



14 JUL 2015

Ms Rebekah Sherriff  
[fvi-request-2783-02f8fa2f@requests.fvi.org.nz](mailto:fvi-request-2783-02f8fa2f@requests.fvi.org.nz)

Dear Ms Sherriff

On 29 May 2015 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

1. *The number of foster carers a child who has been in the care system has over their lifetime - mean, median, mode, upper and lower range*
2. *Number of social workers managing a child in foster care - median, mode, upper and lower range*
3. *Number of children who are separated from their siblings when they are removed from the home and placed into care.*

Child, Youth and Family always works with the best interests of the child or young person in mind and the decision to place a child or young person in the care of the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development is not one that is made lightly. Children and young people may come into the care of the Chief Executive for a variety of reasons which may be complex. The care may be short term, for example, respite care for a parent of a child with severe behavioural problems, or longer term where care and / or protection issues are present.

Child, Youth and Family is aware that the best possible outcome for a child is to ensure that while they are in our care they are in a safe and secure placement environment with the least number of disruptions. Child, Youth and Family ensures that children are not moved unnecessarily, but in some cases a change in caregiver is unavoidable.

Children who have suffered severe abuse may have high needs due to their complex health, psychological or behavioural needs. This can make them extremely challenging to care for. Even with the best intentions, caregivers cannot always cope with the level of care and supervision these children require. Caregivers may also have changes in their own personal circumstances that make it impossible for them to continue caring for a child or require some respite.

A child or young person in care may have more than one social worker at a time or have a change of social workers during the time that they are in care. The Child, Youth, Residence, Adoption System (CYRAS) is a case management tool that allows social workers to record information about their involvement with the child, young person and their family, however, it is not a database.

The information you have requested about *the number of foster carers a child who has been in the care system has over their lifetime - mean, median, mode, upper and lower range* and *the number of social workers managing a child in foster care - median, mode, upper and lower range* is not centrally recorded. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files and case notes. 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.

I have included links to the Ministry website where you can find additional information about children in care:

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/key-statistics/children-and-young-people-in-out-of-home-placements.html>

<http://www.cyf.govt.nz/keeping-kids-safe/ways-we-work-with-families/if-a-child-is-in-our-care.html>

The following two tables show the number of children in out of home placements broken down by age, number of caregivers they have had and the length of time they have spent in care, as at 30 June 2014.

Please note: some information has been suppressed to protect the privacy of children and young people where the values are five or less.

**Table 1: Number of caregivers in the life of children and young people in care as at 30 June 2014**

Number of caregivers	Children and Young Person's duration in care						Total number of CYP
	0 to 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	More than 10 years	
1	332	205	199	143	52	18	949
2-5	230	304	490	773	398	139	2,334
6-10	S	10	S	156	259	148	609
11-15	S	0	S	S	66	73	168
16 +	0	0	S	S	28	38	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>4,129</b>

**Table 2: Children and young people's duration in care by age group as at 30 June 2014**

CYP's duration in care	Age Group (as at 30 June 2014)						Total number of CYP
	Age 0-1 years	Age 2-4 years	Age 5-9 years	Age 10-13 years	Age 14-16 years	Age 17+ years	
0 months to 1 year	335	230	248	170	100	0	1083
1-2 years	150	202	177	121	74	0	724
2-5 years	S	302	386	249	164	S	1,101
5-10 years	S	S	288	302	211	S	801
More than 10 years	0	S	0	143	270	S	413
<b>Total</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>819</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>4,129</b>

The information regarding the number of caregivers provided in the tables includes provisionally approved family / whānau caregiver placements, foster care, Child and Family Support Services and residential placements. The information does not include respite caregiver placements as these are often of a very short duration. Some information has been suppressed to protect the privacy of children and young people where the values are five or less.

Your request for the number of *children who are separated from their siblings when they are removed from the home and placed into care* is refused as this information is held in notes on individual case files on the CYRAS case management tool. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. 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.

Child, Youth and Family understands the importance of maintaining family ties and attempting to place children from the same family together. It is a long-standing placement principle that, where possible, siblings should be placed together in the interest of their emotional wellbeing. Children are more likely to be secure and have a sense of belonging within their family when they are placed with siblings. There are many considerations when placing siblings together, for example family size and quality of relationships. While placement of siblings together is desirable, placement decisions need to be made in the best interests of each child.

I hope you find this information regarding children and young people in care helpful. 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



Bernadine Mackenzie  
Deputy Chief Executive