



18 JAN 2016

Mr Jason Howarth
Fyi-requests-3525-8aed19e3@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Howarth

On 5 January 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

- *How many notifications did CYF received in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 that relate to parent/guardian/caregiver drug use?*
- *How many CYF cases since 2013 have parent/guardian/caregiver drug use listed or been identified as an issue?*
- *What are CYF guidelines relating to parent/guardian/caregiver drugs use and continued involvement with children?*

The Ministry of Social Development works hard to create community environments where the 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 is guided by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989.

Child, Youth and Family's standard reporting of substantiated abuse findings includes emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. The Ministry does not centrally record whether drug or substance abuse is involved in a notification or a substantiated finding. This information is held in notes on individual case files and 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.

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.

Child, Youth and Family's key statistics, including notifications, findings and interventions, are available online at www.cyf.govt.nz/about-us/key-statistics/.

There is no specific policy around the use of alcohol and drugs by parents and caregivers. As always, the primary concern is the safety of children.

All Child, Youth and Family caregivers go through a rigorous assessment process before they are approved to have children placed in their care. This process includes

health checks and comprehensive police checks for all household members aged 17 years and over, the provision of referees and at least two interviews, one of which is conducted at the potential caregiver's home. Questions around the use of alcohol and drugs will be addressed as part of the assessment and subsequent review process.

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. This includes, but is not limited to, drug and alcohol related offences.

Further information regarding the Child, Youth and Family caregiver assessment and approval process and the policy relating to allegations made against Child, Youth and Family caregivers, including illegal drug use, is available online at: www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/policy/caregiver-assessment-and-approval/index.html and www.practicecentre.cyf.govt.nz/policy/allegations-against-caregivers/index.html.

I hope you find this information 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



Viv Rickard
**Deputy Chief Executive
Child, Youth and Family
Ministry of Social Development**