recent available date.*

*6.2 Total annual spend on temporary / agency staff deployed into the authority's in-house children's homes in the most recent complete financial year.*

*6.3 Names of the staffing agencies or employment businesses currently used to supply temporary workers into the authority's in-house children's homes, including any framework or neutral-vendor arrangements in place.*

*6.4 Please provide contact details (named officer where possible, otherwise relevant team inbox) for the function(s) responsible for engaging agency/temporary staff into the authority's in-house children's homes.*

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).

This is because this information is not held in a reportable format and to complete the request we would need to manually review, retrieve and extract the information requested

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.

Suffolk County Council estimate that it will exceed the time allowed for an FOI to locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request.

#### **Advice and Assistance**

Whilst we cannot provide you with what you have requested, if you are happy to narrow down your request to questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 we may be able to provide you with some information.

Furthermore, if you can please confirm the time period you are requesting this information and for this same time period to be applied across questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 that would make it easier for us to respond.