

Stand alone questions.

The following 4 questions are the last in our series of local authority FOI questions. These are stand alone questions, yet still interesting in their own right.

Question 1.

Do child social services follow the same guidelines or process when investigating child abuse when the child is in the care of the local authority as it does when a child is still living with their parent/s

Local Authority investigate all concerns that are raised regarding the safety and wellbeing of children regardless of where they stay.

Yes, it follows the same process.

If a child is in the Care of the Local Authority and a professional (including Foster Carers) have an allegation made against them, a referral may be made to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to complete an investigation. Apart from this the process is generally the same.

Yes, child protection procedures are the same for any child, the current guidance is working together 2018.

Yes – the Safeguarding Procedures can be viewed via the Safeguarding Partnership website. If the abuse is alleged to have been perpetrated by a person in a position of trust, then the LADO process is also followed – link via the same website.

All cases of child abuse are investigated following statutory protocols and governed by law.

Yes – this is set out in the safeguarding procedures. This will also involve the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) who oversees allegations made against professionals or those employed to work with children, such as carers

****Yes****

The focus of any investigation of harm to a child would be as above in all circumstances.

We have publically published procedures for the main aspects of our practice

LBWF and CSC in general have a number of guideline documents that inform threshold decision making amongst that being Local LBWF threshold doc/ Police threshold doc/London Continuum of need/Barnados but also legislation that informs

practice i.e Childrens Act and Working Together. These are used in combination with information received and gathered through m,ulti agency working to make a threshold decision and are not based on one element alone.

A strategy meeting would be held in all cases if it is believed a child may or has suffered significantly.

This is not a Freedom of Information request as you are not asking for recorded information.

Yes. Although it is the same process there are additional elements, supports and safeguards.

Yes the child protection investigation process is the same.

The Council have interagency child protection procedures and National Child Protection Guidance was updated and published in October this year

We have to adhere to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Yes all allegations of abuse regardless of where the child resides will be investigated under the above threshold of the children act.

2. This is not a valid request for recorded information as you have asked me to answer a question. Under my duty to advise and assist, please note that the same process would be followed in both instances, as set out under our child protection procedures.

Yes

We work, as do all public bodies in Wales, to the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Question 2.

How many sexual abuse claims end up being or not being investigated by child social services? reports or statistics from 2010 by calendar or financial year.

We always investigate allegations.
The extent of the investigation varies depending on each individual case.

I consider this question to be materially identical to question 9.

All child welfare protection concerns are assessed and investigated.

It has not been possible get data for sexual abuse from 2010 onwards but we have just added a new system in place to capture some data, hopefully this might help you. In the last

6 weeks from the 23rd Sept below is the breakdown of the contacts we got through our Front door.

So we only have about 6 weeks' worth of data, since 23rd September. Since then there have been 96 contacts to the Front Door where SA was flagged as a presenting issue.

Breakdown of outcomes:

Referral to Children's Social Care

42

Early Help

4

No further action

33

Information/Advice provided

17

It would need to be clarified as to whether this is referencing section 47 investigations or any referral to CSC. Also, what is meant by "sexual abuse" eg CSC would not investigate every sexual abuse allegation that involved only adults. It may be that you are seeking a specific level of information around s47 investigations relating to child sexual abuse where concerns not substantiated.

It is perhaps the most difficulty area to work in not least because there is often no direct evidence, abuse is rarely witnessed, and allegations are made long after the event or not made at all. It is a sensitive piece of work with children of all ages, to help understand what might have happened. Data provided is for each financial year and has been captured from the Children in Need Census – using the 'Factors identified at the end of the assessment' files.

Please also note, we only hold information back to 2015.

Reporting Period

Number of completed assessments where Sexual Abuse was identified as a factor at the end of the assessment

2014-15 = 53

2015-16 = 102

2016-17 = 84

2017-18 = 99

2018-19 = 149

2019-20 = 165

2020-21 = 27

Data as follows.

2009/10 = 2297 referrals

2010/11 = 2516 referrals

2011/12 = 4555 referrals

2012/13 = 4340 referrals

2013/14 = 4247 referrals, 142 with sexual abuse factor.

2014/15 = 3122 referrals, 223 with sexual abuse factor.

2015/16 = 3301 referrals, 237 with sexual abuse factor.

2016/17 = 3505 referrals, 280 with sexual abuse factor

2017/18 = 3098 referrals, 136 with sexual abuse factor

2018/19 = 3291 referrals, 171 with sexual abuse factor

2019/20 = 3410 referrals, 134 with sexual abuse factor

2020/21 = 2935 referrals, 127 with sexual abuse factor.

*Data on presenting need at referral was not collected before 2013/14

We hold information relating to how many investigations uphold that allegations are substantiated or not.

Sexual Abuse allegations are investigated by the Police. We advise you to redirect this enquiry to the Police.

