

Freedom of Information – Response – 27574

Q1 Safeguarding concerns involving unpaid carers

Q1a Please provide the number of safeguarding concerns (alerts) recorded where the adult at risk was an unpaid / family carer.

*Of these, please specify (where held) the number of these concerns where:
the source of risk / harm was a person they provide care for and the person they care for has dementia*

Q1b Please provide the number of safeguarding concerns (alerts) recorded where the concern was raised about an unpaid / family carer who was not considered an adult at risk.

Please specify (where held) the number of these concerns where:

the source of risk / harm was a person they provide care for

and the person they care for has dementia

Q2 Outcomes of these concerns

Of the concerns identified in Question 1a please provide:

Q2a The number that progressed to a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry

Q2b The number concluded as:

substantiated

partially substantiated

not substantiated (if recorded)

Q2c The number that resulted in no further action following initial screening

Q2d Any available data on cases identified in Question 1a involving unpaid carers which resulted in:

emergency respite

emergency residential placement

Of the concerns identified in Questions 1b please provide:

Q2e The number that progressed to a Section 42 safeguarding enquiry

Q2f The number concluded as:

substantiated

partially substantiated

not substantiated (if recorded)

Q2g The number that resulted in no further action following initial screening

Q2h Any available data on cases identified in Question 1b involving unpaid carers which resulted in:

emergency respite

emergency residential placement

Q3 Carer follow up and support (where recorded)

For the cases identified in Question 1, please indicate (where held in structured data fields) instances when the unpaid carer was offered or received a Carer's Assessment under the Care Act 2014

Q4 Data recording and alternative information (if exact data not held)

"If your safeguarding systems do not allow you to identify cases in the way described above, please provide notes, hyperlinks to any relevant information (or attach relevant documents) "

Q4a A brief description of how carer status and relationships are recorded within safeguarding data systems

Q4b Whether dementia status of the cared-for person is recorded in a searchable/structured field

Q4c Any closest available data or proxy measure (e.g. safeguarding cases involving carers where "risk from cared-for person" is recorded, even if dementia cannot be isolated)

Q4d Does your local authority maintain any specific process, pathway, policy, or guidance relating to safeguarding concerns where the source of the risk is the person being cared for?

Q4e During the last three years, has your local authority undertaken any audit, review, learning exercise, serious incident review or safeguarding adults review involving harm experienced by unpaid carers.

If yes, are these publicly available?

Following consideration of your request, Suffolk County Council (SCC) is refusing the request under section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit prescribed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Under the Regulations, the appropriate limit for

local authorities is £450, which equates to 18 hours of officer time calculated at £25 per hour. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) confirms that a public authority may refuse a request where the estimated cost of determining, locating, retrieving and extracting the requested information would exceed this limit.

The information requested is not held in a report or searchable format that would enable SCC to extract the requested data through a simple system query.

To answer the request, the Council would need to identify and manually review safeguarding records for:

- 160 cases from 2024;
- 118 cases from 2025; and
- 61 cases from 2026 year-to-date.

This represents a total of 339 safeguarding cases requiring examination.

The requested information requires SCC to establish matters such as:

- whether the adult at risk was an unpaid or family carer;
- whether the safeguarding concern related to the carer or the cared-for person;
- whether the source of risk or harm was the cared-for person;
- whether the cared-for person had dementia;
- whether concerns progressed to a section 42 enquiry;
- the outcome of any safeguarding enquiry;
- whether emergency respite or residential placement occurred; and
- whether a Carer's Assessment was offered, undertaken or declined.

This information is not consistently recorded within structured fields and would require officers to manually review records held across a number of systems and locations, including safeguarding records, ATOM assessments, Care and Support Plans, Health Information Exchange records, Mental Capacity Assessments, case notes, MASH records, Carers' Assessments, correspondence and documents stored within SharePoint. The estimated time required to review an individual case varies depending on the complexity of the records and the specific question being considered. The estimates provided by operational staff range from a few minutes per case to approximately 20 minutes per case for several elements of the request. These estimates have been reviewed by another officer and were considered conservative.

Even applying the lowest average review times to the 339 identified cases, the Council would need to spend substantially more than 18 hours locating, retrieving and extracting the information. For example:

- reviewing dementia status alone is estimated to take approximately 15 minutes per case, equating to approximately 84.75 hours across 339 cases; and
- reviewing safeguarding concerns relating to unpaid carers is estimated to take approximately 20 minutes per case, equating to approximately 113 hours across 339 cases.

These examples demonstrate that the work required to comply with the request would significantly exceed the statutory cost limit before consideration of the additional questions relating to section 42 outcomes, emergency placements, and Carer's Assessments. Accordingly, SCC estimates that the cost of compliance would greatly exceed the appropriate limit and section 12(1) of FOIA is engaged. The ICO's guidance confirms that authorities may take into account the costs of determining whether information is held, and locating, retrieving and extracting that information when estimating compliance costs.

Under s.16 of FOIA public authorities must provide reasonable advice and assistance where possible. SCC has considered whether this request could be refined to fall within the cost limit however we have been unable to do so that would still provide you with information of value. However, whilst you are not obliged to if you are able to let us know why you would like the information/what you would like to use the information for it may be that we can suggest a way to help provide you with some useful information.