



Our ref: 69802038

Date: 10 December 2024



Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request. I have detailed below the information for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 that is being released to you by Birmingham Children's Trust.

1. How many individual children were reported missing within your local authority?

278

2. How many total incidents were reported of children going missing within your local authority?

1,193

3. How many children were looked after by the local authority between 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024?

2,950

4. How many individual looked after children went missing?

96

5. How many incidents were reported of looked after children going missing?

640

6. How many return interviews were offered to children following a missing incident?

1,182

7. How many return interviews were completed following a missing incident?

1,087

8. How many of these return interviews were completed within 72 hours of the child returning from the missing episode?

This information is not held in a readily accessible format.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) requires us to comply with a request, unless it would be too expensive to do so. Under Section 12 (Cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit) of the Act, the cost limit for the Trust is £450 i.e. 18 hours at the rate of £25 per person per hour.

The cost limit allows us to consider when estimating the cost of complying with a request, time spent determining whether we hold the information requested; identifying, locating and retrieving it and extracting the information from the relevant documents.

In order for us to answer this question, we would need to review each of the 1087 records to ascertain whether children were interviewed within 72 hours. From undertaking a sampling exercise in respect to similar requests in the past, we estimate that it takes approximately five minutes to locate, retrieve and extract this information you have requested. This would take in excess of 90 hours.

We are therefore unable to process your request as to do so would exceed the cost limit as set out in s.12 of the Act.

In cases where the time involved in dealing with requests for information would exceed 18 hours, the Trust normally offers individuals the option to pay for the additional work over and above 18 hours, at a subsidised rate of £25 per hour. However, where the resources involved in dealing with a request would have a

detrimental impact on the Trust's ability to provide its core services, the Trust is entitled to not provide this option. Accordingly, we refuse this part of your request outright.

9. Who provides return interviews to children following a missing incident in your area?

The Trust has a specialist service (EMPOWER U) which employs Missing Support Workers to complete Return Home Interviews.

10. Do you provide or commission any follow-up support for children and young people following an RHI?

On occasion, EMPOWER U will refer or signpost children and young people into statutory children in need processes or for Early Help intervention.

11. Please tell us more about your return interview service. Would you like to see any changes in national guidance? What are the barriers to effective provision? What is working well in your area?

The Trust has a small team of Missing Support Workers responding to a large number of children who are missing frequently. The '72hr' guidance for responding is incredibly subjective in terms of when this starts and stops. We often experience delays in receiving police reports and we work with a child-centred approach so that children have been missing are seen when they choose rather than meeting a timescale. Clarification on how this should be interpreted nationally would be useful.

The Trust would also advocate for children in care who are missing frequently that there should be better thought about how their needs are met and if the RHI approach is ideal. We would like to adopt an intervention role also to embed contextual safeguarding walkaround/safety mapping with children when they are first reported missing to learn with them about their community and how they keep safe and education them however with the level of demand and size of the team this is not possible.

Our small team work incredibly well to meet the needs of the children they see and are strong advocates for children, providing excellent recommendations to reduce

missing and forging trusted, independent relationships. Responding to missing episodes is a key factor in early intervention and prevention, intelligence building around contextual safeguarding issues. However, the guidance around the timelines for this should be more evidence-based and avoid process leading practice.

Please quote the reference number 69802038 in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with our response to your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days from the date this authority issued its initial response. Please outline which part of the response you are not happy with setting out your reasons. This request should be addressed to:

Corporate Information Governance Team
PO Box 16366
Birmingham
B2 2YY
Email: infogovernance@birmingham.gov.uk

If you are still dissatisfied with the Council's response after the internal review you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Website: www.ico.org.uk

I will now close your request as of this date.

Yours sincerely

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