

Freedom of Information Request – Response – 27784

Dear Suffolk County Council,

Please treat this as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

As at the date of your response, please provide the following information regarding children and young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan in your local authority area:

- 1. The number of children/young people with an EHC Plan who are currently awaiting allocation of a special school place.*
- 2. The number of children/young people currently educated otherwise than at school (e.g. via a Section 19 arrangement) while awaiting a specialist placement.*
- 3. The number of children/young people currently receiving interim or alternative tuition while awaiting a specialist placement.*
- 4. The number of children/young people placed in an independent special school because no maintained (state) special school place was available.*
- 5. The average waiting time, in weeks, between an EHC Plan naming a school or type of provision and the child/young person starting at that placement, for the most recent 12 months for which you hold data.*
- 6. A breakdown of (1) above by primary type of need (e.g. ASD, SEMH, SLCN, MLD, other), if held.*

Suffolk County Council (SCC) can confirm that this information is held however, it is being withheld under s.12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA.) s.12 allows a public authority to refuse a request where it is estimated that complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit (£450 calculated at 18 hours of staff time charged at £25 per hour.)

Whilst SCC can confirm that we do hold the information you have requested, it is held over multiple case files and would involve an individual staff member to undertake a manual trawl of individual case files to locate and extract the relevant information.

SCC wish to apply s.12 exemption to Q4 and Q5 and have broken down the steps and time required for each question as follows:

Q4 - Therefore, in order to find out the number of children/young people currently placed within an Independent special school because no Local Authority maintained (state) special school place was available would require an individual to complete the following steps, to retrieve, extract and collate:

- Locate the number of CYP that are in an independent Special School (currently 701 CYP)
- For each child, go into their LL record, and check when the placement started (1 min)

- Then go into documents relating to that time period, and check the original consultation responses (Local Offer and Independent Specialist) and parental preference (3 mins)
- Cross match against the panel request for the independent specialist placement and the panel agenda to confirm the agreement (1 min)
- Based on the information held, conclude whether this placement was because no maintained (state) special school place was available (1 min)

There are currently 701 records that would need to be reviewed.

CYP have carried out a sample exercise regarding these tasks outlined above and have been able to ascertain that this would take approximately 6 minutes per record.

$6 \times 701 = 4,206$ minutes / 60 = 70 hours

Therefore, this would exceed the time and cost allowed for an FOI.

Q5 In order to find out the average waiting time, in weeks, between an EHC Plan naming a school or type of provision and the child/young person starting at that placement, for the most recent 12 months would require an individual to complete the following steps, to retrieve, extract and collate:

- Calculate the number of every finalised new and amended plan between August 18th 2025 and August 18th 2026 (10,254) 10 mins
- For each child, go into their LL record and confirm the date the plan was issued and the date they started at the named setting (if not already on roll and/or named). Record this manually (2 mins)
- For each entry, calculate the time between the EHC Plan being finalised and the placement start date (2 mins via Excel)
- For the cohort, calculate the average time (1 min via Excel)

There are currently 10,254 records that would need to be reviewed.

CYP have carried out a sample exercise regarding these tasks outlined above and have been able to ascertain that this would take approximately 5 minutes per record plus an initial 10 minutes to determine the files to be searched.

$5 \times 10,254 = 51,270$ / 60 = 854 hours

Therefore, this would exceed the time and cost allowed for an FOI.

The total cost of responding to Qs 4 & 5 would exceed the time and cost allowed for an FOI

$70 \text{ hours} + 854 \text{ hours} = 924$

$924 \text{ Hours} \times £25 \text{ per hour} = £23,100$

Advice and Assistance

Whilst SCC cannot respond in full to your request we can provide you with information to answer questions 1, 2, 3 and 6 Please let us know if you would like to receive this information and we will begin preparing this for you.