Children's Services do undertake assessments as outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and work alongside the Police in certain circumstances. We do not hold how many sexual abuse claims are or are not subject to assessment in a reportable format

2020 - 11
2021 - 1

Information for 2010/11 to 2015/16 is not held in a way that can be provided easily and would require manual activity, this is because we changed the way we recorded outcomes for referrals in 2015/16. Below we provide referral information for the last five financial years – these referrals are those where the Child In Need category was recorded as 'Sexual Abuse'.

Financial Year
2016/17 = 606
2017/18 = 499
2018/19 = 419
2019/20 = 394
2020/21 = 532

OFFICIAL

Continue to assessment 545 465 359 336 458

89.9%
93.2%
85.7%
85.3%
86.1%

Court Reports, No further Action or guidance/signposting

61
34
60
58
74

10.1%
6.8%
14.3%
14.7%
13.9%

All referrals to LBWF that report concerns over a child's welfare are investigated through a MASH process that determines through multi agency working whether further assessment and support is required.

It is not possible to answer this question / Information not held. Any allegation of sexual abuse against a child would be investigated and that the police are ultimately responsible for the investigation. Children Services would be responsible for any safeguarding plans that came out and notification by the police from their investigation that support is required.

If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare and considers that they may be a child in need or that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, then they should share the information with the police who will investigate.

I have to advise that the information you requested is information not held by the Council and as such I must refuse your request in terms of Section 17 of FOISA. However, in line with the duty placed on the Council in terms of Section 15 of FOISA, I can advise all investigations follow national child protection procedures.

The question is very general and does not define what is meant by a claim or indicate who the claim relates to. We cannot answer such an unclear question.

We do not hold this information.

Any sexual abuse referral about a child would have an initial investigation.

In compliance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, we are required to provide notice that the information requested above is not held under Section 17 – Information not held. We do not gather statistics in relation to this query.

It is not clear what is meant by 'claims' in this question. However, all allegations of sexual abuse are investigated by Police, Social Work and/or Health as appropriate. This may be linked to other forms of abuse and neglect, and may also be historical. Disclosures may be withdrawn for a number of reasons. There is no collated data for the number of 'claims' as they may be investigated by Police or Social Work or jointly and therefore we are unable to provide this information. Therefore with reference to Section 17 of the Act we cannot provide you with the information requested as it is not held by The Highland Council.

All referrals to Children's Social Work are investigated. Outcomes may differ according to professional assessment, and this would depend on the particular case, therefore under S17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) act 2002 we advise that we hold no information in relation to your request.

All allegations / concerns of abuse or neglect referred to Children's Community Services are immediately allocated to a social worker and the child seen and spoken to within 24hrs. The Trust report our compliance on this procedural requirement monthly to our Health and Social Care Board. For the financial year 2020/21 the Trust reported 100% compliance.

Information not available

We do not hold this information as a corporate record.

We have estimated that the cost of complying with your request will exceed £450. We have made this calculation in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limits and Fees) Regulations 2004.

All allegations of child abuse of any type are investigated by the Local Authority.

All allegations of sexual abuse against children are investigated

Question 3.

Since 2010 how many children have been removed from their homes where child social services have used parental mental health as a reason. These statistics if available can be per calendar or financial year.

The number of children placed on the Child Protection Register, where 'Parental Mental Health Problems' was one of the identified risk factors, who were then accommodated (note this does not include children/young people who were removed from their home but were not placed on the Child Protection Register);

Calendar Year	# CYP
2013	20
2014	38
2015	18
2016	18
2017	40
2018	11
2019	31
2020	24
2021 (so far)	14

There may be several areas of concern which lead to a child becoming looked after, however our system only allows the recording of one of these concerns. Children who have been accommodated away from home with a recorded reason for becoming Looked After of parental mental health:

Year	Children becoming accommodated away from home due to Parental Mental Health
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2010	4
2011	6
2012	8
2013	5
2014	8

Please note, none have been recorded with a reason of Parental Mental Health since 2014. The above figures may include the same child in more than one year.

In addition, the links below provide details of our procedures and protocols:

[Domestic-Abuse and the Protection of Children Guidance \(girfec-aberdeenshire.org\)](https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org)
[Guide to Domestic Abuse Assistance in Aberdeenshire \(girfec-aberdeenshire.org\)](https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org)
<https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/about-girfec/>
<https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/home/child-protection/>

It is not possible to define this alone as children are removed based on risk and need and this may be for a variety of factors that could include parental mental health.

The number of entries to care where the most recent assessment had a recorded factor of Parental Mental Health:

2010-11 11
2011-12 6
2012-13 3
2013-14 20
2014-15 19
2015-16 24
2016-17 54
2017-18 128
2018-19 167
2019-20 239
2020-21 233
2021-22 (so far) 108
Total 1012

Parental mental health isn't a main factor as to why we would remove a child from their parents, but can be part of the assessment so therefore we cannot provide an answer for this particular question

Information not held

We do not remove children for mental health per se, we work with many parents where mental health is an issue and support them to care for their children. We do not collect data on whether parents of children that are removed had mental health difficulties.

