

23 November 2021

Subject: Child social services - report - share information of domestic abusers

- 1. Does child social services report domestic abusers to the local police? If not, is there a reason for this?**

Yes, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Children's Community Services Social Workers have a duty to report all crime that comes to their attention to the PSNI.

- 2. Does child social services warn new partners of abusers that they have a record of domestic abuse to help prevent further cases of abuse? If not, is this an area they are considering?**

There are a number of ways upon which such information can be shared in order to protect and safeguard children; (i) Child Protection Policy and Procedures (ii) Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.

- 3. Does child social services explain previous social services involvement to new partners? If not, is this an area they are considering?**

The determination around what information is shared will be case specific and will be decided upon what is considered as necessary, proportionate and justified.

- 4. Does child social services share information about someone with their ex-partner if requested for a custody dispute case? for example will they share historic information about the mum/dad from when they were children with the other person? If so, under what circumstances?**

Please refer to response to question 3.

- 5. What do child social services view as breaking confidentiality in regards to information they hold and give out? How often has this happened since 2010 per calendar or financial year if statistics are available.**

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is unclear what the requestor means by "breaking confidentiality". Should the requestor provide clarity, the Trust will endeavour to provide a response.

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- 6. How often do child social services put adults / children at risk of abuse by not informing / sharing information about the conduct of a new partner? For example a person is well known to child social services in any area of abuse and they do not inform or share information that could protect an innocent person who starts a relationship with the abuser? If there are any reports or statistics since 2010 on this per calendar or financial year this would be helpful. If there is no evidence of this it will also be helpful.**

Please refer to response to question 3. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust do not electronically count this type of information. To do so would require a manual review of case files which would be in excess of the time allocated to this FOI.

- 7. How often if at all are parental family court proceedings used against the child/ren of that case later on in life? Statistics / reports from 2010 per calendar / financial year appreciated.**

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is unclear what the requestor means by this question. Should the requestor provide clarity, the Trust will endeavour to provide a response.

- 8. How often do Cafcass, psychologists, psychiatrists or other professionals rubber stamp / validate child social services concerns even when there is evidence to the contrary? Again any reports or statistics from 2010 are appreciated.**

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust do not electronically count the occasions, where relevant, when expert witnesses concur with the assessment of Children's Community Services. To do so would be a manual review of case files which would be in excess of the time allocated to this FOI.

- 9. 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.**

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.

- 10. How often does child social services get involved with someone over allegations regardless of previous positive involvement? for example a parent has passed multiple assessments but new allegations are made by either the same person or family of the same person. Does there come a time when child social services look at this as harassment and stop investigating. Any reports, rules etc on this would be helpful.**

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The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust do not electronically count this type of information. To do so would be a manual review of case files which would be in excess of the time allocated to this FOI. Of note, any consideration to not investigate a recurrent compliant would be case specific and determined by a range of variables. Any decision will be directly informed by what is in the best interests of the child.

Any statistics, reports, legislation, rules, protocols etc. to validate or reject these questions are welcome.

- ❖ Where responses have indicated this would require a manual interrogation of data, this would exceed the costs limit specified in the FOI act.

We estimate that compliance with these elements of the request for information would exceed the appropriate costs limit. Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information 2000, the limit has been specified as £450 and represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 18 hours in determining whether we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this information.