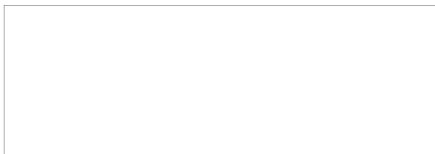




**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

29 AUG 2016



Dear

On 11 July 2016 you emailed the Ministry requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, the following information:

Using linked MSD/CYF data, in the calendar years ending 2013, 2014 and 2015:

- *How many distinct children had a substantiated finding of abuse?*
- *Of those children with a substantiated finding of abuse, how many had a caregiver in current receipt of a benefit?*
- *How many had a caregiver not currently on a benefit but with a history of benefit receipt?*
- *Of those with a caregiver currently on a benefit, what type of benefit was received?*
- *Of those with a caregiver currently on a benefit, what were the caregiver's ethnicity, gender and age?*
- *What were the ages of all the children with a substantiated finding of abuse?*
- *What were the ages of the children with a substantiated finding of abuse and a caregiver either receiving a benefit or with history of receiving a benefit?*
- *Please supply any data sets (excel or other) relating to 'Children's Contact with MSD Services':*

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/childrens-contact-with-msd-services/children-s-contact-with-msd-services-fact-sheet.doc>

The Ministry of Social Development works hard to create community environments where abuse and neglect of children and young people is not tolerated. Child, Youth and Family always works with the best interests of the child or young person in mind and within the statutory framework of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989.

When responding to a concern of alleged abuse or neglect, the welfare and interests of the child or young person are the first and primary consideration. When a notification is received, Child, Youth and Family determines whether further action is required. Not all of the care and protection notifications received by Child, Youth and Family will result in further action as it may become evident early in the process that there are no issues warranting further assessment. Notifications that require no further action may be referred to other services or to community providers through partnered response. For example, families may be referred to other services where appropriate, such as counselling services. Consequently, although a formal investigation may not be required, this does not mean that there was no further involvement with the family.

A finding of abuse is made after an investigation or assessment has been completed by Child, Youth and Family and the abuse has been substantiated. Abuse includes emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Please find below a table displaying the number of children with one or more substantiated finding of abuse, broken down by age group at last finding in the reported year, for the calendar years 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Age	Calendar Year		
	2013	2014	2015
Age not recorded	613	541	553
0 – 1 year	2,786	2,195	2,085
2 – 4 years	3,601	2,769	2,715
5 – 9 years	5,009	4,332	4,083
10 – 13 years	3,435	2,946	2,716
Age 14 years and over	2,191	1,912	1,769
Total	17,635	14,695	13,921

In the '*Children's Contact with MSD Services*' factsheet you refer to in your request, it is stated that the estimates presented should be viewed as broad indications of scale given the limitations and errors in linking data across the systems. There is no single unique identifier allocated to an individual against which all their contact with different Ministry services is recorded. This creates issues with data quality when linking data from two different systems such as Child, Youth and Family and Work and Income. As such, linking data across systems requires substantial manual collation in order to ensure the resulting information is accurate.

The Ministry is unable to provide you with linked data relating to children with a substantiated finding of abuse and a caregiver on a benefit or with a history of receiving a benefit, as this information is held in notes on individual case files. In order to provide you with this information Ministry staff would have to manually review thousands of files. 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.

The data sets relating to the '*Children's Contact with MSD Services*' factsheet are not able to be supplied through this avenue and this request is refused under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect the privacy of natural persons. The need to protect the privacy of these individuals outweighs any public interest in this information. However, you can make a submission to the Research Access Committee for these data sets. Further information about submissions to the Research Access Committee and the application form is available here: www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/contact-us/research-access-committee/

I hope you find this information relating to children with substantiated findings of abuse 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Murray Edridge', written over the closing 'Yours sincerely'.

Murray Edridge
Deputy Chief Executive
Child, Youth and Family