

A Williamson by email:  
[request-55151-109bd481@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-55151-109bd481@whatdotheyknow.com)

21 January 2010

Dear Mr/Ms Williamson,

**Request Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Ref: FOI309258)**

Thank you for your e-mail of 17 December requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act. In your e-mail you asked:

*"Who is ultimately in charge of overseeing the local authority child services; Can the local authority child services be held accountable for their actions; Does the Cabinet office agree with local authority child service using allegations, hearsay, misrepresentation, part-information, wrongly worded information, falsehood and speculation in court against families; Does the cabinet office believe the above practices to be lawful; Are there any changes in the pipeline for the way child services deal with families, so that the families human rights are not destroyed during their time being scrutinized by the child services; Is there a time limit as to how long the local authority can hold and use out-of-date information on a family. In other words does the Cabinet office say it is lawful for child services to use information that is 10 or 20 years old on a family?"*

The Freedom of Information Act provides the requestor with an access right to recorded information. In this case, we would consider that the request is not a request for recorded information. We would of course be happy to re-consider the question asked should it be re-phrased as a request for recorded information. A 'valid' request under the FOI Act is one that asks to see recorded information held by the public authority, such as information on a specific issue, or process, not one that asks for opinion or seeks answers or calculations etc.

Additionally you will wish to know that where requestors make broad requests, for example ones that do not specify a timeframe, or insufficiently define a theme, it may not be possible to process the request if the estimated cost of complying exceeds an appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending three and a half working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act departments are not obliged to comply with requests in these circumstances.

The responsibility for overseeing local authority child services lies with the Department for Education. You may therefore wish to contact them in connection for any information you may be seeking –you can request information by contacting the department in one of the following ways: Telephone: 0370 000 2288, Typetalk: 18001 0370 000 2288, Fax: 01928 794248 or you can write to the Department at: Department for Education, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7

2GJ. If you are looking for specific records held in relation to Child Services you may request this under the Freedom of Information Act – either in writing to the department or you may make a request on line at:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/>.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me – contact details are at the top of this letter – it would be helpful if you could quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Sue Gray  
Director  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

email: [foiteam@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foiteam@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,



Jennifer Rowland  
Desk Officer  
Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat