

Freedom of Information Request – Response – 27804

Suffolk County Council has reviewed your request and identified some clarification and narrowing down of certain questions to enable us to provide you with some of the information you have requested. Please see the details under each question.

With regards to the response in its entirety to provide the information over a 10 year period would likely trigger a s.12 exemption, in order to enable us to provide you with some information would you be willing to narrow the timeframe down to a 5 year period?

1. Looked After Children (LAC) – Core Statistics

A. Children starting to be looked after

Number of children who started to be looked after.

Please specify whether figures are recorded by calendar year, financial year, or 31 March snapshot.

B. Children ceasing to be looked after

Please provide totals broken down by:

returned home

adopted

Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs)

residence orders

other permanence outcomes

C. Total number of children looked after

Total number of children looked after as of 31 March each year.

D. Calculation method

Please confirm the formula or method used to calculate yearly totals (e.g., raw counts, system reports, or national dataset imports).

A lot of this information can be found via the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2024-to-2025> if there is information you are interested in that has not been

captured here or you are unable to find please let us know and we would be more than happy to see if it is something that we can assist you with.

2. Mental Health of Looked After Children

A. Diagnosed mental health conditions

- Number of LAC with a recorded mental health diagnosis.

If diagnoses are not recorded, please confirm whether you hold:

mental health flags

CAMHS referral records

emotional wellbeing indicators

B. Pre existing vs. developed in care

Of the above:

number diagnosed before entering care

number diagnosed during care

Suffolk County Council (SCC) do not record this information. We may be able to provide

you with annual average SDQ scores as an emotional wellbeing indicator. If you would be happy to narrow this question to that information, please confirm.

3. Self Harm and Suicide Incidents

Number of LAC with recorded incidents of:

self harm

suicide attempts

suicide deaths

Please include incidents recorded in:

safeguarding reports

incident logs

serious incident notifications

SCC would be unable to provide all of this information within the timeframe allowed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) however, if you would be willing to narrow the scope of this request to suicide deaths and serious incident notifications we should be able to provide you with some of the information you are seeking.

4. Missing / Absconding / Unauthorised Absences

Number of LAC recorded as:

-missing

-absent without authorisation

-repeatedly missing (3+ episodes)

SCC only record missing and repeat missing categories, 'absent without authorisation' is no longer recorded. If you are happy to narrow down your request to the two categories that are recorded please let us know and we should be able to provide you with some of the information you are seeking.

5. Complaints, Allegations, and Data Breaches

A. Complaints

Number of complaints made against children's social care, broken down by:

-complaints by parents

-complaints by looked after children

- outcomes (upheld / partially upheld / not upheld)

B. Allegations

Number of allegations made against:

- foster carers

-residential staff

- other professionals

C. Data breaches

Number of data breaches involving children's social care, including:

-how many involved children's data

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) as the cost of complying would exceed the appropriate limit, which for Local Authorities is £450 or 18 hours at £25 per person per hour.

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) states that when estimating the cost of compliance public authorities may only take into account the time needed to determine whether the information is held, time to locate the information, retrieve it and extract it.

To identify all of the complaints that fall within the scope of your request a staff member would need to manually review all complaints received during this time period which equates to 2,133 complaints.

There is no quick search or filter available to search through all of the complaints and a staff member would have to open each individual complaint record, locate the original complaint correspondence and associated case information, scan read the information to identify any key words before reviewing the complaint in more detail to identify if it falls within the scope of your request.

For complaints received during 2021/22, each stored case file would need to be opened individually and reviewed. For complaints received from 2022 onwards, each case within the GOSS system would need to be opened and searched in the same manner.

The volume of information contained within complaint files varies considerably. Some records contain only a few lines of text, whilst others exceed ten pages. Even if only a single page per complaint required review, this would involve examining at least 2,133 pages of information.

SCC estimate that reviewing each complaint would take approximately five minutes. Across 2,133 complaints, this would require approximately 177 hours and 45 minutes of officer time.

If you would be willing to narrow down this part of your request to just sections B and C then we should be able to provide you with some of the information you are seeking.

6. Parental Mental Health

Number of assessments where parental mental health was recorded as a factor, and how many resulted in:

child protection plans

children entering care

Some of this data is available based on SWA factors (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need/2025>)

However, this would require some reviewing of the data to determine if a child had a Child Protection Plan or became a Child in Care. Please let us know if the information you require relates to a CPP or CiC status applied directly after the Social Work Assessment or at any time.

7. Outcomes for Children Returned Home

Number of children who returned home and how many:

were re referred

were re assessed

re entered care within 12 months

Please could you clarify whether this relates to children being re-referred, re-assessed, or returning home in a specific year, or at any time over the five-year period. Please could you also confirm whether you would like the data on children in a year reassessed in that year or reassessed ever after returning home, etc.

8. Placement Stability

Number of placement moves per child:

1–2 moves

3–5 moves

6+ moves

Please could you clarify whether you are wanting to know about placement moves in each individual year, or over the whole period.

9. Out of Area Placements

Number of children placed outside your authority area, including distance bands:

0–20 miles

20–50 miles

50+ miles

Please could you clarify whether you are wanting to know about out of area placements in each individual year, or over the whole period. Please note we only record this information in whether a child was placed within or over 20 miles from home.

10. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Number of UASC looked after by your authority.

Please could you clarify whether this is the number of UASC throughout an individual year, a snapshot at the end of a year, or in total throughout the five-year period.

11. Recording Systems

Case management system(s) used between 2014–2024 (e.g., LiquidLogic, Mosaic, CareFirst).

Whether any data migration occurred that may affect historical totals.

SCC have used LCS since 2018, if we are required to go further back then CF was used and whilst there was data migration this would not affect any historical totals.

12. Definitions and Counting Rules

Please provide your authority's definitions for:

- started to be looked after
- ceased to be looked after
- placement
- episode
- missing
- unauthorised absence
- mental health diagnosis

- complaint

-allegation

SCC are able to respond to this question in full.

Please confirm whether any definitions changed between 2014–2024.

No