



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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30 JUN 2014

Leah Beaumont
fyi-request-1637-c29e972a@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Beaumont

Thank you for your email of 30 April 2014 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *All data held by Child, Youth and Family for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating Family Group Conferencing policies, procedures and outcomes. This is a request for data held by the department that is not listed on the Child, Youth and Family website concerning Family Group Conferences for example:*
 - *Practitioner and client feedback*
 - *Reviews and reports*
 - *Annual budgets*
 - *Input/outputs.*

Child, Youth and Family is a service of the Ministry of Social Development. It protects the safety and promotes the wellbeing of children and young people and employs around 1,400 social work staff in a variety of roles including field social workers, supervisors and senior practitioners.

In 1989, the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act introduced an innovative system for the Youth Justice Service to work with young offenders and for the Care and Protection System to work with families of vulnerable children and young people. This was the Family Group Conference (FGC). At the time, this approach to assisting children and young people and victims of young offenders, was unprecedented.

FGCs ensure families and whānau are supported to develop their own solutions to problems. Social workers, other professionals and families work together to reach agreement on how to keep a child or young person within the family group while issues of care and protection are resolved. There are two types of FGCs:

- **Care and Protection FGCs:** These are meetings where the family/whānau of a child or young person who is in need of care and protection meet with wider family/whānau, friends, key support people and Child, Youth and Family to put in place supports to ensure the safety of the child and young person concerned.
- **Youth Justice FGCs:** These are meetings where a child or young person who has offended, their family, victims and other people meet with a social worker or youth advocate to discuss ways to help the child or young person to: acknowledge their offending and how they can learn from their mistakes; find practical ways for the child or young person to put things right and make up for what they did; and options for practical solutions to help them turn their life

Page 1 of 3

around. This may include programmes that help with acquiring life skills, employment, education, or activities like team sports and mentoring.

'Mā mātou mā tātou – changing young lives' is Child, Youth and Family's three-year plan. It gives Child, Youth and Family a set of priorities to strengthen the quality of practice for staff. Mā mātou mā tātou sets out the commitment to reinvigorating the FGC process. This document is publicly available on Child, Youth and Family's website at: www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/reports/our-strategy-final.pdf

Child, Youth and Family knows that good outcomes are achieved when the FGC process is well managed, children, young people and their family/whānau are well prepared and know what to expect from the conference, and key professionals are fully informed and engaged.

Your request for all information is very broad and substantial manual collation would be required to locate and prepare all documents within the scope of your request. As such I refuse your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act. The greater public interest is in the effective and efficient administration of the public service.

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.

However, you may be aware that the Ministry has recently released the *Qualitative Review of Social Worker Caseload, Casework and Workload Management*. The Qualitative Review addresses some aspects of FGCs including the number of referrals to FGCs, the number of FGCs held and the purpose of FGCs. This document is publicly available on the Ministry's website at:

www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/media-releases/2014/workload-and-casework-review.pdf

Furthermore, Child, Youth and Family has completed the report *Final Recommendations on Improving Family Group Conferences to Achieve Better Outcomes for New Zealand's Most Vulnerable Children*. I will provide you with a copy of the report once the Vulnerable Children's Bill has been enacted.

As you are aware, key statistics pertaining to FGCs are publicly available on Child, Youth and Family's website at:

www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/who-we-are-what-we-do/information-for-media-backup.html

The Ministry's Annual Report also addresses some aspects of FGCs as a performance measure, as well as the Social Services Committee Inquiry into Child Offenders which you may also find helpful. The Annual Report is publicly available at on the Ministry's website at:

www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/annual-report/2012-2013/index.html

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