



Mr Alastair Scott-McKinley
Request-804507-13d05d59@whatdotheyknow.com

21 December 2021

Our Ref: RFI 41721

Dear Mr Scott-McKinley

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Information in relation to Foster Carer Respite

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 8 November 2021. Please accept our sincere apologies on the delay in responding to you. Thank you for your patience.

A response to each of the questions raised has been provided by the Children's Services & 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. Please can you provide a copy of the Trust's respite policy and procedures?

A1. There are no respite policies/procedures within the Trust, each case is based on the assessed needs of the child and Foster Carers.

Q2. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you tell me the process used by the foster carer for requesting respite.

A2. The Foster Carer will discuss the reasons for a short break request with the Supervising Social Worker.

Q3. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you provide a copy of the assessment tool used by social work staff to determine if respite is to be approved.

A3. The decision on the respite approval is based on the assessed needs of the child in placement and the Foster Carers.

Q4. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you outline all professionals who are involved in decision making concerning approval and provision of a single instance of respite.

A4. The supervising Social Worker will discuss the request with the child's field Social Worker and if respite is agreed the Social Worker will attempt to source a short break within their own team's Foster Carers. However should this be unsuccessful, they can make a referral to the duty team to identify a placement.

Q5. Please can you tell me the number of Trust foster carers who have requested respite care in the last year.

- a. **Please break this down by emergency/ planned/ any other designation used by the trust**
- b. **Please also provide the number foster carers who received respite when requested**
- c. **Please also provide the number of foster carers who were refused respite when this was requested.**

A5. There have been 21 requests made via the duty team for carer to carer short breaks within between April 2020 and March 2021.

The information requested in Questions a, b & c is not available for carer to carer short breaks.

- Q6. If not stated in your respite policy, please can you tell me the annual total number of days respite entitlement that an approved foster carer has within the trust (please also outline any difference between non fee paid/ fee paid foster carers).**
- A6. There is no agreed number of short breaks for free or non-free paid carers, this is based on the assessed need.
- Q7. Please can you tell me the number of foster carers who have received/ not received their annual respite entitlement within in the trust in the last year.**
- A7. There is no annual respite entitlement within mainstream fostering. This is on request from the carers depending on the needs of the child. Foster Carers within the specialist schemes receives 14 days respite per calendar year.
- Q8. If not stated in the respite policy what alternative arrangements are possible for respite other than placement with an approved trust foster carer.**
- A8. Alternative arrangements include placing children with carers that are approved support persons, if deemed appropriate.
- Q9. Please can you provide a copy of the equality screening for your respite policy.**
- A9. I refer you to Answer 1.
- Q10. Please outline the total number of days holiday entitlement (annual leave) which foster carers receive.**
- Q11. Please confirm if the annual respite entitlement is additional to any annual leave entitlement.**
- A10-11. Foster Carers are not employees of the Trust therefore there is no holiday entitlement.
- Q12. Please outline the trusts arrangements for providing sickness leave, compassionate leave to foster carers.**
- A12. Sickness or compassionate leave is based on the assessed needs of the Foster Carers.
- Q13. Please outline any arrangement where holiday entitlement is paid for in lieu or other comparable arrangement.**
- A13. Foster Carers are not employees of the Trust therefore there is no holiday entitlement.

Q14. Please provide a copy of the policy which governs foster carer leave entitlement.

Q15. Please can you provide a copy of the equality screening for your foster carer leave policy.

A14-15. I refer you to Answer 1.