

12 January 2021

Our Ref: RFI 40273

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Looked After Children (LAC)**

I am writing to confirm that the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (the Trust) has now completed its search for information relating to above which you requested on 4 August 2021. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your request, due to the impact of Winter Pressures that the Trust is currently facing. Thank you for your understanding and forbearance of this matter

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Children's Services and Social Work Directorate and is attached in Appendix A.

If you are unhappy as to how this request has been handled, you have the right to seek a review within the Trust in the first instance. You should write to the Information Governance Department, Lough House, Ards Community Hospital (informationgovernance@setrust.hscni.net) within two months of the date of this response and your complaint will be considered and a response provided, within 20 working days of receipt.

If, after receiving a response, you remain unhappy, you can refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner at The Information Commissioner's Office –Northern Ireland, 3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB. It is important to note that if you refer any matter to the Information Commissioner, you will need to show evidence of having gone through the Trust's internal review procedure to try to resolve the matter with the Trust in the first instance.

If you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Manning
Information Governance Assistant

Q1. How many children have become LAC in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A1. In the Trust, there have been 1740 children who have been admitted to care in the past 10 years. Please see Table 1 for breakdown.

Table 1

Year	No. of Children who became LAC
2012	149
2013	224
2014	197
2015	176
2016	190
2017	149
2018	178
2019	170
2020	150
2021	157

Q2. How many LAC children are diagnosed with mental health issues in any category in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A2. The information you have requested is not held by the Trust. Mental Health Services for young people are provided on a regional basis through the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (Belfast Trust), by the child and Adolescent Mental health Service (CAMHS). However, the Belfast Trust does not categorise their referrals on the basis of LAC status and therefore this data is not recorded.

Q3. How many LAC children have tried or succeeded in committing suicide in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A3. During the past 10 years there have been <10 child deaths reported under the Cared for Children and Safeguarding Services within the Trust, with the incident code of attempted/completed suicide. However, there is not an additional category denoting whether these children were LAC.

Q4. How many parents of LAC, meaning the parents they lived with before becoming LAC have been since diagnosed with mental health issues in any category in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A4. The information you have requested is not held by the Trust. Trust Adult Mental Health services does not categorise their referrals on the basis of whether the parent has a LAC and therefore this data is not recorded.

Q5. How many parents of LAC, using the above definition have committed suicide each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A5. Please see Table 2.

Table 2

Year	No. of Deaths recorded as Suicide (Attempted or completed)
2010	<5
2011	<5
2012	<5
2013	<5
2014	<5
2015	<5
2016	<5
2017	<5
2018	<5
2019	<5

Q6. How many complaints have been filed against child social services in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

A6. Please see Table 3.

Table 3

Year	No. of Complaints
2011	10
2012	53
2013	52
2014	54
2015	56
2016	55
2017	60
2018	58
2019	54
2020	47
Total	499

Q7. How many LAC have run away or disappeared in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

- A7. The Trust report on children and young people who have been reported missing to the PSNI three or more times over a six month period. The Trust did not commence collecting data on children/young people reported missing until January 2017.

For children/young people who were reported as missing three or more times Please see Table 4 for breakdown during the period January 2017 to June 2021.

Table 4

Year	No. of Children reported missing 3 or more times
2017	54
2018	13
2019	18
2020	21
2021	<10

Q8. How many LAC have died from any cause in your area each calendar year for the past 10 years.

- A8. During the past 10 years there have been 21 child deaths recorded under the Cared for Children and Safeguarding Services within the Trust, however, there is not an additional category denoting whether these children were LAC.

Please see Table 5 for each year.

Table 5

Year	No. of Child Deaths
2010	<5
2011	<5
2012	<5
2013	5
2014	<5
2015	<5
2016	<5
2017	<5
2018	<5
2019	<5

You will note for Questions 3, 5, 7 & 8 that some of the numbers have been masked. The numbers have been masked because there are a small number of individuals within a small geographical area and therefore the individual could be identified. Potential Identification of the individual may therefore lead to the disclosure of their personal information.

This information relates to personal information, it is exempt from release under Section 40 (2) and 40 (3) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

Section 40 (personal information) states:-

(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if—

(a) it constitutes personal data which not fall within subsection (1), and

(b) the first, second or third condition below is satisfied.

(3) The first condition is that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act—

(a) would contravene any of the data protection principles.