We do not hold this information.

This data is recorded as parental illness or disability and is published on the DfE website for this.

If it is the number of children who became looked after each year

2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
121	169	178	232	239	231	259	270	304	269

Children can only be removed from their homes by children's services by applying to the courts.

We only hold data on whether parental mental health is a factor in an assessment.

This information is not held centrally or separately and would require a manual check of all complaints / allegations.

This is a new area of data collection, so data is not available prior to 2020.

2020: 13

2021: 17

The table below shows the total number of admissions to care over the requested period. However this will include all admissions, including short term breaks (respite). Ascertaining the type of care and reason for entering care would require the reviewing of the child's records (whether parental mental health was a contributing factor). An estimate to review the admissions to care to fully answer this question is shown below.

Financial Year	Number of admissions to care	Hours required to review
2010/11	227	38
2011/12	212	35
2012/13	204	34
2013/14	255	43
2014/15	262	44
2015/16	224	37
2016/17	169	28

2017/18	221	37
2018/19	194	32
2019/20	185	31
2020/21	218	36

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021 (to 31/10/21)	Total
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10	X	6	38

Notes:

1.

X – Please note data has been suppressed to preserve confidentiality (values between 1 and 5)

This information is online for all LAs and nationally for statistical years.

We do not hold this information. However, poor parental mental health can be a risk factor which affects the safety and protection of children, and in extreme cases, this may one of the reasons for needing to remove a child from their family home, often in conjunction with other risks.

If a child is removed on a legal order the Children's reporters will hold this information.
SCRA

In compliance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, we are required to provide notice that the information requested above is not held under Section 17 – Information not held. We do not gather evidence or data in relation to this query.

We do not record statistics on numbers of children removed from the home due to parental mental health, therefore under S17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 we advise that we hold no information in relation to their requests.

Parental mental health is never the only reason for the removal of a child, in fact the Local Authority support a lot of parents with mental health to parent appropriately. The decision to remove a child is only ever based on safeguarding concerns and the risk of or likelihood of harm to that child.

Unable to provide this information

This information is not recorded. Please note that the Freedom of Information Act requires public authorities to provide recorded information held by an organisation. As such, the council is not obliged to provide information that is not recorded or to give an opinion or judgement.

Question 4.

At what age should an adult explain death to a child and under what circumstances would this be deemed appropriate? Any reports of evidence of this would be lovely.
Nothing on google scholar

We do not have an age driven approach. Please see the following link:
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/telling-a-child-that-someone-has-died>

This will be child specific and dependent upon the child's age and level of development.

This request is not valid under RFI regulations which permit requests for recorded information and data sets.

Death can be explained to children of all ages and depending on their age and understanding would direct the type of conversation you may have with the child. Guidance information and resources are widely available to members of the public via the internet and examples of this can be found on: [Explaining death and dying to children | Child Bereavement UK](#).

This would be dependent upon the child's age and understanding and a decision to be made by a parent/carer. Bereavement services would support the family at this time.

This is not recorded information and would be based on individual circumstances. This letter therefore acts as a refusal notice under section 17.1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 because, in accordance with section 1.1 of the Act, this information is not held by Leicester City Council.

****As this would fall under opinion, the Authority is unable to answer****

North Yorkshire

This would be entirely dependent on the needs of the child and the circumstances for that particular child. There are a range of support services available to offer advice in this regard.

Under the Freedom of Information Act you can ask for any information you think a public authority may hold. The right only covers recorded information which includes information held on computers, in emails and in printed or handwritten documents as well as images, video and audio recordings.

The authority is not required to answer your question if this would mean creating new information or giving an opinion or judgment that is not already recorded.

This would depend on the age and understanding of the child, this would need to be done with a child friendly focus

This is not a Freedom of Information request as you are asking for a view from the Council.

This question appears to be looking for an answer, rather than asking for recorded information, therefore it is not a valid request under FOISA. However I can advise that any guidance offered would be dependent on the age of the individual, and the circumstances.

We do not have a policy on this, and I would suggest that this would be heavily dependent on the child, their circumstances and their relationship with the deceased person.

There is no set age to discuss such events with children. It would be based on the individual child and their circumstances.

In compliance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, we are required to provide notice that the information requested above is not held under Section 17 – Information not held. The council has not carried out any studies relating to the

above.

This would be around individuals circumstances and assessment – there will be practice guidance available on the internet

This is not a request for 'recorded information' and we cannot provide an opinion or explanation in relation to individual cases, therefore under S17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 we advise that we hold no information in relation to your request.

. We have considered your request for information and on this occasion we cannot supply the information you have requested.

. This is not a valid request for recorded information, but a request for a corporate view of a highly subjective and nuanced topic.

This would be dependant on the age and understanding of the child

This information is not recorded. Please note that the Freedom of Information Act requires public authorities to provide recorded information held by an organisation. As such, the council is not obliged to provide information that is not recorded or to give an opinion or judgement.

