

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Your request for information has now been considered and the Council's response to your questions is shown below.

You asked:

NOTIFICATIONS TO HIGH COMMISSIONS AND EMBASSIES OF CHILDREN IN CARE

To ask the Local Authority's Children's Services Head of Service:

1. What is the Local Authorities policy for notifying High Commissions and Embassies (their Consular Welfare Sections) regarding non-UK national children that are?

- A. Taken in to Care**
- B. Being Adopted**

There is no particular policy in this regard. Embassies etc. will be communicated with on a case by case basis.

2. What is the Local Authorities policy for enabling High Commissions and Embassies Consular Welfare access visits to non-UK children in its care and prior to adoption?

If an Embassy representative etc. should seek to visit/see a child in the care of the local Authority they will be required to indicate the purpose of such a visit and the local Authority will determine if it is or likely to be in the child's best interests. If so suitable arrangements will be made.

3. Has the Local Authority sought any legal or other advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regarding High Commissions and/or Embassies Consular Welfare visits to non UK children in its care?

No although would do so if the occasion arose.

4. Has the Local Authority refused any High Commission or Embassy Consular Welfare visits to non UK children in its care and if so how many?

No

5. By the Local Authority:

How many foreign national children have in the last five years:

- A. Been taken into Care**
- B. Been Adopted**
- C. What list of countries were they from**

A number of Foreign National children have been taken into care by this Local Authority in the last five years. Almost all can be described as unaccompanied asylum seeking children arriving in this country from mostly Afghanistan and Iraq. Total number over the last five years for this group is 37 with a further 68 young people offered a variety of support whilst age etc. was established. The total range of countries from which the young people came is as follows, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Congo, Eritrea, Italy, Albania, Vietnam, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Palestine, South Africa, Nigeria and Brazil. In addition, a small number of children have been taken into care for very specific issues relating to Child protection matters from Norway, the Netherlands, Libya, and several nations in the Caribbean. The total is 9, none of the children have been adopted and a number have returned to their parents or relatives.

6. By the Local Authority:

How many High Commissions and Embassies Consular Welfare Sections in these cases as in 5. A. & B. above were:

A. Notified

B. Were not notified

One, the Libyan High Commission. With reference to the other children we worked directly with agencies in the home country or families and relatives in the home country.

To High Commissions and Embassies Consular Welfare Sections

7. In the cases of doubt regarding nationality and other unconfirmed/unverified information such as history what is the Local Authorities policy regarding enquiring of High Commissions and Embassies for confirmations that may be available outside of the UK regarding non UK children in its care and prior to adoption.

This category of children, with unconfirmed identities etc. mostly relates to unaccompanied asylum seeking children. In the case of Afghanistan and formerly Iraq it was and is very difficult to get Governmental access to data either relatively quickly or, in the case of Afghanistan, confirm the accuracy of any data acquired without extreme difficulty. Our focus is on correctly identifying the child as quickly as possible, ascertaining if any relatives/parents will take responsibility and providing suitable care if they cannot be returned home. No child in this category has been adopted.

8. What is the Local Authorities Policy regarding non-UK children in its care or as adopted being able to ensure their right of access to their non-UK Identity and Nationality once they reach age16 and should they wish assistance to leave the UK.

We make every effort to ensure that children and young people are aware of their back ground and culture and if at all possible ensure that they are cared for or have contact with other UK based communities who share that culture.

Should they wish to return home that would only be possible prior to the age of 18 if there was an agreed and fully assessed 'care plan' which had identified appropriate carers in the country of origin.

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If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request please write to:

Head of Information Governance
Information and Support
Leicester City Council
FREEPOST (LE985/33)
New Walk Centre
LEICESTER LE1 6ZG
e-mail: FOIA@leicester.gov.uk

Your request for internal review should be submitted to the above address within 40 (forty) working days of receipt by you of this response. Any such request received after this time will only be considered at the Council's absolute discretion.

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Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545 700
www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

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Yours sincerely

Lynn Wyeth
Head of Information Governance