

Essex County Council
Schools, Children & Families Directorate
PO Box 47, County Hall
Chelmsford, Essex
CM1 1YS

Ms D Cruickshank
request-59608-74ce8412@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: ECC-009635-11

Your ref: N/a

Date: 14 February 2011

Dear Ms Cruickshank

Your Freedom of Information Request:

I am pleased to enclose the following information, which I believe satisfies your request.

You requested the answers to the following questions regarding Looked After Children (LAC) within the care of our local authority.

1) What is the lower age limit of children to whom advocacy services are offered?

There is no lower age limit, we provide non instructed advocacy where required.

2) What is the upper age limit of children to whom advocacy services are offered?

The age range of children to whom advocacy services are offered is 0 - 19 years and up to 25 years for young people with learning disabilities.

3) How many individual referrals for LAC are provided for per year within the Service Level Agreement (SLA)?

We must reach at least 15% of total looked after population, but there is no upper limit set.

4) How many referrals to independent advocacy services in the last year were made by:

Contd.

The current contract commenced August 2010; therefore the figures below are from August 2010 to January 2011:

a) Social workers	22
b) Families of LAC	3
c) Carers (foster or otherwise) of LAC	1
d) Self referral of children	9
e) Other professional (please specify in this case)	
Education	2
Voluntary sector	16

5) Please provide a copy of the SLA with Barnardos.

Please see attachment 1 – Barnardos Final Contract.

6) What is the position if demand for advocacy services by LAC exceeds the provision in the SLA? Are children then left without access to advocacy services.

Advocacy would be spot purchased.

7) When does the contract with your current independent advocacy service end?

Contract end date is 31/3/2012 (+ 1 year option subject to funding) break clause dates of 28/2/2011 & 30/9/2011.

8) Will the contract be renewed? If not what provision for independent advocacy will be put in place?

This is a statutory service so will have to be provided in some form at the end of this contract.

9) Is independent advocacy used in decision making processes with children and young people outside of the complaints system? If so, can you please indicate typical scenarios where advocates may be involved.

- Statutory Reviews
- Child Protection meetings
- Pathway Planning meetings
- Personal Education Plans
- Service Provision and Planning Consultations
- Access to legal advice and support
- Family Group Conference

10) In the last year how many complaints received from LAC involved the child or young person being represented by an independent advocate?

One.

11) What was the total number of complaints from LAC in the past year?

The number of complaints where the child was Looked After was 70. However, this is not the number of complaints *from* Looked After Children as our report filters does not allow us to separate such data. For example we can report on how many complaints are from children (not specifying Looked After) or how many complaints are regarding Looked After Children (not specifying who they are from).

You may reuse all or part of this information free of charge in any format or medium. You must reuse it accurately and not in a misleading context.

Please contact me if you would like further advice or assistance about your request or your right to access information held by Essex County Council.

If you are not satisfied with my response to your request, please let me know. If I am unable to resolve the issue immediately, I will explain our complaints procedure. If, after following our complaints procedure, you are still not satisfied, you are entitled to ask the Information Commissioner to review our decision. You can contact him at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545700.

Yours sincerely

Lauri Almond

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