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16 April 2013
Your reference:
Our reference: FOI 2013-0186

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - DISCLOSURE

The council has completed its search relating to your request for information about troubled families, which we received on 15 March 2013.

The council holds information within the definition of your request.

Question 1

If there is information available I would be interested in seeing how many families have been identified so far in Cumbria and in *general* what are the measures being taken to help the families and individuals i.e. social worker being assigned to a family.

Answer 1

In Cumbria, the Troubled Families work is part of a wider approach to working with families called Focus Family.

As of March 2013 there have been 873 families identified as meeting a combination x 3 of the Troubled Families criteria.

Families recognised as meeting the Troubled Families criteria will be offered an enhanced and more holistic package of support through a key worker system. Families are allocated a social worker if there is a recognised need, following an assessment and in line with current policies and procedures.

Question 2

An overview of how your allotted budget is being spent in terms of services to help the families would be useful.

Answer 2

The troubled families programme has only been running for a year. In order to directly support changes within the Local Authority and its partners the authority received £1,103,000 for the year 2012-13 from the government Troubled Families Initiative. Due to the funding mechanism set up by the government, the local authority receives an attachment fee for every family identified. Following a payment by results scheme, results of successful work with families is paid retrospectively. Although many of the families, who meet the strict criteria to receive enhanced support, have been identified, no payment by results has yet been claimed and attachment fees have not been given for all the families. Details of this are available through the Department for Communities and Local Government publication "The Troubled Families Programme: Financial Framework"

Question 3

At this stage what are the long-term expectations of the scheme and a calculation of how much money could be saved in the long term by the council if there is success with the scheme?

Answer 3

The long-term expectations of this work are that through changes in practice and a more co-ordinated and holistic approach to working with families there will be improved outcomes for families with some of the most entrenched difficulties.

Information on the indicative savings of this way of working is available through the Department for Communities and Local Government publications “The Cost of Troubled Families” and “The Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families”.

Question 4

How many of these families have been recognised as having problems with Childhood Sexual Abuse, either as a current problem or where the adults have disclosed experiences of past abuse and are still suffering the consequences? This was a problem cited by Louise Casey in her initial findings.

Answer 4

Information on the individuals within each family is currently restricted to the four main areas of the Troubled Families criteria, worklessness, anti-social behaviour, crime and attendance concerns, along with some information on local discretionary criteria. In Cumbria the local discretionary criteria considered so far includes:

Child Protection plan

Child in Need

Domestic Violence that meets the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) threshold

Further work is currently being undertaken on other criteria.

Question 5

How many of the individuals (that make up the families) have medical history of mental health problems?

Answer 5

This information is not held.

Question 6

Through the scheme have any of the individuals been referred for treatment for mental health problems?

Answer 6

The local authority is not required to collate data on the number of individuals accessing specific forms of therapy, or the reasons why they require support. This does not mean this support is unavailable. The Local Authority Focus Family approach is supporting an innovative programme designed to offer specific support and therapy to families where mental ill health is a known concern.

Question 7

Through the scheme have any of the individuals been referred to therapy to help with substance abuse/addiction or alcohol abuse/addiction?

Answer 7

This information is not held.

Question 8

Through the scheme have any of the individuals been referred to therapy or counselling for problems relating to historic childhood sexual abuse?

Answer 8

This information is not held.

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Yours sincerely,

Claire Park
Team Leader – Corporate Complaints and Information Compliance

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If you are dissatisfied with the way we have responded to your request or wish us to reconsider our decision, please write to:

Corporate Complaints and Information Compliance
Chief Executive's Office
Cumbria County Council, The Lonsdale Building, The Courts, Carlisle, CA3 8NA
E-mail: foi-dp@cumbria.gov.uk Fax: 01228 226706

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