

Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road, London E17 4JF  
DX: 124540 Waltham Forest

Mr Hardwicke Carruthers

Email: request-22725-  
7f0515d8@whatdotheyknow.com

ask for: Shirley Orjih  
direct line: 0208 496 4710  
e-mail add: shirley.orjih@walthamforest.gov.uk  
direct fax no: 020 8496 4255  
our ref: LE/SOR/62212  
your ref:  
date: 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Dear Mr Carruthers,

**Re: Request for Information**

I write further to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. I apologise for the delay in responding to your request for information. The nature of your request necessitated consultations with several council officials and departments. The last of the consultations was received today.

You have specifically requested the following:

**Request 1**

Report of LG Ombudsman recommends the following under paragraphs 87, 88 and 89. Please provide copies of all documents identifying how LBWF is meeting LGO recommendation. Recommendations:

- a. Council to apologise to Ms Smith
- b. Compensation of £7,000 to be paid
- c. Review approach to dealing with complaints
- d. Review the way it deals with the assessment of children

In relation to (1a), the Council apologised to Miss Smith by a Press release of Monday 29 October 2009. Also, a direct apology was made to Ms Smith by Linda Cointepas, Acting Deputy Director, Children & Young People Services on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009. By this apology, the Council accepted the recommendations of the Ombudsman in full. The Council apologised for failure to meet the needs of Ms Smith as well for the distress caused by its failings in this matter. The Council also confirmed that the recommended compensation of £7,000 was to follow by separate cover. I can confirm that the said compensation was paid to Ms Smith in November 2009.



In relation to the Press release, I have **attached** a copy of the statement by Cllr Liaquat Ali, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Services. We have decided to withhold the apology letter on the basis that this information is personal data relating to a third party. Section 40(2) FOIA. This section precludes the disclosure of personal data where it is being requested by a person other than the data subject.

In relation to recommendations (1c) and (1d) above i.e. the recommendation that the Council should review the way it deals with complaints and the assessment of children, the following steps have been taken:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Confirmation of the CYPS' acceptance of the report and recommendations	Email Corporate Complaints that the report's findings are accepted, the compensation is agreed and action taken and an action plan put in place	Completed
CYPS report on the failings in this matter to go to the Gov Committee	Report to go to the next Audit & Governance Committee meeting	Meeting will be held on 14 January 2010
Improvement Report to be sent to the LGO	Copy of the report to Audit & Governance Committee and improvement plan to be sent to the LGO	January 2010
Review of the child in need assessment process	Roll out training on undertaking assessments for social workers, training on listening to children and young people and incorporating the views in assessments provided to managers. Training to be cascaded to social workers by managers. Initial and core assessment audit standards to be reviewed to ensure robust scrutiny of inclusion of the voice of the child/young person.	Completed
Review the way decisions and advice is given to CYP when services are not provided	Young People to be informed in writing of the reasons why services have not been provided	Completed
Review the stage 2 complaint inv. process and adjudication process	Complaints Manager to review the quality standards of current pool of external investigating officers	Completed

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Review Stage 3 review Panel and adjudication process	Complaint Manager to review the quality standards of current pool of review panel members	Completed

The following actions are ongoing in relation to the review of the stage 2 & 3 review panel processes:

In relation to reviewing the stage 2 complaint investigation process and adjudication process, the Complaints Manager is to meet with the Deputy Director of CYPS prior to the stage 2 adjudication being written.

In relation to the stage 3 review panel and adjudication process, the following actions are ongoing:

- 1) Complaints Manager to meet with the Executive Director and Deputy Director of CYPS prior to stage 3 adjudication being written
- 2) Provisional adjudication sent to complainant with offer of meeting to discuss outcomes

**Attached** below are details of some of the training courses referred to above:

- 1) Details of Waltham Forest CYPS Training on Initial Assessments including learning outcomes
- 2) Children at the Heart of Assessments
- 3) Communicating with Children, a two way process

## **Request 2**

**LB spokesman said the following: It is not the LGO's remit to advise the Council on what to do with its staff. Please provide copies of all documents related to statement and Council's decision to support its staff to act in the way it did towards Mrs Smith.**

It is common place for the Council's press officers to provide verbal briefings to journalists as background information additional to written statements. The Yellow Advertiser reports accurately that there was no recommendation by the Ombudsman to enforce disciplinary action. At no point in the article is there inference that such a recommendation is part of the Ombudsman's remit.

Similarly, at no point in the article or in any statement or verbal briefing issued by the Council regarding the issue has there been any comment made that should be seen as the Council demonstrating a "decision to support its staff to act in the way it did towards Ms Smith".

In the Press statement of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Councillor Ali said that "Waltham Forest Council, particularly our social workers, have a huge responsibility as guardians of some of the most vulnerable people in the borough. Ensuring their welfare is a responsibility that we all take extremely seriously.

"As a service provider and as a local authority, Waltham Forest has made real improvements in the five years since Miss Smith first contacted us, but complacency is not, and cannot, be a part of our business. I have discussed the Ombudsman's findings with staff and am confident his recommendation will be put into place as we continue to improve our service."

### **Request 3**

**Please provide copies of documents from Cllr Ali as the person responsible for the acts of the staff that he supports their acts... and the Council's service failure.**

Please refer to the statements of the Councillor as provided in our response to your first question. The Councillor did not at any point state his support for the acts of the staff rather he accepted the findings of the Ombudsman. Please refer to the above press statement quoted in response to your second request. I have also **attached** a full copy of the Ombudsman's Report dated 21 October 2009.

I trust that this satisfies your request sufficiently however, if you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you have the right to request a review of the Council's response to your request for information. If you wish to request a review, you may contact the Corporate Information Officer within 28 days of the date of this letter at:

Corporate Information Officer  
Room 1  
Waltham Forest Town Hall  
E17 4JF

Tel: 020 8496 4334

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of that review, you may seek further recourse by lodging an appeal with the Information Commissioner.

Yours Sincerely,



**Shirley Orjih**  
for Director of Governance & Law