

FOI 3023

17th April 2025**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST**

- 1. On December 31st, of each year between 2018 and 2025 inclusive, what was the number of social workers in children's services in your trust?**

Response:

Date	Headcount*	WTE
As at 31 Dec 2018	415	387.62
As at 31 Dec 2019	420	395.13
As at 31 Dec 2020	445	419.23
As at 31 Dec 2021	453	425.54
As at 31 Dec 2022	454	422.41
As at 31 Dec 2023	445	414.63
As at 31 Dec 2024	452	421.61

- 2) On December 31st, of each year between 2018 and 2025 inclusive, what was the average caseload per social worker in child services?**

Response:

The Trust does not have an information system to support the collation of the data. In order, to provide this information a significant manual review of caseloads would be required and would take more than 18 hours to collate. The cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. In order, to obtain this information, it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Public Authorities are not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit.

- 3) During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many complaints have been made against children's social workers in your trust?**

Response:

Please find below the total number of complaints raised in relation to children’s social work services (to include informal, enquiries, point of service delivery and formal) by

year (up until 28 March 2025). There is currently no robust system within the Trust to accurately extrapolate which of these related specifically to complaints against individual social workers. Social work complaints are often complex in nature and multifaceted. To extrapolate this data, this would require a manual review of each complaint and would take more than 18 hours to collate. The cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. In order to obtain this information, it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Public Authorities are not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit.

	Total by Year
2018	92
2019	106
2020	100
2021	109
2022	142
2023	129
2024	151
Up to 28/03/2025	34
Total	863

4) During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many of those complaints led to a formal investigation?

Response:

Please find below number of **children’s social work services formal complaints** by year (up until 28 March 2025). There is currently no system within the Trust to extrapolate which of these complaints related specifically to social workers. This would require a manual review of each complaint and would take more than 18 hours to collate. The cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the “appropriate limit” as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004. In order to obtain this information, it would exceed the £450 limit and is therefore cost prohibitive.

Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Public Authorities are not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit.

	Total by Year
2018	75
2019	93
2020	86
2021	92

2022	111
2023	85
2024	80
2025 Up to 28/03/2025	22
Total	644

5) During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many families have taken legal action against children's social services in your trust over allegations of wrongful removal?

Response:

Within the timeframe, there have been 2 legal actions initiated. One in 2018, has been withdrawn by the Plaintiff, and one in 2019 which has not progressed.

6) During each year 2018 - 2025 inclusive, how many social workers have been dismissed or disciplined due to misconduct?

Response:

	Total by Year
2018	0
2019	0
2020	0
2021	<5
2022	0
2023	<5
2024	<5
2025	<5

The Trust has a legal duty to protect patient/staff confidentiality and, in line with this duty, the figure <5 has been provided where figures are very low. This is because of the potential risk of identification of an individual. In reaching this decision the Trust has taken into account the small geographical area which the Trust serves and the sensitivity of the information requested. In addition, the Trust has taken into account the fact that all information disclosed in response to an FOI is disclosed to the 'world at large' and is published on the Trust website.

S 40 (2) (third party information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 has been applied to exempt the exact figures from disclosure. The Trust does not consider the disclosure of the information to be fair to the individuals concerned as there is the potential risk of identification of an individual(s) which they would not expect, and which would therefore breach the fairness element of the first principle of the Data Protection Act 2018

Email: foi.team@southerntrust.hscni.net