



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

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1.5 NOV 2013

Leigh Baillie  
[fyi-request-1070-93bd870c@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-1070-93bd870c@requests.fyi.org.nz)

Dear Ms Baillie

Thank you for your email of 15 August 2013 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many individuals have been turned down as caregivers due to domestic violence where they were the victim not the perpetrator?*
- *Why are applications for caregivers turned down on the grounds of domestic violence when the applicant was the victim not the perpetrator?*

The Ministry of Social Development supports community environments where abuse and neglect of children and young people is not tolerated. Child, Youth and Family always works in the best interests of the child or young person and every allegation of abuse is treated seriously.

The removal of a child or young person from their family is a decision that is not taken lightly. As with all actions taken by Child, Youth and Family, the interests of the child or young person are paramount. If no family member is identified as being able to safely care for the child or young person, then they will be placed with an approved Child, Youth and Family caregiver. Wherever possible and appropriate, the relationship between the child or young person and their family is maintained and strengthened.

Over the past ten years, over 32,000 children and young people have been in the care of Child, Youth and Family. Most of these children and young people will be placed with caregivers and family members, with a small number having spent time in a residence.

Caregivers play an essential role in helping to look after some of New Zealand's most vulnerable and troubled children and young people. They provide emergency, respite or longer-term alternative care for children and young people of all ages. The role of a caregiver is both demanding and rewarding for individuals and families. Child, Youth and Family gives priority to providing training and on-going support to caregivers, and carefully considers the needs of the child or young person and family when making a placement.

All Child, Youth and Family caregivers go through a rigorous assessment process before they are approved to have children or young people placed in their care. This process includes comprehensive police and health checks for all household members aged 17 years and over, the provision of referees and at least two interviews, one of which is conducted within the potential caregiver's home. In many cases a new caregiver will be 'buddied' with an experienced caregiver.

Page 1 of 3

Training is available to all caregivers, including those looking after relatives. This allows caregivers to learn new skills, share experiences, and develop a support network with people in similar situations. Out-of-family caregivers/foster parents receive mandatory training from child and family support services, iwi social services and cultural social services. We also encourage all caregivers to join support organisations such as the New Zealand Family and Fostering Kids.

A list of the required checks made by Child, Youth and Family before approving a caregiver status is available through the Practice Centre website at the following links:

<http://practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/policy/caregiver-assessment-and-approval/resources/ways-to-care-process.html>

<http://practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/policy/caregiver-assessment-and-approval/index.html>

A thorough Police vetting for all household members aged 17 years and over is undertaken, which would identify any interactions a person may have had with the Police, as a witness, victim or offender – including the Family Violence database.

While a caregiver assessment is largely focused on assessing the skills and abilities of prospective caregivers, it is just as much about understanding the needs of the child or young person who requires a placement and deciding whether or not the prospective caregivers can meet these needs.

It is important that we always give strong consideration to what children and young people need both now and in the future and that we do everything we possibly can to place them with caregivers, whether it be family/whānau or non-family/whānau, who will provide them with the love, care and attention they deserve.

During the assessment process, social workers may become aware of concerns around family violence. In each instance the social worker will talk with the proposed caregiver about these concerns and explore the circumstances within which things have happened. Then Child, Youth and Family will reassess how this may impact on that person's ability to care for the child or young person.

The Ministry does not centrally collate data on the number of caregiver applications received and therefore cannot provide information or data regarding the number of applications which are denied due to an applicant's past experience of domestic violence. In order to provide this information Ministry staff would be required to manually review all of the caregiver applications received to determine whether these applications were approved or declined, and of those that were declined, the reason for this decision. Therefore, your request for this information is refused on the basis of substantial manual collation under section 18(f) of the Act.

I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to respond to your request given extra time, or the ability to charge for the information requested. I have concluded that, in either case, the Ministry's ability to undertake its work would still be prejudiced.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful on this occasion. You have the right to seek an investigation and review of my response by the Ombudsman, whose address for contact purposes is:

The Ombudsman  
Office of the Ombudsman  
PO Box 10-152  
WELLINGTON 6143

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernadine Mackenzie', written in a cursive style.

**Bernadine Mackenzie**  
**Deputy Chief Executive Child, Youth and Family**