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17 April 2015

Your reference:

Our reference: FOI 2015-0223

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - DISCLOSURE

The council has completed its search relating to your request for information about the Troubled Families programme, which was received on 10 March 2015. We apologise for the delay in response.

The council holds information within the definition of your request.

Request

In the period from the beginning of the first phase of the Troubled Families Programme to the most recent data available, and for those families selected for inclusion in the programme:

1. a) What local discretionary criteria did you use in addition to the three primary criteria for inclusion in the Programme?
b) For each primary and each discretionary criterion, please provide the number of families which you recorded as meeting that selection criterion.
2. a) If a family met all three main criteria for inclusion in the programme, did you record whether it also met additional criteria?
b) If a family met at least one discretionary criterion for inclusion, did you record whether it also met additional discretionary criteria?
c) If domestic violence/abuse was a criterion for inclusion in the programme, did you record information on the types of domestic violence/abuse experienced by families who you recorded as fulfilling this criterion? If so, please list the subcategories used.
3. What kinds of sanctions is it possible to apply to families under, or in relation to non-engagement with, the Troubled Families Programme? Please list all categories of sanction.
4. How many sanctions have been applied to families under, or in relation to non-engagement with, the Troubled Families programme in your local authority for the entire period for which data is available? Please provide the numbers of sanctions within each category of sanction if available.
5. a) How many times, if any, was a family with domestic violence identified as an inclusion criterion sanctioned under the Troubled Families programme?
b) Which categories of sanction were applied in these cases?

Response

1. a. Cumbria's Troubled Families programme is known as "Focus Family". In order to ensure we support the right families we have made the local discretionary criteria as wide as possible whilst still targeting issues that are a high cost to the public purse. Local discretionary criteria include children in receipt of social care interventions at Child in Need and Child Protection levels, families who were eligible for Free School Meals or living with challenges such as poor mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse and young people at risk of homelessness. The ethos of the Focus Family has been to ensure that families meet at least two of the national criteria and then encourage partners to

consider the many other needs of the families, rather than to have a tick box system, which risks making families ineligible for support.

1. b.

Claim Criteria		MARAC	Child In Need	Free School Meals	Child Protection	Child Looked After	School Action Plus	Domestic Violence	OTHER LA Discretion
Crime	176	42	118	111	44	38	<4	8	8
Crime & worklessness	56	12	45	32	14	13	<4	<4	<4
Education	98	9	51	84	14	5	<4	<4	<4
Education & worklessness	29	<4	18	22	<4	<4	0	0	0
Crime & education	432	16	161	150	29	46	24	57	78
Crime & education & worklessness	51	8	35	41	10	14	0	<4	<4
Worklessness	41	7	34	30	10	10	0	0	<4

*The response 4 or less is used for any category that has 4 or fewer families included. Where numbers fall below 4 data cannot be shared as identification of individuals may be possible.

2. a. In Cumbria some of the Focus Family work has been contracted out to partners. As part of the data collation requirements the main evidence held centrally is for the three national criteria. This is to ensure that accurate submissions were made to DCLG. The Focus Family team are working to progress recording methods so intelligence on all local discretionary criteria is improved. As the local discretionary criteria are not rewarded through payment by results there is a need to find a balance between recording and storing sensitive information and protecting the rights of individuals.

2. b. In order to evidence eligibility for the Focus Family programme any family who did not meet three of the national criteria had at least one local discretionary criteria recorded.

2. c. The main sub-categories we have recorded for domestic abuse are domestic abuse/ violence or MARAC. Research suggests the different descriptors of abuse are often co-morbid, therefore we have not tried to collate this information centrally.

3. The ethos of the work to engage families is to use a strength based model of co-work and to be honest with families about their situation. This is recognised as a successful way to help families understand their challenges. The Focus Family work includes partnership working with the Law Centre to offer rights based advice and support to families when they are in difficulty.

Categories of sanctions include:

- Criminal proceedings, including housing and education related
- Housing associations' powers
- Job Centre Plus sanctions in relation to worklessness criteria
- Statutory powers under the Children's Act for Children's Services

4. This data is not collated.

5. a. For numbers please see response to question 1b.

Please also note that many families are initially identified as meeting certain criteria but once work is undertaken and relationships developed more challenges often become apparent. This is particularly true in relation to domestic violence which is often hidden and only disclosed within the confines of a secure working relationship with a trusted individual.

5. b. Sanctions for domestic violence and abuse are in line with national practice and are mainly in relation to arrest of the perpetrator. As evidenced in the 2014 HMIC report, Cumbria Constabulary has a good record for charging perpetrators of domestic abuse and the Focus Family work is closely linked into this work. It aims to support both perpetrators and victims, whether these are adults or children.

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Yours sincerely,

Bridget Sanderson
Complaints and Information Governance Officer

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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 Directorate
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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